

A guide to visual processing disorder

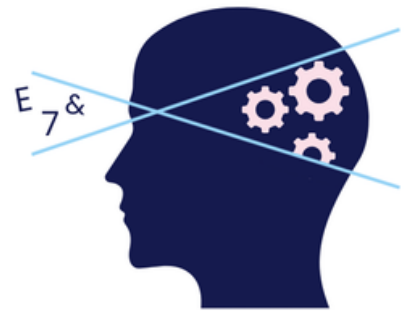
What is VPD?

Some people experience difficulties with how they see and make sense of visual information. This can include challenges with visual perception, processing, or spatial awareness, often caused by how the eyes and brain work together. They may also feel visual discomfort or sensitivity to patterns, bright colours, or printed text.

These challenges can affect how well people can focus and understand what they see. Tasks that involve reading, writing, following instructions, or copying from a board may require much more effort and concentration. This can make them appear distracted, tired, or slower to respond, even though they are trying hard.

People with these visual processing difficulties might struggle with activities involving text, shapes, maps, symbols, or detailed drawings. This can show up in subjects like maths, art, design, science, or even physical activities that rely on hand-eye coordination.

It's important to remember that their difficulties come from how they take in and interpret visual information, not from a lack of ability. Their work might look messy or incomplete, but this usually reflects visual strain rather than carelessness. Encouragement, patience, and clear verbal explanations can make a big difference.



Traits of VPD

Eye strain/discomfort

- Squinting, frowning, or eye-closure in bright light
- Blurry or double vision
- Red, watery, or painful eyes
- Headaches around the front of the head

Posture/head movement

- Tilting or moving head while reading
- Poor posture or wriggling at desk
- Holding books too close or too far

Reading issues

- Losing place, skipping, or re-reading words
- Letters or words jumbling, merging, or reversing
- Confusing similar words or missing small words
- Using a finger to follow text

Writing/symbol difficulties

- Letter transpositions when writing
- Trouble with symbols (+, -)
- Difficulty remembering sequences
- Trouble copying from the board
- Confusing right and left directions



How to support in unit meetings

- Complete an adjustment plan after speaking with parents/guardians
- Use a communication passport to understand needs more fully
- Allow the use of aids (speech to text technology, reading guide etc) if they are used at home/school
- Encourage sitting upright and facing the front when demonstrating/explaining tasks
- Use large writing, coloured markers, and a pointer
- Give information on pastel-coloured paper and provide templates when possible
- Reduce copying and include short breaks from visual tasks
- Make use of natural light whenever you can
- Access further support if needed.

Remember you can get help with the costs for inclusive materials and resources. This may be available in your country and region, or with the accessible guiding grant from HQ.