



Upper limb Stability for Writing

Weak muscles in hands and shoulders can result in poor pencil control and untidy written work. These exercises are aimed at strengthening, and should have a beneficial effect on fine motor skills and handwriting.

Shoulder Exercises:

To strengthen the muscles around the shoulder girdle, arms and hands.

Press-ups – start on the floor on hands and knees. Keeping the back and neck in a straight line, bend the elbows until the nose almost touches the ground. Straighten the elbows until you are back in the first position. Do the movements in a slow controlled manner; increase the number of press-ups each time, as the muscle strength improves.

Wall press-ups - stand at arms length away from a wall, place hands flat on the wall. Bend the elbows keeping the back and neck straight, until the nose nearly touches the wall. Straighten the arms to get back to the first position.

Crab Walks – start on hands and knees but with tummy and head upwards. Keep bottom up off the ground. If space is limited, see how long the position can be maintained.

Push-ups on a chair – start sitting on a chair. Place hands onto the chair seat next to the knees and straighten the arms, leaning forwards through the arms, letting the bottom come off the chair seat. Repeat, increasing number as strength improves.

Some commercially available toys can be positioned vertically eg Etch a sketch. Magna Doodle, pegboards

Drawing or painting on a vertical surface ie blackboard, wall or easel. On blackboard painting with water

Cleaning blackboard, washing/polishing car

Wringing out cloths, flannels etc using both hands.

Swimming.

Gardening activities such as digging, raking, sweeping

Climbing and crawling games, obstacle courses, wheelbarrow races

Weight bearing through one arm whilst doing another activity with the other, eg: leaning against wall with one arm whilst drawing on a vertical surface with the other

Swinging on monkey bars and rings etc

Any activity that involves pushing/pulling against resistance

Hand Exercises

Ask the child to shake their hands before and in between exercises to release tension in the muscles.

Sit with palms together, fingers spread. Press fingers together, push elbows out and heels of hands down. Repeat at least 5 times.

Pretend to play fast music on the piano or drum fingers on the table to sound like heavy rain.

Manipulative activities with resistant materials eg clay, play doh or putty - use to strengthen fingers by manipulating e.g. rolling out sausages and balls, flattening on the table surface and poking straight fingers into the dough, hiding small shapes inside to be retrieved.

Flick football - use small pieces of paper, and try to flick them into a circle in the centre of the table.

Twirling pencils – hold a pen or pencil in one hand using thumb, index and middle fingers only, and twirl the pen around in circles.

Squeezing stress balls or rubber figures e.g. stretch Armstrong.

Stirring or kneading stiff mixtures such as cake mix or modelling clay