

Concussion & Vision: Teacher's Classroom Checklist

Signs of visual dysfunction after concussion · for K-12 educators

How to use this checklist

Observe over 3-5 school days. Check any behavior you notice, then share with the school nurse, the student's OT/TVI, and the family. Patterns across categories matter more than any single item.

Reading & near work

- ☐ Loses place in text; re-reads the same line
- ☐ Uses a finger, ruler, or index card to hold place
- ☐ Skips small words or drops line endings
- ☐ Words appear to move, blur, or double after a short time
- ☐ Rubs eyes, blinks hard, or closes one eye while reading
- ☐ Complains of eye strain, headache, or nausea within 5-15 minutes

Board work, copying, and screens

- ☐ Slow or inaccurate copying from board to paper
- ☐ Loses place between board and desk
- ☐ Handwriting drifts off the line or spacing collapses
- ☐ Squints at the board or leans in close to the screen
- ☐ Symptoms spike during Chromebook or iPad tasks

Light, movement, and environment

- ☐ Sensitive to fluorescent lights, sunlight, or bright screens
- ☐ Wears a hood, hat, or sunglasses indoors
- ☐ Feels dizzy or nauseated in hallways, gym, cafeteria, or bus
- ☐ Avoids busy visual environments (bulletin boards, patterned rugs)
- ☐ Reports symptoms worsening across the school day

Attention, fatigue, and behavior

- ☐ Mental fatigue after 20-30 minutes of visual work
- ☐ Increased irritability, tearfulness, or withdrawal with visual demand
- ☐ Task avoidance specifically for reading, worksheets, or screens
- ☐ Falls asleep or asks for the nurse after visually demanding classes

First supports to try in the classroom

- Reduce visual clutter: single-column worksheets, larger font, off-white paper.
- Schedule visual breaks BEFORE symptoms appear (e.g., 20/20/20 rule).
- Preferential seating away from windows, fluorescent banks, and doorways.
- Offer audio versions of text and oral response options when possible.
- Provide a quiet, dim recovery space and a rest pass without stigma.
- Document what triggers and what relieves symptoms; share with the team weekly.

When to escalate

- Symptoms persist or worsen beyond the medical provider's expected recovery window.
- Reading, tracking, or focusing complaints continue after other symptoms fade - request a developmental optometry referral.
- Behavior, mood, or academic drop that is not resolving with initial accommodations - loop in the OT, counselor, and 504/IEP team.

Educational reference only, not medical advice. A student with a suspected or diagnosed concussion should be under the care of a qualified medical provider. Share observations with the school nurse, OT/TVI, and the family; supports here are used in coordination with the medical team.