

Dear Parents,

I am doing this workshop so that we can ensure a consistent writing experience for your child by using similar techniques and language—“staying on the same page” so to speak! PLEASE DO NOT FORCE YOUR CHILD TO SIT AND PRACTICE HANDWRITING EACH DAY! YUCK! THIS IS THE OPPOSITE OF WHAT I AM TRYING TO ACHIEVE.

Remember every child is different and unique. They develop at their own rate and there is no definitive timetable for these skills. Pick and choose from these activities based on your own child's interests and current skill level. Incorporate these activities into your lifestyle and keep them fun, don't worry about “scheduling practice time,” just take advantage of teachable moments.

After looking over this material, please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Writing rocks!

Mrs. Kestler

yorkiedudette@yahoo.com

Helpful Websites for Printable Worksheets

<http://www.first-school.ws/theme/handwriting.htm>

http://www.writingwizard.longcountdown.com/multi-word_handwriting_worksheet_maker.html

<http://www.handwritingworksheets.com/>

To Encourage a love of writing.....

Keep the pressure off

To raise a writer, give your child every opportunity to put pen to paper, chalk to sidewalk, paint to easel, and marker to poster board, but make sure it's all in fun. Your preschooler is just beginning to understand how words are used to convey thoughts, and is still developing the fine motor skills needed to form letters. Your goal, at this stage, is to encourage her so she'll realize that writing is an activity with its own unique rewards.

Experiment with writing tools

Let her try all different types of writing implements — crayons, chalk, pens, pencils, paints. Experiment with fat and skinny writing implements.

Shortened "nubs" promote a more correct grip. Even dough and modeling clay are writing tools — you can roll them out and form rope letters (this helps develop her motor skills as well). Keep these supplies in a drawer she can reach easily.

Experiment with surfaces

For starters, white paper is a must. Big pads of newsprint are inexpensive, and children love having a big surface to fill in. But don't forget about chalkboards, sidewalks, and dry erase boards.

Model good writing habits

Let your child see you writing on a daily basis: making to-do lists, writing e-mails or letters, keeping your own journal. Young children are copycats: If you love to write, chances are your child will learn to share your enthusiasm.

Use the computer

Log on and let your child compose words on the computer (depending on her age and dexterity you may have to help her). Feel free to let her click the keyboard even if she's too young to spell actual words. While she's not actually crafting letters with her own hands when she types, she's still practicing writing. She's learning that letters combine into words and phrases that convey thoughts.

Be enthusiastic

Show an interest in what your child writes or draws, even if it just looks like scribbling to you. Be specific: Saying "You're really learning how to write your name" is much more meaningful to your child than "You are such a good writer!" And remember to compliment her on the process of writing as well as the result. That is, say things like, "You really take your time when you write," or "I can see how much care you took with this word."

Remember your child is still developing the muscles and skills to enable writing.

To strengthen gross motor muscles and promote eye-hand coordination....

Practice vertical writing such as drawing on a mounted chalkboard and painting and drawing on an easel.

Write in shaving cream.

Write in the sand or snow with a stick.

Write on the steamed up mirror in the bathroom!

There are several things that make handwriting more difficult for one child than another. One is the rate of development.

Fine motor skills are the ability to control small precise movements with the fingers, wrists and hands. Children need to develop this ability before they can write legibly. The age during which these skills develop vary from child to child. Some children have amazing finger dexterity at ages 2 or 3, while others are still developing this dexterity at ages 5 and 6 or beyond.

Give children a wide range of prewriting activities to promote the development of the necessary skills. Fine motor tasks that encourage eye-hand coordination of any kind help children with writing.

To strengthen fine motor muscles

Play small peg games such as Light Bright

Practice stringing beads and sewing lacing cards

Transfer small beans or coins into small tubes like film canisters

To practice and reinforce pre-writing and writing skills....

Make a scrapbook journal. Take snapshots of your child with friends and relatives. Paste them in a journal or scrapbook that you make together or buy. Have your child tell you who is in the picture and where it was taken, and write down what he says as a caption. This will be a wonderful keepsake for him when he is older.

Keep a diary or big calendar. Children love to talk about themselves. By keeping a diary or calendar, your child learns to "talk" about himself and his activities in writing. Even if your preschooler is still struggling with letters, get him in the habit of writing a word or drawing a picture in a special notebook or calendar on a daily basis, using crayons or markers. Make it a regular part of his routine (before bed is often a good time).

Play with alphabet refrigerator magnets. Playing with letter magnets on the fridge helps your child practice writing and spelling. For portability, you can attach the letters to a cookie tray.

Make an alphabet book. Fold a piece of construction paper in half, insert blank white pages, and staple the binding. Have your child write one letter per page, in upper and lower case, and draw a picture that starts with that letter.

Write together. Whenever you sit down to write a letter or a shopping list, or to pay bills or fill out an order form, ask your child to join you. Give her some writing paper, a blank check or deposit slip, or an order form of her own to work on while you take care of business. She will learn that writing is an essential part of everyday life.

Use modeling clay or Play-Dough to form words. First, make large flashcards with letters of the alphabet or simple words. (Laminate the cards if you can.) Then roll out thin ropes of clay. Ask your child to trace the words or letters on the cards using the ropes of clay. Not only will she learn to recognize words, but playing with the clay will help build the muscles in her fingers and hone the fine motor skills she'll need to write.

Keep a travel log. When you're on the road together, whether traveling across the country or just to Grandma's, have your child take along a notebook in which she can draw pictures of what she sees and does. She can take it on trips to the zoo or the beach, too. Help her add a descriptive word or two.

Make a list. Children love to draw up lists. Ask yours to create a wish list of toys she'd like for an upcoming birthday or holiday. Writing about something as fun as toys will link writing and enjoyment in her mind. You can also ask her make a list of items to pack for a vacation. Some children enjoy drawing up "to do" lists for each day or week.

Take dictation. Have your child dictate a story to you while you write it down. She can talk about her birthday party, for instance, or a trip to the movies. This is a great way to reinforce the connection between the written and spoken word. And once your child gets more comfortable forming letters and writing words on her own, which usually occurs sometime during first grade, you can switch roles. This will boost not only her writing skills but her listening skills as well.

"Publish" a book together. Find drawings and writings that your child did in previous years. Paste them on pieces of construction paper, and ask your child to talk about each entry. Using heavy cardboard, make a cover for the pages and have your child decorate it. Ask her to compose a title page, listing her own name as author. Punch holes in the pages and bind the book together with yarn or ribbon. Treat it like a real book by storing it on the bookshelf with your child's other books.

Play games that promote writing.

Tic tac toe and the initial game are great games to promote writing skills. Dot to dot pictures and mazes are also great practice.

Other ideas ...

- Organize a chalkboard or bulletin board for written messages for all family members.
- Involve your child in family writing activities such as making shopping lists, instructions for babysitters, directions for visitors to your house, plans for birthday parties, and notes for school.
- Have your child write thank-you letters for gifts.
- Encourage your child to write and draw cards to send to relatives and friends for birthdays and holidays.
- Promote letter-writing of all kinds, such as notes to the tooth fairy or pen pals.
- Suggest special writing projects. Your child can make yard sale signs, posters for his or her room, or label favorite objects with "sticky notes."

There are several things that make handwriting more difficult for one child than another. One is the rate of development.

Fine motor skills are the ability to control small precise movements with the fingers, wrists and hands. Children need to develop this ability before they can write legibly. The age during which these skills develop vary from child to child. Some children have amazing finger dexterity at ages 2 or 3, while others are still developing them at ages 5 and 6 or beyond.

Give children a wide range of prewriting activities to promote the development of the necessary skills. "Fine motor tasks that encourage eye-hand coordination of any kind help children with writing,". These may include:

- Placing small pegs in pegboards;
- Sticking golf tees in Styrofoam;
- Dropping pebbles in skinny tubes;
- Moving coins, buttons and beads from one container to another with the index finger and thumb.
- Finding pennies and other small objects hidden in playdough.

Get a Grip

The correct grip is one of the most important things you can teach your child. This is also the first thing you should check if your child is having difficulty with her handwriting. The wrong grip may be causing your child to strain too hard physically to manipulate the pencil.

Is your child's thumb actually on the pencil, or is it wrapped around the pencil or the other fingers? She should grip the pencil equally by the thumb, the side of the middle finger and the tip of the index finger. This is called a "tripod grip."



Pencil Grasp Activities

Introduction

The manner in which a child holds a pencil is called "pencil grasp." It involves the positioning of their fingers on the pencil & the position of the

pencil in their hand. Usually between the ages of 4 & 5, most child have developed a mature & efficient pencil grasp.

An efficient pencil grasp is one that allows the greatest amount of finger movement and is the least fatiguing for the muscles of the hands. These qualities are very important when learning to print & handwrite.

The most commonly seen efficient pencil grasp is called a "Tripod" pencil grasp. It is characterized by holding the pencil with the thumb, index, and middle fingers, and is used by most adults.

Many skills are required to develop an efficient pencil grasp. These include the ability to move fingers in isolation of each other, adequate hand muscle strength, & good wrist stability.

Delicate Touch (the ability to use different amounts of pressure)

- Paint with an eye-dropper
- Pick up fragile objects (Cornflakes, mini-marshmallows, small pieces of foam) with tweezers, tongs or fingers, without breaking or denting them
- Drawing or tracing on tissue paper
- Line up Dominos on their end or sides
- Release and count drops of water from an eye dropper one at a time

Precision Rotation (the ability to spin objects with your fingers)

- Activities that require rotating an object in one's finger tips
- Spinning tops and playing Jacks
- Hold a flat object such as a book or plate on extended fingers, and ask the child to rotate the object on their fingertips.
- Threading nuts on/off of bolts (progress from large to small)
- Hold two balls in one hand and attempt to rotate one ball around the other.

Separation of the Sides of the Hands (the ability to hold something in your hand while using your fingers)

- Activities that require one side of the hand for stability & the other side for movement
- Squeeze the trigger on a spray bottle with the pointer & index finger, while the thumb and other fingers stabilize the bottle.
- Roll small balls of Playdoh between the thumb and index finger
- Give the child a number of small items such as coins, beads, or bingo chips to hold in one hand. Then ask them to sort and place the items into a container one at a time using only their thumb and index finger.

The Arches of the Hands (general hand development)

- Roll objects such as a small ball or silly putty within the palm
- Roll a pair of dice within cupped hands
- Activities that require weight bearing through open hands such as wheel barrel walking and imitating animals by crawling on all four
- Line up a row of several pennies and turn them over as quickly as possible using finger movements
- Open & close zip-lock bags using fingertips, ensuring that web spaces do not collapse
- Ask the child to cup their hands with their palms up, and gradually add grains of rice (or coffee, sand, water, etc.) to the maximum amount the child can hold.

Small Muscles of the Hand (muscle strength)

- Play tug-of-war with small diameter objects such as elastic bands, coffee stir sticks, or plastic lacing.
- String beads ensuring that the

child using finger movements to place the string through the bead rather placing the bead over the string.

- Insert pegs into a peg-board
- Wring out clothes or sponges
- Playing with clay, putty or Playdoh
- Games & toys that involve grasping or squeezing things

Wrist Stability (wrist strength)

- Drawing/writing on a chalk board or another surface that is above eye level
- Use a rolling pin to flatten Playdoh, cracker crumbs, cookie dough, etc. and make sure that the hands are open rather than closed around the handles
- Position games and toys on a vertical surface
- Paint, draw, colour, etc. on a vertical surface or mounted on a clipboard.

Please refer to the Articles & Information section of our website for information on developing a mature pencil grasp.

Copyright © 2002 Skill Builders. All Rights Reserved.

Email Us at:

info@skillbuildersonline.com

Occupational Therapy

Skills for the job of living.

Visit Us Online at:

www.skillbuildersonline.com

Fine Motor Activities for Pre-School Aged Children

The area of fine motor skills is crucial to a child's success throughout school. Fine motor

skills refer to one's ability to grasp and utilize an object with their hands. This is important in almost all activities of life such as dressing, bathing, writing, & cutting. Consequently fine motor skills are of utmost importance in the classroom and throughout life.

The following activities will help your child refine their fine motor abilities.

1. Scissor Ships: Draw broad, straight lines on a sheet of paper. Tell students that the scissors are like big ships breaking through ice, and they have to be opened wide before moving on.
2. Pizza making: Give each student a piece of clay approximately the size of their palm. Have students roll the clay into a ball with both hands. Do not let students roll the clay on the table. Once the clay is in the shape of a ball, have students flatten the clay with their hand. Ask students to pinch off small pieces of clay and roll them into little balls with the thumb and first finger of one hand to represent the pepperoni or sausage for the pizza. Students must place the "toppings" on the pizza.
3. Secret Key: Place a padlock on a box filled with a goodie of some kind (fruit, stickers, etc.). Place several keys in front of the box-with only 1 key being the right key. Students must manipulate the keys in order to get a prize.
4. Rubber-band Wrap: Give students various sizes of rubber bands and several different sized jars and cans.

Students must stretch the rubber bands over the cans and jars.

5. Scissor Cutting Activities: Students cut old magazines, greeting cards, and newspapers to find a specific letter or picture, and paste it into a collage.

6. Jewelry Making: Students design jewelry from macaroni, buttons, and beads.

7. Building Block Activities: Students use plain blocks, legos, or tinker toys to build and or copy designs.

8. Coloring: Students use crayons, colored pencils, or markers to color pre-drawn pictures.

9. Push Pegs: Draw circles or any shapes on a piece of styrofoam. Give students golf tees or small wooden dowels. Students must push the pegs through the circles on the styrofoam. This reinforces tip-to-tip grasp with the thumb and index finger.

10. Sand Writing: Place a layer of sand (or flour) in a baking pan. Ask students to write or draw in the sand with their fingers.

11. Chalk Scraps: Give students small pieces of colored chalk. Instruct students to hold the chalk piece between their thumb and first two fingers (the last two fingers can remain next to the second finger, but not touching the chalk). Allow students to draw on the chalkboard using this grasp. This grasp reinforces proper grasp for future pencil writing tasks.

12. Pick Up Objects: Have students pick up small objects such as pennies, marbles, or

beans and place them in a bottle with a small opening or small opening in a box.

13. Q-Tip Art: Have students paint pictures with a Q-Tip.

14. Card Bowl: Cut a small rectangular shape in the lid of a bowl (Cool Whip sized). Have students put playing cards through the hole one at a time.

15. Spoons: Have students pickup beans with a spoon and transfer them from one container to another. Students should be reminded to maintain proper grasp (which is the same as their pencil grasp).

16. American Sign Language: Teach students basic letters and/or signs.

Copyright © 2002 Skill Builders. All Rights Reserved.

Email Us at:
info@skillbuildersonline.com

Occupational Therapy

Skills for the job of living.

Visit Us Online at:

www.skillbuildersonline.com