Visual Closure

What is visual closure?

Visual closure is the skill we use to imagine a whole picture when we are only given part of it. People with dyslexia can find this particularly difficult, but it's a skill we all need and use.

When do we use visual closure skills?

You are using visual closure skills when

- you find the right sock when you can only see part of it
- you can still read a road sign that is partly covered by a tree or graffiti
- you can still read writing if it is smudged or crossed out
- you can pull the correct piece of paper from a pile when you can only see the corner of it
- you can recognise a friend in a photo when you can only see part of their face
- you can find your car in a car park when you can only see the roof
- you can guess quantities of objects accurately without counting them all

Why is visual closure important for learning?

We can read more quickly if we don't need to individually process and sound out every letter in a word and can just recognise it by its shape, effectively filling in the blanks.

Look at the following:

zeb   kanga   hamst   seag

As fluent readers, we automatically fill in the missing letters in our mind to complete the word.

This also means our brain isn't having to work so hard – it will free up our working memory to do other things, like following and remembering the story or information we are reading. We will be less tired when reading and will understand and enjoy what we are reading to a greater degree. This means we are more likely to read for longer which will make our reading skills even better.

Visual closure is also important in handwriting as we imagine the completed word as we write.

What sort of activities will help to improve visual closure skills?

For children 2-5 years old:

1. Print out two sets of simple pictures (animals, shapes, vehicles etc.) Use a marker pen to put marks (straight, curved or zig zag lines, circles, shapes) on one set to partially block out the image. Ask the child to match the partial image with its whole partner.

2. Partially hide a toy, item or shape under a cloth and ask the child to identify what it is. (Make sure they have the vocabulary to identify all the items.)

3. Jigsaws at an appropriate level are a great way to develop visual closure skills. They are sometimes not viewed as 'true' visual closure activities as they use motor skills as well, but they are a fun way to practice both skill sets.

4. Cut a hole in a piece of paper and place it over a picture. The child has to identify the image by moving the paper over it to reveal small sections of the image at one time.

5. Some of the activities for older children listed below may also be suitable for younger children.

For older children:

1. Practise identifying popular signs and logos with part blocked out. Make them harder by leaving less of the picture visible.

2. Do jigsaws at the appropriate challenge level.

3. There are some apps available for tablets/ phones which use slow reveal picture puzzle activities to practise visual closure. You could make a physical version by

covering a picture with strips of card and removing them one by one to see how quickly the image is identified.

4. Lots of printables are available on sites like *pinterest* and *twinkl*, such as activities identifying letters, numbers and images when parts are missing.

Spring
Draw the other half
Complete the other half of each picture and color them in.
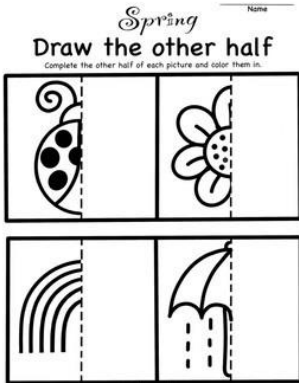
5. Complete the other half of a given picture. Cut a symmetrical drawing, picture or simple photo in half, stick one half on one side of a piece of paper and see if the learner can complete the missing half like a mirror image. (Again this uses motor skills but is still a good exercise.) Look for 'Draw The Other Half' or 'visual closure' pictures online for ideas of simple ones to make or print out.

Tip: if the child is right handed, put the original half on the left so their hand isn't covering the picture they're trying to copy. If they are left handed, use the right half of the original for them to copy.

Examples of symmetrical images include butterflies, ladybirds, houses, sun, star, leaf, rainbow, open book, kite, tree, plant, flower, chair, face, animals viewed straight on.

6. Make or print two sets of matching line drawings, one drawn with complete lines and one with dotted lines. See if your child can match up the dotted version of a picture with the whole line version. You could also do this with silhouettes.

7. Do dot-to-dot puzzles and predict what the images are when they are partially completed.

8. Guess words which have missing letters in games such as Hangman.

9. Copy 3D models e.g. lego, k'nex, meccano

Free printables   Finish The Shape Owls