

VISUAL MOTOR CONTROL

Visual motor control refers to the ability to coordinate visual information with motor output for precise visual guidance of movement. In other words, it is our ability to accurately control our movements according to what we see.

Children can have difficulty with visual motor skills for a number of reasons. Some children have difficulty with control of movement, some with visual processing, and others do not attend visually to an activity. Other children may not have had the opportunity for, or interest in, practicing visual motor activities. Another group of children have difficulty coordinating visual input with their movements although the individual skills are adequate.

Children with weak visual motor skills know what they want to do and how to do it, but they cannot guide movements accurately to accomplish tasks successfully. These children may have difficulty with activities that depend on visual guidance such as placement of letters on a line, cutting on a line with scissors, or building models and performing other fine mechanical tasks.

Developing Visual Motor Control

Any precise movement that requires visual guidance will be helpful in improving visual motor control. It is important to grade activities by having your child begin with easier tasks, and slowly progress to more difficult activities. If your child is able to experience success, they will increase in confidence and may be more willing to try activities that challenge their skills. Your aim is to help develop strategies to break the task down into easier steps.

Activity Suggestions

- **pegboards** - have your child copy a straight line with a color pattern, progress to simple shapes and then copy designs from a card
- **tracing** - requires more hand-eye coordination than free drawing
- **mazes** - start with a simple straight line path using vertical, horizontal, then more complex mazes (your child can first trace with their finger if necessary)
- **stencils** - draw inside large, simple stencils, then outside of stencil as your child improves. Progress to more complex and smaller shapes and letters
- **dot-to-dot activities** - use simple vertical then horizontal lines, diagonals, zig zag lines, simple shape and then more complex pictures
- **block designs** - make a design with blocks of one color and size, and have your child copy it, progressing to varied colors and sizes of blocks until they are able to copy a block design from a card.
- **construction toys such as lego or playdoh** - provide an opportunity to work on visual motor skills and can be graded by the degree of difficulty in the design to be copied
- **lacing cards** (can be handmade by punching holes in a picture that has been glued to posterboard) - begin with simple pictures and large holes, progressing to more complex pictures with small holes -this activity can be used to assist in teaching shoe lacing
- **puzzles** - teach your child strategies such as identifying shapes, working L → R or top to bottom and considering what the completed picture is to look like.
- **games** - jacks, pick-up sticks, Jenga, etch-a-sketch and video games can be encouraged as

Visual-Motor Activities Related to Handwriting

Compiled by Deanna Iris Sava, MS, OTR/L

Several occupational therapists contributed to the ideas that were compiled into this list of visual motor activities.

Letter Spacing

- ① Graph paper. Instruct the students to leave one box open as a space between words.
- ② Draw colored line or highlight space between words in a sentence that student has to copy to give him/her a visual cue.
- ③ Use the following items to leave spaces between words: index finger of non-dominant hand, popsicle stick (can call it "Mr. Spacey"), eraser, triangle pencil grip, sticky strip of post-it note, shiny penny (can velcro this to desk so it's always handy), M&Ms/skittles, etc., tiddlywinks, bingo chips, marker stamps.
4. Another use of tongue depressors for K-1: Make up a story that some friendly spacemen had come to class and were going to help us write. The kids decorated the wood -- Cheerios for eyes or mouths, glitter or feathers. Then they were paired with their Earth partner -- the pencil. Some kids had big pencils and some had pencil grip pencils because this was what their own spacemen liked. They used them between words and the spacemen were happy. Around the middle of year the spacemen went back to their own home planet and most of the children were able to leave adequate space between the words without the spacemen.
- ⑤ Highlight right margin if child crams words on right side of paper rather than dropping down to next line.
- ⑥ Highlight both margins (left one green and right one red) or use Wikki Stix for the child to bump the margins with his or her pencil.
- ⑦ Place dots between words with a pencil, then erase the dots.
- ⑧ Let child review own work to determine if there are spaces between the words.
9. Write the sentence "ca nyo up layb all? Ask the student to read this exactly as it is written. When child can't read it, tell him/her that this is how his/her work looks to you, A very hard to read as the spacing is all messed up. Then circle the letters to show him/her that the words are "Can you play ball?" Then ask student to write this sentence with proper spacing. Can write any sentence at student's reading level.
10. Some students respond better to concrete instruction such as, "Move your pencil over before you start the next word."
11. Sometimes I suggest to a child to write x amount of words per line



Copying Designs

Visual Motor Activity 9

Supplies Needed:

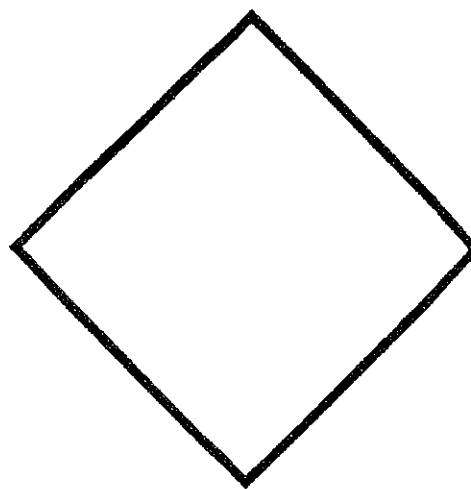
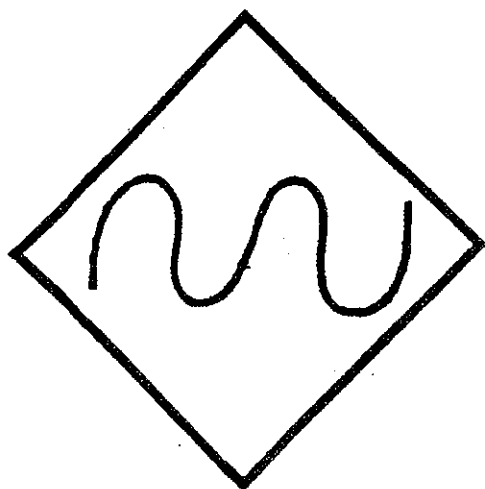
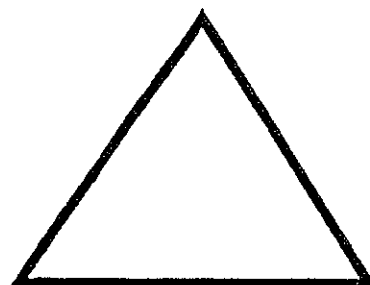
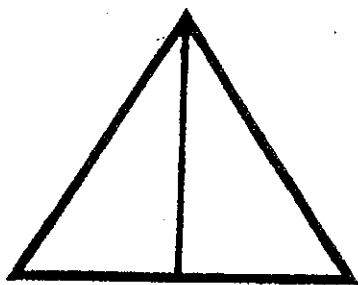
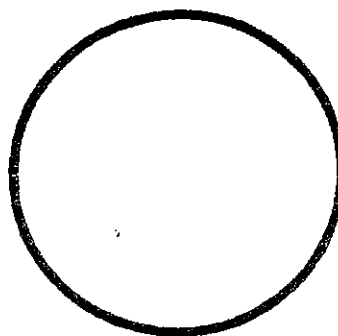
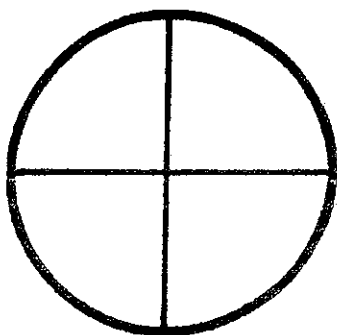
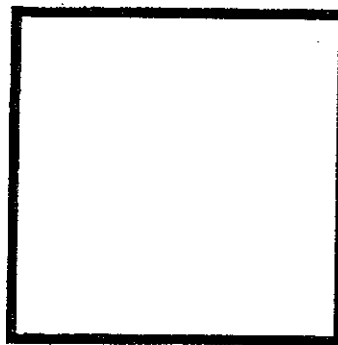
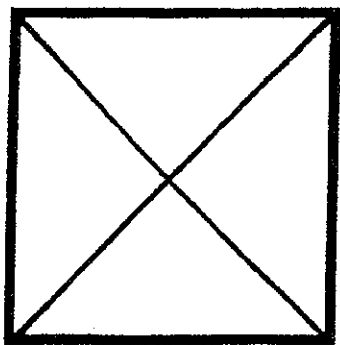
- Copying designs worksheets (attached)
- Writing utensil

Have the student draw the lines inside the shapes on the right to make it look exactly like the shapes on the left.

It may be helpful to put a blank piece of paper over the worksheet and uncover one pair of shapes at a time, to focus the student's attention.

You can also vary the materials and supplies used: paints, chalk or shaving cream.

Copying Designs





Copying Pictures

Visual Motor Activity 10

Supplies Needed:

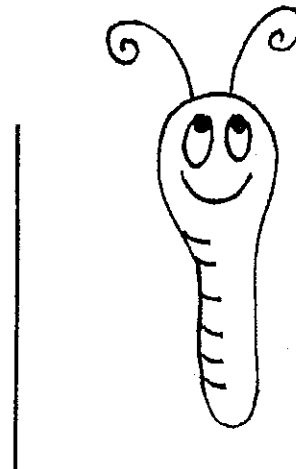
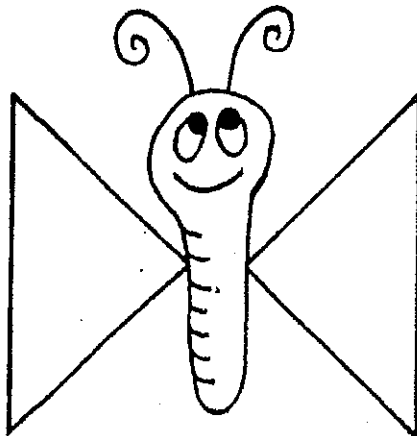
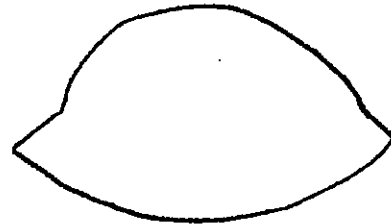
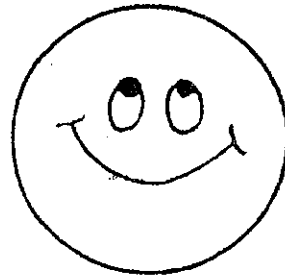
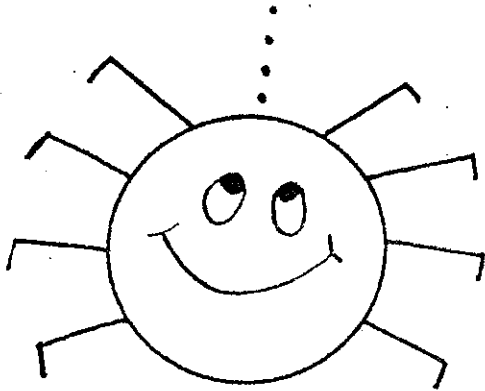
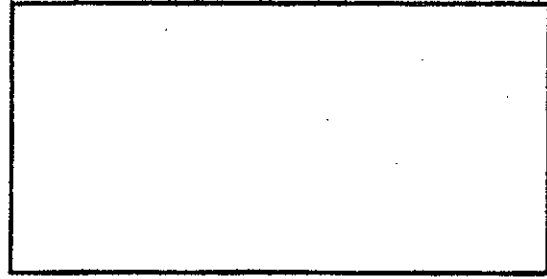
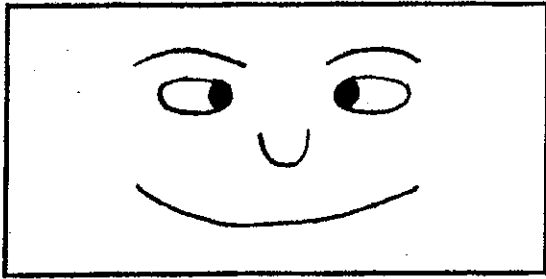
- Picture design worksheet
- Writing utensil

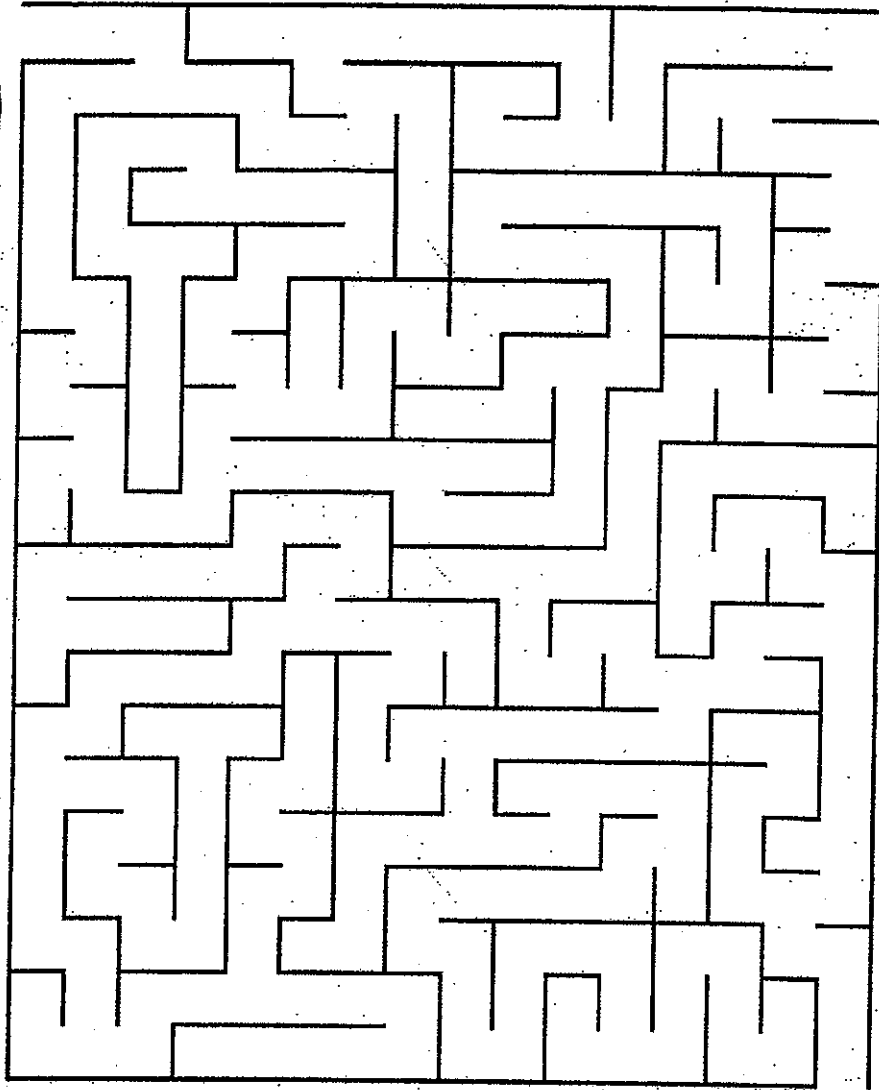
Have the student complete each partial picture in the right column to make it look exactly like the picture in the left column.

If the student has difficulty with focus, cover all but one pair of pictures with a blank sheet of paper.

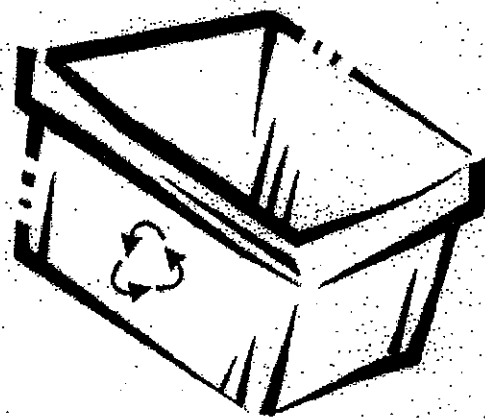
Encourage proper pencil grip.

Can You Picture This?





Put the bottle
into the
recycling bin



Help the butterfly fly
to the flower.

