

Eye tracking (saccades)

Orthoptic Visual Processing Difficulties Clinic

Information for patients and relatives

Eye tracking and reading

What are saccades?

When you read, your eyes make lots of small jumps from one word to the next.

These quick eye movements are called saccades.

Saccades help your eyes move across a page so you can read and understand words.

How can eye movement affect learning?

Sometimes a child's eyes find it difficult to move smoothly across a page.

This is not usually because they cannot see clearly. It happens because their eyes find it difficult to work together.

Your child may:

- lose their place while reading
- skip words
- mix up words
- find it difficult to learn what they have read
- use a finger to follow the words
- find it difficult to copy from a book or classroom board

These problems may become clearer as schoolwork gets harder and print becomes smaller

How can exercises help?

Eye tracking is a skill that can improve with practice.

The exercises help the eyes:

- move faster
- move more accurately
- follow words across a page more easily

This can make reading smoother and easier.

Tips for reading

Ask your child to:

- keep their head as still as possible
- move their eyes rather than their head

- use a ruler or reading window to help keep their place
- take their time when copying from a book or classroom board

School may also be able to provide:

- extra time for copying tasks
- printed copies instead of asking children to copy

Home exercises

An eye movement specialist (orthoptist) will give your child eye exercises to do at home.

Your child should aim to do the exercises every day for about 5 minutes.

Regular practice will help your child gain this skill more quickly.

Fun things to try

Your child can also practise eye tracking with:

- dot-to-dot puzzles
- word searches
- games, such as the ones below

Letter hunt

Choose a letter, such as **O**.

Look across a page and count how many times it appears

Torch game

In a dark room, shine a torch onto an object.

See how quickly the other person can find the same object with their torch

Pencil game

Hold two coloured pencils apart.

Look at one pencil, then quickly look at the other.

Keep swapping between them.

Useful apps and games

Some games can help your child practise with eye tracking, including:

- Tetris
- Piano Tiles
- Pac-Man
- Fruit Ninja
- Bubble Shooter
- Air Hockey

These are suggestions only. Parents and carers should check that any app or game is suitable for their child.

Contact us

Orthoptic Team

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