# Activities for younger low vision students: Ideas for developing ‘good looking’ skills

Vision is all about ‘good looking’. It is the integration of many skills; a very complex process. We want our children to look at the object, to identify it, to reach for or touch it, and figure out its position in space. This involves motor movement and planning, it often involves language, both expressive and receptive and it involves coordination; eye – hand, eye – foot and then integration and comprehension; vision is indeed a complex process.

We do know that while we cannot change the anatomy of the eye, we can make a difference in how children see by teaching them to use ‘good looking’ skills. Practice, repetition of systematic looking skills in a meaningful and motivating activity often helps children to improve their visual functioning.

Practice does not need to be work – but instead repetition of the many different skills, including systematic scanning, visual memory, sequencing, tracking, visual closure, spatial orientation, form constancy and eye hand coordination, in fun activities.

Our job is to help catch the child using good looking skills and identify that for them, as well as to continually extend them to do more within the context of having fun!

These are just ideas for ways to extend vision beyond the reach of a hand.

Clapping games- are a great way to expand the visual field – clap my hand high, clap my hand low, clap right, clap left. Let the child find your hand in that predictable space and then slowly increase the size of the space working further out of their field. When they look to see where your hand is and make that clap, then compliment the good looking and go back to making it easy. Don’t forget to sing – that is half the fun!

Eye spy magnify – using your ladybug magnifier or any quality hand held magnifier – just have fun looking at things in the house and garden. Are they bigger or smaller? The magnifier does a great job of limiting the visual field and zeroing in on just a small area. Eye spy variation can use a funnel or a paper towel roll.

Eye spy – flash light! A favourite game for a rainy day. Put a large sheet over the kitchen table and crawl under the table. Tape shapes to the ‘walls’ of your new home and use the flash light to eye spy shapes. Picture of favourite animals or storybook characters can also be used.

Eye spy flash light can also be used in the dark, in the living room or bedroom…. Just looking for interesting shapes. Take turns holding the flashlight and identifying what you see. This game works will with friends.

Eye spy – book - there are many eye spy books in the library or you can make your own. Maybe it is a Franklin book and you are the SPY with the eye to find that story book character. ‘Beam’ him with your flashlight, spy him with the magnifier or point to him.

Guided pointing is sometimes helpful – have you child go for a ride on your hand, while you are pointing, and then slip your hand away

I hear with my ear – visual identification is often tied to auditory clues. I hear with my ear is a game to integrate the two senses.

I hear with my ear involves discussing is it near or far, is it a machine or a person, is it loud or quiet, is it big or small. Sometimes this game can be played with

“getting warmer” I give you clues and you need to figure out what I see or hear

Left – right – top -bottom – skills in scanning … all games need to be played with the idea of developing systematic scanning. If you are playing I spy or I hear with my ear – try to incorporate a predictable scanning. Left – right, top – bottom is good, as it is very transferable to reading.

What’s Missing! Build your visual memory and good looking skills. Memory tray (any number of participants) – put 3 items on a tray cover the tray with a tea towel – the first player takes away I item and the others have to guess what’s missing. Helps to make this game successful, use a tray with a solid, background or put a plain solid coloured place mat over the complete surface. Choose motivating object (initially) such as a special toy, block, adding in ones that are known to child but not necessarily motivating (eg toothbrush, battery, pencil

Pattern, Patterns Patterns – patterns are always happening. Make your own with shapes and toys and things we use every day! Crackers and cereal make good patterns too. Or use real money – practice identify coins, commercial beads, or even different shaped lego or duplo blocks

Stringing beads – winding the end of the string with tape to give it some rigidity (duct tape is great!), or use a pipe cleaner – make sure the beads don’t fall off… what to eat it? Try using cheerios or fruit loops and licorice whips.

**5 Fun Books to Create – each week something new.**

Shape of the Week – 8 weeks, each week a new shape – circle, square, triangle, oval, hexagon, rectangle, star, octagon. Make a book of shapes (ones cut out from magazines, find the shapes during eye spy, make the shapes with pipe cleaners, wikki stix, play dough, cookies dough, pancakes (pour through cookie cutter),

Colour of the week – finding these colours when you are out and about, but also focusing on one colour at a time.

Spatial positions of the week - 8 weeks, each week a new position in space – beside, under, on top, between, across, over, left, right , Understanding prepositions and spatial positions cannot be assumed.

In my Bucket – each week, go for a walk, put some things in your bucket and come home to write a story about it. The story can be on a theme such as big and small, numbers, (I feather, 2 stones, 3 shells, 4 pinecones etc)

The shapes can be ‘attached’ into the book by popping them into a zip lock bag and taping the bottom of the bag to the left edge of the page. The bag then opens on the right side of the page and the item can come out to be talked about

All About Me – use your child’s name to make a book with the letter of their name.

Derek; D page would have all things (pictures and words) that start with letter d, that are important to the child (Daddy, diggers, dog, doll) E page ( easel, chocolate eggs.

The idea of all about me is just a means of finding important words around the house that the child can identify with and attach meaning.

Bubbles – chasing bubbles, clapping bubbles and catching them with a fly swatter.

Big Splash – outside activity – fill an ice cream bucket with water, get a hand full of pepples, marbles, toy cars – kneeling on a chair, facing backwards, aim to drop the item into the bucket. Increase difficulty by using a narrower opening

**Other ideas**

* Make large dot-to-dot ditto sheets using various shapes.
* Use different sized baskets and boxes for sequencing, big little,

in-out.

* Have colored egg and jelly bean hunts either indoors or out.
* Use colored sand, available in craft shops, in trays for tracing

hands and objects.

* Make bowling pins from painted milk cartons, use rubber

balls to roll at pins.

* Take a photograph of child and other familiar faces. Enlarge

photo and glue it to a hard backing, then cut it into simple

puzzle pieces.

* Paint footprints onto sidewalk or draw on paper and paste to

floor; have child walk in them. Light them with a flashlight if

necessary.

* Place colored circles or squares on a drum and have the

child hit the yellow, red, blue, shape.

* Cover one-half pint, quart, and one-half gallon ice cream

containers and milk cartons with bright, colorful, textured materials.

* Take two simply-drawn pictures of an item in the child’s

environment and cut one into four pieces. Encourage the

child to put pieces together to match whole.

**Commercial games**

Twister

Candy Land

Memory

Discovery toys – giant Peg Board, Measure up Cups, Playful Patterns!

Building toys with large snap-together components; stringing beads; puzzles; pegboards; crayons; finger paint; chalk; modeling clay; simple sewing cards; large balls; match-up-shape toys; tricycle; connect-the-dot games; sticker boots/games.

Hide and seek – toy hunt

Mobiles

Posters

Remember, these are just ideas and suggested activities to promote good looking skills.