



Rehearsal Guide

Vision and Eye Exam

Preparing people with intellectual disability/autism (ID/A) to successfully complete a vision and eye exam

Introduction for Caregivers

A rehearsal guide contains realistic pictures, concrete ideas, and clear, brief instructions for guiding a person through what can be expected in a specific situation. It includes helpful suggestions for caregivers to follow to make the experience meaningful for the person and increase the likelihood of a successful outcome. This approach is beneficial when supporting people with intellectual disability/autism (ID/A) who are anxious about situations such as doctors' appointments, hospitalizations, and medical testing.

A rehearsal guide provides opportunities for the caregiver to assist the person to learn about a specific situation. It contains information on what is needed and why and explains what can be expected. Such a guide is most effective when it is person-centered and used in conjunction with discussion to allow exploration of specific areas of concern. It can be a powerful tool when used as intended.

The expected result is that the person will then experience the situation in a way that supports health and well-being by being prepared and knowing what to expect. The guide can be used at all stages of the situation to facilitate a positive end result.

Thank you for taking the time to use this tool to work with self-advocates to improve their health outcomes.

How to Use This Rehearsal Guide

For best results, begin to review this rehearsal guide with the person prior to the day of the appointment. Sometimes it will help to review this material with an individual several days or weeks before an appointment; other times, it may be better to wait to review this material until just before the procedure is to take place, perhaps the day before or the morning of the procedure. Together with the individual, determine which will best suit the individual's needs and abilities in understanding the information provided; however, it is important not to wait until 5 minutes before a procedure to introduce this guide to an individual. Give the individual enough time in advance to become familiar with the procedure based on the pictures and information contained on each page and with the individual's abilities in mind.

It is best to review this guide slowly and to focus on one idea/page at a time, allowing the person to talk and/or ask questions after each idea/page is presented. A caregiver may want to share personal experiences related to having this procedure done but be sure to do so in a positive manner, depicting a positive outcome.

For Best Practices

- ✓ Allot time to review this material when the individual is alert and interested in doing so.
- ✓ Ensure that the setting is free from distraction. Based on the individual's attention span, it may be best to review one page at a time, rather than reviewing an entire guide in one sitting.
- ✓ Explain each picture and practice the suggested exercises with the individual, such as deep breathing, as they appear throughout the guide.
- ✓ On the day of the procedure, take this guide along to continue rehearsing the various steps involved in the procedure.
- ✓ Remain positive, calm, and upbeat.
- ✓ Remember to offer positive reinforcement throughout the procedure. If the procedure is not able to be completed, focus on positive aspects. If the individual seems upset, talk about it later when they are calm to find out how they felt and what could be changed or improved to have a better outcome the next time.

What Is an Eye Doctor?

Different doctors do different things. Some doctors check your heart and lungs to make sure they are healthy. An eye doctor is a doctor who specializes in vision, or how you see, and eye health.



Why See an Eye Doctor?

An eye doctor can prescribe glasses to help you to see better. An eye doctor can diagnose and treat eye diseases. An eye doctor can help you keep your eyes as healthy as possible.

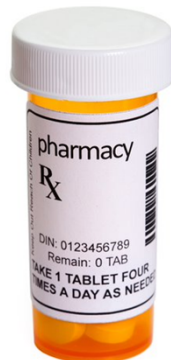
Eye doctors know all about eyes and can answer your questions about your eyes.

The eye doctor will tell you what is going to happen before doing anything. It is important that you relax, so you can listen to the doctor.



Before the Appointment

Before you go to the eye doctor, it is important to remember to bring health history information, a list of your medications, and your glasses (if you have glasses).



Introducing the Process

(Name of individual), your doctor wants you to get a vision and eye exam on (insert date here) at (insert name of location).

Vision and eye exams are an important step in taking care of your eyes.

(Name of caregiver) will stay with you during your vision and eye exam.



Note to Caregiver: Contact the doctor's office in advance to assure that a caregiver will be permitted to remain in the room while the exam is taking place.

In the Waiting Room

At the eye doctor's office, you will wait until someone calls your name to be seen by the doctor.

(Name of caregiver) will stay in the waiting room with you.

You might be given paperwork with questions about your vision and general health history. You may answer the questions or ask a caregiver to help you.

You might want to take a book or magazine to read or some of your favorite music to listen to on your headphones while you wait.



When Your Name is Called

A medical assistant will invite you into the exam room. They will talk to you about what you need to do for the exam. They are friendly and will help you.



Note to Caregiver: Be patient and use a calm, reassuring tone while assisting the individual.

Meeting the Eye Doctor

Next you will meet with the eye doctor.

The eye doctor will ask questions about your eyes. If you have problems with your eyes or questions about your eyes, talk to the eye doctor about them.

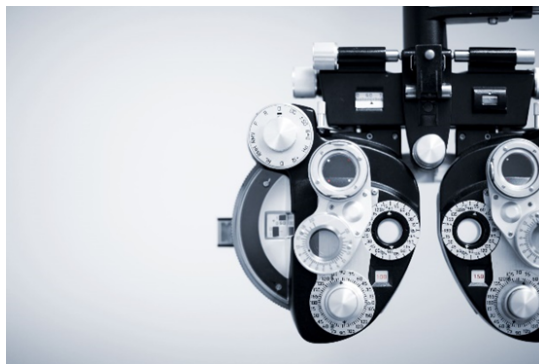
Be sure to tell the eye doctor if you have trouble seeing things or if you have other questions about your eyes.



Note to Caregiver: Wait for the person to respond to questions from the eye doctor, and then offer additional information, as needed, such as reports of pain or problems, or any changes in vision.

The Exam Room

You will sit in a big chair, and you will see different tools. These are special tools that help to look at the outside and inside parts of your eyes.



Note to Caregiver: Caregivers may want to visit the eye doctor's office prior to the visit to allow the individual to meet the staff at the office and to see all the equipment prior to the scheduled visit.

Testing How Well You Can See

During the first part of the exam the eye doctor will test your vision, which is how well you can see. This helps the doctor know if you need glasses. The eye doctor will test one eye and then the other eye. With one eye covered, you will look at an eye chart and say the letters, numbers, or pictures you can see. Then you will switch which eye is covered and do the test again. This lets the eye doctor know how well you see far away from you.

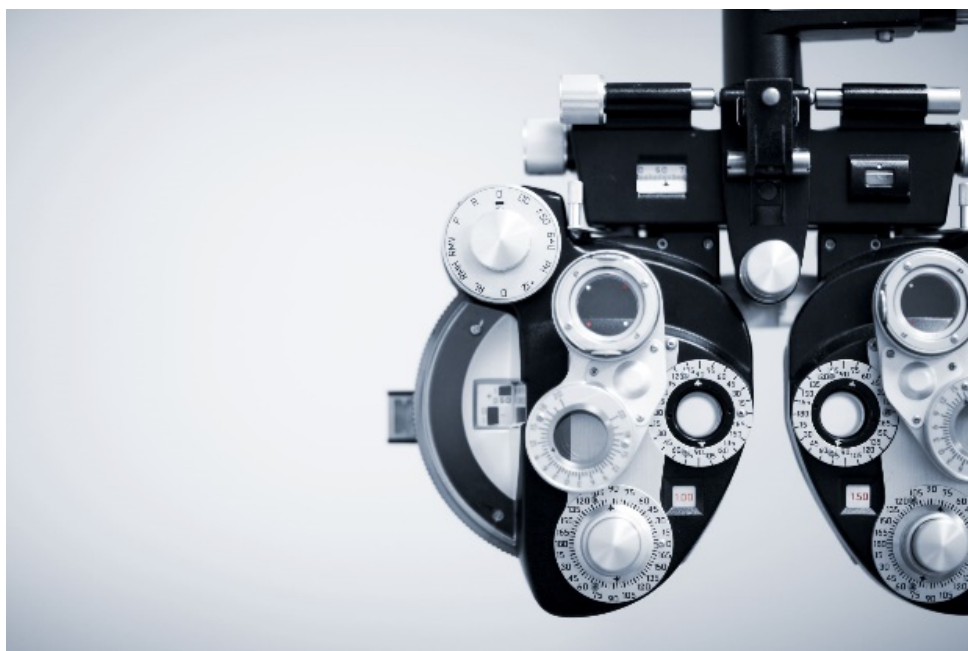
To test how well you see close to you, the eye doctor might have you look at cards that are as close to your face as you might hold a book.



Do you need glasses?

The vision test might show that you need glasses to help you see better. If you need glasses, the eye doctor will help you decide what lens will work best for each eye. The lenses are the part of your glasses you look through.

The eye doctor will use a machine that has lots of different lenses. The eye doctor will choose a lens for each eye and ask you to say the letters, numbers, or pictures you can see on a chart. The eye doctor will change the lens and ask you which one helps you see better. You might be asked to say which number lens – 1 or 2 – helped you see better, or you might raise your hand when you see clearly.



Testing Your Eye Health

The eye doctor will look in each of your eyes with a light to make sure it is healthy. The eye doctor might place drops into your eyes and look at the inside of each eye. Some eye doctors use a machine that blows a puff of air into each eye. This machine will not touch your eye.

These tests help the eye doctor know if your eyes are healthy.



Note to Caregiver: If applicable, ask the doctor if the individual can feel the puff of air on their hand first prior to it being introduced to the eye. Encourage the individual to be as still as possible during the exam.

You Are Almost Done

After your vision and eye exam is done, you will go to the lobby or a different room. If you need glasses, this is where someone will help you pick out a pair of glasses. You may also need to schedule a follow up appointment to pick up your glasses or for another exam.



You Can Do It!

That is how easy it is to go to the eye doctor!

I know you can do it!

You always do a great job!



Note to Caregiver: Take time to assess how well the person understands what was presented. Ask some brief questions such as, “Do you know what will happen when you go for your eye and vision exam?”

Review the rehearsal guide as often as needed to ensure the person understands and is prepared when the day for the eye and vision exam arrives.

References

- American Optometric Association. (2018, January 5). How to examine patients with special needs. Retrieved on May 15, 2023, from <https://www.aoa.org/news/clinical-eye-care/health-and-wellness/how-to-examine-patients-with-special-needs?sso=y>
- American Optometric Association. (n.d.). Comprehensive eye exams. Retrieved on May 15, 2023, from <https://www.aoa.org/healthy-eyes/caring-for-your-eyes/eye-exams?sso=y>
- Cigna. (n.d.). What Happens During an Eye Exam? Retrieved on May 15, 2023, from <https://www.cigna.com/individuals-families/health-wellness/what-happens-during-an-eye-exam>



For additional information regarding this guide or any of our physical or behavioral health trainings, contact:

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