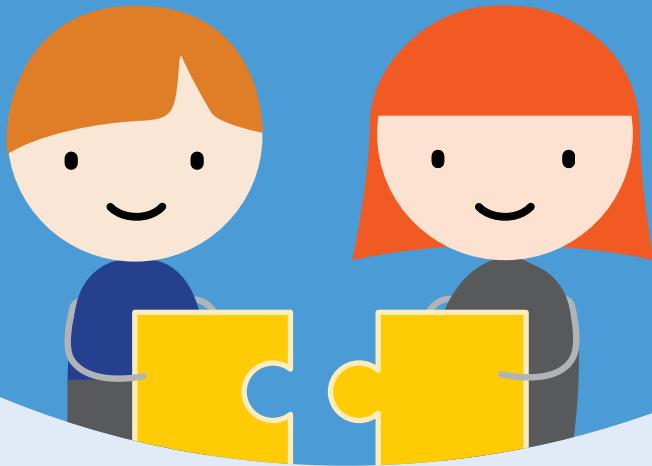


Visual processing and epilepsy



The impact of epilepsy is variable – some students are greatly affected while others are not.

Visual processing refers to how visual information is interpreted by the brain. This is different from problems involving sight or sharpness of vision. Reading and maths are two core areas where visual processing skills are very important. There are some specific factors which may cause visual processing difficulties for a student with epilepsy.

Possible causes of visual processing difficulties

- As visual and spatial function is controlled on the right hemisphere of the brain, students who experience focal seizures in this hemisphere may exhibit visual processing difficulties. This might be the reverse for students who are left handed.
- Difficulties may be directly linked to a student's medication and/or seizure activity or linked to an underlying neurological abnormality.

Possible indicators of visual processing difficulties

- Difficulties remembering visual information.
- Difficulties recognising letters, numbers or symbols.
- In reading or writing the student may reverse, invert or twist letters around.
- In spelling the student may add, omit or double letters.
- Poor sense of left/right.
- May be clumsy and exhibit poor motor coordination.
- Difficulties in recognising social cues, e.g. others' facial expressions.



How teachers can help

- As a teacher, you do not have the skills to diagnose a visual processing disorder in a student, but you can identify potential problems and refer appropriately.
- Identify the student's most efficient learning style and use it consistently to support and increase their understanding of a concept.
- Play games with the class as a whole that require visual perceptual skills.
- Reduce the amount of visual stimuli and information on a worksheet for the student.
- Enlarged print for books, worksheets or other materials which the student uses can often make tasks more manageable.



Strategies to try

- Have student engage in age appropriate sequencing activities, e.g. place objects in correct order or follow instructions to build an object.
- Jigsaw puzzles – simple self-made puzzles and progressing to more complex.
- Provide the student with age appropriate classifying activities starting with simple classifications and progressing to the more complex.
- Provide student with opportunities to reproduce simple/complex designs using concrete materials.
- Tracing over outlines of pictures, and copying pictures may also be beneficial.

This fact sheet is part of a suite of resources that are targeted to both parents and teachers to assist students with epilepsy in the primary, secondary and special school settings.

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The information contained in this publication provides general information about epilepsy. It does not provide specific advice. Specific health and medical advice should always be obtained from a qualified health professional.

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The Epilepsy Smart Schools Practical Guide and supporting resources provides information on how a school can embed inclusive, safe and educationally sound practices for students with epilepsy and in so doing become 'epilepsy smart'. The guide and supporting resources which can be accessed via www.epilepsysmartschools.org.au