

Follow the Target (tracking & eye-movement control)

This activity helps develop the ability to easily and smoothly pursue targets with the eyes only, without moving the head, even when targets cross the midline of the body. Effective eye movement control is an important skill that is required to be able to efficiently navigate lines of print while reading and doing other tasks that depend on precise and fluid eye movements.



What you need

- Strong yarn that does not rip easily
- A pair of scissors
- Small, light objects (1-2 inches) with rounded or soft edges that can be tied securely to a string and moved back and forth like a pendulum. Be creative, select a few different objects, so that you can mix it up.
- An eye patch (*note, you can download directions for a DIY pirate eye patch*)
- A tracking sheet to document your practice
- You'll need two people for this activity: one person who, like Max, does the activities (we will call this person Max in the directions below), and one person who, like Gina, guides the activity (we will call this person Gina in the directions below).

Preparation

- If you don't have an eye patch, make one following the DIY pirate eye patch instructions.
- Download a tracking sheet from the website.
- Cut 3-5 strings of about 2.5 feet in length.
- At one end of the string, tie a loop through which a hand can fit.
- Securely tie the other end of the string around an object.
- Repeat this process until all objects are securely tied to the strings.

Activity

This activity can be done with the child lying on the back, sitting, standing (on both or one leg), and with and without an eye patch. For children who might struggle to move their eyes without moving their head (or are doing this activity for the first time), start them lying on their back (Level 1) as it makes head movements clearly noticeable.



Level 1 - Emerald

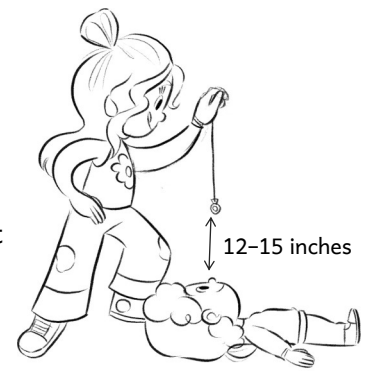
This activity is done with the child lying on the back, with and without an eye patch. Start with the eye patch.

You playing Max (you are doing the activity):

- Lie down on your back. Make sure that no bright light is shining in your eyes.
- You will follow targets only with your eyes without moving your head.

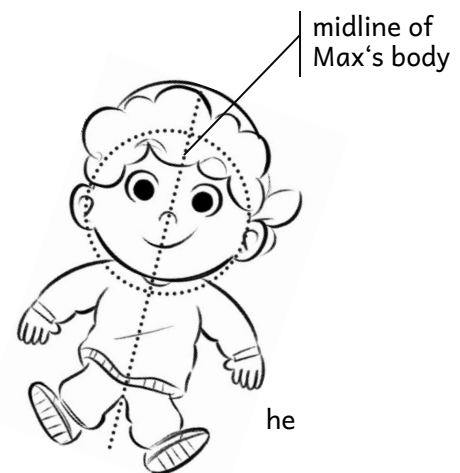
You playing Gina (you are directing the activity):

- Select one of the prepared objects.
- Fit your hand through the loop, loop that end of the string also around your wrist, and hold onto the string (note, for safety, always have one end of the string also looped around your wrist to prevent objects from dropping in case the string accidentally slips from your hand while you are moving an object.)
- Stand behind Max's head. Hold the object about 12-15 inches above Max's head (12-15 inches is about the same length of your elbow to your finger tips) and instruct: **"Keep your eyes on this [object name]. Follow it just with your eyes without moving your head. Don't look away from it until I say stop."**
- Start with the object at eye level. Slowly move the object in various patterns and directions (e.g., circle, cross, x, square, figure 8, etc...). Mix things up so Max cannot predict where the object will go next.



It is important that your patterns cross the midline of Max's body, so that his eyes, too, have to cross his midline.

- Once Max can keep up consistently, vary the size and speed of the movements, but always control the moving object carefully and pay attention to Max's eye movements.
- Document how many times Max moves his head and how many times moves one or both eyes away from the object. Give Max lots of opportunities to overcome potential difficulties.



Important Note

Some children may not have enough eye movement control yet to move their eyes smoothly and effortlessly. Pay attention to irregular movements such as movements away from the target, jumpy or jittery eye movements, stickiness in the movements, eyes darting back and forth, or frozen gazes or stares. If you notice any of these symptoms, slow down your movements. Give Max lots of opportunities to overcome potential difficulties.

Recommended Practice

2 minutes per round, 2-3 rounds at a time, 1-3 times per day, 3-5 days per week, depending on fluidity of a child's eye movements. Notable improvements can generally be achieved within days or weeks.

More Advanced Levels

Only move to more advanced levels of this activity when Max is able to do the current level with and without an eye patch, following objects only with the eyes, without moving the head, without looking away from the moving object for the entire duration of the activity.

Level 2 - Sapphire

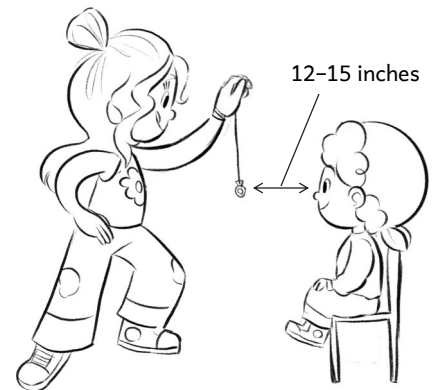
Same as Level 1, but the activity is done in a sitting position, with and without an eye patch. Follow the same directions and recommendations.

You playing Max:

- Sit on a chair.

You playing Gina:

- Start with the object at eye level, about 12-15 inches away from the face. Give the same directions (**“Keep your eyes on this [object name]. Follow it just with your eyes without moving your head. Don't look away from it until I say stop.”**) and move the object in various patterns as described under Level 1. Again, it is important that your patterns cross the midline of Max's body, so that his eyes, too, have to cross his midline.



- Once Max can keep up consistently, vary the size and speed of the movements, but always control the moving object carefully and pay attention to Max's eye movements.
- Monitor the activity as described under Level 1. Document how many times Max moves his head and how many times he moves one or both eyes away from the object. Give Max lots of opportunities to overcome potential difficulties.

Level 3 - Fire Agate

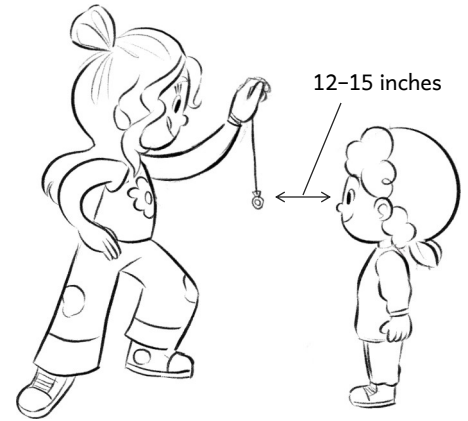
Same as Level 1, but the activity is done in a standing position, with and without an eye patch. Follow the same directions and recommendations.

You playing Max:

- Stand with your legs hip-width apart.

You playing Gina:

- Make sure no sharp objects are around in case Max wobbles. Be ready to lend a supporting hand.
- Start with the object at eye level, about 12-15 inches away from the face. Give the same directions (“**Keep your eyes on this [object name]. Follow it just with your eyes without moving your head. Don’t look away from it until I say stop.**”) and move the object in various patterns as described under Level 1. Again, it is important that your patterns cross the midline of Max’s body, so that his eyes, too, have to cross his midline.
- Once Max can keep up consistently, vary the size and speed of the movements, but always control the moving object carefully and pay attention to Max’s eye movements.
- Monitor the activity as described under Level 1. Note how many times Max moves his head and how many times he moves one or both eyes away from the object. Give Max lots of opportunities to overcome potential difficulties.



Level 4 - Blue Fluorite

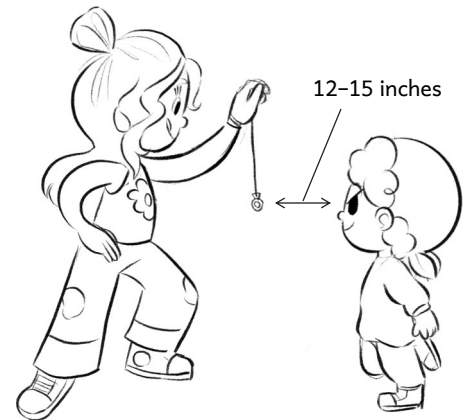
Same as Level 1, but the activity is done standing on one leg, with and without an eye patch. Follow the same directions and recommendations.

You playing Max:

- Stand on one leg (practice with each leg).

You playing Gina:

- Make sure no sharp objects are around in case Max wobbles. Be ready to lend a supporting hand.
- Start with the object at eye level, about 12-15 inches away from the face. Give the same directions (“**Keep your eyes on this [object name]. Follow it just with your eyes without moving your head. Don’t look away from it until I say stop.**”) and move the object in various patterns as described under Level 1. Again, it is important that your patterns cross the midline of Max’s body, so that his eyes, too, have to cross his midline.
- Once Max can keep up consistently, vary the size and speed of the movements, but always control the moving object carefully and pay attention to Max’s eye movements.
- Monitor the activity as described under Level 1. Note how many times Max moves his head, how many times he moves one or both eyes away from the object, or how many times he has to put his foot down. Give Max lots of opportunities to overcome potential difficulties.



Level 5 - Tiger's Eye

Repeat Levels 1-4, but also vary the distance between the object and Max's face. Follow the same directions and recommendations. Do this activity with and without an eye patch.



You playing Max:

- Practice all positions (lying down, sitting, standing on both legs and only on one leg), with and without an eye patch.

You playing Gina:

- Make sure no sharp objects are around in case Max wobbles. Be ready to lend a supporting hand.
- Start with the object at eye level, about 12-15 inches away from the face. Give the same directions (“**Keep your eyes on this [object name]. Follow it just with your eyes without moving your head. Don't look away from it until I say stop.**”).
- In addition to moving the object in various patterns as described under Level 1 also switch up the distance between the object and Max's Eyes. Move the object as close as 8 inches to as far away as 3 feet from Max's eyes. The object must **NEVER** touch Max's eyes. Again, it is important that your patterns cross the midline of Max's body, so that his eyes, too, have to cross his midline.
- Once Max can keep up consistently, vary the size and speed of the movements, but always control the moving object carefully and pay attention to Max's eye movements.
- Monitor the activity as described under Level 1. Note how many times Max moves his head, how many times he moves one or both eyes away from the object, or how many times he loses his balance. Give Max lots of opportunities to overcome potential difficulties.

