

## Visual Tracking and Learning to Read

Visual tracking is the movement of both eyes together across a line of print from margin to margin. There are serious learning problems when either one or both eyes have difficulty in making a smooth sweep. To control such an irregular eye movement, a person must use some or all of the 10% nerve energy left after the eyes use about 90% of the same energy to focus on the visual stimuli, letters and words. The 10% remaining energy is used for understanding vocabulary, word pronunciation, and memory for the printed text. When there is a problem in the visual tracking, the amount of energy needed to control it results in poor reading skills with a significant loss in comprehension and memory for text topic.

Visual training is successful in improving eye tracking and overcoming the problem. Lessons are simple activities concentrating on practicing a smooth movement by training the mind to tell the eyes to track to eliminate the problem. This may be done in the home or classroom. What are the symptoms and why is it important to identify them?

Visual tracking is not visual acuity, where near and far vision needs to focus for a clear image.

A simple flicking of one or both eyes when tracking or changing eye direction can reduce the ability of the reader to comprehend and memorize the material by as much as 90%.

**Approximately 80-90% of students in special education have a visual tracking problem.** When treated and provided a proper intervention reading program, many may return to regular classes.

**Approximately 20-35% of the general population has a visual tracking problem.** Many individual difficulties go undetected and this group continues with reading dysfunction as adults and they often experience serious emotional problems from academic frustration in school.

### Symptoms:

- Homework involving reading, especially for a test, requires 3 or 4 hours when students with normal visual tracking may only need one hour or less;
- student reads a page in a textbook, and then reads 3 or 4 more pages; they cannot recall what was read, even on the last page they read. . Schools and parents identify this type of student as having a "poor short term memory";
- reads for 5 or 10 minutes and stops;
- they complain of being tired;
- the assignment is boring;
- they hate school and avoid school work;
- they are mad at parents for making them study;
- always identified by teachers as having some kind of behavior problem;
- referred for remedial classes, especially reading and spelling;
- always below grade expectancy in reading tests;
- are dysfunctional readers in middle school, high school and as adults;
- complain of headaches and often become irritable;
- may have poor eye-hand coordination;
- improperly identified as being ADD or ADHD;

- recommended for medication to control problems but problems remain and student's medication only hides the causes;
- visual screening at optometrist or school will not usually detect visual tracking problem;
- generally dislikes sports and is often clumsy when trying to learn or play;
- prefers physical over visual hobbies;
- becomes a high school dropout;
- has truant problems at school;
- seeks social relations with students having same general behavior and attitudes;
- is a significant part of the 60-70% of identified dysfunctional readers in high school and as adults;

**Any person that has an eye that hesitates, jumps, flicks while tracking, or other irregular eye movements, impacts the educational challenges for reading and academics requiring reading. When this group of problems is combined with the right brain, kinesthetic and ESL population, a tremendous void is left unidentified and not corrected in schools. This should not occur in American education but our entire educational process is based on profits for book publishers, political overtones at all levels, and a teacher training system that frequently emphasizes the wrong concepts and skills.**

**Visual screening could occur rapidly in kindergarten and again in grade two. Identifying a problem and training at this age will prevent enormous emotional pain and academic failure. Cost to the student, parents and society is too great to ignore the need.**

**Certified Learning Systems has compiled a list of simple visual tracking tests for school or home use. A separate set of visual tracking lessons is also available. Lessons use simple, 'around the house' materials except for two very inexpensive items that are optional for successful training.**

**Tests and lessons are available as a packet from Certified Learning Systems on the website store.**

**All tests and lessons have been used and recommended by behavioral optometrist and/or through resources such as the Bernell Behavioral Optometric Supply, [www.bernell.com](http://www.bernell.com) and the Optometric Extension Program at [www.oepf.org](http://www.oepf.org)**

**Visual tracking exercises usually improve the problem in about 60 days if practiced for 12-15 minutes, 3 to 4 days a week.**

**During and after initial lessons are completed, remedial reading lessons to develop basic decoding skills is critical.**

**This void in word analysis required to control longer and more difficult words, is the foundation and strength of the Read Quick-Learn Quick 3 Step System.**