

# Oculomotor Exercises Handout

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Oculomotor dysfunction refers to the impaired functioning of the oculomotor system, which controls eye movements and is crucial for various visual tasks. This condition affects a person's ability to coordinate their eye movements properly, leading to difficulties with tasks that require precise visual tracking skills and visual scanning.

## 4 Oculomotor Exercises for children

### Eye jumps

**Target:** Saccadic motions of the eyes

To improve saccadic eye movement activities, have the child extend their arms in front of their body with hands at shoulder height, making fists with their thumbs pointing up. The child should gaze at the left thumb and then quickly jump their eyes to the right thumb, repeating this back-and-forth motion multiple times. The goal is to have the eyes move smoothly between the thumbs without overshooting or undershooting the target.

### Rubber bands on a straw

**Target:** Convergence of the eyes

This exercise focuses on the convergence of the eyes, a crucial aspect of oculomotor skills. Have the child hold a straw perpendicular to their nose and place rubber bands on the straw. As the rubber band moves along the straw, the child should visually track it, with their eyes moving inward as the band approaches the nose. After the rubber bands are in place, have the child remove them, observing how the eyes move outward.

### Ball bounce and read

**Target:** Visual accommodation

To strengthen visual accommodation, write different colors, vocabulary words, sentences, or numbers on a board. Position the child about 8-10 feet away from the board, holding a ball. Instruct the child to read the first word on the board, then look down at the ball, bounce it, and look up to read the next word. Continue this sequence through all the words on the board.

### Balloon volleyball

**Target:** Visual tracking

Balloon volleyball is a fun and effective way to improve visual tracking. Since balloons move slower through the air than balls, they are easier to track, making this exercise perfect for developing oculomotor skills. Start by having the child watch you toss the balloon up and down. Then, have the child toss the balloon themselves. Once they're comfortable, take turns batting the balloon back and forth.

Oculomotor exercises can benefit individuals of all ages who struggle with conditions affecting their eye movement control. By strengthening the oculomotor system, these exercises can enhance visual performance, reduce strain, and support overall visual development and function.