Visual Perception

- The ability to interpret, analyze, and give meaning to what is seen. Visual perception skills can be broken down into the following areas:

Visual Discrimination - the ability to determine exact characteristics and distinctive features among similar objects or forms. In reading, this skill helps children distinguish between similarly spelled words, such as was/saw, then/when, on/one, or run/ran.

Visual Memory - the ability to remember for immediate recall the characteristics of a given object or form. This skill helps children remember what they read and see by adequately processing information through their short-term memory, from where it is filtered out into the long-term memory. Children with poor visual memory may struggle with comprehension. They often subvocalize, or softly whisper to themselves, as they read in order to help compensate auditorily. They may have difficulty remembering what a word looks like or fail to recognize the same word on another page. They may also take longer copying assignments because they must frequently review the text.

Visual Sequential Memory - the ability to remember forms or characters in correct order. This skill is particularly important in spelling. Letter omissions, additions, or transpositions within words are common for children who struggle with this skill. They often subvocalize (whisper or talk aloud) as they write. Recognizing and remembering patterns may also be a problem.

Visual Spatial Relations - the ability to distinguish differences among similar objects or forms. This skill helps children in understanding relationships and recognizing underlying concepts. This area is closely related to the problem solving and conceptual skills required for higher level science and math.

Visual Spatial Orientation - Visual Spatial Orientation helps us with letter reversals. Many parents and educators considered letter reversals after age seven to be a symptom of dyslexia. While this can be true, the most common cause of reversals in older children is a lack of visual spatial development--consistently knowing left from right, either in relationship to their own bodies or in the world around them. Children with poor visual processing have not developed adequate skills in visual perception and spatial orientation, such as laterality and directionality. Also, children who experience frequent double vision deal with such visual confusion that their brains often misinterpret their visual input.

Visual Form Constancy - the ability to mentally manipulate forms and visualize the resulting outcomes. This skill helps children distinguish differences in size, shape, and orientation. Children with poor form-constancy may frequently reverse letters and numbers.

Visual Closure - the ability to visualize a complete whole when given incomplete information or a partial picture. This skill helps children read and comprehend quickly; their eyes don't have to individually process every letter in every word for them to quickly recognize the word by sight. This skill can also help children recognize inferences and predict outcomes. Children with poor visual closure may have difficulty completing a thought. They may also confuse similar objects or words, especially words with close beginning or endings.

Visual Figure Ground - the ability to perceive and locate a form or object within a busy field without getting confused by the background or surrounding images. This skill keeps children from getting lost in details. Children with poor figure-ground become easily confused with too much print on the page.