

## Symptoms Checklist

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### When Is Learning Difficulty Due to a Vision Problem?

While learning occurs through a number of complex and interrelated processes, vision plays a key role. Many signs, symptoms, and behaviors associated with learning disabilities are similar to those caused by vision problems. This is why it is so important that a comprehensive vision examination be part of the interdisciplinary evaluation of all children who are failing to succeed in school.

Here are some signs and symptoms to look for that may indicate a vision problem.

#### Symptoms

#### Possible Vision Problems

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- Complains of blurred vision
  - Rubs eyes frequently
  - Squints

#### **Nearsightedness, Farsightedness, or Astigmatism**

inability to see clearly in the distance or up close

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- Closes or covers one eye
- Occasionally sees double
- Rubs eyes frequently
- Able to read for only a short time
- Poor reading comprehension

#### **Eye coordination problems**

inability to coordinate the eyes together effectively

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- Holds things very close
- Complains of blurred vision
- Poor reading comprehension
- Says eyes are tired
- Able to read for only a short time
- Has headaches when reading

#### **Eye focusing problems**

inability to easily refocus eyes or maintain clear focus

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- Moves head excessively when reading
- Frequently loses place, skips lines when reading
- Uses finger to keep place
- Poor reading comprehension
- Short attention span

#### **Eye tracking problems**

inadequate ability to smoothly and accurately move the eyes from one point to another

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- Mistakes words with similar beginnings
- Difficulty recognizing letters, words, or simple shapes and forms
- Can't distinguish the main idea from insignificant details
- Trouble learning basic math concepts of size, magnitude, and position

#### **Faulty visual form perception**

inability to discriminate differences in size, shape, or form

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- Trouble visualizing what is read
  - Poor reading comprehension
  - Poor speller
  - Trouble with mathematical concepts
  - Poor recall of visually presented material
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#### **Faulty visual memory**

inability to remember and understand what is seen

- Sloppy handwriting and drawing
- Can't stay on lines
- Poor copying skills
- Can respond orally but not in writing

### **Faulty visual motor integration**

inability to process and reproduce visual images by writing or drawing

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- Trouble learning right and left
  - Reverses letters and words
  - Trouble writing and remembering letters and numbers

### **Difficulty with laterality and directionality**

Poor development of left/right awareness

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### **Physical signs or symptoms**

- Frequent headaches or eye strain
- Blurring of distance or near vision, particularly after reading or other close work
- Avoidance of close work or other visually demanding tasks
- Poor judgment of depth
- Turning of an eye in or out, up or down
- Tendency to cover or close one eye, or favor the vision in one eye
- Double vision
- Poor hand-eye coordination
- Difficulty following a moving target
- Dizziness or motion sickness

### **Performance problems**

- Poor reading comprehension
- Difficulty copying from one place to another
- Loss of place, repetition, and/or omission of words while reading
- Difficulty changing focus from distance to near and back
- Poor posture when reading or writing
- Poor handwriting
- Can respond orally but can't get the same information down on paper
- Letter and word reversals
- Difficulty judging sizes and shapes

### **How to Identify a Vision Problem**

Children should be referred for a **comprehensive eye exam** whenever visual symptoms are noticed or if they are not achieving their potential. Many of these vision problems will not be detected during a school vision screening or limited vision assessment as part of a school physical or routine pediatric health evaluation.