

# Session 1 Notes



## Contrast Sensitivity

### Overview

This is known as Irlen Syndrome or visual stress. We refer to it as Contrast Sensitivity, since that is actually the issue. It is not a defect, but rather an over-functioning of a crucial visual skill.

Remember, this is vastly over-targeted as a cause of reading difficulty. So always make sure you test it with a coloured overlay. If contrast sensitivity is to blame, you should see CLEAR improvements with reading when using it.

### Patterns

- Complaints of text moving around on the page.
- Struggles with black text on a white background but reads better from coloured paper or with a coloured overlay.
- Complaints of feeling dizzy while reading.
- Looking away from the page frequently.

### Solutions

Reduce the contrast by using coloured overlays or printing on coloured paper.

## Weak Eye Tracking and Convergence

### Overview

The position of each of your eyes is controlled by the six extraocular muscles that surround each of your eyes. These eye muscles are controlled by neurons from your motor cortex. The tricky bit is that there is a very complex system that determines how big each movement should be, to get each eye into exactly the right position.

That system is modulated by the cerebellum. To help control the eyes, the cerebellum receives signals from sensors in the eye muscles. Those indicate the current position of the eyes. It also gets input from the visual cortex, your balance system and the frontal lobe. It then sends a moderating signal to the motor cortex, to give your eye movements more precision.

An underperforming cerebellum leads to a range of possible patterns, including poor eye tracking accuracy all the way through to full dyspraxia. You will find it can get much worse when a child is tired.

### **Patterns**

- Reads large single words okay
- Struggles with a page of small text
- Skips words
- Variable ability from day to day
- Passes a standard eye test without a problem
- Coloured overlays make no difference
- Often struggles more when reading later in the day

### **Solutions**

- Make the text size bigger
- Use a finger or black marker pen to run underneath lines of text
- The student should do a session of 15 seconds of finger tracking eye exercise, followed by 15 seconds of rest, in a batch of three exercises. And they should try to do at least three sessions per day. So, in total they do nine individual exercises lasting 15 seconds each day.

### **Task for the Week**

- Find a student who seems to be good at word decoding, but struggles with small text.
- Test for the three possible causes and try applying the appropriate solution.
- Send us your observations to [training@allaboardlearning.com](mailto:training@allaboardlearning.com)