



OPTIONS CENTER EDUCATION TOPIC



Brain Gym® Exercises for READING

Visual Perception

The first three years of school are spent learning to read; the remaining years are spent reading to learn. If students have trouble reading because of problems with visual perception, they must expend so much energy on the skill of reading that they can't focus on learning.

Students are usually given a 20/20 sight test, which tests their ability to see letters 20 feet away. Sight, however, is only one of many skills required to process the information received visually -- some students have 20/20 eyesight and still have problems with their vision. Problems range from difficulties with focusing, eye coordination, depth perception, and eye muscle action.

Good vision skills give students the ability to understand and process what they see. Learning takes place when both eyes work together efficiently, and combine this with the information received through others senses such as hearing, touching, and moving. Thus, the eyes, brain, and body work together as a team. These skills, once thought to be genetic, are learned and change throughout our entire lives.

Vision problems that cannot be corrected with lenses are usually easy to correct with vision training programs provided at Options Center for Health & Education. Vision training can eliminate problems at an early age, which can make the difference between failure and success in school.

There are a variety of Brain Gym activities for the three main reading categories: 1) moving eyes across the page without skipping words [*Brain Gym® Teacher's Edition Revised*, p. 33], 2) oral reading [*Brain Gym® Teacher's Edition Revised*, p. 33], and 3) reading comprehension [*Brain Gym® Teacher's Edition Revised*, p. 34].

Smoothly moving eyes across a page is a major reading skill to perfect. The development of visual skills for reading begins with the ability to move both eyes together from left to right. Students can perform five exercises to help with this visual ability.

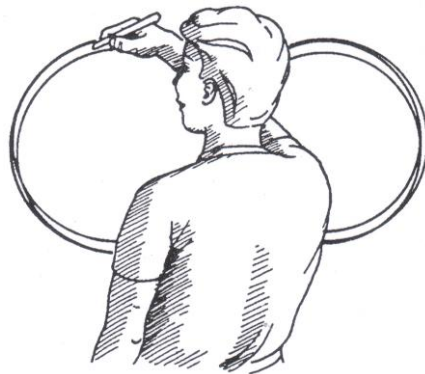
The first exercise, **Brain Buttons** (part of P.A.C.E.) [*Brain Gym® Teacher's Edition Revised*, p. 25], is done by putting one hand on the navel (or "belly") while holding the two

indentations below the collarbone with the other hand. Repeat so both hands have been on the Brain Button points.

While doing the Brain Buttons the student can also do the **Butterfly** [*Brain Gym® Teacher's Edition Revised*, p. 25], by pretending s/he has a paintbrush on the end of his/her nose and "painting" Lazy 8s on the ceiling.

The next exercise, **Cross Crawl** [*Brain Gym® Teacher's Edition Revised*, p. 4], is done by coordinating the movement of reaching an arm to touch an opposite leg (or knee). The Cross Crawl increases the student's ability to move eyes and read faster.

The fourth exercise is for the student to draw **Lazy 8s** [*Brain Gym® Teacher's Edition Revised*, p. 5] with each hand, starting from the center and drawing toward the right. It is done by drawing an "8" that is lying on its side. The student starts the Lazy 8 in the center, drawing up to the left. Variations of this exercise include using the right, left and both hands together. Lazy 8s can be drawn in any sizes. The student may also use various writing utensils such as pens, crayons, colored pencils, paint, etc. Lazy 8s relax the muscles of the eyes, neck, and shoulders while focusing and improve eye-muscle coordination. Lazy 8s also help the student recognize symmetry and improves depth perception. The Lazy 8s or infinity symbol integrates the right and left visual fields, enabling the reader to cross the midline without interruption.



Source: *Alternative Health Care, Space Age Interpretations of Age-Old Truths*, M. Press. 1994. pg. 143.

The last exercise to help reading skills is to perform **Tracking** [*Brain Gym® Teacher's Edition Revised*, p. 25] exercises with the student. To track, have the student follow the tip of a pencil with his/her eyes horizontally, vertically, and in a Lazy 8. All these exercises strengthen eye muscles and allow the student to more easily and smoothly read the words left to right on a page.

A reader must discover that s/he is telling a story and therefore communicating ideas through reading. The student must have the concept of a verbal code in order for true reading

to be possible. Usually this involves an auditory as well as visual, and kinesthetic component. All three components must be used together for the student to become a better oral reader. Five Brain Gym® activities can be used when the student is to give a speech or read aloud in class or at home. The first, **Neck Rolls** [*Brain Gym® Teacher's Edition Revised*, p. 9], is done by first breathing deeply, relaxing the shoulder and upper back area, and dropping the neck forward. Roll the head slowly from side to side as you breathe out tightness. By relaxing the neck and shoulder area, the student's voice sounds stronger when s/he reads.

The second Brain Gym activity is the **Energy Yawn** [*Brain Gym® Teacher's Edition Revised*, p. 29] which is performed by placing your fingertips against any tight or tender spots on the jaw. Make a deep, relaxed, yawning sound and gently rub away the tension. The Energy Yawn is done to relax the throat so the voice can be stronger.

The third exercise is the **Cross Crawl** [*Brain Gym® Teacher's Edition Revised*, p. 4] and has been explained above. The fourth exercise is **The Rocker** [*Brain Gym® Teacher's Edition Revised*, p. 11], which is done by leaning back on your hands (while sitting on a comfortable surface like carpet or a padded mat) while rocking in circles, back and forth until the tension goes away. The Rocker relaxes the hips after the student has been sitting for a while which then improves posture and allows the student to have a strong voice.

The fifth Brain Gym® exercise done for Oral Reading is **Belly Breathing** [*Brain Gym® Teacher's Edition Revised*, p. 12]. First, rest your hand on your abdomen and blow out all the "old" air in short, soft little puffs. Next, take a slow, deep breath, filling up the abdomen gently. Your hand will softly rise as you inhale and fall as you exhale. Belly Breathing helps relieve nervousness and tension.

In order to fully comprehend what s/he reads, the student must be able to focus his/her reading. Three stretching or lengthening exercises can be done to help reading comprehension. The first, **The Calf Pump** [*Brain Gym® Teacher's Edition Revised*, p. 20], is performed by first leaning forward as you exhale while pressing the back heel gently to the ground. To release, lift up the back heel and take a deep breath. The Calf Pump helps students become more motivated and ready to move.

The second exercise is **The Footflex** [*Brain Gym® Teacher's Edition Revised*, p. 19], which is done by grasping the tender spots on the ankle, calf, and behind the knee, one at a time, while slowly pointing and flexing the foot.

The third exercise, **The Grounder** [*Brain Gym® Teacher's Edition Revised*, p. 22]. Start the Grounder with legs comfortably apart. Point the right foot to the right. Keep the left foot

pointed straight ahead and the body pointed forward. Now bend the right knee as you exhale and, then, inhale as you straighten the right leg. Repeat three times, then do on left side. When doing this exercise keep your hips tucked under. The Grounder strengthens hip muscles and helps to stabilize the back to help the student better focus on what he, or she, is doing.

Source: *Brain Gym® Teacher's Edition Revised*. Ventura, CA: Edu Kinesthetics, Inc. 1989. p. 33-34



Bibliography:

Cox, Helen K. and Blaine Patino, *Alternative Health Care, Space Age Interpretations of Age-Old Truths*, M. Press. 1994.

Dennison, Paul and Dennison, Gail. *Brain Gym® Teacher's Edition, Revised*. Ventura, Ca.: Edu-Kinesthetics, Inc. 1989.

Options Center for Health and Education, Inc.

4316 N. Prospect Road
Peoria Heights, IL 61616
(309) 685-7721 • email: options@mtco.com
www.options-center.com