

Pre-Writing Skills

INTRODUCTION

Writing is not just about holding a pencil and forming letters on a page. Development of pre-writing skills is dependent upon:

- Balance – being able to sit independently with arms free to use pencils, crayons etc.
- Shoulder Stability – the ability to control the movement of the shoulders is important for reaching, as well as supporting the forearm, wrist and finger actions.
- Forearm Control – the ability to move the forearm through a range of movements
- Wrist Stability – the ability to hold wrists in a stable and controlled position.
- Grasp – the ability to grasp and release a writing tool
- Using both hands – the ability to use both hands at the same time e.g. right hand writes with the pencil while the left hand holds the paper.
- Co-ordination – the ability to co-ordinate the eyes with the shoulder, elbow, wrist and finger movements
- Attention – the ability to concentrate on a task
- Sensory Experiences – the ability to tolerate sensory and motor experiences e.g. crayons, paints sand, foam

The suggested pre-writing activities will therefore include a range of activities to promote the above skills.

ACTIVITIES TO DEVELOP PRE-WRITING SKILLS

General Movement Activities to encourage joint stability and coordination include:

Shoulder Shrugs – hold hands, palms up and shrug the shoulders towards the ears and then down again. Repeat 10 times.

Crossing arm wave – hold straight arms above your head and cross them to wave. Repeat 10 times. Lower the arms so that the hands are pointing to the floor and again cross straight arms. Repeat 10 times.

Throw aways – hold fisted hands up in front of shoulders or on upper chest. Extend arms in a strong throwing movement. Repeat 10 times.

The hug stretch – hands hold opposite elbows. Lift arms above head and lower again. Repeat 10 times.

Sensory Activities

Using your finger, practise drawing and copying shapes in a range of different materials e.g. sand, foam, paints, gloop, lentils etc.

Basic shapes to encourage are:

I - O / \ + X S  

Practise writing letters in the air, make it into a game by guessing which letter it is.

Use various writing utensils e.g. pencils, crayons, chalk, felt pens, gel pens, paintbrushes etc and see how they feel on paper, sugar paper, wallpaper, blackboard, whiteboard, cardboard etc.

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Pre-writing Skills – Advice Sheet

Hand and finger strengthening activities include:

- Squeeze a ball whilst watching TV or travelling in the car. This can be made by filling a balloon with flour.
- Put an elastic band over your fingers and thumb, keeping it quite close to your fingertips. Stretch your fingers open and shut them again to make a duck face.
- Knead and pinch theraputty or playdoh into different shapes or animals e.g. letters, snake, hedgehog etc.
- Pop bubble wrap between thumb and index finger.
- Teach the child how to make an O by touching the pad of the thumb to the pad of the index finger.
- Finger rhymes and action songs e.g. incy wincy spider.
- Play games with tweezers e.g. operation game, feed the dog.
- Use clothes pegs to pick up small items like cotton wool balls and beads. Squeeze pegs and place around a piece of cardboard or a plastic container.
- Rip and crumple tissue paper and glue onto card.
- Build a tower of bricks or cubes.
- Thread beads onto a lace.

Pencil grasp development



Above are pencil grasps children may adopt ranging from ages 1-6

Pencil pressure— activities to promote the correct amount of pressure required for writing include: Draw on different types of paper e.g. tissue paper, sugar paper, cardboard, sandpaper, corrugated card. Experiment with pressure required for each one.

Try drawing using different utensils e.g. thicker pencil, light up pen, chalk, vibrating pen, charcoal, felt pens.

Draw patterns with chalk on a blackboard. Use water and a paintbrush to make them disappear.

Developing Pencil Control and Fluency

Pre-writing worksheets – use a variety of worksheets to:–

- Match one object to another e.g. draw a line across the page from left to right to match pictures.
- Trace shapes and patterns, colour in pictures, dot to dots and mazes. Encourage your child to trace the patterns and mazes with their finger first to learn the correct pathway.
- Draw continuous patterns such as clouds, a snail, sheep, tornado, sea waves etc, keep the wrist on the table while drawing round and round.

Hand dominance is the preference of one hand to perform fine and gross motor tasks, such as writing, cutting or catching and throwing a ball. Though hand dominance means tasks are performed more efficiently by the dominant hand, the non-dominant hand also plays a significant role in completing tasks e.g. the non dominant hand holds the paper while the dominant hand is cutting with scissors, the non dominant hand holds a bowl while the dominant hand mixes ingredients. Some children may swap hands during tasks. Children develop hand dominance at around 2-4 years but this can be later.

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File Path:Child Health AHP/OT/Tayside/Pre-Ref.Workstream/Pre-Ref.Advice Sheets

Pre-writing Skills – Advice Sheet

USEFUL WEBSITES

www.donnayoung.com/penmanship/printing-readiness

www.therapiststreetforkids.com

www.kidzone.ws

www.kidslearningstation.com/fine-motor-skills

www.sparklebox.co.uk/fine-motor-control

www.activityvillage.co.uk