

“No Chaining” Technique for VDS and other Processing Activities



The goal of any visual processing activity is to increase visual processing skills. This is done by showing information to an individual who holds the information in short-term memory for a few seconds and then gives the information back orally in the same order it was received. This needs to be done without resorting to coping and compensating techniques. This is hard when you are working at your own “cutting edge”, “rubber meeting the road” level no matter who you are and no matter how well you process information. Any kind of compensating may increase the digit span score but it *will not* raise the function of visual processing which is a major key to being successful in academics and sports, picking up social cues, and making eye contact.

It takes time to increase digit spans; each digit is equivalent to one year's visual development, so if you increase by 1 digit in 4 months, congratulate yourself/your child; you have done well! If digit span scores go zooming upward in a short period of time (less than a month), it's possible the client may be using a coping/compensation technique.

There are several ways to compensate with the visual processing activities:

1. **Chunking:** Mentally grouping the digits in order to remember them. For example, five numbers can be broken up into two groups, three and two. Your child might mentally group off the first three numbers and put them in a mental “holding zone”, then chunk the last two as well. Reading the numbers as fifty-two or eighty-three is another example.
2. **Chaining:** Under one's breath or in one's mind repeating the sequence so far and adding the latest number or object. Example: 1...1,3,...1, 3, 2...1, 3, 2, 5, etc. You can often see the child doing this as their lips are moving. If your child is chunking or chaining, please see instructions on the “No Chaining Technique” handout.
3. **Visualizing:** You might observe the child's eyes staring into space as if looking at something far off, looking sideways, or looking upwards whenever you give the sequence. This indicates that the child is using visualization skills (“seeing” the numbers in his/her mind as a whole) instead of holding each separate piece of information (number), processing those pieces visually and giving them back to you. ***If your child is visualizing, have him keep his eyes focused on you as he is calling the numbers back to you.***

No chaining technique for VDS:

Client whispers or mouths each number as he reads it on the card and then he says the entire sequence at the end. Remember, you only hold the card up for 3 seconds, so if client is not finished whispering/mouthing the numbers after 3 seconds, you still remove the card and then from memory, the client whispers/mouths the last numbers he saw and then says the entire sequence.

No chaining technique for VFD:

Client whispers/mouths each number as you quickly flash the cards to him; then he says the entire sequence at the end.

No chaining technique for Sequencing in a Flash:

Once every week or two, sit with client to observe how he/she does the Sequencing in a Flash activity. If you detect any chunking, chaining or visualizing, then it is time to “change the rules of the game.” At this point, you would teach the no chaining technique (see No Chaining handout) and have the client use this new technique while you sit and watch. Old habits are sometimes difficult to break so you may need to casually observe this activity to be sure the no chaining technique is used each time for a month or two. Another option is to discontinue doing Sequencing in a Flash for a week or two and use the digit span cards instead, with the no chain technique.

When you first begin using the no chaining technique, you may notice a decrease in the client's visual processing scores; which proves the client was definitely chunking/chaining and you need to continue using this technique for all processing activities. If, after a week or so of using this method, the client's digit spans have not decreased, then you know his visual processing skills are truly improving and this is something to celebrate!