

Sensory Questionnaire

Sense of Vision

Greater Glasgow and Clyde



This series of Sensory Questionnaires are designed to enable you to check your child's progress at particular stages of development.

YOUR SENSE OF VISION

We use our vision to interpret information from all we see around us. Some children use their vision differently and can either be more sensitive to visual input (e.g. avoiding bright lights) or less sensitive (e.g. appearing not to see something right in front of them).

If you suspect your child does not process visual information as well as they should please complete the following questionnaire and then try using the downloadable strategies to help them.

If you have concerns about your child's ability to see things properly please take them to an optician for an eye test.

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Question 1 - Visual (12 - 18 Years)

Question 1

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Do you find certain kinds of light such a fluorescent lighting (classroom or kitchen) or sunlight uncomfortable and often squint, cover your eyes or wear sunglasses?

Most people struggle with the sensation of coming out of the cinema into broad daylight, or coming out a long tunnel in a car or train and screwing your eyes up against the brightness? A few people however, appear to experience that level of discomfort quite regularly. If you react in this fashion to bright light quite regularly reply 'yes' to this question.



Strategies and Suggestions

If you are one of them try the following suggestions:

- If you are visually sensitive to bright overhead lights then try to use natural lighting or an angled desk lamp whenever possible
- See if it is possible to get dimmer switches fitted to the lights in the house, particularly in the bedroom and living room. Not all lights are suitable for dimmer switches so seek the advice of an electrician first.
- Switch off bright overhead lights and work in natural lighting whenever possible i.e. sit next to a window.
- Try wearing sunglasses or a baseball cap to reduce the amount of bright light your eyes are having to deal with.
- Use window blinds or shutters to reduce the amount of bright sunlight flooding a room.
- It is possible to buy plastic filters to put over overhead strip lights that diffuse the light and make it less harsh. These can work particularly well in a classroom.



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Question 2 - Visual (12 - 18 Years)

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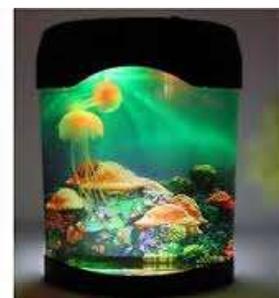
Do you prefer to be in the dark and tend to close the curtains/blinds when you're at home, in your bedroom?

Most teenagers are not bothered by the dark, although some still prefer to have a degree of light and may still use a night light rather than being completely in the dark during the night. This question does not refer to whether you like the dark at night but is more about whether you would seek out a dark place to go during the day. For some teenagers that may involve going into a large cupboard or disappearing under the duvet or cushions as they find the constant visual stimulus of their surroundings a bit overwhelming.



Strategies and Suggestions

- Use items such as a desk lamp, lava lamp, or illuminated fish tank to provide a more subdued source of lighting.



- See if it is possible to fit a dimmer switch to the overhead bedroom light. Check with an electrician before attempting to fit a dimmer switch as not all overhead lights are suitable for them.
- Try to find a quiet dark place to go to for some down time. Speak to your guidance or pastoral care teacher if you need somewhere to go on occasion in school.
- If you spend a lot of time using a computer screen reduce the amount of glare the screen generates by turning the monitor's brightness setting down.





Question 3 - Visual (12 - 18 Years)

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Do you like being in places with bright or flashing lights?

Do you find you can get lost staring at particles of dust dancing in the beams of sunlight, or fixate on the light bouncing off the teacher's jewellery? Do you enjoy watching flashing lights or shiny objects to the point that you forget where you are and what you are supposed to be attending to? If you have answered 'yes' to either of these questions then please press the 'yes' button.



Strategies and Suggestions

- Focusing on bright and shiny objects might be good fun but can be distracting. Try learning to juggle as this can provide a similar sensory experience to watching flickering lights but is also good for developing your ability to focus and concentrate.
- To help you concentrate better try to reduce the amount of bright lights and shiny objects in your bedroom. This will help both with sleep and study!
- Create a visual [sensory box](#) which contains some motivating visual objects which you can fidget with.



- Avoid strobe lighting especially those that flicker; the flicker can have the same effect on your brain as watching a highly pixelated screen, and this is what we are trying to reduce!
- You can purchase plastic covers for strip lights for a few pounds online. These soften and diffuse the light.





Question 4 - Visual (12 - 18 Years)

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Do you have difficulty when trying to find objects in competing backgrounds e.g. trying to find a particular sock in a drawer, or an object in a messy room?

Even adults know how frustrating it can be to find the matching pair for a sock in the laundry basket, however they keep searching because they know it might be there. Some teenagers really struggle to spot a sock in their sock drawer, find a specific jumper in a pile of clothes or locate a favourite item on a crowded shelf. This is because looking for an item against a busy or cluttered background is a challenging visual task.



Strategies and Suggestions

- If it is difficult for you to find things on a patterned background it is advisable to avoid patterned carpets, bed covers, and places with lots of visual input. Try to keep bedding plain and work surfaces or desktops clear.



- Reduce the amount of clothes in drawers and cupboards (this is not an excuse to use the 'horizontal storage system' of your bedroom floor!) Organise them using drawer dividers, or label the edge of the shelves so you know where specific items will be stored.



- If as a teacher you have a teenager in your class who struggles with this try to reduce the amount of text that is presented on a worksheet by either increasing the font size and spacing between lines, or printing the information over several pages.
- It is possible to reduce the amount of text on a tablet or computer screen by increasing the font or zooming in on the page.
- Minimise the amount of visual input that is presented at one time.
- Look under '[Organising Yourself](#)' for more strategies to make finding things in your schoolbag easier.





Question 5 - Visual (12 - 18 Years)

Question 5

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Can you be startled or shocked when being approached suddenly?

*Do you get a surprise each time you are approached from behind?
Do you sometimes get upset or jump when your name is called?*



Strategies and Suggestions

- Let parents, carers and relatives know to never approach you from behind.
- It is easier if people can say your name before they approach you, as this prepares you for them moving into your line of vision.
- Your parents may wish to speak to your guidance or pastoral care teacher to advise them of the different way you process movement in your line of vision, in order that staff at school can accommodate you better.





Question 6 - Visual (12 - 18 Years)

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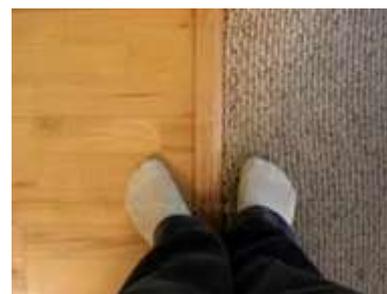
Do you tend to be very cautious going down the stairs, stepping off a kerb or when crossing the road and often feel your way with your feet or step over a join between two different floor coverings e.g. where carpet joins laminate flooring.

Do you tend to feel your way with your feet when moving across thresholds at doorways or where one floor covering meets another? You may sometimes use the back of your foot to check where the edge of the step is and then slide your foot and ankle over the stair tread until you feel the step below. These are often signs that your ability to process depth is not working as well as it should. Your eyes are not interpreting what they see properly and you are not able to guess if something is above, below, or on the same level as the ground you are standing on.

Strategies and Suggestions

Some people struggle with an aspect of visual processing called 'depth perception'. You need good depth perception in order to judge the distance between two objects, and to decide if a surface is flat, stepped, or sloping.

- Take your time when going down stairs, walking off a kerb or crossing over different floor coverings. You need to focus on where you are going.



- Feel with your feet. Use your foot to feel along the tread of the step until you reach the edge. Then run your heel down the riser until your foot hits the tread below. This will feel a bit awkward at first but you will pick up speed with practice.
- It is easy to become upset, angry or fall over if rushed or pushed over by other young people, so it is worth speaking to your guidance or pastoral care teacher to see if you can be let out of class five minutes before the bell rings to avoid the rush in the corridors between classes.





Question 7 - Visual (12 - 18 Years)

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Are you easily distracted by nearby visual stimuli e.g. pictures, items on walls, windows or other people moving around, which can make it difficult to concentrate?

Some young people struggle to concentrate in a busy room. It can be hard to focus your attention on the teacher if you are fascinated by the murals or wall and window displays, or continue to look at the person talking to you if the TV is playing in the corner. Whilst mild distraction is fairly common, particularly amongst younger children, as you mature you should be able to focus on the person talking to you or the book you should be reading without being side-tracked by other visual information around you.



Strategies and Suggestions

- It is important that visual distractions are removed or kept to a minimum in order for you to be able to concentrate. In the classroom it can be hard to find an uncluttered space, but perhaps your teacher can put your desk against a blank piece of wall or use some kind of screening around your desk to make it easier to focus.
- For teachers it is worth considering carefully where the young person is sitting when being asked to concentrate; for example can the blinds be pulled down to stop him/her looking out of the window
- Try going to a quiet space where you can relax e.g. can you go to your bedroom, and sit cocooned in a cosy bean bag chair to help you calm and focus again after a day at school?
- Slow rhythmical rocking movements over a therapy ball in an inverted position can be relaxing (check with your GP before trying this as inverted positions lower blood pressure). Again this should be done in a darkened or low stimulus environment to reduce the amount of visual distraction and allow your brain some breathing space.





Question 8 - Visual (12 - 18 Years)

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Do you often look intensely, or stare at people or objects?

Normally we look at people and then look away. Even when we are talking to somebody it is unusual to maintain unbroken eye contact; we do look more when we are listening but would still give a cursory glance to other people or objects in our surroundings. Some teenagers however appear to stare at others beyond the point of comfort. If you appear to fixate on faces or objects to this degree then respond 'yes' to this question.



Strategies and Suggestions

- If you have a tendency to looking intensely at someone or something then you might not be aware that what you are doing can be uncomfortable to others and you might need an adult to remind you to stop. Ask somebody you know, either a parent, teacher, support staff, or even a friend, to tell you to stop staring. You might choose to use a 'code word' or phrase, so that if the other person was to say the word you would know to stop looking; this can be as simple as 'eyes'.
- As a parent or teacher supporting a young person you will have to provide prompts and cues to help them desist in looking intently at others. You may need to call their name, or move in close to catch their attention and then help them move away from the object or person. You could use social stories to reinforce appropriate behaviour around looking at others.





Question 9 - Visual (12 - 18 Years)

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Do you dislike or avoid being in big supermarkets, shops or stadiums as there is too much to look at and it hurts your eyes?

Some young people struggle to concentrate in busy environments. Supermarkets and shopping centres can be particularly difficult to cope with because of the sheer number of other people present as well as all the sensory experiences; colours, light, smells and sounds. It can be hard to focus your attention on staying calm and completing the task at hand e.g. buying new shoes or picking up food for dinner. If you find visiting such places a challenge then please answer 'yes' to this question.



Strategies and Suggestions

- Try visiting smaller shops or supermarkets with lower ceilings and less visual stimulation, until you can cope better in bigger stores.
- Wear a baseball cap to reduce the amount of visual information coming into your peripheral field of vision.
- Wearing sunglasses may help reduce the amount of glare from the overhead strip lighting.
- Visit shops at quieter times.
- Listening to music or podcasts you enjoy through headphones can help you relax a bit. Being more relaxed in environments that you know you find stressful will enable you to cope better with the amount of visual information you are having to process.

