

DID YOU KNOW.... Although we talk about eye sight and vision, we actually SEE with our BRAIN! The eye collects information and sends it to the brain; then the brain makes sense of the information.

If there is a problem with our brain, then we can find it difficult to see, even if our eyes are normal.

In people with cerebral visual impairment (CVI), or visual processing problems, the brain struggles to make sense of all the information it is given.



This means the vision does not develop well, using vision is a lot of effort for the brain and often the brain switches vision off to give it a rest. Sometimes people with CVI can see well, but at other times they don't seem to see at all.



CVI is a very complex condition: every person with CVI will use their vision in different ways and have problems with different tasks.

HOW DO WE SEE

There are several steps which the eye and brain go through in order to 'see'. These happen automatically in most people.



AWARENESS – first our brain needs to notice that the eye is sending it some information. In most babies this happens in the first weeks of life.



ATTENTION – next we need to practice seeing and develop stamina in keeping our vision on all the time. In babies this happens in the first months of life.



DETECTION – once our vision is switched on, we need to learn how to 'spot' something new – notice that there is something interesting to see, where is it so we can move our eyes to see it better



IDENTIFICATION – and once we have spotted something, knowing what it is, what it is called, what it is for, noticing how many there are



RESPONSE – once we have seen something, know where it is, know what it is, we can decide what to do – shall we reach out and grab it; should we move away from it; should we make noise to tell someone we want to hold it!

The way to help people with CVI is to understand HOW they see. This can take years; each visit to the clinic we will learn something new. It is only by trying new things at home and school that we will learn together how to MAKE IT EASIER to see.

We can get better at seeing with practice, but first we need to MAKE IT EASIER to see.

The main problem with MAKING IT EASIER is that our brain has lots of information to deal with in one go. Here are a few ways which might help.



BIG BOLD BRIGHT it is easier to see things which are BIG. Contrast (black on white) is much easier to see than one colour on another. Colours should be BRIGHT and simple with no patterns.



CUT THE CHATTER it is easier to see if we do not have to listen at the same time. Do not talk or have other noise when trying to use your vision. Words of encouragement from a parent or teacher do not MAKE IT EASIER!



CLEAR THE CLUTTER it is easier to see if there is only ONE THING we are trying to see. Show ONE THING at a time. Have a plain carpet or table. Have only ONE TOY, ONE PICTURE, ONE WORD or ONE LINE of text.



SHOW IT HIGH using the lower half of vision is difficult for some people. You can MAKE IT EASIER by showing objects above shoulder height; use a tilted desk top; hold books up not flat.



GIVE ME TIME it can take time for the vision to switch on and then understand what it is seeing. You can MAKE IT EASIER by showing objects for 8 seconds, holding them still, before moving. Don't forget, they need to be BIG BOLD BRIGHT, CLEAR THE CLUTTER, ABOVE SHOULDER HEIGHT and CUT THE CHATTER!



IS IT MOVING? This one is tricky; some people with CVI say you can MAKE IT EASIER by holding objects still – they cannot follow them once they are moving BUT

Some other people with CVI say you can MAKE IT EASIER by slowly moving objects – only when they are moving do they become able to see! You will only find out which works by trying!



LEFT OR RIGHT most people with CVI see better on one side than the other. You can **MAKE IT EASIER** to see by showing objects on the easy side first.



ONE THING AT A TIME showing one object at a time is a great way to **MAKE IT EASIER**. Sometimes it is not possible to notice that a new object has appeared if you are already looking at something. If you want to show two objects, take the first one away, wait, then show the new one.

Don't forget **WAIT FOR EIGHT**, **BIG BOLD BRIGHT**, **CUT THE CHATTER** and **LEFT OR RIGHT**, **IS IT MOVING** and **ABOVE SHOULDER HEIGHT!**

There are lots of websites with information and advice. Remember, each child with CVI or visual processing problems is different; there isn't a quick fix or one 'right' way to help to **MAKE IT EASIER** to see – it is only by trying different things you will discover what works for you.

www.cvisociety.org.uk

www.cviscotland.org

There are many more strategies for school age children you might want to look at
There are lists found at the bottom of this web page

<https://www.ulster.ac.uk/research/topic/biomedical-sciences/research/optometry-and-vision-science-research-group/vision-resources/professionals/cerebral-visual-impairment-assessment>

(You can find it by going to www.ulster.ac.uk and searching 'cerebral visual impairment' in the search bar)