

# Understanding Visual Acuity

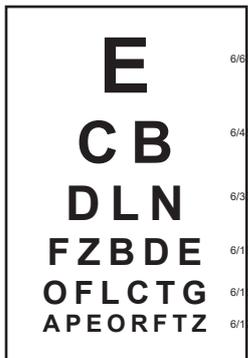
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## What is Visual Acuity:

- ◆ A measurement of how well the patient is able to see (when spectacles are worn if they are needed).
- ◆ It tells us how well the patient sees at a certain distance compared to how well somebody with normal sight sees at the same distance.
- ◆ It used to be measured at 20 feet (hence the term 20/20), but now at 6 metres (eg: 6/6).
- ◆ The abbreviation is "VA".

## Why is Visual Acuity important:

- ◆ We need to know VA so that we know whether the best possible vision has changed & whether they meet various legal standards (driving, blind pension, etc).



- ◆ You need to understand VA when you are delivering spectacles so that you know what vision the patient should expect.

## How do we measure Visual Acuity:

- ◆ VA is usually measured with a Snellen Chart of standard letters. The optometrist asks the patient to read the smallest they can.

## How do we state Visual Acuity:

- ◆ Visual Acuity is recorded on the file as a fraction. eg: **6/9**  
The first number is the distance at which the test was done (6 metres) and the second number is the size letters that the patient could read (what normal sight would have seen at 9 metres). This fraction is called Snellen notation.
- ◆ A plus (+) or minus (-) means slightly better or worse than the line indicated. eg: **6/6<sup>+</sup>**

## Interpreting Visual Acuity:

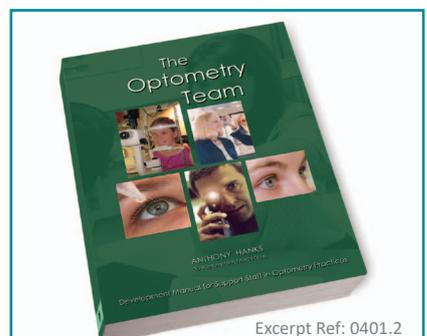
- ◆ **6/6** means they could read at 6 metres what a normal person could read at 6 metres. So they have normal vision.
- ◆ Don't try to remember these examples. Understand what they mean so you can work it out at the time:
  - **6/9** means they could read at 6 metres what a normal person could read at 9 metres. So it had to be 1 1/2 times bigger than normal.
  - **6/12** means they could read at 6 metres what a normal person could read at 12 metres. So it had to be 2 times bigger than normal. (This is the standard for a Drivers Licence).
  - **6/30** means they could read at 6 metres what a normal person could read at 30 metres. So it had to be 5 times bigger than normal. (Not very good, so don't expect too much from the spectacles).

- **6/60** means they could read at 6 metres what a normal person could read at 60 metres. So it had to be 10 times bigger than normal. (This is one of the standards for a Blind Pension).

## How do we record Visual Acuity:

- ◆ On the record form:
  - The unaided vision (un) and/or the habitual vision (hab) with current spectacles.
  - The VA with the new Rx.

|        |                      |              |
|--------|----------------------|--------------|
| Old Rx | R: -3.00 -0.50 x 95  | 6/ <u>9+</u> |
|        | R: -3.50 -0.75 x 80  | 6/ <u>9</u>  |
| New Rx | R: -3.50 -0.50 x 100 | 6/ <u>6+</u> |
|        | R: -4.00 -0.75 x 80  | 6/ <u>6+</u> |



This is an excerpt from *The Optometry Team*, written by optometrist Dr Tony Hanks - now in its' 4th edition.

The book is available on-line from [www.hanksresources.com](http://www.hanksresources.com)