

Supporting developing hands and writing

As we help our children prepare for the move to reception class, we want to offer as many opportunities to learn fine motor skills and develop our hands, which in turn helps to learn to write. Fine motor control also helps with hand-eye co-ordination which is later linked in with literacy. However, this is not always as easy as you think. We have all had to learn the steps to hold a pencil, write, zip our coats and tie our shoe laces. They require perseverance, repetition and the physical development to be able to do them, it is easy to underestimate the complexity involved.

Before any of this, it is important to understand is the physical development of the hand. At birth, a baby has 19 bones in each hand in the fingers, but not yet have bones in the wrist. There are lots of spaces between the bones, mostly occupied by cartilage, and the wrist bones begin to form at three years old. At this stage, we see more bone and less cartilage and they have more strength than a baby or toddler. This physical development has direct implications for their skill development. Holding a writing implement requires co-ordination and strength. Children's hand bones aren't fully developed until around seven or eight years of age.

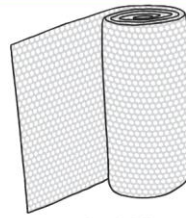
The image below shows the difference between the developing of bones and muscles of a 3 year old and a 7 year old. This is why a child can't write and needs to strengthen their hands in **other ways first**.



This can be through PLAY! Activities that can support fine motor skills are:

- Using tweezers, tongs, or clothes pegs to pick up small objects and pop them in a tub
- Painting water on the fence with a large paint brush
- Holding and using small paintbrushes to make patterns in sand or rice
- Having small crayons, triangular pencils or different sized chucks to use
- Using chucks to make big marks on the play area,
- Completing puzzles and jigsaws
- Arts and crafts and the practice of using scissors
- Using sticky dots on sheet to take off and stick on a sheet
- Threading

Other activities could be;



How many bubbles of the bubble wrap can you pop?



How many beads can you thread on to a string?



Can you separate all the pasta from the peas with your tweezers?



How many paperclips can you join together?

Pre-writing shapes

These are the lines and shapes that your child needs to be able to make before they are able to form letters and numbers. They are a mixture of straight lines, shapes with straight sides and shapes with curves. When you look, all of these are used when forming letters and numbers.

Pre-writing shapes will help your child make more complex shapes as they get nearer to school age. All children develop at different rates but an estimate of when children are able to make pre-writing shapes can be:



About 2 years old



About 2 and a half years old



About 3 years old



About 3 and a half years old



About 4 years old



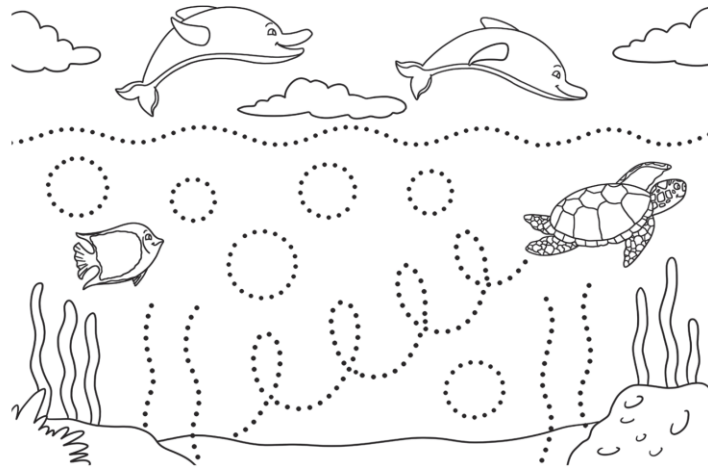
About 4 and a half years old



About 5 years old

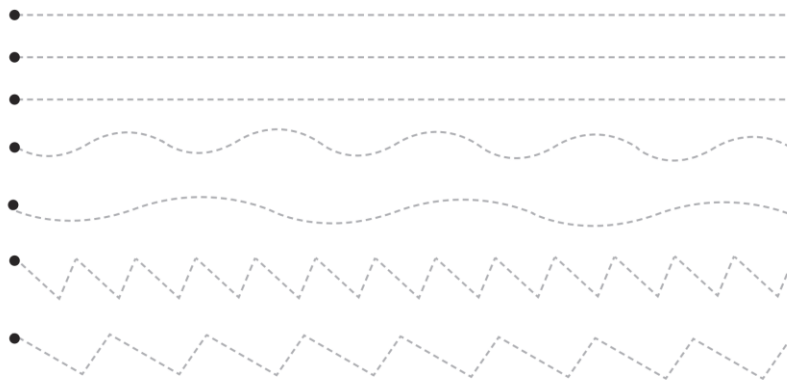
To support your child move to this stage you can use templates that are fun such as;

Under the Sea



Pencil Control

Start from the dots and trace and lines from left to right.



Your child's white boards, pen and whiteboard eraser is enclosed. This can help you practice any form of writing or drawing where ever you are, wipe it off and start again!

If your child is beginning to form letters or numbers we would encourage you to follow the starting point and direction on the board we have enclosed. This is how they will form them in school and it is easier to learn it this way now than re learn later on.

The reverse of the board is plain – remember ANY marks they are making are good, even if they are 'squiggles' and aren't making sense to you. They are all developing the hand strength!

Dough Disco

Dough disco is a great fun way to get your child to strengthen their hand muscles. A tub of play doh is also enclosed with a support leaflet so you can have a try.

We hope you enjoy it and have lots of fun with the activities and games that will all support hand development and ultimately writing and literacy in a fun way.

Enjoy!