
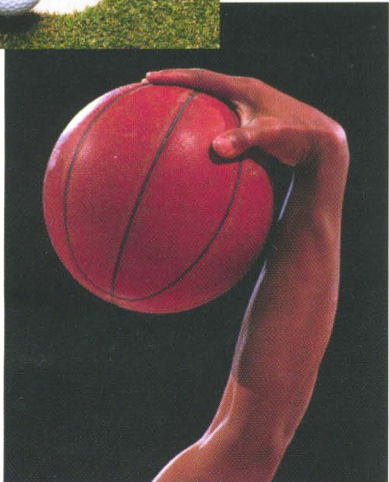


# Getting In The Game: Sports Performance

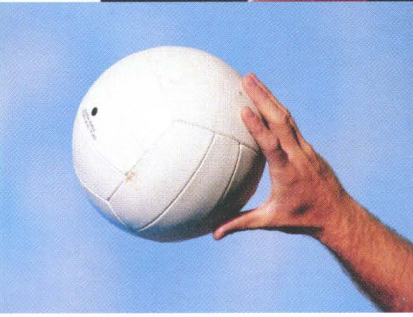


Do you wish you could cut a few strokes off your golf score? Does your child always seem to be just a few steps away from the soccer ball? Having trouble





returning your tennis partner's serve? While all sports are different and visual demands vary, all too often athletes don't understand that good vision, just like speed and strength, is an essential component in how well you play your game. And, there is much more to vision than just seeing clearly.








Vision encompasses many skills. Just as practice and exercise can increase your stamina, strength and speeds, there are ways you can improve your visual fitness



and accuracy. There are several important visual skills that can affect how well you play your favorite sport:

-  **Dynamic Visual Acuity** – the ability to see objects clearly while in motion.
-  **Eye Tracking** – closely related to dynamic visual acuity, this is the ability to 'keep your eye on the ball,' or follow the moving ball. It may also be referred to as vision pursuit.
-  **Eye Focusing** – the ability to change focus quickly and accurately from one distance to another.
-  **Peripheral Vision** – the ability to see people and objects 'out of the corner of

your eye' while concentrating on a fixed point. You do not see things in the same way that you see something in front of you, but rather you simply become aware of someone or something on your left or right.

-  **Depth Perception** – being able to quickly and accurately judge the distance between yourself, the ball, your opponents, teammates, boundary lines, and other objects.
-  **Fusion and Flexibility Stamina** – being able to keep both eyes working together, even under high speed and physically stressful conditions.
-  **Visualization** – the ability to picture events with your mind's eye or imagination. Relates to remembering plays, court position, planning future action.
-  **Eye-hand and body coordination** – appropriate use of your hands, feet and body when responding to visual information, i.e. getting yourself to the ball.
-  **Visual concentration** – being able to stay on task for increased awareness and fewer distractions.

There are several signs that a visual problem, rather than lack of practice or mastery of the sport, may be hampering your performance. Do you:

# Sports Performance and Your Vision

- not see the ball clearly
- have difficulty knowing where the ball or other players are at all times
- over- or under-estimate the distance of the ball, players, or boundaries
- make similar mistakes over and over again
- lack noticeable improvement with practice
- have trouble remembering plays

If you've checked any box, a sports vision optometrist may be able to help. Many people are remarkably skillful at adapting to their vision problems or level of visual skills. They assume everyone sees the way they do. Others may have good visual skills that enable them to play well, but if sharpened and with proper visual fitness, could allow them to play even better. The visual system is an information processing system. The eyes lead the body. Because all sports are different, and visual demands vary, your doctor of optometry can assess your unique visual system and recommend the proper eye classes or contact lenses, or design a vision therapy program to maximize your visual skills for your specific sport.

## Eye Injury Prevention

Eye protection should be a major concern to all athletes, especially in certain

high risk sports. Thousands of men, women and children suffer eye injuries each year, many of them blinding, which may have been prevented had they been using sports eyewear. There are many types of eye protection available, in either prescription or non-prescription lenses. Ask your optometrist which type is best suited for your favorite sport. Sports that may be hazardous to your eyes include racquetball, tennis, squash, handball, ice hockey, badminton, archery, baseball, softball, basketball, fencing, and any sport with a projectile.

## See Better, Play Better

An optometrist with expertise in sports vision can provide visual care and consultation designed to protect, correct and enhance your vision to play your chosen sport better. Call or write the American Optometric Association for a sports vision optometrist in your area.

