



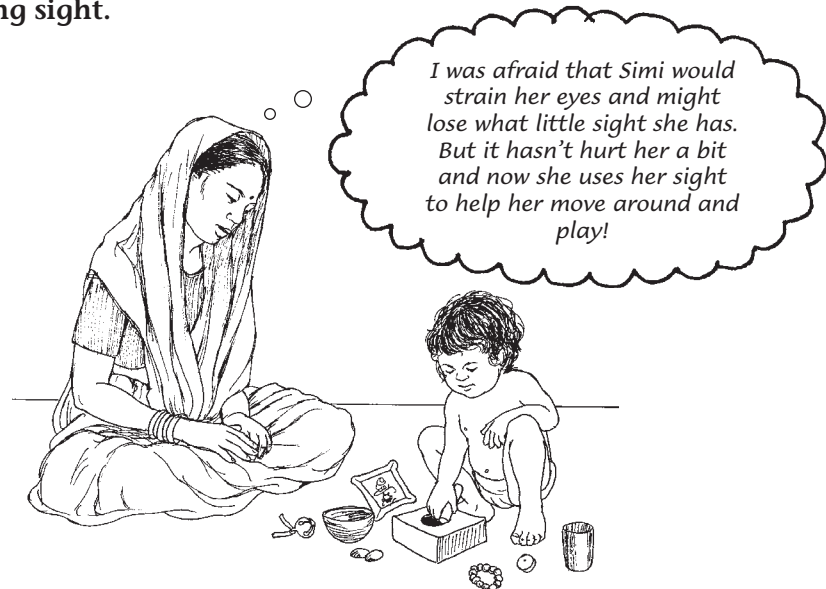
Chapter 4

Finding Out What Your Child Can See

Many children who have difficulty seeing are not totally blind but can see a little. Some children can see the difference between light and dark but cannot see any objects. Other children can see objects if they are in certain places, in certain kinds of light, or if they are a certain size or a bright color. Some children can see movement.

Before starting the activities in this book, it is important to find out what your child can see. Knowing this will help you do activities in ways that **will help her learn most.**

If your child can see a little, knowing how she sees best also means you can choose activities that **will help her make the most of her remaining sight.**



Using vision does not lead to its loss. Your child's eyes will not be hurt if she uses her sight to help her do things.

Is my child totally blind, or can she see a little?

If you are unsure whether your child has some sight, watch to see:

Does she close her eyes in bright sunlight or turn her head toward a light?



Does she bring objects close to her eyes?



Does she follow slowly moving objects with her head?



Does she always tilt her head in a certain way?



Does she move her hand back and forth in front of her eyes?



Does she reach for objects that do not make sounds?



If you notice any of these things, you can learn more about what they mean by reading the next few pages.

What does my child see?

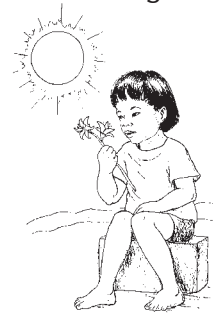
WHAT KIND OF LIGHT HELPS MY CHILD SEE BEST?

Some children may have trouble adjusting to changes in the amount of light. Or your child may be able to see in some kinds of light but not others.

Notice if your child squints or turns away from light. She may see best when the light is not too bright or when the weather is cloudy.



Notice if your child likes to look at things in bright light. She may see best in brightly lit rooms or strong sunlight.



The direction the light comes from may affect what your child can see. Try changing the position of the light as she does different tasks to find out what helps her see best.



To see small details, this child sees best when the light is directly over the object.



The kind of light may also make a difference. Some children do well with light focused on what they see. Others do well with light that is diffused but still strong.

AT WHAT DISTANCE DOES MY CHILD SEE BEST?

Most children who can see a little see objects best that are about an arm's length away. But some children see an object best when it is very close to their face. Others see best when an object is much farther away. Watch your child carefully to see how far she likes to hold objects from her face. This is probably the distance at which she sees best.



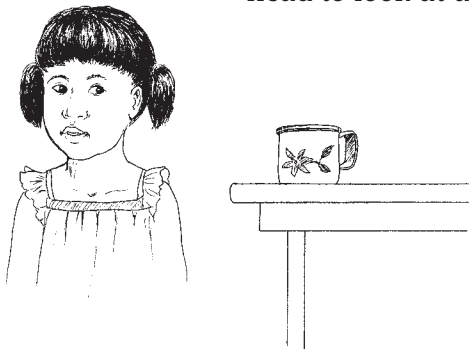
This child sees objects best when they are about an arm's length away...



...but this child sees objects best when they are close up.

IN WHAT DIRECTION DOES MY CHILD SEE BEST?

Although most children see objects that are directly in front of them most clearly, they can also see objects that are off to either side, or above or below their eyes. Sometimes, however, a child cannot see very far to the side. Or she may not be able to see certain areas at all, like the area directly in front of her, on either side, or below her chin or above her eyes. To find out what direction your child sees best, watch her closely to see where she likes to hold objects or the way she tilts her head to look at an object.



This child can only see objects that are off to the side. To see an object, she must move her head to the side and look back at the object.

WHAT SIZE OBJECTS DOES MY CHILD SEE BEST?

Most children who can see a little see large objects best. But some children can see only a small area in front of them. These children will recognize small objects more easily than large ones. Watch your child to see the sizes of objects she likes to play with.



This child likes to play with small things because she sees them best.



This child sees large objects best.

DOES MY CHILD KNOW HOW FAR AWAY OBJECTS ARE?

Some children have difficulty judging how far away an object is. So when they reach for the object, they may reach too far. Or they may not reach far enough, because they think the object is closer than it really is. To find out if your child can judge distance, watch to see if she reaches correctly for toys or other objects.



This child thinks the bottle is farther away than it really is.



This child likes playing with the dark colored pan because she can see it better than the spoon.

DOES MY CHILD LIKE CERTAIN COLORS OR THE DIFFERENCE (CONTRAST) BETWEEN CERTAIN COLORS?

Some children can see objects when they are brightly colored, or when they are against a different colored background. Watch to see if your child prefers certain colors, differences between colors, or patterns. These are probably the colors and patterns she sees best.

WHAT ELSE AFFECTS MY CHILD'S SIGHT?

A child often seems to see better at some times than at others. This does not mean her sight has changed, but that something else is affecting how much she sees, such as:

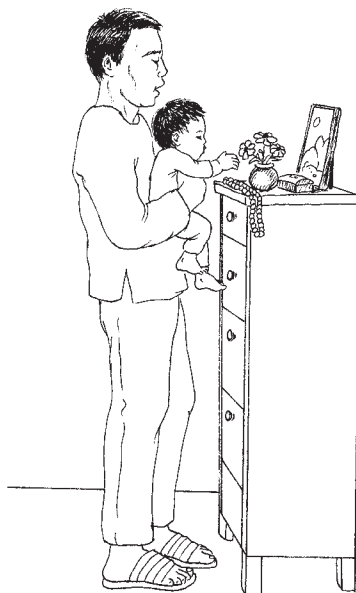
- whether an object is familiar to her
- how tired she is
- her health
- whether she is taking medicines
- whether she is feeling happy or sad

You will probably need to watch your child carefully in different situations and at different times to find out what she can really see.

Helping your child use the sight she has

If your child can see a little:

Give her lots of different objects to look at. This will encourage her to become interested in the world around her and to use her sight more.



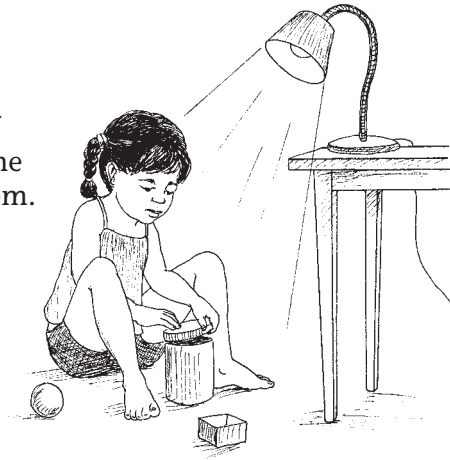
One way to show her different objects is to walk around the house. Talk about what you see, and encourage her to touch and hold things.

Let your child hold things or move her body in the way that helps her see best, even if it looks awkward to you. For example:



If your child sees only a small area in front of her, she will see more if she looks up, down, and to the right and left as she moves instead of straight ahead.

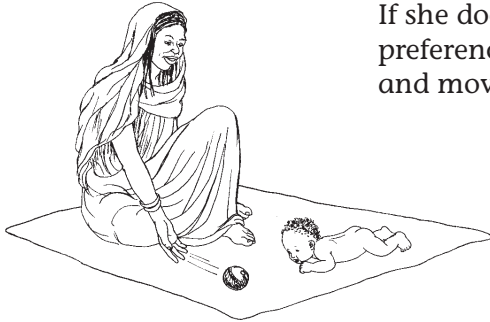
If your child can see a little, try changing the amount of light, the kind of light, or the direction the light comes from. See what works best.



If she has trouble seeing when the amount of light changes, teach her to stop moving and to wait for her eyes to adjust.

Notice if your child tends to pay attention to certain:

- colors
- patterns
- sizes
- color contrasts

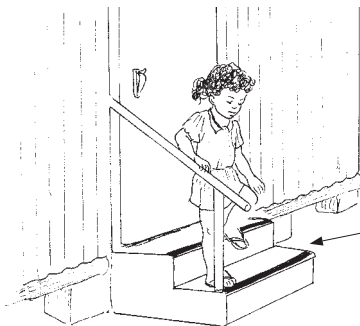


To catch her baby's interest, this mother rolls a brightly colored ball across a white cloth.



Use bright colors to mark the edges of objects or places. This will help her learn to recognize places and shapes.

When she is older, brightly colored ribbons, cloths, or objects can help her know where she is.



Brightly colored tape or paint can help a child know when the height of the floor changes.

Will my child's sight get worse?

To answer this question, you will need to know what causes your child's difficulty seeing. For more information, see the chapter "Why Children Lose Their Vision and What We Can Do", page 155.