

Literacy Profile for Students with Physical Impairments

The Literacy Profile for Students with Physical Impairments (2nd edition) provides a guide to the teacher of students with physical disabilities to make literacy decisions. The checklist can be helpful in listing factors that may impact literacy instruction and providing modifications that can be used to address these factors.

As seen in Appendix A, the Literacy Profile is divided into main sections:

- 1) general information
- 2) physical efficiency areas
- 3) communication considerations
- 4) reading considerations
- 5) writing considerations

General Information

The information that is contained in the general information section identifies the type of disability the student has, as well as any additional impairments or issues. In regard to the type of disability, it is important to determine if the condition is deteriorating since that will require frequent checks to determine if the adaptations being used for reading and writing are still adequate. It is also important to determine if the student has fluctuating tone or significant changes in his or her range of motion since that can change placement of materials and how the student is able to write (or keyboard or use a switch).

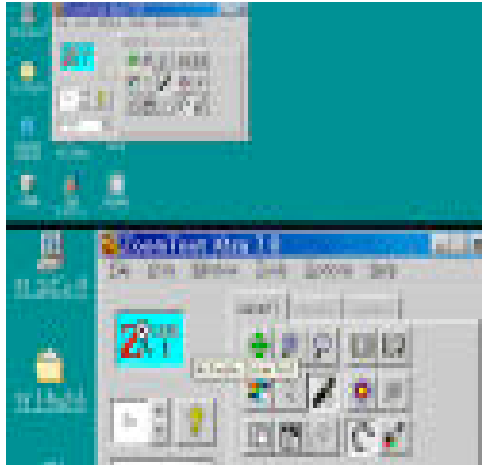
Visual Impairments & Font Size

Students with physical disabilities often have visual impairments. It is important to make appropriate modifications to address their visual impairment. This may include having more or less illumination to see the material better. Students with visual impairments may also benefit from high contrast materials (e.g., black print on white paper, yellow print on black background). Having the print bolded may make it more visible for the student as well.

When a student with a visual impairment is reading (or writing), it is critically important that the print be the appropriate size. (This includes students who are reading using symbols or pictures.) Often print may need to be enlarged. One method of enlarging text is through the use of devices such as magnifiers or a CCTV (which is pictured below).

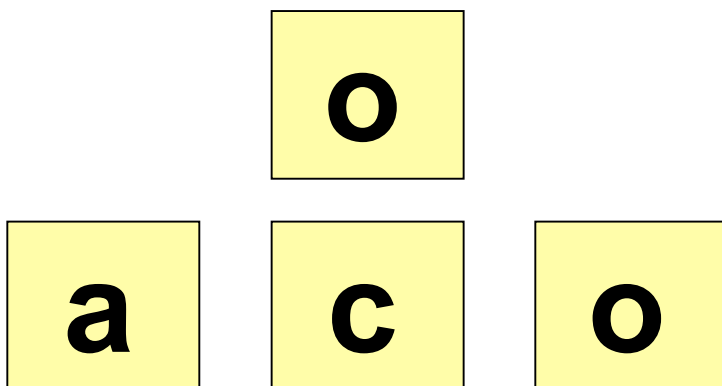


When using a computer, a software program, such as ZoomText (by Ai Squared (www.aisquared.com), can enlarge a section of the computer screen. In the picture below, the bottom half of the screen is enlarging the section of the screen in which the cursor is located (from the top left section of the screen).

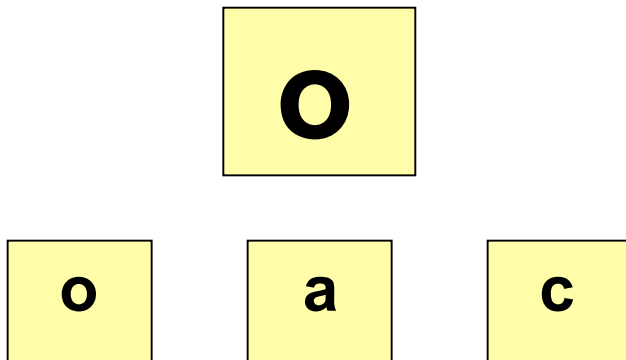


Teachers often must determine what size print is most appropriate for each student that has a visual impairment. One method of doing this is to see if the student can match various sizes of letters (and words) and then determine if the size is appropriate when placed in several lines of print. In this method, the teacher first prints out various sized letters (and some letters may be bolded and some not to determine if having the letters bolded is easier for the student). The idea is to have the student match a letter to decreasingly smaller letters. The student does not need to know the name of the letters, only to be able to match.

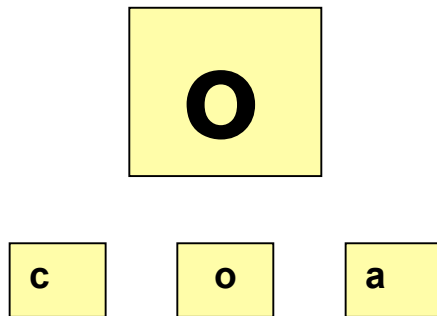
For example, first show the student a large letter 'o', and give 3 choices of letters that are the same size. Be sure to select three letters that are similar in shape. Ask the student to find the same letter as the top one.



Next, ask the student to again find the same letter as the one above and mix up the choices. If the student is successful, decrease the size of the choices as shown below. (Leave the one they are matching to the same, original size.).



If the student is successful, decrease the size of the choices again (see below).



When the student can no longer correctly match the letters, the font size is too small and the teacher needs to use the next larger size that the student could successfully match. This procedure should be repeated with other letters and then full words. It is important to check full words since some students have difficulty seeing letters next to each other and will benefit from having the spacing between the letters adjusted. Finally, it is important to see if the student is able to see the words in lines of print. Sometimes the spacing between the words or lines needs to be adjusted, or a larger size font is easier for the student. This assessment can also be used with symbols for communication systems.

Other additional impairments

Other impairments, such as hearing impairments, intellectual disabilities, learning disabilities and perceptual problems should be specified on the literacy profile with any additional information that would be helpful. Other types of problems such as distractibility should be noted, as well as any recommendations for decreasing distractions for the student. Another category is available to add important information that could impair learning, such as motivational issues, behavior problems, learned helplessness, and poor self-concepts.

