

Simple Activities That Require Pattern Discrimination and Attention to Visual Detail

Compiled by Julie Shepherd Knapp, copyright 2005, 2007

Some simple activities that provide your child with practice in pattern discrimination, noting visual detail, and visual memory...

These activities provide practice in skills such as attention to visual detail, pattern discrimination, and visual memory. Choose activities from this list that seem appropriate for your child's age, abilities, and interests.

Some children have a particularly hard time with visual activities, may tire easily, or complain of a headache. Keep in mind that a child who's having a lot of trouble may be showing a deficit in their visual skills, and might benefit by seeing a [Developmental Optometrist](#) for an assessment. See the [Homeschooling with Dyslexia and Visual Skills Problems](#) section for more information.

These activities should be presented to your child as fun and low-pressure art projects or play-time activities. Some children will prefer to watch YOU do the activity for a while, or watch while you instruct siblings. That's OK -- many children like to learn new things by watching others... but give them every opportunity to join in. Be sure to make mistakes yourself – to keep your child from being disheartened, and because children learn by observing, as well as by doing, and mistakes are great opportunities for learning. Feel free to modify the activities to suit the ability and interests of your child.

Pattern Discrimination Activities:

Color Hop

Make a Rainbow

Pattern Repeat

Pattern Tiles

Pony Bead Kits

Hama Bead Kits

Counted Cross-Stitch

3-D Pattern Repeat

Origami

String Figures

Activity Descriptions:

Color Hop

This is a game a little like Twister. In an area free of obstacles, place a number of colored patches on the floor. The patches may be colored chalk on a driveway, construction paper taped securely to the floor, squares of colored duct tape, or even different colored washcloths or fabric pieces laid on a carpeted area. The person who is "It" calls out a challenge to the other player(s), such as "step on a green square?", "hop to a red square?", "put your hand on an aqua square?", "step over a blue circle?", etc. After playing this way for a while, make up harder challenges, such as "can you hop from a blue square to a red square?", "can you touch a red and blue square at the same time?", "can you sit on a red square and put your feet on a brown square and a red square?", "can you hop all the way across on only blue squares?". Challenges that cause a player to reach and contort are especially fun ;-). Take turns being It (letting your child call the challenges) and be sure to laugh, groan, and fall down a lot ;-).

Make a Rainbow

Draw a rainbow using several colors (they don't need to be realistic rainbows). Have your child copy your rainbow. Let your child make a rainbow for you to copy. Repeat with more colors. Try drawing comets, or hair ribbons, or fish, other objects that might have a color pattern.

Pattern Repeat

Lay out a series of colored items in a pattern for your child to add to. Start with two colors, such as red and blue, and begin with an alternating red-blue pattern at least six items long. Have your child add to the end to extend your pattern (can he tell which comes next?). Gradually increase the pattern complexity and number of colors used. Possible items to use: blocks, Lego's, pop-it beads, candies, crayons, breakfast cereal, etc. Try making patterns with various shaped and sized items, too. Try using plastic pony beads or colored pasta to make patterned bracelets or decorations.

Pattern Tiles and Tangrams

Pattern tiles are tubs of plastic tiles in various geometric shapes that can be used to make geometric patterns, illustrations, or artful designs. Your child can follow the patterns included, or you can take turns making patterns to be copied. Tangrams, based on an ancient Chinese puzzle, are a similar product that comes with seven tiles to be arranged to match given patterns. (Tangrams patterns are a lot more difficult to copy)

Pony Bead Kits

Have child string pony beads into decorative back-pack fobs or key chains. There are kits and pattern books available in craft stores – the beads are strung on a string or plastic lacing, then woven back and forth to create animals, etc. Here are some [free online patterns](#). Of course, be aware of and take precautions against choking hazards with young children.

Hama Bead Kits

[Hama Beads](#) and [Perler Beads](#) are small tubular plastic beads that are placed (following a pattern) on a holder, then ironed to melt them into a permanent decorative item for use as a key chain, etc. Kits and pattern books are available in craft stores. They come in small, medium, and large sizes (you can choose larger ones if your child has a lot of trouble with fine motor tasks). Of course, be aware of and take precautions against choking hazards with young children.

Counted Cross-Stich

Fabric is stitched with a decorative picture or design, following a pattern. Craft stores carry a great variety of kits and pattern books for ages 5 and up. The kits for younger children use a larger grid and a blunt, plastic needle.

3-D Pattern Repeat

Use building toys, such as Lego's or K'Nex, to make 3-D forms for your child to copy. If your child already plays with these kinds of toys, you can begin by asking him to show you how to make a copy of something he has already built – an exact duplicate (same pieces in the same colors he used originally). Ask him for help and direction in completing the duplicate. Continue the activity by creating your own 3-D form for your child to copy (with your help and direction where needed). As your child masters this activity, you can turn it into a challenge, saying “Here is my design – can you copy it?”

Origami

Origami, the Japanese art of paper folding, requires a child to follow a sequence of instructions to create various figures. The instructions are typically a combination of visual diagrams and written instructions. This is wonderful practice for 3-D pattern repeat, visual discrimination, paying attention to detail, and remembering a sequence of mental images (of how the figure should look).

String Figures

Check your library for books and videos on learning to do string figures. The instructions are usually presented visually – either by illustrations, photos, or on video. This is wonderful practice for 3-D pattern repeat, visual discrimination, paying attention to detail, and remembering a sequence of mental images (of how the figure should look).

For the next level of activities go to:

[**Simple Games to Exercise Your Child's Visual Perception and Visual-Motor Integration**](#)