

# 8 Signs of Visual Processing Disorder

When our occupational therapists are evaluating a child and suspect a visual processing disorder, we have noticed a trend in the stories that families tell; their child is struggling at school, and they can't figure out why. Letters and numbers are reversed, they are a poor speller, and handwriting is sloppy.

All these issues look like difficulty with vision, but we usually hear that the child passed their last eye exam so that can't be the problem, can it?



**Rogers Bridge**  
Pediatric Therapy

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If you find yourself telling a similar story, your child may be experiencing a visual processing disorder, also called visual motor deficit or visual perception deficit. This term refers to the ability to make sense of the information that is taken through the eyes.

The brain is responsible for using the information from our eyes to create images and impressions. Sometimes these deficits are identified in school as contributors to learning disabilities and sometimes they are mis-diagnosed as a different disorder.



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## 1. Visual Discrimination:

The disorder may affect the ability to determine difference between similar looking letters, words, shapes, or objects.

A person may confuse similar looking words which can affect reading comprehension and reading fluency. (i.e., confusing "b" for "d" or a circle for an oval.)



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## 2. Visual Figure-Ground Discrimination:

The disorder may affect the ability to locate an object, form, or word within a busy field. A person may have difficulty finding hidden pictures or specific information on a page. Examples of this include activities such as a crossword puzzle or participating in games such as "where's waldo" with a busy background.



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## 3. Visual Sequencing:

The disorder may affect the ability to recall the correct order of letters, symbols, words, or pictures.

A person may have difficulty writing answers on a different sheet of paper than the questions by skipping lines during text when reading or aligning numbers in math problems.



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## 4. Visual motor Processing:

The disorder may affect the ability to see with the eyes to coordinate the movement with body parts.

A person may be considered "clumsy" by bumping into objects often or have difficulty turning the pages to a book.



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## 5. Long/Short Term Visual Memory:

The disorder may affect the ability to remember shapes, symbols, or objects a person has previously seen. A person may have difficulty with spelling and remembering facts after reading them silently.



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## 6. Visual-Spatial:

The disorder may affect the ability to understand where objects are in space ("near" or "far").

A person may have difficulty writing or coloring inside the lines or spacing letters and words on a page when writing.





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## 7. Visual Closure:

The disorder may affect the ability to identify objects when only parts of it are showing. A person may have difficulty understanding a smiley face is a face if it is missing ears or hair. This can have a tremendous impact on spelling as it is difficult to recognize a word if a letter is missing.



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## 8. Letter and Number Reversals:

The disorder may affect the ability to recognize patterns by perceiving differences between similar letters or words.

