

Optometric Vision Training

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Adult and Paediatric Eye examinations · Vision training for dyslexia and dyspraxia · Vision training for autistic spectrum · Vision training for Sports Performance · Visual Rehabilitation for stroke · Visual Rehabilitation for Acquired Brain Injury

www.visiontraining.org.uk

Visual hygiene *(adapted from Harmon, Birnbaum and Howell)*

When doing close work be it reading a book, using a computer or an electronic device it is always best to place what you are looking at in downgaze. You want to be looking slightly downward to see the screen or page. When looking at a screen alter the brightness to a level that is comfortable and reduce any screen flicker. Ensure that the screen is positioned to minimise reflections. Consider attaching an anti-reflection screen to your computer if required. Keep the main room light on. If necessary use an anglepoise like light or be near a window so that there are good lighting conditions throughout the room.

Optimise the lighting on your electronic device for the time of day. Download the F.lux computer programme for free. If using a phone there may be a 'night shift' feature. Both of these measures reduce the amount of blue light given out by the screen which is thought to help restful sleep. Similarly avoid using electronic devices within half an hour of going to bed. Avoid the use of televisions in the bedroom.

When working on an electronic device, ideally take a ten second break looking into the distance to relax your eyes for every ten minutes of work. The muscles that control the focussing of our eyes can get tired and looking into the distance for ten seconds allows these muscles to relax. When reading a book or Kindle get into the habit of looking up into the distance for 10 seconds at the end of every two pages.

Remember to blink every 3-4 seconds. Computer users are known to stare at the screen and staring at the screen can lead to your eyes feeling dry and irritable.

Keep your work at a reasonable distance when reading a book, when writing, when using an Ipad or phone or when playing a game on any handheld device. A reasonable distance is around 40cm or an elbow to knuckle distance (the distance from your knuckle on your chin to the end of your extended elbow), whatever that is for you.

When reading or writing, ideally work on an inclined surface, a bit like the old fashioned school desks. Keep your work at a about a 30° tilt so that you are more inclined to sit up straight. You can always use an A4 file and place this under your work to produce the necessary angle of tilt. Also keep your head straight and your feet flat on the ground.

Be aware of your peripheral vision. There is a tendency when your eyes get tired to block off your peripheral vision. When reading or on a screen notice whether you can see beyond the screen. Can see the four walls of the room or have you blocked off your peripheral vision? If you have blocked off your peripheral vision take a break and if you have taken enough of a break, your peripheral vision would have opened out again.

Some computer users display a postural compensation called 'upper crossed syndrome' which is recognised by some physical therapists though not by others. This is a position where the body slumps and the head is tilted forward. This can lead to a tightening of the muscles of the neck, back and shoulders. Get up every twenty minutes to walk across the room in order to relax these muscles. In order to maintain good posture, consider getting advice from an osteopath, Alexander technique teacher or taking up an interest which involves stretching such as yoga, Pilates or a martial art all of which involve stretching. Remember to breathe when working up close. Sometimes people are concentrating so much that they start taking very shallow breaths or even holding their breath. This causes them to tense up. Instead remember to breathe slowly and deeply. Any yoga, Pilates or martial art teacher will give you advice on breathing.

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