

Neurodiversity and Visual Difficulties



The information in this leaflet is taken from the British Dyslexia Association website.

Full information is available via this link:
<https://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/dyslexia/neurodiversity-and-co-occurring-differences/visual-difficulties>

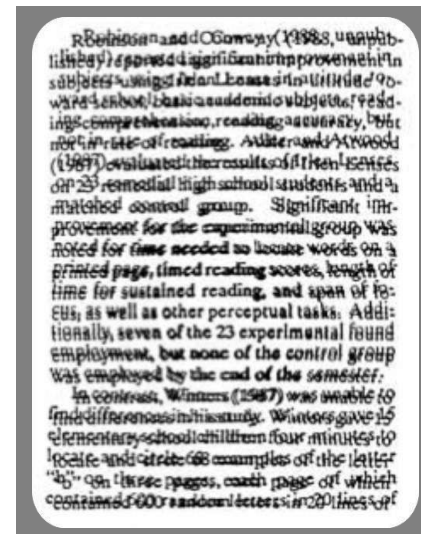
Some people experience visual discomfort or disturbance when they read.

The leaflet aims to give guidance to anyone who experiences such difficulties associated with reading.

Visual Difficulties...

Some people experience visual discomfort or disturbance when they read. Common symptoms that may significantly impair reading ability, or make reading very tiring, include:

- ◆ Headaches and eyestrain associated with reading and/or other near work
- ◆ Text appearing blurred or going in and out of focus
- ◆ Text appearing double or alternating between single and double
- ◆ Difficulty keeping place in text
- ◆ difficulty tracking across lines of text
- ◆ Discomfort with brightness of the page or contrast between text and background
- ◆ Text that appears to shimmer or flicker



These symptoms may have a variety of different causes due to disease or abnormality. They must be investigated by a professional who is qualified to diagnose them correctly and give appropriate treatment.

Anyone who experiences such difficulties associated with reading should consult a registered optometrist for a full assessment of eye health and visual function.

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Advice...

Any child who is a struggling reader should be assessed by a registered optometrist to either rule out or treat visual difficulties.

This assessment and treatment is to check the health of the eyes and to enable clear and comfortable vision; treatment of visual difficulties is **not** treatment of dyslexia.



Children under the age of 16, and young adults under the age of 19 who are in full-time education, are entitled to a free NHS sight test with an optometrist, and to an optical voucher to help with the cost of glasses or contact lenses. This should include an assessment of the ability of the eyes to focus and work together correctly.

In many cases the NHS sight test is all that is required to enable an optometrist to identify a problem and provide appropriate treatment with prescription glasses or contact lenses.

Sometimes, however, the optometrist will consider that further assessment and/or other forms of treatment are necessary. This can be undertaken by an optometrist for a fee, by referral to a colleague or via the NHS, but not in all cases.

Recommendations...



It is recommended that every child should have a full sight test when they start school, and as frequently as recommended by their optometrist after that.

The vision screening that most children are given at school entry (age 4-5) is only a test of whether a child can see clearly in the distance. It does not test the functions needed for clear and comfortable vision when reading.

Some websites and providers of education resources offer coloured overlays, tinted reading rulers, and other devices that may make reading easier and more comfortable for some children.

These aids may be helpful, but **it is very important that these aids should not replace or discourage full professional assessment.** In particular, coloured overlays and similar aids must not be promoted as the first strategy to help children with reading difficulties.



If children have visual difficulties, then it is essential that these are diagnosed and managed correctly by qualified, registered professionals.