

Task Organization

If the individual has total blindness, try the task yourself while occluded. This will help you realize aspects of the basic challenges of completing the task non visually. Analyze the environment and consider modifications.

If the individual has a vision impairment, consider the amount of visual acuity and visual field the person has when determining size, shape, and position of objects presented. Refer to functional vision evaluation and/or eye report of the individual.

Lighting factors should be considered. Decide what type of light, how much, and where it should be positioned to help the individual see better and reduce glare. Even healthy eyes require 2-3 times more light by the time a person is 40 years old.

Contrast is very important. Color of objects should contrast with the background. The best contrast is most often black/white or black/yellow. All materials used should be of contrasting colors. For example, don't use brown objects on a brown tabletop. Put colored beads into clear tubes, use gray work trays with yellow material, etc. Use a placemat or tablecloth to add contrast between the materials and the work surface.

Figure/ground should be considered. The background that an object is placed or held against should be a solid color. Avoid patterns and designs that can be confusing when objects are placed on top or in front of them. For example, items can be lost when placed on a flowered tablecloth, on a patterned rug or when in front of "busy" wallpaper.

Distance from work is important. Keep in mind the individual's position from the task relative to their visual acuity and field of vision.

Task Organization (continued)

Consider the field of vision. If an individual has limited field (tunnel vision), don't spread work across the table, rather keep it closer together in an area if possible. Also, it may be helpful for the individual to sit further back in order to increase the viewing area.

Make use of assistive devices such as paper-folding jigs, sorting trays, tape recorded instructions, large print, photocopier enlargements, talking computer software. Anything that works is acceptable.

Consistency is very important. Place materials in the same area within the workspace. Use consistent terminology when referring to objects and procedures. Label objects so everyone knows the correct terminology. Use Braille or large print as appropriate.

Define the working area with a tray or a tactile border. Draw a rough diagram of where to place materials on trays or workspace for each task. Make sure that all materials are comfortably within the person's reach and vision.

Encourage exploration of the work area by the individual through systematic search patterns and tactile inspection of all materials. Encourage use of both hands when possible.

Backward chaining can be a successful method of teaching. Allow the individual to explore the finished product first before learning how to assemble it. Start simple and increase complexity over time as appropriate.

Break down the task. It may help to write down steps in sequence so that the same sequence is used each time. Tape record or prepare a large print instruction sheet so the individual can refer to it as needed.

Encourage independence. Encourage the person, whenever possible and safe, to obtain his/her own working materials. Provide a consistent location to put the finished product.

Task Organization (continued)

Don't underestimate abilities of an individual who has vision impairment/blindness. Most tasks can be done by the person simply by using a different method than used by a sighted individual or given more time to complete. However, tasks requiring fine visual discrimination may be inappropriate or frustrating for the person who is visually impaired/blind.

Be willing to experiment! Trial and error is often the best way to develop a working solution. Try different placement, lighting, size, position.

Be patient! Take time to observe the individual performing the task and make modifications as necessary. Give the person time to learn the task, make mistakes, and problem solve before jumping in to assist.



Developed by: Maureen Coyle, M.A., COMS
Donna DiCorpo, M.Ed., COMS
Edited by: Lisa DiBonaventura, M.A., COMS
Kathleen Kenney, M.Ed., COMS

See also MCB/DDS Partnership handouts:

- Sensitivity to Vision Loss: How to Best Assist a Person Who Has Vision Impairment
- Common Signs of Vision Loss
- Eyeglasses and Sunglasses
- Creating a Safe Environment

For additional resources, please visit: focusonvisionandvisionloss.org