



## Tracking Skills - Rotations

The eyes should be able to track in a circle and across from one side to the other evenly. If the eyes cannot do this, a child may have difficulty reading across the page and finding the next line without re-reading or skipping lines. If tracking is difficult, the child has to think about controlling eye movements and cannot concentrate fully on reading. Losing place while reading, is a common symptom of **visual stress**. In addition, the words may appear to float or move. Visual stress is treated by changing the colour of the background of the text. The best colour is found for the child using a wide range of test colours. Children with visual stress often also need tracking exercises. Children with co-ordination difficulties often benefit from eye tracking exercises. These are best done daily for five minutes until the tracking is smooth.

### Exercises

Exercises are recommended for children who cannot track smoothly and accurately. If the eyes are not tracking properly, the child can only follow the following movements by moving their head and shoulders. It may be necessary to first cover one eye with a "pirate patch" and start by doing the exercises with each eye before doing them with both eyes.



For this exercise, an assistant (parent or teacher) sits opposite the child and the child's preferred hand is held by the assistant by interlocking the fingers with the two thumbs upwards and touching each other (see diagram above). The child can put a sticker or draw a smiley face onto their thumbnail to help concentration. If the eyes lose track, the thumb pads can be rubbed together using the sense of touch to show the child where to look. The assistant and child's arm need to be able to move freely. The assistant then moves the child's hand slowly in a smooth small circle whilst the child looks at their own thumb. When the child can do this without also moving their head, the circle can be increased and zigzags and figure 8s tried. The figure 8s can be up and down or side to side. When this becomes easy, try the following exercise:

The child sits opposite the assistant and is asked to look at a small picture held at reading distance. The picture is moved in a clockwise circle, which is large enough for the child to fully move the eyes to see it, but not so large as to need head movements. After three clockwise circles the picture is moved horizontally in line with the eyes with the child tracking all the time and then moved in an anti-clockwise circle. When the eye movements become smoother, the exercise can be practised using figures of 8. Finally, to help this to become automatic, carry out the exercise whilst asking the child questions of gradually increasing difficulty. This helps concentration when reading and hand and eye co-ordination in sports.