

Dear Parents and carers,

I have put together some ideas to support strengthening of hand muscles as a precursor to pencil control and writing. I hope you will find some of them helpful.

Fine motor building activities

Before children can control a pencil or write they need to have strong muscles in their hands and arms.

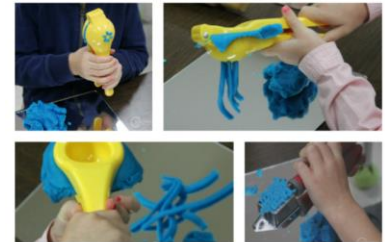
Below are some ideas for activities and more ideas can be found on [The Imagination Tree - Creative play and learning for kids](http://TheImaginationTree.com)

Playdough is great for helping build hand strength. You can follow the fun "dough disco" routines on YouTube with actions and songs. You could make your own sand dough using the recipe below. This can then be used with shells to make prints.



FINE MOTOR PLAY SQUEEZING PLAY DOUGH

teaching2and3yearolds.com



Squeezing pipettes and pegs will strengthen the fingers and thumb in preparation for a tripod grip





Cutting grass, leaves or bits of paper and card will help build hand strength and scissor control.



Children can also cut up plastic straws before threading onto pipe cleaners or wool. Small beads are also good for threading.



A good way to practise letter formation before children have a secure pencil grasp is to make the letters in sand with a finger tip, stick or paintbrush

Try this activity to help your child recognise and spell their name without the need for writing.





Rolls of unused wallpaper or backing paper are great for children to use large motor movements for mark making. Just roll out across the floor or garden. You could also hang the paper vertically over a door.

The importance of working on a **vertical** surface... short video and activity ideas

https://theinspiredtreehouse.com/motor-skills-and-more-working-on-a-vertical-surface/?j_source=fb

Here are a few ideas to try at home...

- *Tape a piece of paper to the wall or door and trace objects or stencils
- *Paint with paint brushes or paint rollers
- *Play with magnets on the refrigerator
- *Paint with shaving cream or finger paint on an easel
- *Play with felt shapes and pictures on a felt board
- *Draw and color with chalk on a chalkboard
- *Writing with dry erase markers or window markers on a window or hanging mirror
- *Writing and drawing with bath foam or bath crayons while in the bath
- *Prop iPads and other tablets up using a slant board or the prop that comes on the case. Let children use a stylus to encourage use of an efficient grasp.
- *Help to wash windows
- *Help to wash the car



Pre-writing skills

Please do not worry if your child is not yet forming letters. First focus on these shapes using fingers in sand or foam, sticks in the mud, chalk on the path, or paint bushes on large paper.

Once they can confidently draw these they will be ready to begin copying letters.

We recommend starting with the first letter of their name and as they master that you can add the next one, one at a time. You can model the rest of their name for them.

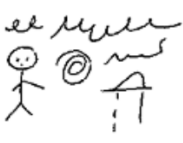
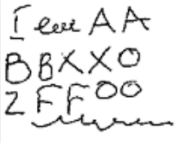

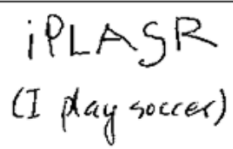
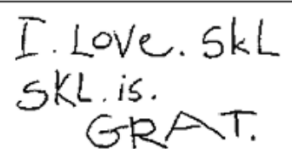
PRE-WRITING SHAPES

Before your child can learn to write, he or she needs to be able to draw these shapes

	—	○	+	
2 years	2½ years	3 years	3½-4 years	
□	/	\	X	△
4 years	4½ years	4½ years	4 years 11 months	5 years 3 months

Children who can draw an oblique cross are able to copy more letters and numbers than children who cannot

■ Stages of Early Writing

Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
		
<p>Scribbles from left to right.</p> <p>Draws picture only.</p>	<p>Uses letters in drawings.</p>	<p>Uses beginning sounds only to communicate about drawing.</p>
Stage 4		Stage 5
		
<p>Uses beginning, ending and middle sounds to write words.</p> <p>Reads writing back to teacher</p> <p>Uses invented spelling to write a sentence.</p>		<p>Writes recognizable words as well as sound spelling to write sentences.</p> <p>Writes from left to right.</p> <p>Is aware of space between words.</p> <p>Experiments with punctuation.</p>

When children begin to use independent writing as part of their play they will use lines, shapes and familiar letters e.g. from their name, to form their 'words'. This is known as emergent writing and should be actively encouraged. Children might like to write a story, caption a picture or write a shopping list. As they develop confidence with letters and sounds they will begin to listen for the sounds (phonemes) in words they want to write and represent them with the corresponding letters (graphemes) they have learnt.

How else can you help?

Let your children see you writing. Children love to mimic what adults do so if they see you writing notes, labels, letters etc they will want to do it too! Point out letters from your child's name in books whilst reading or in the environment. Encourage your child to notice writing and logos in different places and to be curious to what it means. Read signs to them, showing them how the words are written from left to right, top to bottom.



Share a love of reading with your child, encouraging them to join in with well known phrases from familiar stories. When children become familiar with story structure and language they become inspired to create their own, and from storytelling comes story writing.



I hope these are helpful,

Mrs Tomlin and the Nursery Team :)