

Some Definitions of Vision Therapy from the Literature

1. Optometric VT has been defined as the art and science of developing visual abilities to achieve optimal visual performance and comfort. It provides the patient with an opportunity for both development and learning experience. *Journal of Behavioral Optometry, Vol. 1, 1990, Number 3, p. 66-67.*
2. Vision therapy is a clinical approach for correcting and ameliorating the effects of eye movement disorders, non-strabismic binocular dysfunctions, focusing disorders, strabismus, amblyopia, nystagmus, and certain visual perceptual (information processing) disorders. The practice of vision therapy entails a variety of non-surgical therapeutic procedures designed to modify different aspects of visual function. *Advanced Therapist Vol. 34, Number 1, p. 131 (Quote from N. Flax). Also used by M. Scheiman in his VT Manual.*
3. Vision therapy creates a visual environment in which the patient may modify their visual behavior and alter their visual performance to meet the visual needs of their specific environment. *Rehabilitation Techniques for Binocular Dysfunctions by Richman and Cohen, p.1.*
4. Vision therapy arranges conditions ... so that the patient can learn many visual abilities which will allow them to take in, use and understand more information over a large area in less time. It allows one to use his vision to learn more and succeed better at his task or pastime, whatever it may be. Rather than exercises for the eyes, it involves an awareness of movement, control of movement and, ultimately, the automatic movement of eyes integrated with movement in many of the body systems. *Learning to See and Seeing To Learn - Orem, R.C., p. 84*
5. Visual training, also referred to as vision therapy, is the art and science of developing visual abilities to achieve optimal visual performance and comfort. *R M Greenburg, J. Amer. Optom. Assn., Jan 1985, 56 (1):57-58 (SAME AS #1)*
6. Optometric vision therapy is based on a medically necessary plan of treatment which is designed to improve specific vision dysfunctions determined by standardized diagnostic criteria. Treatment plans encompass lenses, prisms, occlusion and other appropriate materials, modalities and equipment. *AOA Definition of Vision Therapy*
7. Vision therapy sets the stage for you to learn or improve visual abilities. This allows you to quickly take in, use, and understand more information over a larger area of space. It also allows you to use vision to learn more and succeed better at work, school, or in athletics. Rather than exercises for the eyes, it involves an awareness of movement and control of movement. The result leads to smooth and automatic movement of eyes coordinated with movement. *by Dennis Hoover*

WHAT IS VISION THERAPY?

I. A Definition:

Optometric vision therapy is a treatment plan used to correct or improve specific dysfunctions of the vision system. It includes, but is not limited to, the treatment of strabismus, amblyopia, accommodation, ocular motor function and visual-perceptual-motor abilities.

II. What does Vision Therapy do?

Optometric vision therapy works on the development of visual skills, among which are the following:

1. The ability to follow a moving object smoothly, accurately and effortlessly with both eyes and at the same time think, talk, read or listen without losing alignment of eyes. This pursuit ability is used to follow a ball or a person, to guide a pencil while writing, to read numbers on moving railroad box cars, etc.
2. The ability to fix the eyes on a series of stationary objects quickly and accurately, with both eyes, and at the same time know what each object is; a skill used to read words from left to right, add columns of numbers, read maps, etc.
3. The ability to change focus quickly, without blur, from far to near and from near to far, over and over, effortlessly and at the same time look for meaning and obtain understanding from the symbols or objects seen. This ability is used to copy from the chalkboard, to watch the road ahead and check the speedometer, to read a book and watch TV across the room, etc.
4. The ability to team two eyes together. This skill should work so well that no interference exists between the two eyes that can result in having to suppress or mentally block information from one eye or the other. This shutting off of information to one eye lowers understanding and speed, increases fatigue and distractibility, and shortens attention span. Proper teaming permits efficient vision to emerge and learning to occur.
5. The ability to see over a large area (in the periphery) while pointing the eyes straight ahead. For safety, self-confidence and to read rapidly, a person needs to see "the big picture," to know easily where they are on a page while reading and to take in large amounts of information, i.e., a large number of words per look.
6. The ability to see and know (recognize) in a short look. Efficient vision is dependent on the ability to see rapidly, to see and know an object, people or words in a very small fraction of a second. The less time required to see, the faster the reading and thinking.
7. The ability to see in depth. A child should be able to throw a beanbag into a hat 10 feet away, to judge the visual distance and control the arm movements needed. An adult needs to see and judge how far it is to the curb, make accurate visual decisions about the speed and distances of other cars to be safe.