

# Quick Vision Check

How often your students move their eyes off the music can give you valuable information about why a student is struggling with reading. Use this form with all of your students over the course of 1 week.

Reading Rating- use a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 means no or extremely limited reading and 5 means proficient sight reader.

Music Selection- a section of music that your student plays which you can use to assess reading ability. With younger or less experienced students, I often use 8-12 measure sections and will count the number of notes or beats. This gives me a rough estimate of how many eye movements there are per note, which I can use to compare good readers with those who struggle.

Eye movements- how many times a student moves their eyes to and from a page of music.

Comments- use this space for any observations you have about your students' reading.

## What do you do with the information?

Is there a relationship between how many times a student moves his eyes and how well that student reads his music?

Do students who read well move their eyes more or less than students who don't?

Do you have students who don't look at the music at all?

Do you have students who tilt their heads to the side when reading?

Do you have students who move their heads from side to side when moving their eyes across the page?

Do your students' eyes track in the right place in the music?

Piano teachers are in a great position to inform parents when they suspect a vision problem.

If you suspect a vision problem, recommend a good Developmental Optometrist or an Ophthalmologist who specializes in vision and how children learn. Two websites that can help with this are [covd.org](http://covd.org) and [pavevision.org](http://pavevision.org). You may want to call around your area first so you have a connection with various doctors.

When speaking with the parents about what you suspect, put yourself in the shoes of the parents first. Often parents are already overwhelmed with managing jobs, children, activities



and homework. If there is a visual issue that vision therapy or glasses can help, it is another thing that parents need to add to their already busy schedules. It will involve the cost of the appointments and possibly glasses and therapy.

If there are no doctors who specialize with vision and learning in your area, it will also involve the inconvenience of traveling to where one is.

Parents may also be of the mindset that there isn't anything wrong with their child, and that vision therapy is just another way for the doctors to make money.

Of course, in my experience, this isn't the case. These people are generally very well trained and go into the field of vision because they are genuinely interested in improving how children learn. There is a lot of science behind what they do, and the profession has been around a long time.

When I speak with parents, I give concrete examples of the behaviors I am seeing in my students with regard to their vision and progress. I am also able to tell them what children who don't struggle are doing, or not doing. (That's why you want to look at all your students, not just the ones who are having troubles.)

Regardless of how the parents react to my suspicions about how their children see, I can still help the students learn in the lessons by:

- Using color coded music.
- Working on micro-sections of music and obscuring the rest of the lines with sticky notes (this allows the student to focus on tiny sections of music without being distracted by the rest of the music)
- Using methods which teach chords and improvisation
- Asking lots of questions in the lessons to get the student thinking
- Getting the student to stand up and move around during a lesson to get blood circulating to the brain
- Doing vision development exercises adapted to the piano
- Doing visualization exercises (there are lots one can do to help students with many aspects of learning the piano)
- Having the student sing along with the melodies away from the piano
- Playing games
- Specifically praising small accomplishments

I used to think that students either got reading or they didn't. Now I see that it was me who didn't get it. Kids learn differently and it is my job to figure out why.



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# Quick Vision Check

Use this chart to measure how many times your students move their eyes off a page of music.

Name	Reading Rating	Music Selection	Eye Movements	Comments

Quick Vision Check



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