

VFCS LEVELS

LEVEL I: Uses visual function easily and successfully in vision-related activities.

At most, children in Level I may be challenged when using their vision in unfamiliar and/or crowded environments and/or new activities, but they do not consistently need compensatory strategies or adaptations.

Distinctions between Levels I and II

The difference between Levels I and II is the need for self-initiated compensatory strategies to use visual function consistently and independently in vision-related activities. Children in Level I may show at most some delay for example in recognizing new objects or unfamiliar faces, or in exploring unfamiliar environments. Children in Level II perform almost the same activities as children in Level I, but they typically show self-initiated compensatory strategies, such as head movements (e.g. rotation) or adaptation of head position in order to facilitate visual target localization or to improve eye movements quality; eye-blinking or use of finger pointing to better explore an image in particular if it's very complex (with a lot of details, different prospects and sizes, unusual lighting conditions, different objects orientation or objects overlap); adjustment of the distance of the visual target or of the object to have a better visual focus or to stabilize fixation; placement of visual targets (for example toys or school equipment) to a specific area of visual field to facilitate the activity.

LEVEL II: Uses visual function successfully but needs self-initiated compensatory strategies.

Children in Level II consistently need self-initiated compensatory strategies to perform vision-related activities. They may avoid or rush through some activities requiring visual skills; however, their visual difficulties do not restrict or only mildly restrict their independence in daily life.

Distinctions between Levels II and III

The difference between Levels II and III is the need for assistance in adapting the environment to consistently use vision functionally in daily activities. Children in Level II adopt spontaneous (i.e. self-initiated) strategies, managing to use vision functionally in most vision-related activities. Children in Level III need to have the environment adapted and/or the activity modified for them in order to address vision-related activities. They typically need high contrast backgrounds (e.g. chessboard patterns; black and white, yellow and blue, red and white patterns), optimized size and contrast of the visual target, reduced visual crowding, adjusted distance of visual target, and/or reading desks, and/or magnifying systems and other visual technological devices.

LEVEL III: Uses visual function but needs some adaptations.

Children in Level III need, in addition to self-initiated compensatory strategies, some adaptations to consistently use vision functionally and perform most vision-related activities in daily life. Adaptations include any modifications made to the visual environment, and the use of adaptive equipment and/or technological devices in order to enhance visual function.

Distinctions between Levels III and IV

The difference between Levels III and IV is that children in Level III use visual function in a consistent way, and do not usually need other sensory modalities to perform activities. Children in Level IV, in addition to the adaptations already described for Level III, typically take great advantage from the adjustment of lighting conditions to facilitate vision, such as for example illuminating the target objects in semi-dark conditions. Their use of vision is restricted and inconsistent, and they are able to perform only part of vision-related activities. For example, they show discontinuous eye contact, fixate in extremely adapted situations, and recognizes faces or objects using also other sensory modalities. Visual monitoring is very difficult without the integration of other sensory modalities.

LEVEL IV: Uses visual function in very adapted environments but performs just part of vision-related activities.

Children in Level IV can use vision when significantly supported through adaptations, however their use of vision is inconsistent, they perform part of vision-related activities, and they often use other sensory modalities to help initiate and maintain visual function.

LEVEL V: Does not use visual function even in very adapted environments.

Children in Level V have severe limitations in daily vision-related activities even when supported by significant adaptations; they use almost exclusively other sensory modalities (hearing, touch, etc).

Distinctions between Levels IV and V

The difference between Levels IV and V is the child's ability to perform part of vision-related activities if strongly supported by adaptations. Children in Level IV sometimes use visual function if supported by a highly adapted environment and other sensory modalities (hearing, touch, etc). Children in Level V typically do not perform vision-related activities, and they always need other sensory cues.

VFCS Level Identification Chart

Does the child use visual function in most vision-

YES

NO

Does the child use visual function in at least part of vision-related activities, if

NO

YES

YES

NO

Does the child need self-strategies to use visual function

Level III
Uses visual function but needs some
 modifications, adaptive equipment

Level IV
performs just part of vision-related activities and usually uses other sensory modalities (hearing, touch, etc)

Level V
Does not use visual function even in
 has severe limitations in daily vision-related activities even if supported by significant adaptation, uses almost exclusively other sensory modalities

NO

YES

Level I
Uses visual function easily and
 at most may be challenged when using vision in new and unfamiliar environments and/or

Level II
Uses visual function successfully
 distance of the visual target, etc.