



Prewriting Activities

Introduction

Before children are ready for writing, they need to develop hand skills and they need to develop strength and control in their arms and shoulders so that they can steady themselves. Children must be able to understand where their hands are during a task, what the movements feel like and how they move. Here are some activities to develop hand, arm and shoulder control as well as hand eye coordination.

Play dough

(to warm up fingers before other exercises)

- Squeeze dough to warm up fingers
- Roll out a sausage with both hands. Pinch a ridge along the top with index finger and thumb of writing hand. Flatten the ridge with fingers and thumb in turn.
- Roll small (pea sized) balls between thumb, index finger and middle finger gently. These can then be squashed between thumb and each finger in turn (keeping web space open in a circle) or flicked by thumb and each finger in turn.

Finger Exercises

for warming up before writing as well as if hands getting tired/ sore when writing).

- Touch fingers to thumb in turn, first one hand, then the other, then both hands together
- Shake out hands at sides.
- Make stars (fingers stretched) and then close hands, several times.

Finger Tips

*This grasp involves accurately bringing together the **tips** of the thumb, index finger and often the middle finger. The following are useful activities to encourage and strengthen this grip:*

- Construction toys e.g. Lego, Meccano.
- Games – using small figures or button / tiddlywinks sized markers. E.g. Connect 4
- Peg Boards – with medium to small sized pegs for the finger tip grip.
- Craft activities – gluing small objects, sticking stickers or threading.
- Threading activities – with medium to small beads, pieces of straws, or punched holes and a lace. Can progress to lacing more complex patterns.
- Picking up and sorting objects, gradually using smaller and smaller items e.g. pasta shapes, beans, lentils, screws, nuts. Tweezers or clothes pegs can be used for variety.
- Paper tug-of-war for two people. Use strips of paper or card and can be held with different fingertips and thumb.
- Put pennies into a piggy bank, play with finger puppets and spinning tops.

Thumb exercises

(strengthening thumb muscles).

- Thumb wrestling encourages the practice of thumb movements in both larger movements as well as in strength of the thumb.
- Draw a face on the thumb and get the thumbs to talk to each other in a 'thumbs up' position (hand fisted).

Small Object Games

Place a small object in the palm of the child's hand. Have the child use the fingers of that hand to roll the object up the hand until it is held between the thumb, index and middle fingers. Repeat a few times with each hand, trying to get the child to increase the number of objects they can manage in their hands at one time, keeping most in the palm and taking each to the finger tips in turn e.g. play a game with small pieces (e.g. travel games), peg board pictures, posting coins.

Pencil Exercises

Pick up the pencil (as if going to write), and walk the fingers up and down the pencil keeping the three finger grasp.

- Use a pencil with a rubber at one end, and turn the pencil around in the hand to rub out, and back again to write.
- Use a click pen and keeping the pen in one hand, click the pen and then walk the fingers back to hold it ready for writing

Take the lid of a marker pen, while holding the pen in one hand

Pencil Control Exercises

First, make sure the child is holding the pencil correctly (tripod, with open web-space forming a circle, and thumb bent at the last joint, and tips of index and thumb touching the pencil just behind the nail). Ensure that the child rests the side of his hand and forearm on the table. The two small fingers should be curled under, helping to provide stability to the hand, so that the fingers are free to move when forming letters.

- Scribbling –Encourage the child to use finger movements with circular scribbles, keeping the hand on the paper. Try to keep the scribbles slow and careful.
- Flowers/suns – start with a small circle and encourage the child to draw ovals as petals or sunbeams touching the circle each time and moving around the circle in all directions. They can often manage two directions but not all the way around and may need you to show them where to go with another pencil.
- Snails and whirlpools – start with a small c shape and draw a spiral, getting slowly bigger, without crossing any lines, keeping the hand in one position, stretching the fingers. The reverse can also be done, starting with a circle and drawing a spiral that gets gradually

smaller.

- Highlighted scribbles – make small squiggles with a highlighter and the child tries to keep inside the coloured line. Small shapes and letters can also be used.

Arm and Shoulder exercises

- Tug-of-war
- Tummy-lying activities on the floor, with arms propped on forearms to read books, colour or do puzzles.
- Wheelbarrow walking
- Animal walks
- Playground equipment, such as the climbers and monkey bars, at your local park.
- Obstacle courses

Therapy ball activities.

Hand Eye Co-Ordination Games

- Roll, throw and catch large sized balls.
- ·Puzzles - Use 4-6 piece puzzles. Support your child to match the picture to the box,
 - identify areas of the picture the piece matches with, ask the child to start with corners/straight edges
- Inset puzzles.
- ·Copy block patterns- build stair shapes, bridges, pyramids, trains using up to 6
- blocks - get the child to copy your example

- Play balloon volleyball, scarf toss and catch.
- ·Draw and scribble.
- Colour simple shapes using Paint with Water books (the colours magically appear).
- Pour, ladle and spoon soapy water into different sized containers at the kitchen sink.
- Play Simon Says and use terms such as "up & down," "back & forth" and "front & back."

Sensory Activities

- Hide pennies, beads or other small objects in Play-Dough, sand or rice tubs for your child to find.
- ·Draw shapes and lines on sandpaper or carpet squares.
- ·Put everyday objects such as a key, toothbrush, spoon, eraser, paper clips into a bag. Your child identifies the objects by feeling them.
- Whole Body Copying Games - e.g. Simon Says, a variety of animal walks.
- Make lines, shapes and letters by: finger painting, painting with food or shaving cream, painting with water on the path and even with your fingers in the sand.

Other Activity Ideas

- ·Play shape and letter matching or recognition games
- ·Practise writing the shapes in the air.
- ·Draw using crayons, chalk, pencils and pens

and crayons

- ·Use chalk to draw on the pavement.
- ·Writing on coloured paper, or black paper.
- ·Use special painting books where with a wet finger the colour appears by magic.
- ·Use Magna-doodle writers to practice.
- ·Use painting easels or pin paper on walls to paint and draw.
- ·Draw a person - Ask the child to name body parts as you draw or name missing parts.
- ·Focus on copying circles, crosses, vertical, horizontal and diagonal lines
- Start Big, End Small: Teach a child pre-writing shapes using big movements then make the shapes smaller!