

Lesson Ideas: Kindergarten through Grade 3

Implement any of the following lesson ideas to teach your students about the eyes, visual system, eye health and safety. Each lesson idea can be completed as an independent learning activity or incorporated into your existing curriculum.

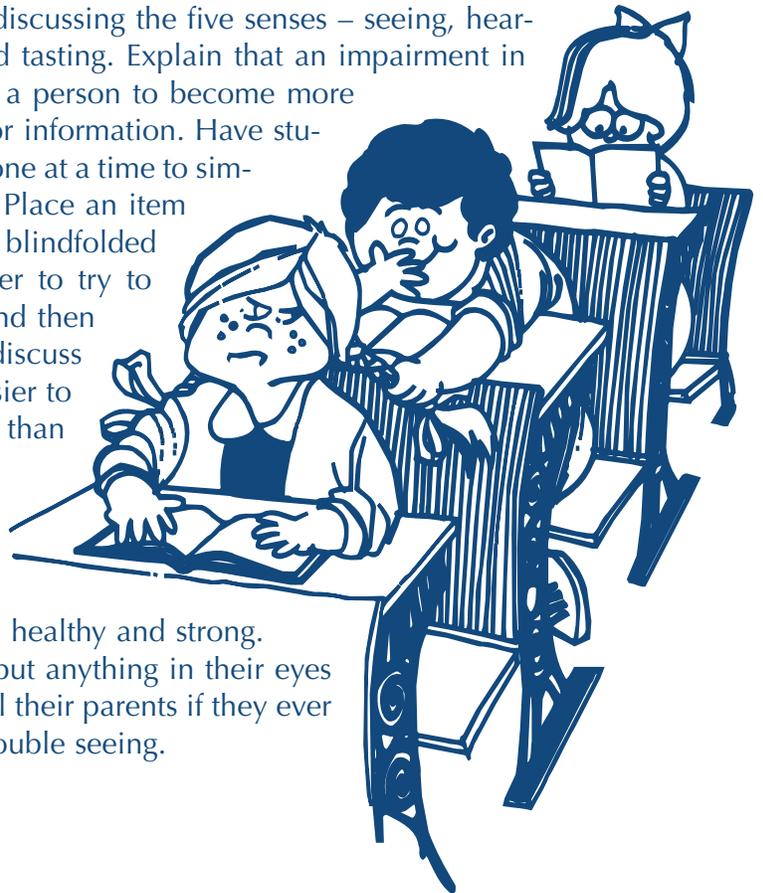
Masters for photocopying a variety of fun Vision Quest materials to help students learn are included in this kit.

Lesson #1: Visual awareness

Bring a blindfold to class and a box of small, everyday items (such as a spoon, pencil, crayon, leaf, rock, apple or orange, rolled up newspaper, bar of soap, glove or sock, comb, plastic cup, small doll or toy, coin, bracelet and wrapped gum or peppermints).

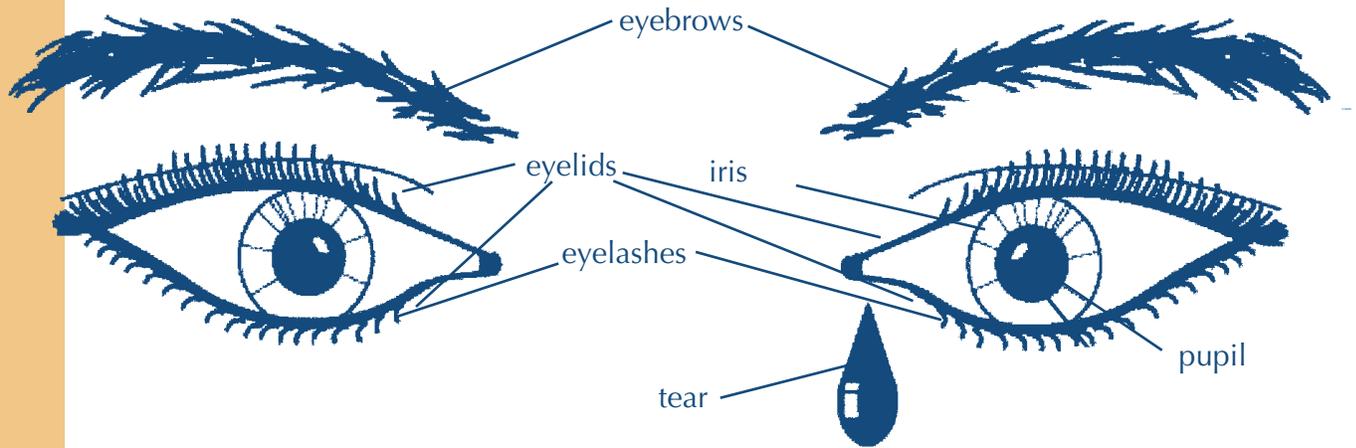
Start the lesson by briefly discussing the five senses – seeing, hearing, touching, smelling and tasting. Explain that an impairment in one of the senses requires a person to become more dependent on the others for information. Have students put on the blindfold one at a time to simulate a visual impairment. Place an item from the box in front of the blindfolded student and ask him or her to try to identify it, first by scent, and then by touch. Have the class discuss why certain items were easier to identify by scent and touch than others.

Conclude by discussing all the important ways we use our eyes and why it is important to keep our eyes healthy and strong. Remind students never to put anything in their eyes or rub their eyes, and to tell their parents if they ever injure their eyes or have trouble seeing.



Lesson #2: Parts of the eye

Suggested Vision Quest materials: “The Parts of My Eye” activity sheet.



Bring several hand mirrors to class and photocopies of “The Parts of My Eye” activity sheet. Begin by drawing a simple diagram of the eye on the board and asking students if they know the names of any parts of the eyes. As parts are identified, explain that:

- ✓ the **eyebrows**, **eyelids** and **eyelashes** help protect the eye from dust, dirt and sunlight;
- ✓ the **tears** help keep the eye moist, clean and comfortable;
- ✓ the muscles in the **iris** (the colored part of the eye) help open and close the **pupil** (the black dot) which is a hole that allows light to go into the eye so vision can occur.

Explain to students that vision requires light and ask them about difficulties they’ve experienced trying to see in the dark. Pass mirrors around and ask each student to identify his or her pupil, iris, eyelashes and eyelids. Have several students look at the size of their pupils in a darkened area of the classroom (or coat room) and in direct sunlight. Explain to students that the pupil widens in darker situations letting more light into the eyes so vision can occur. The adjustment of the pupil to light is why it is sometimes difficult to see clearly when entering a dark environment (such as a movie theater) after being in the bright sunlight.

Have students review these concepts by completing “The Parts of My Eye” activity sheet which requires looking at both their own eyes and the eyes of other students.

Lesson #3: Safety inspectors

Suggested Vision Quest materials: “Book Marks and Mailing Inserts” copy master.

Begin the lesson by reminding students that there are many things in the environment that can hurt our eyes, and that we can help protect ourselves by becoming more aware of our surroundings and potential eye hazards.

Appoint all students to be eye safety inspectors for the day and lead them on a tour

around your school or neighborhood. Have students identify as many potential hazards to the eyes as possible (including dark hallways or stairwells, protruding objects, rocks, dirt, dust, glass, pine needles, smog, pollen, balls, toys and looking directly at the sun).

Arrange for the inspectors to have a brief

meeting with a coach or physical education instructor to discuss the importance of protecting the eyes and head when playing certain sports and to look at examples of sports safety equipment (such as a catcher's mask, football helmet or swim goggles). Your tour might also include a stop at the school nurse's office for a short presentation on what one should do when dirt or dust get in the eyes.

Conclude by making a final list on the board of the "DOs and DON'Ts of Eye Safety."

Have each student draw a picture illustrating one of the concepts and include a caption under the drawing. Display the artwork in the hallway, library or cafeteria under title posters – "The DOs of Eye Safety" and "The DON'Ts of Eye Safety" – to remind other students. Also have students invent eye-catching, artistic ways to decorate the borders of bookmarks on eye and vision care for your school's library and to take home to parents. A copy master for these bookmarks is found in this kit.

Lesson #4: Eye examinations

Suggested Vision Quest materials: "Visiting the Eye Doctor" and "Eyeglasses for You and Me" activity sheets.

Ask the students to name any people they know (including family members, celebrities or cartoon characters) who wear eyeglasses. (A few well-known eyeglass-wearers include Harry Potter, Doc of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, Simon of The Chipmunks, Flo Bear of Sesame Street, and, often, Santa Clause).

Explain that people wear eyeglasses to see better and they get them by visiting an eye doctor. Ask any students who wear eyeglasses to tell the class what it is like to visit an optometrist's office or talk about your own experience.

Some discussion points to include are:

- Not everyone who visits the eye doctor needs eyeglasses. Most people visit the eye doctor to make sure their eyes are healthy.
- An eye examination can be fun because it is kind of like playing a game to see how well you can see in different situations. Eye examinations do not hurt.
- Your eye doctor is called a "doctor of optometry" or "optometrist" and his or her helper is a "paraoptometric." (A medical doctor who specializes in eye surgery is called an "ophthalmologist.")
- When you arrive at the optometrist's office, you'll get to sit in a big chair where you'll have a good view of everything.

The paroptometric (doctor's helper) will ask you some questions about how you use your eyes. For example: Do you play sports or use a computer? Do you ever have trouble seeing the board at school? Do letters or people ever look blurry to you? Your mom or dad will be there and can help answer questions about your general health and activities.

- When the doctor of optometry comes in, he or she will say "hello" and take a good look at your eyes to see if they are healthy and working properly. Your optometrist will use a little tool called an ophthalmoscope to shine a bright light into your eye. This tool helps your doctor see the inside of your eye through your pupil (the small black hole in the middle of the colored part of your eye (your iris)).
- The doctor will also let you look through a special instrument (called a phoropter) that contains a variety of lenses. This part of the exam is fun because you'll be asked to try to read letters by looking through different lenses – some which will make the letters quite blurry and some which will make them very clear.
- You might also be asked to participate in some other "seeing games" that are tests to measure how well you can see color, view objects around you and use your eyes together as a team.

- At the end of the exam, the optometrist and paraoptometric will discuss the health of your eyes with you and your parents and whether or not you need eyeglasses, some other kind of treatment, or protective eyewear for playing sports or other activities. (Some examples of protective eyewear include masks for playing hockey and goggles for swimming).
 - Because your eyes are growing and changing, it is a good idea to visit your optometrist every year. Your doctor will tell you if more frequent exams are necessary.
 - When the exam is done, you'll leave the doctor's office knowing more about the health of your eyes, what you can do to see better, and how to take care of and protect your precious gift of sight.
- Conclude by recreating the optometrist's office in the classroom:
- Have students take turns pretending to be the optometrist, paraoptometric, parent and patient.
 - Let the students look through a magnifying glass and identify each other's pupils and irises.
 - Show students that if a flashlight is shined into the eye, the pupil becomes smaller. A larger pupil makes the inside of the eye easier for the doctor to see.
 - Ask children who wear eyeglasses to explain how their vision differs with and without the glasses (for example, how letters appear on the board).
 - Finish by letting children cut out and decorate paper eyeglass or sunglass frames using the frame copy master found in this kit. Remind students that, while not everyone needs to wear eyeglasses for good vision, everyone should wear sunglasses to protect their eyes from the sun's harsh rays.

Lesson #5: Guest speaker or field trip

Suggested Vision Quest materials: "Visiting the Eye Doctor" and "Eyeglasses for You and Me" activity sheets.

Invite a doctor of optometry or a paraoptometric to visit the classroom to remind children how important it is to take care of their eyes and to explain, in simple terms, what happens during an eye examination. The optometrist or paraoptometric may want to bring a story about the eyes to read to students and/or an ophthalmoscope, lenses or other instruments to familiarize children with some of the tools in the office.

Another option is to organize a field trip to an optometrist's office where students can meet the doctor and staff and tour the facilities. The South Dakota Optometric Society can help you find a member optometrist in your community; just phone 605-224-8199 or e-mail sdeyes3@pie.midco.net. A list of optometrists is also found in this kit.

Let us help!

The South Dakota Optometric Society offers a video lending library, assistance locating speakers, traveling exhibits and photocopying assistance (where available). Contact the society at 605-224-8199 or www.sdeyes.org for more information.

