

VISUAL SKILLS REQUIRED FOR **FOOTBALL**

Quarterbacks

Anticipation Timing

Exact anticipation timing can help a quarterback move out of the pocket just at the right time to avoid being sacked. It is also vital for releasing the ball on time to receivers and for completing a perfect hand-off to a running back.

Concentration

The quarterback has the most extensive and difficult reads to make, as the success of each play originates on his accurate read of the defensive scheme. Any lapse in concentration will result in a botched play, or worse, a fumble or interception. He must also be able to concentrate downfield on his receivers through the stress and distraction of the oncoming rush.

Depth Perception

Depth perception is a critical skill for a QB in that he must be able to accurately judge the distance and speed of the receiver and throw the ball to the correct point. A short-coming in this area will result in incompletions or interceptions.

Eye-Hand/Foot/Body Coordination

The ability to interpret visual input and then to successfully coordinate hand, foot and associated body movements is an important part of most sports because it affects both timing and body control. A QB must be able to throw the ball where it should go, particularly while he is scrambling or off balance.

Peripheral Vision/Awareness

A quarterback must be able to be aware of the rush surrounding him while concentrating on his downfield receivers. The quarterbacks who seem to step up in the pocket at the last instant to avoid a charging rusher possess this skill.

Speed and Span of Recognition

The more instantaneously he is able to process the visual information which surrounds him, the more time the QB will have to choose the correct reaction, and complete the play.

Receivers

Accommodation & Convergence

Receivers must be able to track and constantly refocus on the ball as it approaches, so it doesn't become a blur.

Depth Perception

Receivers must calculate exactly how far and fast the thrown ball is traveling so that they can adjust their own speed and location to be in the exact spot to catch the ball.

Eye Endurance

Football is a very fatiguing sport, which requires excellent conditioning. Physical fatigue can greatly affect concentration, visual reaction time, and eye-hand coordination. Eye fatigue can also affect performance levels in much the same way. When the muscles in our eyes feel tired or strained, we feel the fatigue all over. Just like a weightlifting routine is used to increase physical endurance, visual exercises can be used to strengthen the eye muscles and thereby reduce fatigue.

Peripheral Vision/Awareness

A receiver must possess this skill as he extends to make the catch. He must be sure of the location of nearby opponents as well as the sideline. This will help to avoid injuries or allow him to make a quick move to spring into the open after making the catch.

Running Backs

As the running back handles the ball quite often in the game and can also be pass receiver, he must possess those visual skills which are required by the receivers such as Accommodation & Convergence, Concentration and Eye-Hand Coordination.

Peripheral Awareness is also an important skill for the back as he must often be able to pick up blitzing linemen who have beaten their block. This skill is also required by the back while running the ball as he must be able to focus on where he is going and be able to see and recognize the action in his periphery. Speed & Span of Recognition is critically important to the ball carrier, as the more visual information he can take in, and the faster he can turn this into a physical reaction, the more effective his running will be.

Defensive Backs and Safeties

Accommodation & Convergence

As in the case of receivers, defensive backs and safeties must be able to track and constantly refocus on the ball as it approaches and not let it become a blur.

Anticipation Timing

The visual system provides an individual with the information needed in order to act, and to judge *when* to act. Defensive backs and safeties need to be able to effectively judge the cutoff point of the on-coming ball or ball carrier.

Concentration

Defensive players need to concentrate on the ball when it is in the air and make the interception. It usually requires a great athletic effort to arrive in position to make the 'pick' and it is often accomplished through the distraction of waving arms and moving bodies.

Peripheral Vision/Awareness

Defensive players must be able to effectively focus on the central object (the ball when it is in the air, the man in man-to-man coverage, the quarterback in zone coverage) and still be confident of the action happening around that object.

Linebackers

Concentration

Lapses in this skill are extremely hazardous in this position as it is a high traffic area. It is also important to be able to concentrate on the 'keys' required to read each play with the many distractions associated with a high traffic area.

Peripheral Vision and Awareness

A linebacker must be able to focus on his 'keys' while being aware of opponents in his area. One of the main concerns of the linebacker is the 'crack back' block. Early awareness and reaction to this potentially hazardous situation can greatly enhance his effectiveness and help to avoid injury.

Speed & Span of Recognition

Line backing is a fast action/reaction position. The ability to take in visual information and instantaneously translate it into a physical reaction is vital to superior play.

Kickers

Concentration

Kickers, like other players, need to be able to block out the distractions of the field and the crowd.

Anticipation Timing

The visual system provides an individual with the information needed in order to act, as well as the information needed to judge when to act. Kickers need to be able to effectively anticipate the timing of the snap, the approach to the football, and ultimately the trajectory of the foot meeting the football.

Accommodation & Convergence

Eye tracking ability is important in kicking. Quick, accurate eye movements are needed to rapidly survey the goal post position, players, and the football on the pitch of the tee or where placed for a field goal attempt. Studies have shown that if the kicker's head has to move to aid in eye tracking, foot to goal post, his performance is not only less efficient, but balance is thrown off too.

Depth Perception

Timing, anticipation of the snap and the teeing up and the ultimate kicking action, are skills related to good depth perception. No one stays in the same place very long. The ball and the players are all in constant, relative motion. The goals are stationary, but most shots are taken at the goal as the kicker is in motion.

Eye-Hand/Body/Foot Coordination

Most kickers depend more on eye-foot and eye-body coordination. The eyes lead the body follows, so the visual system guides the motor system. For the players, exact eye-foot coordination is essential to hit the "Uprights" and to ensure that the ball goes through for a field goal.