

CRANIAL NERVE EXAMINATION

Key skill

By the end of this session, you should be **confident** and **competent** in the following:

Examination of the cranial nerves	Rapid clinical screen	Key likely diagnoses or pathologies
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Examination routine:

- A Position the patient on the edge of a chair or trolley facing you.
- B Quick general look, especially of the facial area, for obvious abnormalities.
- C **Smell and taste.**
“Are you having any difficulties with your sense of smell?” (I)
- D **Visual acuity**
“Do you have any problems with your vision?”
Ask the patient to look at a clock on a far wall and tell you the time (II)
- E **Visual fields**
Peripheral visual field testing using a wagging finger.
The patient covers his right eye and the examiner closes his left.
“*Tell me when you see my finger move*” – bringing the wagging finger in from the peripheries towards the centre. Temporal fields are tested in the horizontal plane, and by moving the finger through upper and lower temporal quadrants. Change hands and repeat on the nasal side. Compare the patient’s visual fields with your own to map out any defects.
Then swap sides to test the right eye.
A central scotoma is tested for using a red headed pin. Compare the patient’s right eye with your left, as above. Move the pin/stick from the temporal periphery through the central field to the nasal periphery, asking
“*Can you see the pin head? What colour is it? Tell me if it disappears or changes colour.*”
- F **Eye movements**
“Look at my finger and follow it with your eyes”. (III, IV, VI)
- G **Nystagmus** (cerebellar pathology) (VIII)

	Look for this during the testing of eye movements.	
H	Ptosis (sympathetic)	(III)
	Again, look for this as you test eye movements.	
I	Pupils	
	Direct and consensual light reflexes	(II, III)
	Accommodation and convergence reflex	(III)
	"Look into the distance.....now look at my finger."	
J	Facial movements	
	"Raise your eyebrows"	
	"Screw your eyes up tight"	
	"Puff your cheeks out"	
	"Whistle"	
	"Show me your teeth"	(all VII)
	"Clench your teeth" (feel masseters & temporalis)	
	"Open your mouth and stop me closing it"	(motor V)
K	Palatal movement	
	Keep your mouth open....say aah"	(IX,X)
L	Gag reflex	
	Touch back of pharynx on both sides with an orange stick.	(IX,X)
	Look for tongue wasting or fasciculation	(XII)
	"Put your tongue out....waggle it side to side"	(XII)
M	Accessory nerve	
	"Shrug your shoulders...keep them up as I press down"	(XI)
	"Turn your head to the right...now the left..."	
N	Hearing	
	"Can you hear that?" (rub finger and thumb in front of each ear)	(VIII)
O	Facial sensation	(V)
	<i>Revising the distributions of Va, Vb, Vc, C2, C3.</i>	