



{inclusion outreach}

1031 Lucas Avenue
Victoria, BC V8X 5L2
Tel 250-595-2088

www.inclusionoutreach.ca

Orientation and Vision

For most students, vision is the primary means of gathering information, planning movement, and receiving feedback from the environment. For students with visual impairments, it is sometimes necessary to facilitate other ways to:

- Experience an event
- Participate within their environment or
- Gain some understanding of general concepts

Your student's experience of their world becomes limited in part, because of:

- Vision
- Potential limited movement
- Potential limited physical exploration

As caregivers, therapists, and helpers, we need to ask ourselves:

- Is our student making sense of their world?
- What senses are they using as a way to interact with the environment?
- Are they using vision as a tool to understand the world?
- Does your student have a comprehension of the world around them?
- Does your student understand the words or concepts that we are talking about?
- How can we help our student to make sense of the world?

If your student has a visual impairment, they may not have experience with concepts that we find common. Strategies to support students to experience new concepts include:

- Bring the rock to them to touch
- Describe concepts of hard, cold, rough, big, heavy etc.
- Describe the rock with other words or concepts

Most students with visual impairments require assistance in **orientating** to their world. Often, they have little idea of orientation concepts, including:

- Before/After
- In front of/Behind
- Beside
- Up/Down

Respect

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- Colours, etc.

These concepts need to be embedded within activities such as:

- Transitioning from one room to another
- Movement in general

Your student's skills will include:

- Sensory (hand use in touching object cues, adding different textures)
- Learning concepts of directionality (e.g., "forward", when spoken by the assistant), and learning colours, etc.
- Using hands to hold onto object cues, cruise along the walls, etc.

The student's team can help provide orientation strategies by blending the student's vision skills with other stronger skills they may have, to assist the student in developing their own orientation strategies. The following are some examples:

Example #1

- Using object cues in the environment and having your student look for, reach and eventually match it with the object cue in their hand.
- Developing a 'Chat' book with classmates, encouraging the student to use it by touching an item that they have seen on a walk, which has been added to the book.
- Describing an item from the chat book through colour, texture, and shape
- Having the student try to find the object
- Describe the setting where the object was found
- Adding concepts such as "in front", "behind", etc. in your description of where the object was found or where they are walking

Example #2

- Using object cues in your student's environment and having them look for, reach and eventually match the object cue in their hand
- Matching a color that they are identifying in a 'vision lesson' with concepts such as "red" and "round" for apple
- Use that same colour to create a line on the wall in the hallway to direct the student to a familiar room by following the coloured line
- Add a texture to the coloured line and encourage your student to 'cruise' by feeling the along the wall

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- Eventually visually orient the student to the coloured strip to get to the destination



Here the assistant is holding up actual examples of colour for choice making, rather than just using the words.



This student is encouraged to touch and explore the objects before making a choice, in order to provide more sensory information.

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