

What is visual acuity?

Visual acuity is clarity or sharpness of vision, and is measured in the distance this sharpness is true for, such as 20 feet in the United States, or 6 meters in England. Clarity of vision at a distance is affected by many factors, such as peripheral awareness, depth perception, astigmatism, or eye diseases. Examinations by optometrists and ophthalmologists diagnose factors that affect vision. Prescription lenses and vision therapy programs improve vision, and medications, surgery and other treatments may be used if eye diseases are present.

Normal visual acuity is termed 20/20 in the United States. This does not necessarily mean perfect vision, but indicates that a person is able to see objects 20 feet away with the normal clarity and sharpness that is expected. To give an example of nearsightedness, 20/50 vision means that what would normally be observed at 50 feet must be observed at 20 feet in order to be seen clearly.

Related Terms:

- Hyperopia – farsightedness; able to see well at a distance, but unable to bring close objects into focus
- Presbyopia – the loss of focusing ability
- Myopia – nearsightedness; able to see objects that are close, but unable to see objects that are at a further distance

Source: The American Optometric Association <http://www.aoa.org/x4695.xml>