




# GETTING READY TO WRITE

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## HANDWRITING WARM-UPS

Use handwriting warm ups before writing to help with endurance and strength. They can also be helpful when child's hand becomes tired.

- **Chair-push ups** - while sitting, put your hands onto the sides of the chair next to your hips – try to lift your bottom off the chair, and in stay in that position for 5 seconds. Feet should not be on the floor to assist!). This is also a good one to do if your hand aches from handwriting.
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- **Push your hands together** in a prayer position with your elbows out to the side, while sitting or standing, and holds for 5 to 10 seconds.
  - **Bird cages**. Put your fingertips on the table, with your hands arched up. Your hands should look like birdcages. Press down onto the table with your fingers, without allowing the *birdcages* to collapse. Hold for 5 to 10 seconds.
  - **Tripod stretch and bend** – hold a pen or pencil in a proper tripod grasp i.e. between the tip of the thumb and forefinger resting against the third finger. Do it in the air and practice straightening and bending the fingers.
  - **Climb the pole** – Hold pencil vertically in the air. Using finger only (not the palm), climb the hand up and down the pencil.
  - **Shake the hands** out before starting to write.

## ACTIVITIES TO DEVELOP GOOD HANDWRITING

- **Weighted Pens** - Fill a large hollow ball-point pen with lead ball bearings to increase weight of pen for writing tasks. The extra weight gives greater stability to the hand and sensory feedback.
- **Coin Turn** - Rapidly turn over a line of 10 pence coins using finger tips and thumb. Work to increase speed.
- **Tweezers** - Pick up rice or small objects with tweezers and drop them into a container. Each child can work to break his own record for the number of objects in a given time.
- **Ball Rolling** - Roll small balls of clay or soft paper (e.g. straw wrappers) using the pad of middle or index finger against the thumb.
- **Threading** - Thread string, fishing line or shoelaces through eye hooks or the eye of a needle using a flexion-extension finger motion.
- **Mazes** - Start with large mazes and gradually reduce their size.
- **Multisensory learning** - practice letters using multisensory media e.g. different kinds of paper (brown, waxed etc.), drawing in sand, finger-paints, lotions, shaving cream etc.

#### ACTIVITIES TO DEVELOP HAND STRENGTH

Use play dough or therapeutic putty for the following activities. Putty provides more resistance.

- **Grasp**

Squeeze the therapeutic putty 10-20 times using alternate hands, keeping the shape of the ball. Make sure that all fingers and the thumb are included.



- **Pancake**

Flatten the ball with the palm of the hand into a flat pancake. Hide small objects (pennies, marbles etc.), then dig into it with finger tips to find them.



- **Tripod Pinch**

Pinch the play dough using the skilled fingers (thumb, index and middle finger)



#### POSITIONING FOR HANDWRITING

- **Encourage a correct tripod grasp on the pencil**

- Index finger on top of the pencil
- Middle finger supporting from underneath the pencil,
- Thumb pinching the pencil from the side.
- This is the most efficient and effective grasp for writing.



- **Encourage the correct wrist position**

Discourage a hooked wrist position, by positioning the paper further back on the table. Ensure child's wrist is touching the paper at all times when writing.



- **Ensure correct paper positioning**

Place the paper in the centre of the child's body and at a slight angle to the desk. The paper should be supported by the non-writing hand. There should be sufficient space to rest the child's forearm (from the elbow to the hand) on the table.

For right handed children the paper needs to be placed a little to the right and tilted 30° to the left.

For left handed children it needs to be the opposite.



## ENCOURAGING NEAT HANDWRITING

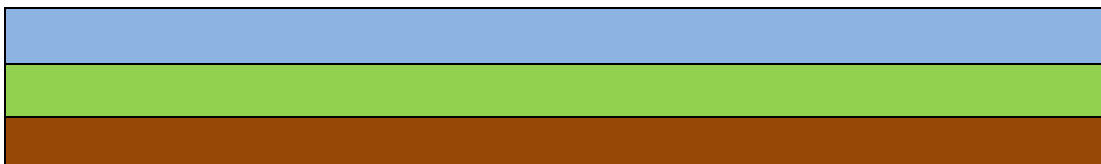
- **Consistent spacing** – spaces should be the same between letters and between words. Encourage the child to leave a finger space between words.

- **Correct placement**

'tall' letters (such as t, k, d) reach up high (sky - blue)

'small' letters (such as a, c, e) sit on the line (ground – green)

'long' letters (such as g, y, j) hang down below the line (soil – brown)



- **Consistent sizing** – ensure all 'tall' letters are the same height, all 'small' letters are the same size, and all 'long' letters reach down the same amount.

- **Appropriate pressure** - not pushing too hard (can you feel the indents of the writing on the back of the paper) or too soft (can you see it clearly). You may like to talk to child about the colour of his writing and whether you can see it from the back of the page – if so, he is using too much pressure.
- **Consistent slope** – all letters sloping in the same direction. This can be very difficult for kids to master, however encourage child to try to make their letters all go in the same direction. It may be helpful to provide them with a slope card to prompt them when writing.
- **Good letter formation** – letters formed in the most effective way.