

## **BATES' SWING**

**“The normal eye is only at rest when it is moving.”**

“One of the best methods of improving the sight, is to imitate consciously the unconscious shifting of normal vision, and to realize the apparent opposite motion produced by such shifting. Whether one has imperfect or normal sight, conscious shifting and swinging are a great help and advantage to the eye; for not only may imperfect sight be improved in this way, but normal sight may be improved also.” W.H.Bates

The swing is a slow side-to-side, back-and-forth shifting of a target. Bates claims that swinging is a necessary part of perfect sight and is helpful in learning how to look without staring. Staring stops the swing and causes imperfect vision. According to Bates, when a patient remembers a letter or sees a letter perfectly and continuously without any volition on the part of the patient, it appears to move in a slow, short, easy swing. Bates called this the “Short (or Optical) Swing”. The swing is usually learned and practiced using letters on a Snellen visual acuity test chart. The Snellen chart is held nearer to the patient or farther away depending on the patient’s prescription. The letter can be large, small or tiny. As swinging improves, patients learn to swing smaller and smaller letters including tiny diamond type or even the period at the end of a sentence.

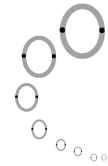
The short swing is a great aid for improving “Central Fixation”. Once learned, patients should practice swinging letters or other targets such as light switches or traffic lights many times each day and also to imagine swinging when palming. Bates advised his students to take frequent breaks to practice swinging a letter to relax the eyes when reading.

The Optimal swing. The optimum width of the swing is about the width of your chosen letter. The optimum speed is about as fast as one would count orally. Bates called this the “Optimal Swing”. The movement is remembered or imagined as easily as it is possible to imagine without any effort whatsoever. It doesn’t feel like an effort of making the eye muscles move the eyes. Instead, the swing feels like an imagination of your mind. It’s like turning a switch on in your brain, no effort, you just think about it and all by itself, it swings. But first you must relax, breathe, trust and let go of desire. Magically your target begins slowly swinging as if someone else is making it swing. *Attention is not on the eyes or eye muscles but on the target. There is not a feeling that the eyes move, just a perception of the target gracefully swinging from side to side.*

As this experience becomes more natural and automatic, not only does your target appear to move, but so does everything else within view. For example, when swinging a letter on a smart device or computer, not only does the letter swing, but the word, the sentence, the paragraph, page, the whole device but also the desk, the room, the building, block, city, earth can be imagined as swinging. Bates calls this the “Universal Swing”.

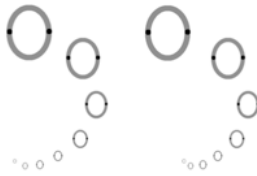
## SWINGING O's

Try swinging the “Swinging O’s” targets. The swinging O’s might make it easier for you to experience Central Fixation (seeing best where the eyes are aiming) and swinging. Bates made a big deal out of central fixation. He said that poor central fixation causes eye strain, myopia and other eye conditions. Bates encouraged his students to take short centralizing and swinging breaks at frequent intervals when reading. He started them using a larger text size such as a ¼” letter like an ‘O’. Then he had them learn to swing smaller and smaller font sizes. Because I’ve had a hard time learning central fixation, I made a gray ¼” O target with black dots (as pictured) hoping that the reduced contrast of black dots printed on gray would make it easier for me to see the looked-at-dot as blackest. It worked. Then I added smaller gray dotted O’s as pictured here. This practice helped me see central fixation in solid objects around me as well as the smallest printed letters.

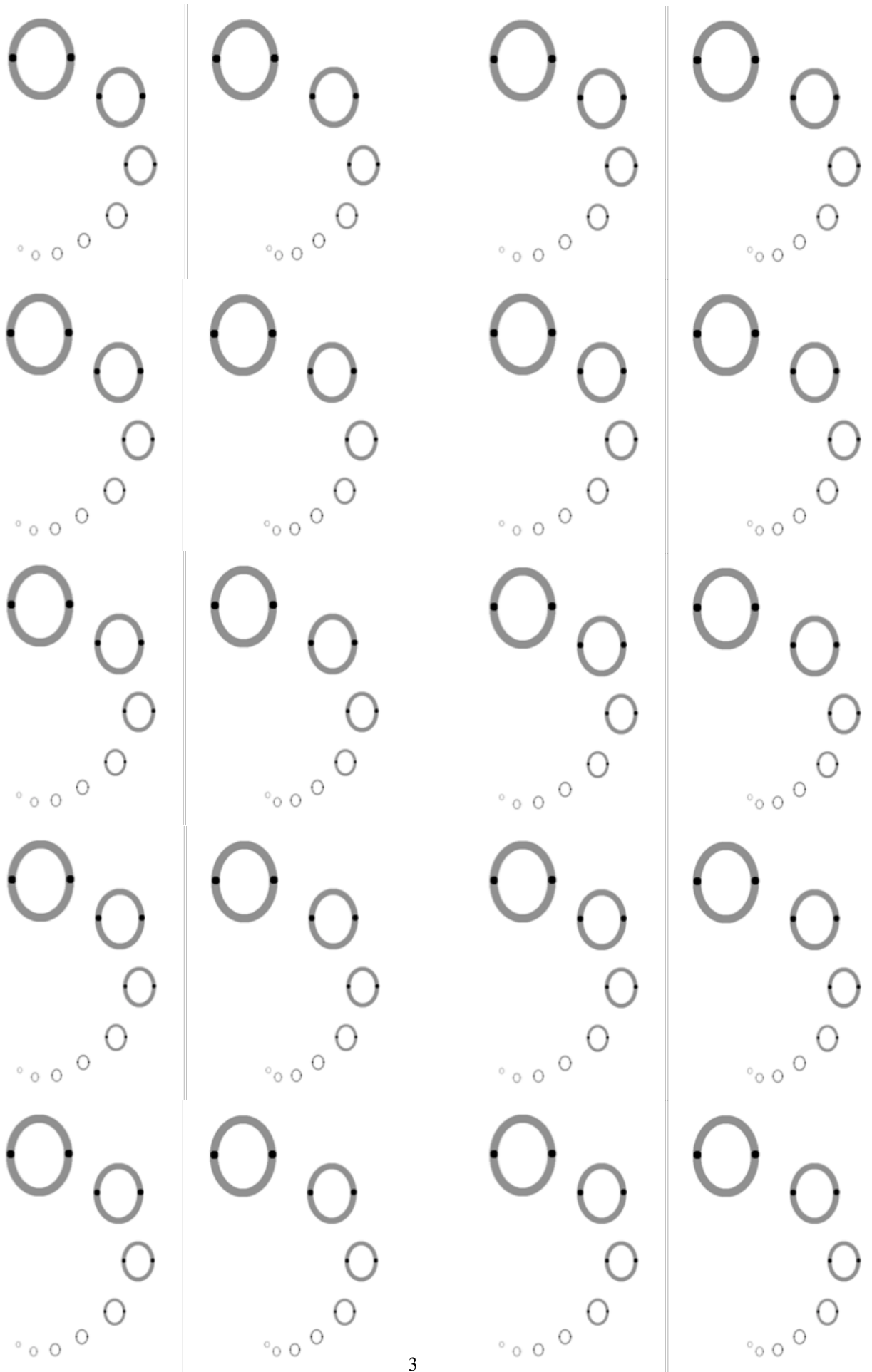


Learning to swing was a high priority practice for Bates. He taught his students to see it and even stated in his *Better Vision* newsletter that students who couldn’t learn the Short Swing had poor prognosis for success. Bates advised his students to practice seeing the swing all the time, even when palming. The grey O with black dots target helped me see Central Fixation, but not the Short Swing. Then it occurred to me to reformat this as a fusion chart by adding a second set of O’s. (If you don't know what I’m talking about, please study the section on fusion targets.)

I arranged the chart so that when converging or diverging it, the O’s in appear in 3-D. I held the chart at about a foot away saw the 3-D but could not see the



O’s swing. I kept trying and found when I diverged the O’s and wasn’t holding the chart in my hand, I could swing the O’s with no effort just as Bates described. The breakthrough happened when I remembered Bates’ instruction to pay attention to the target and not on my eye muscles or eyes. Suddenly, surprisingly and with no effort I saw the O’s swing just as Bates described: slowly in the direction opposite to where I shifted my attention. When I closed my eyes or palmed, I could remember or imagine seeing the 3-D array of O’s swinging perfectly. After that initial success, I wasn’t able to swing the O’s again until a few days later. Now, after many months of practice, I can swing the O’s not just when diverging, converging, aiming normally, and while holding the O chart. I can also swing near and distant objects: doorknobs, lampshades, Kleenex boxes, street signs, the rising and setting sun, etc. Sometimes I can easily swing all these targets and sometimes not. I must be patient and remember to pay attention. The next page is formatted to print ten business cards or cut them with a scissors.



**Bates' Breathing:** "Try to make a habit of always starting by closing your eyes and breathing for ten Bates Breaths – teeth slightly apart, lips closed, breathe in through the nose as if you are yawning (try a few fake yawns and then breathe imagining you are yawning) and then exhale through the nose."

**Bates' Thumbnail:** "It is possible for most people to do a very simple thing—to move the finger nail of the thumb from side to side against the nail of one of your other fingers. One can more readily control the movement of the thumb instead of the eye. This may be done without attracting attention. Practice when in bed, reading or watching TV at home, driving, talking on the phone, walking by yourself or in the presence of other people. Practice this movement until it becomes fluent and automatic. Use the movement of the thumb to regulate the speed of the short swing. Bates found that many people become anxious, unconsciously move too fast and lose self-control and no longer see the movement. At times when the short swing becomes irregular and then it can be controlled by the movement of the thumbnail. It is very interesting to experience how the short swing is always similar to the movements of the fingernail. This movement of the thumbnail can help stabilize and prolong the long swing of the body, the short swing of the letters or other targets, as well as the short swing of remembered or imagined targets when palming or with eyes closed. The visual memory of an object may fail at times but after a little practice, the visual imagination of the movement with the eyes closed can be remembered continuously for longer when it has a slow, short, continuous, regular swing and all without any effort or strain when synchronized with the movement of the thumbnail."

**Bates' Long Swing** "The patient stands with the feet about twelve inches apart, facing one wall of the room. He is directed to turn his body and his shoulders to the right, and in order to do this he lifts the left heel a few inches from the floor. The head is not turned on the shoulders, and the eyes are not moved in the head. Turning the body until the shoulders are square with the right wall brings about the whole movement. Then the body is turned to the left, and to promote this movement the right heel is lifted a few inches from the floor. The body is turned until the shoulders are square with the left wall. *It is very important that moving objects are not observed closely: do not try to see clearly objects that are moving.* One needs a sufficient amount of light in order to practice the long swing. This is the long swing, and it can be done with great benefit because it relieves symptoms of pain when other methods do not succeed.

**BATES' QUESTION**—*Which is more beneficial, the short or the long swing?* L. P.

**ANSWER**—*The short swing, if you can maintain it.*

**QUESTION**—*I still cannot visualize "black" what else can I use as a substitute?* W. H. B.

**ANSWER**—*Don't try to see anything. If it is an effort to visualize black, think of something that is pleasant, for instance, a field of daisies, a sun-set, etc. The result will be just as beneficial.*

**QUESTION**—*To palm successfully is it necessary to remember black or try to see black?*

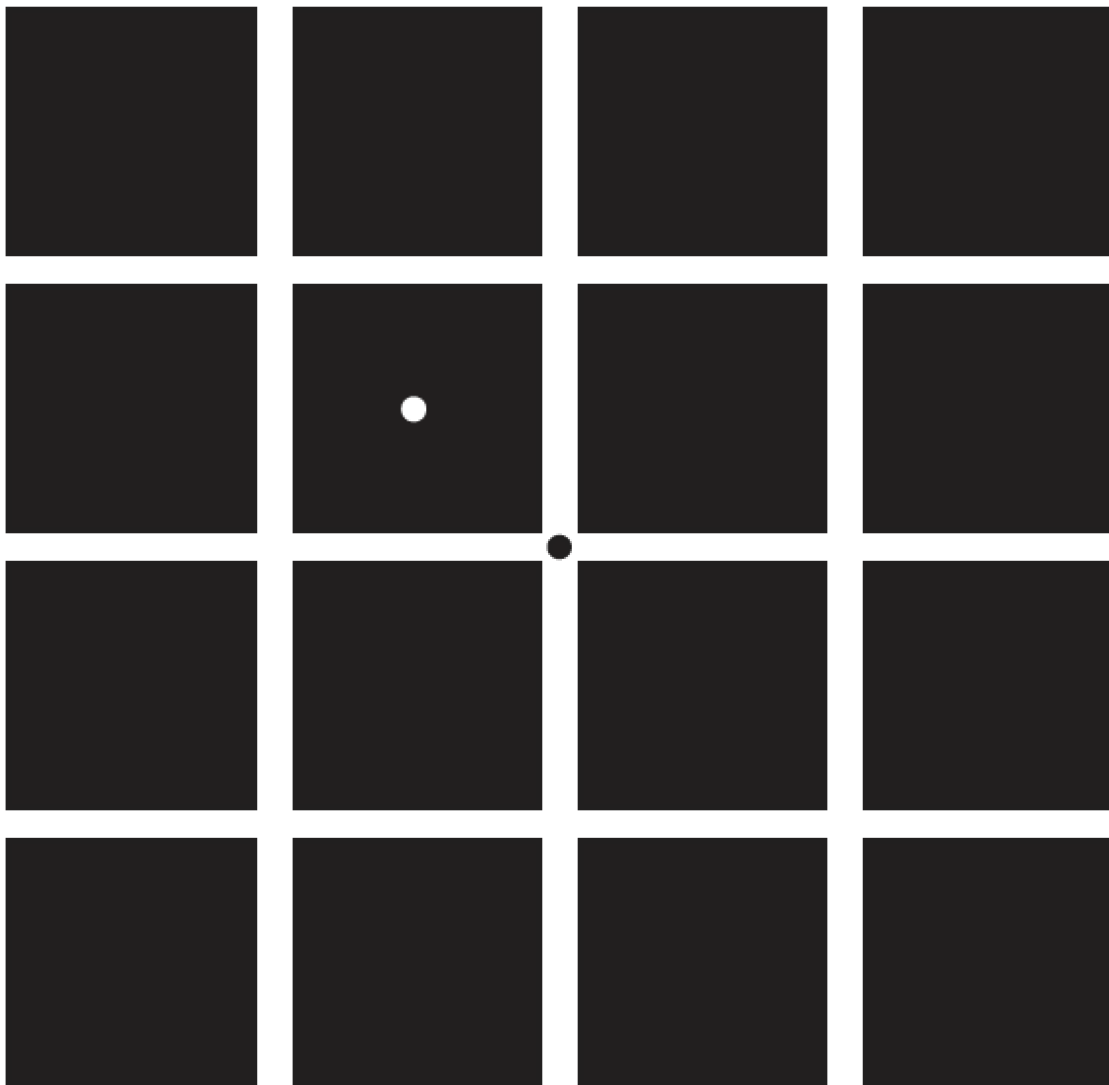
**ANSWER**—*No. When one palms successfully the eyes and mind are relaxed and black is usually seen, but any effort to see black is a strain which always fails.*

**Bates' Failure:** "The failure to imagine that stationary objects are moving, is always due to a stare or strain. There are some people who have great difficulty in demonstrating the illusion of stationary objects moving. Persons with imperfect sight do not ever imagine perfectly the optical swing. By practicing resting the eyes and practicing with the memory and imagination, they may after some weeks, months, or a longer period, become able to imagine a short, as well as a long swing."

## MICROSACCADES

Normally we aren't aware of the small movements and micro saccades that eyes make when fixating a target. The technique pictured below provides an opportunity to see these eye movements. You can print the chart and use it in strong light or look on your computer screen (bright screen).

To see the effect, hold the chart at normal reading distance and look at the BLACK DOT in the center of the picture. Keep fixating the black dot for 10 or 12 slow, full breaths. Then move your eyes to look at the WHITE DOT. Keep looking at it and notice the black lines superimposed on the chart. The black lines are afterimages caused by the white lines when you looked at the black dot for so long. Notice how these black afterimages appear to move even though we are trying to keep our eyes on the white dot.



Here's another way to see your micro saccades. Can you see the illusion of movement? Try this meditation. Notice that as you relax, the movements increase but when you try to see it stops moving. Meditate by observing the movement and allowing it to last for longer and longer. Breathe, blink, let your eyes, jaw, shoulders, etc. relax. To bring it back, close your eyes for a few seconds then open or look away then back to the chart. Practice to sustain the movement for a whole minute. Try with one eye covered. Can you sustain the movement with one eye? Is it the same for both eyes?

