



Brain Beats Music

Developing Eye Fitness

When babies are born, although their eyes are able to see, their brain is still learning how to interpret the messages it receives from their eyes. Additionally, their brain also needs to learn how to control the eye muscles so that it can make sense of the visual stimulus being received. It takes time and practice to develop eye fitness. Over time children's eyes and brains develop which in turn allows children to see where they are going as they move.

There are five areas of eye/brain development that make up eye fitness. These are:

- **Acuity:** the ability to see clearly and distinguish fine details.
- **Focus:** the ability to shift focus from one focal point to another automatically.
- **Teaming:** the ability for both eyes to work together as one. This enables depth perception.
- **Fixation:** the ability to keep the eyes fixed on one location without wandering. This enables the child to look at an object for long enough for the brain to recognise and interpret it. Fixation must be developed before eye tracking can be achieved.
- **Tracking:** the ability to steer the eyes in a deliberate way while keeping the head still. Just because a child has developed the precise tracking control required for reading does not mean they are ready for reading just yet, although overall eye fitness is essential in order for children to function in a classroom setting.

The Problem with Screen Time

When children spend long periods sitting in front of screens they can develop ocular lock. Ocular lock is the inability to keep the head still while tracking. It can prevent eye fitness developing and can lead to reading difficulties due to the inability to track. It can also be stressful for the child.

Movement Develops Eye Fitness

Movement-based music activities are a great way for children's eyes to get the exercise they require.

Children need experiences where:

- there are interesting things to gaze at,
- they shift their focus between near and far,
- their eyes can sweep across wide areas,
- they follow moving objects with their eyes, and
- they use their peripheral vision.

Music Makes it Fun

At Brain Beats Music we intentionally produce music that encourages children to watch, move, copy, predict, play and explore. Songs like *Dinosaur Picnic*, *I'm a Ball*, and *Stretchy Circle* all help develop eye fitness. Through a variety of musical experiences, especially experiences alongside others, children can naturally develop eye fitness, while also having fun.

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