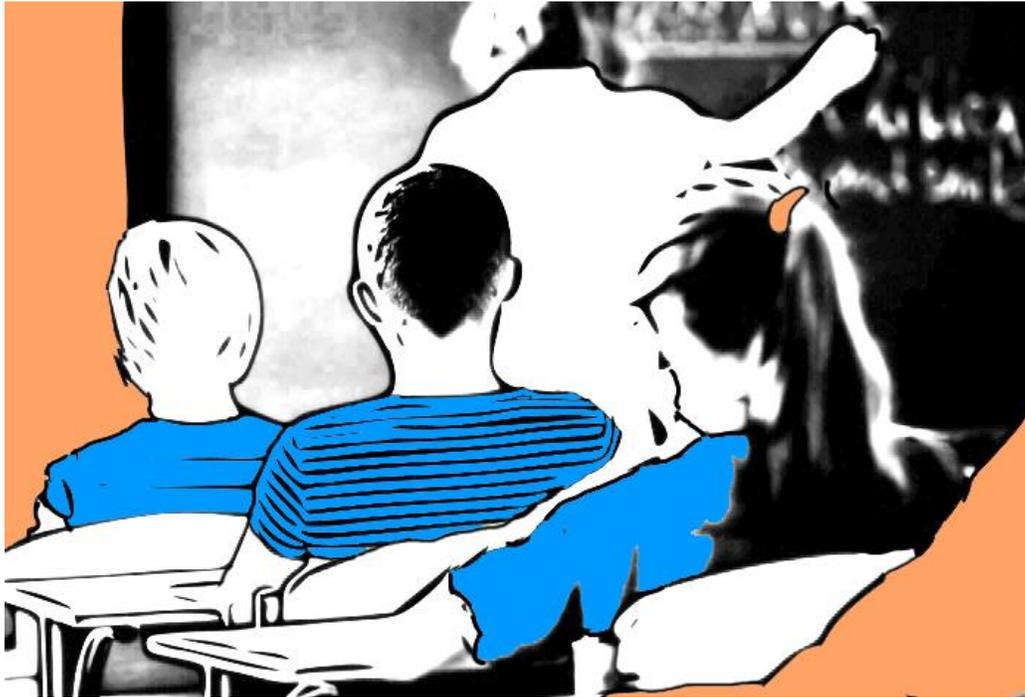


# Visual Tracking

*Is your child having trouble copying off the board?*



Is your child:

- Taking a long time to write down homework from the board?
- Having trouble taking notes?
- Struggling significantly to copy information from one place to another?
- Only finishing half the work because of fatigue copying down directions?
- Having difficulty visually tracking what he or she is reading?
- Often failing to get information written down in the right order?
- Visually losing his or her place a lot?
- Using his or her finger to move along the words while reading?

## LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

Many children report that it is hard for them to copy off the board. It may be that your child has difficulty taking notes or writing down homework assignments that are seen on the board in the classroom. Sometimes, a child's eyesight might be tested, finding no problems. However, the child often fails to write down the homework for the night. He or

she may regularly complain or cry when asked to copy down notes or to write down a list of instructions from the board. Perhaps attention to this task in a busy classroom is too much for your child. It can be hard to attend and copy information. This task takes a lot of brain energy and focus, particularly since writing is a cognitively demanding task. Some children who have these challenges may also have a deficit in processing speed, which can be related to attention and simply means that it takes a child longer to complete a task. When a child works slowly, the pace of the classroom becomes a major source of frustration. Many very bright children struggle with **processing speed**. In addition to academic issues, children who struggle with visual tracking may also have a difficult time with playing ball (e.g., playing balloon toss or ball games), reading street signs, drawing, and participating in sports (e.g., baseball).

## CLINICAL DESCRIPTION

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Clinically, kids who have trouble with copying off the board or with reading could have several specific challenges.

**Visual tracking:** The term *visual tracking* means challenges visually following words on a page as you read or an object as it moves through space. For example, the words, “Homework tonight: Math Lesson 3.4 and Spelling list #11” might look like “Mathon 304 list 11.” The child is having trouble seeing the words laid out properly.

**Visual sequencing:** The term *visual sequencing* means visually putting things in order or noticing the sequence visually, that is, seeing where the words are and following along with the correct order.

**Visual memory** is the ability to see something on the board and to remember it long enough to copy it down.

**Attention:** This issue with memory is likely to be related to attention. Without adequate attention to a task, visual memory will suffer. Often, attention, as mentioned above, may be related to processing speed.

**Processing speed:** Even very bright children may work slowly. Slow processing speed certainly can impact fluid visual tracking.

**Fine motor:** Finally, *fine motor challenges* could be evident, causing the writing to be laborious and effortful. This issue of copying off the board can cause problems as the child moves to upper elementary, middle school, and high school. The copying and writing demands are likely to increase.

## WHAT TO DO IF YOUR CHILD STRUGGLES TO COPY FROM THE BOARD

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If your child struggles with visual tracking, copying from the board and/or fine motor skills, first try a few classroom accommodations. Some potentially helpful accommodations include:

- Allow your child to use a smartphone to take a picture of each assignment instead of attempting to copy it from the board
- Offer up the opportunity for your child can sit closer to the board
- Have your child get copies of the notes that are in each lecture
- Give your child a chance to ask questions aloud while copying or during lecture
- Request that your child have clarification about visuals like graphs and tables
- Allow your child to use a raised surface, such as a slant board or binder, place a sticker to show where the start and end spots are, and reduce visual distractions in the room (such as nametags and distracting posters/charts).

If challenges continue, consider a psychoeducational evaluation to look closely at your child's learning and processing strengths and weaknesses related to writing, fine motor coordination and attention.

In addition, you can try some strategies at home to increase your child's abilities (below).

### **Activities to help strengthen your child's visual tracking abilities**

- Completing puzzles, dot to dots, and mazes
- Placing a marble in a pie pan and rotating the pan in all directions, watching the marble without moving your head (you can also paint the marble and put paper on the bottom of the pan to make a painting)
- Playing with marble runs
- Following a laser pointer without moving your head
- Playing Zoomball
- Playing a game of balloon toss and encouraging the child to track the balloon as they hit it
- Using a flashlight and having the child find different items around the room in a game of I-Spy
- Watching others play ping-pong and trying to follow the ball
- Reading a story or magazine article and circling all of the a's or o's

## SIMILAR SYMPTOMS

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*If your child is struggling with a similar problem, not directly addressed in this section, see the list below for links to information about other related symptom areas.*

- [Shifting attention / flexibility](#): the ability to shift focus back and forth between stimuli
- [Focused attention](#): the ability to maintain attention to a task in the absence of immediate reinforcement, which means that the child may not be able to keep working on something or stay on task because of challenges with focus. A significant amount of attention is required to handwrite something. Often, in cases of poor sustained attention, it is also important to look at [processing speed](#) and how processing speed may relate to a child's success in the classroom.
- [Motor planning](#): the ability to plan and execute motor movement
- [Depth perception](#): the ability to judge the distance in space between the child and other objects in the visual field
- [Visual-Spatial](#): the ability to see how objects fit together
- [Coordination](#): the ability to execute gross motor movements smoothly and swiftly, including running, walking, catching a ball, and kicking a ball
- [Learning](#): the ability to achieve academically in reading, writing, math, and general study skills
- [Body space awareness](#): the ability to judge the body's position in space and to maintain appropriate proximity to others during social interactions

## POTENTIAL DISABILITIES

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*Children who have significant problems in this area may have any of the following potential disabilities. \*Note, this information does not serve as a diagnosis in any way. See the 'Where to Go for Help' section for professionals who can diagnose or provide a referral.*

- [Motor Apraxia](#): challenges with gross motor movement
- [Developmental Coordination Disorder](#): challenges with fine motor, likely including poor handwriting and drawing
- [Autism Spectrum Disorder](#): challenges with social communication and restricted repetitive interests/behaviors. May have motor delays that impact writing/drawing.
- [Specific Learning Disability in writing / Dysgraphia \(Educationally Identified Disabilities\)](#): challenges with writing due to visual or motor processing deficits. Often, not a lot of attention is dedicated to dysgraphia in schools. May require outside testing to diagnose

- [Specific Learning Disability in math / Dyscalculia \(Educationally Identified Disabilities\)](#): challenges with mathematics may relate to visual-spatial deficits
- [ADHD](#): challenges with sustained attention, hyperactivity and impulsivity

## WHERE TO GO FOR HELP

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*If your child is struggling with this symptom to the point that it is getting in the way of his learning, relationships, or happiness, the following professionals could help; they may offer diagnosis, treatment, or both.*

- [CLEAR Child Psychology](#): to obtain a customized profile of concerns for your child or to chat live with a psychologist
- [Physical Therapist](#): to assess and treat gross motor coordination; to help with large muscle groups and movement
- [Occupational Therapist](#): to assess and treat fine motor skills and sensory integration needs
- [Psychologist](#) or [Neuropsychologist](#): to consider symptoms in context, may be related to visual spatial problems, attention, or learning
- [Developmental Ophthalmologist](#): to look at visual tracking and to determine whether your child has a need for glasses or another medical intervention.

*These professionals may recommend the following tests for this symptom:*

- [MVPT-4](#): test of visual perception, including
  - *visual closure*- what would a partially drawn object look like completed
  - *visual figure ground*- locating a visual figure in a distracting visual image or an object that is altered to be smaller, larger, or darker
  - *visual memory*- recalling a picture presented a moment before among distracting objects
- [VMI sequence](#): test of visual-motor integration, visual perception and motor coordination
- [WISC-V](#): test of intelligence. Using tasks of block design, coding, symbol search and cancellation, examiners can look specifically at visual tracking and visual motor (IQ test)
- [DAS-2](#): test of cognitive ability. Provides a spatial index score consisting of block design and a copying or recalling designs subtest depending on your child's age. Concerns with writing or fine motor can be assessed using the spatial index (IQ/Cognitive test)
- [CTMT](#): test of executive functioning that includes visual search and sequence by drawing lines from symbol to symbol. Assesses sequencing, visual attention and distractibility.
- [TOVA](#): continuous performance test of sustained attention in the absence of immediate reinforcement. Often, children with significant challenges with

sustained attention have poor handwriting. Ruling out a diagnosis of AD/HD will be important if sustained attention/ hyperactivity or impulsivity are challenges

- [NEPSY-II](#): test of executive functioning, considering skills such as the ability to plan, organize and sequence, memory and learning. Visual and auditory tasks of memory that provide multiple learning trials to assess these skills and visual spatial processing and overall ability to visually perceive and process information
- [ADOS-2](#): test of social communication for related concerns indicating an autism diagnosis should be considered
- [WIAT-III](#): test of academic achievement for related concerns in reading, writing, or math (academic test)
- [WJ-IV](#): test of academic achievement for related concerns in reading, writing, or math (academic test)
- [TOWL](#): test of written language, provides standard, age and grade equivalent scores for writing only (academic test)
- [Hooper Visual Organization Test \(VOT\)](#): visual integration test to evaluate the ability to see only part of a figure and to ascertain what the whole picture would be if completed

## LEARN MORE

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[2] Debrabant, Julie; Vingerhoets, Guy; Van Waelvelde, Hilde; Leemans, Alexander; Taymans, Tom; Caeyenberghs, Karen. *Brain Connectomics of Visual-Motor Deficits in Children with Developmental Coordination Disorder*. *The Journal of Pediatrics*, Volume 169, 21 - 27. e2.

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Child-with-visual-impairment-in-classroom

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