

Dyslexia and Visual Issues

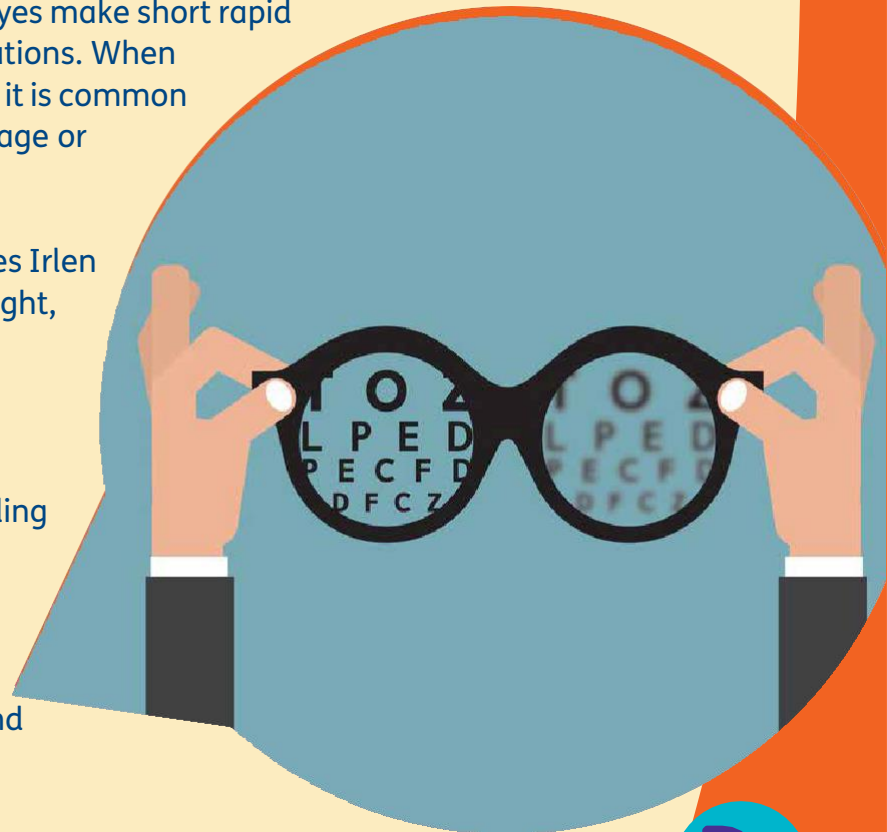
Visual and visual perceptual issues can affect how we see the world and influence our writing and our reading. They do not cause dyslexia but can affect how we see text and make reading more laborious and uncomfortable, affecting how we learn to read.

Some of these difficulties might not be detected in a routine eye test and can occur in children or adults with perfect vision. Not everyone with dyslexia will experience these visual problems, although they do have more impact on dyslexic readers and are more common. People who are not dyslexic can also have these difficulties and struggle to read as a result.

All of these conditions can be treated by an eye care professional.

Types of visual problems:

- **Binocular Instability:** binocular vision co-ordinates the eyes. When both eyes work together, rotating and focusing, this results in a clear single image but when not efficient there can be blurring, headaches and visual discomfort after short periods of reading.
- **Eye Movement Control:** in reading, the eyes make short rapid movements interspersed with short fixations. When these movements are poorly controlled, it is common to miss words, lose your place in a passage or struggle to track along a line of text.
- **Visual stress, previously known as Meares Irlen Syndrome Stress:** this is a sensitivity to light, pattern and flicker which can result in distortions of the text and the illusion of the print moving or blurring. The symptoms of visual stress are more easily seen when you struggle with reading because you look more at words.
- **Visual perception :** the ability to recognise similarities and differences, see subtle changes in text (like horse and house) and remember what you see (visual memory) require good visual perceptual processing. Poor visual perception can account for some of the common errors young readers have.



Visual Problems may explain some of the following symptoms when reading:

- Blurring of text when viewing a page of print even with your glasses on
- Letters appear to move or jump about
- Distortion of text
- Patterns or colours in text
- Glare when reading
- Difficulties following a line of text or column of numbers
- Sore eyes/eye strain
- Tiredness when reading
- Blurring of words and letters
- Headaches/Migraines

Who can help?

An assessment by a qualified optometrist/orthoptist. It is very important to have vision assessed by someone who can look at a range of visual conditions as many of the symptoms or difficulties can be caused by more than one condition. It is also common for more than one visual or visual perceptual condition to be present. There are a number of different treatments that may be required depending on the cause. Not all eye care professionals assess for visual stress and visual perceptual difficulties but they will know who does and can suggest an expert in your area.

Other things that can help:

- Having a conversation with a child about what they see when they look at text
- Make text bigger and use double spacing
- Tint the background on your Iphone, Tablet , PC using the background function
- Using coloured rulers/overlays
- Using tinted paper to write on, rather than using white paper
- Clear fonts, such as Century Gothic, Comic Sans or Verdana, minimum size 12

Further information

- Reading Through Colour by Arnold Wilkins
- Dyslexia and Vision by Bruce J. W. Evans
- Dyslexia and Us: A collection of Personal Stories by Dyslexia Scotland
- Dyslexia Scotland Helpline 0344 800 8484
helpline@dyslexiascotland.org.uk



Dyslexia Scotland

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