



Grow a Reader & Writer

Tips for Improving Handwriting, Fine Motor and Reading Skills

Tips for Developing Handwriting & Fine Motor Skills

Develop Motor Skills

Encourage participation in variety of large and small motor activities to improve visual-perception skills, coordination, arm/hand/finger strength, and ability to cross the midline*.

Activities that improve visual-motor and coordination skills

- sports
- play catch
- jump rope
- hopscotch
- jacks
- [Jenga](#)
- arranging dominos
- [Brain Gym](#) exercises



Activities that develop the pincer grasp (pinching with thumb and forefinger)

- put pegs in a [peg board](#) or play [Battleship](#)
- [fuse beads](#)
- glue confetti or small squares of tissue paper onto paper
- sorting pebbles, small rocks or buttons
- make necklaces and bracelets with beads and string/pipe cleaners
- [Pick up Sticks](#)
- [Don't Spill the Beans](#)
- [Wikki Stix](#) or [Bendaroos](#)
- [Operation](#) or [Perfection](#)
- Legos
- marbles
- dreidels
- chopsticks
- any activity that requires picking up small objects



Activities that strengthen finger, hand and arm muscles

- squeeze on a stress ball (make your own with flour in a balloon!)
- open and close a metal clip or clothespin
- play with play dough or clay
- play with balls of wax (save wax from Babybel cheeses!)
- cut out objects from construction paper
- make food - roll out pizza dough, make cookies with cookie cutters
- paint in broad strokes on an easel (make large X's to practice crossing the midline*)



- draw with sidewalk chalk outside
- write or draw in a prone position – laying on floor propped up by elbows
- do the monkey bars
- learn an instrument

***Crossing the midline** is the ability to do work on the opposite side of the body with the dominant hand – i.e. right hand doing work on the left side of the body. How does your child write lowercase t? With two strokes crossing over each other (crossing the midline)? Or with three strokes, one vertical line and two horizontal lines coming out of the vertical line (not crossing the midline)?

Encourage Child-Generated Writing



Provide Materials

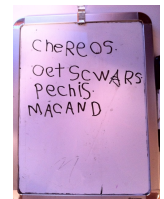
Provide easily accessible writing utensils (pencils, markers, pens, crayons, chalk) and surfaces (paper, whiteboards, chalkboards) during playtime.

Learn Writing through Play

Allow children to observe and imitate you and other real-life situations. Remember children will experiment with writing through different stages (scribbles, symbols and drawings, random letters and numbers, phonetic spelling, conventional spelling and grammar). Allow them to progress through these stages at their own pace and encourage all forms of written communication!

Suggested Activities

- make a grocery list while playing house
- write menus and take orders while playing restaurant
- set up a “concern box” for children to leave confidential notes about things that are bothering them – also cuts down on tattling!
- make cards for family and friends for holidays or just “thinking of you” moments
- write and mail real letters to family and friends
- provide children with a personal journal to record memories and feelings



Establish a Tripod Grasp



Left Hand

Right Hand

Demonstrate how to hold a pencil correctly by teaching your child this technique. Lay the pencil on the table vertically with the point facing toward you. Pinch the pencil just above the point with your thumb and pointer finger. While maintaining this grasp, pick the pencil up and flip it so the body of the pencil rests in the crease between your thumb and pointer finger. Put the remaining three fingers underneath the pencil for support.

To encourage this grasp have your child write with short [golf pencils](#), triangular [pencils](#) or [crayons](#), or use a [pencil grip](#) such as the [Crossover Grip Ergonomic Writing Aid](#) or [The Writing Claw](#).

Tips for Enhancing Reading Skills



Point out letters and words in the world around you

Environmental print is print that is found in the environment around us such as road signs, billboards, cereal boxes, etc. When going for a walk outside or looking at objects in your home, point out different letters and words. This helps children develop an awareness of print all around them, understand that print has meaning, and remember words by associating them with images or objects.

Label the home or classroom

Create your own environmental print by labeling common objects with word cards such as desk, table, door, fridge, computer, bed, etc.



Read to children everyday!

While it's great for beginning readers to practice reading texts independently, all children, regardless of age and ability, should be read to daily. Reading more complicated story book texts exposes children to complex plots and themes as well as advanced vocabulary they would otherwise not encounter in books at their level – not to mention help them develop a love of books and reading. Read both fiction and non-fiction stories.

Ask open-ended questions about stories

In order to develop deep comprehension skills and independent thinking, children need not to just be able to recall information in texts but apply critical thinking skills and make inferences. Ask questions such as, "What does this remind you of? Why might the character be feeling this way or doing these actions? What might happen next? How could the story have ended differently?"

Provide low-stress opportunities for children to practice reading skills

Many children find it difficult to read in front of other adults, especially parents, for fear of failure. Encourage children to read to younger siblings or students or to an audience of stuffed animals – try not to interrupt!

