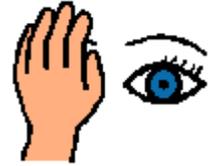




VISUAL MOTOR SKILLS



The importance of visual motor skills.

Visual motor skills are the ability to coordinate visual input and motor output. This begins to develop at birth and continues to refine throughout the child's early years.

Making shapes and letters, coloring, cutting on lines, and tracing are all skills that require visual motor control. In kindergarten children are required to write on a line, space words, and cut out various shapes. Each child will start school with varying levels of abilities. Weak visual motor skills may be attributed to lack of experience, lack of visual attention, lack of interest, lack of visual processing or lack of motor control.

During early school experiences or when learning a new task, children will rely heavily on their visual sense to perform a task until motor patterns are established.

Activities you can do to encourage visual motor skills.

- * Practice making letters, shapes, numbers in various tactile media such as dry kool-aid, sand, salt, on sandpaper, shaving cream, finger-paint, etc.
- * Practice cutting in between pieces of yarn, popsicle sticks, sandpaper, etc. This will give the child tactile and visual input. You can vary the distance, shape and width of the area to be cut.
- * Have the child cut out dot to dots (homemade, from the internet or from a workbook).
- * Use of paper that is uncluttered and has obvious boundaries.
- * Have a visual motor center with items such as puzzles, maze books, dot to dots, stringing beads with pattern cards, stencil and tracing activities, hammer and nail toys, lacing cards, peg boards, tangrams, blocks, etc.
- * Playing catch or target games outside. Indoors try tossing a beanbag to a student to answer a question or on a card with the answer to a question such as what letter makes thesound.
- * Use of manipulatives to make letters/shapes/numbers-wikki sticks, putty, yarn, pipe cleaners, wood pieces, etc.
- * Place magnet letters/numbers in a bag and pass it around the circle and have the child place their hand inside and try to identify their number without looking.
- * Have the child "sign in" everyday at the chalkboard-the child finds their name and then draws a vertical, horizontal or diagonal line to a specific target.

Adaptations for Visual Motor Skills.

- * Highlight lines to write in between or letters to trace. Tracing of dot to dot letters is *not recommended* as the child is then focused on getting to the next dot and is not able to learn the appropriate motor patterns needed in order to make letters
- * Allow the child to copy work from their desk rather than the chalkboard.
- * Use of vertical surfaces—use easels, slant-boards, chalkboards, paper taped or clipped to a wall. 3 inch ring binders can be low cost substitutes for slant boards.
- * Make a template in which the child can write or read in—this will decrease the amount of visual material presented.
- * Use of puff paint/glue for boundaries for cutting/coloring.
- * Use of an index card or piece of paper for the child to use to follow when reading.
- * Use of a popsicle stick, small block, bingo chip, etc. to provide cues for the child to space in between words when writing.
 - * Use thicker types of paper for cutting (i.e. file folders, tag board, etc.).
 - * Tape a wooden shape or popsicle stick to a piece of tag board or thicker paper for the child to cut around/along.