

Visual Acuity

Visual acuity is a measure of the amount of detail each eye is able to see at a set distance. This is usually 6 metres for distance vision and 33cm for near vision. Normal distance visual acuity is stated as 6/6 which means that at a distance of 6 metres the child is seeing what a fully sighted child can see at 6 metres. This is the metric equivalent of 20/20 vision

The second number represents the smallest line of the chart the child is able to read, and the first number represents the distance at which a child with full sight would be able to read the same. So a result of 6/12 means that the child can see at a distance of 6 metres what a child with full sight sees at 12 metres.

For children who have not yet learned all the letters of the alphabet there are special visual acuity tests. Children may be asked to identify a letter from a card by pointing to it on a sheet or may be asked to name a picture of an object, or the sound the object makes. The Orthoptist may even give you some test items to practice at home. The test is usually done at 6 metres, as with the letter chart, but may be tested at closer distances if necessary. If the top letter on the chart is not seen at 6 metres the chart is brought forward 1 metre at a time until the child sees the letter. I.e. For example 3/60 or 1/60

- If the top letter is still not seen at one metre, a hand is held in front of the person and they are asked to **count fingers** (i.e. CF at 1 metres).
- If unsuccessful, the hand is moved in front of the eye. If seen this is recorded as **hand movements** (i.e. HM's at 1 metre).
- If unsuccessful, a torch is shone into the eye first in a light room and then in a dark room and, if this is recognized it is recorded as **perception of light** (i.e. PL).

- If unsuccessful, vision is recorded as **no perception of light** (i.e. NPL).

What Level of Vision is Considered Legally Blind?

The 6/60 line is the top letter of the eye chart. A child who cannot see the top letter of the eye chart with their better eye, corrected by glasses, has a visual acuity of less than 6/60 and is considered legally blind, although they may still have useful vision. Restrictions of field of vision can also result in a child being considered legally blind.

What is Functional Vision?

Functional vision refers to a child's ability to use their vision.

Two children may have the same visual acuity of 6/60 however, one may be very short sighted and sees very little in the distance and the other may have damage to the retina with a limited area of retina that is working. One child may get around more easily purely because they are able to use their vision more effectively.

Functional vision assessments with an orthoptist aim to measure a child's visual acuity, assess eye movements, determine perception of depth and report on how your child can best use their vision. For example the test can help to find out if there is a preferred head posture for the child or if there is a better seeing side due to restriction in the visual field or eye movements. Recommendations can then be made to assist the child to reach his or her full visual potential and adapt the environment to best meet their visual needs.

For more information contact the Children and Youth Services team at VisAbility.



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