

SPORTS VISION

Vision, just like speed and strength, is a critical component in how well you play any sport. In sports, vision has the potential to impact an athlete's overall performance, including clarity of sight, motor performance (the ability to perform specific tasks), and information processing (how you analyze, interpret, and use information).

Sports Vision, the science of helping athletes reach peak levels of performance through the enhancement of visual skills, is becoming more and more important in training individuals of many sports. Through sports vision tests and training, athletes can assess the performance of their eyes beyond the standard ability to see letters and objects clearly on an eye chart. Sports vision training can help them improve their awareness and perception, react faster, and make more accurate decisions in the sports they play. Athletes who use their visual system to its maximum potential will gain optimal performance and a competitive edge.

Numerous studies have confirmed the potential for visual abilities to be strengthened and improved through specific visual training methods. Optometrists specializing in sports vision can help enhance an athlete's performance by identifying and addressing visual weaknesses that might impact their ability to react, focus, and track moving objects. Optometrists with expertise in sports vision often collaborate with other professionals such as ophthalmologists, athletic trainers and coaches.

Training

Becoming a sports vision optometrist involves a strong foundation in optometry, followed by specialized training and education in the unique visual demands of various sports. This training helps optometrists develop personalized programs to improve athletic performance by optimizing the communication between the athlete's eyes and brain. Some optometry schools offer specialized training in sports vision. Many optometrists pursue sports vision training through continuing education courses, seminars, and conferences.

Opportunity

Vision is a crucial factor in sports performance, alongside speed and strength. Many athletes, regardless of age or skill level, are increasingly turning to sports vision training to enhance their visual abilities and ultimately perform better. Optometrists who specialize in sports vision can offer valuable expertise as consultants and serve as directors of performance vision for athletes. Similar to how teams enlist coaches for strength, speed, and nutrition, having a dedicated vision coach can give athletes and teams a competitive edge by improving sport-specific visual skills.



Resources

- **International Sports Vision Association (ISVA)**

www.sportsvision.pro

ISVA is an interdisciplinary group of professionals dedicated to advancing the field of vision training for athletes of all ages and levels to help them achieve peak athletic performance. It's a great resource for learning more about sports vision. Membership is free for any student in a professional degree program or resident in a post-graduate program.

- **American Optometric Association (AOA)**

www.aoa.org

AOA provides resources and networking opportunities.



Why choose this path?

Every time I step on the field or into the exam room with an athlete, I'm reminded why I chose this path...and why I'd choose it all over again. As a sports vision optometrist, I get to help athletes see, react, and perform better, but even more importantly, I get to protect them and keep them doing what they love. I've worked with everyone from wide-eyed Little Leaguers to seasoned professionals, and the excitement never fades when an athlete tells me they saw the ball sooner, made a quicker decision, or just felt more in control. This field has given me a front-row seat to human potential, and I'd love to see more future doctors discover the same fulfillment. If you're drawn to both the science of vision and the heart of sports, this is a career where you can truly make a difference and love what you do!

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