

Visual Perceptual Skills: Real Life Applications

Visual Discrimination

Definition: The ability to determine differences or similarities in objects or forms based on size, color, shape, etc...

Real Life Application: For the tasks of reading and writing, visual discrimination is critical for seeing letters or words as different. Difficulties in this skill area can make “p” look a lot like “q” or “the” look a lot like “then”.

Form Constancy

Definition: The ability to know that a form or shape is the same, even if it has been rotated, made smaller/larger, or observed from up close or far away.

Real Life Application: Form constancy is important for recognizing letters or words in different contexts. For example, a child must know that the word “the” is the same whether they see it written in a text book, on a marker board, or in a magazine article.

Visual Memory

Definition: The ability to recall visual traits of a form or object.

Real Life Application: Visual memory is important for reading comprehension. A child has to remember what they read and recognize a word from one page to the next. Difficulties with this skill can also make copying from a board or book so much more challenging. These children might take forever to copy an assignment because they can't retain the information to transfer it from the board to their own page.

Visual Sequential Memory

Definition: The ability to recall a sequence of objects or forms in the correct order.

Real Life Application: Visual Sequential memory is very important for spelling. Some children might know the letters in a word, but can't get their order correct.

Visual Closure

Definition: The ability to recognize a form or object even when the whole picture of it isn't available.

Real life application: This means you can see a part of something and fill in the rest in your head. Visual closure is important for reading and comprehending what we see quickly. Difficulty with this skill might mean that a child has to study a word or sentence carefully before they know what it is.

Visual Spatial Relations

Definition: Understanding the relationships of objects within the environment.

Real life application: Visual spatial skills can be important in gross motor terms. Think of the direction, "Go put your shoes under your desk, and then come stand in front of the water fountain." The child must understand how to maneuver within their environment by following those spatial commands. That whole left/right concept plays a big part in this skill as well.

In fine motor terms, visual spatial relations are important for appropriate letter orientation and avoiding reversals. After all, "b" and "d" are essentially the same shape, just pointing in different directions.

Visual Figure Ground

Definition: The ability to locate something in a cluttered or busy background.

Real life application: Figure ground skills allow you to find a AAA battery in the junk drawer. A child must be able to sort out visual information to find what they are looking for. Difficulties with this skill can leave kids lost as they look for specific information on a busy worksheet.