

Fine Motor Readiness Skills For Kindergarten

Hand Dominance and Crossing the Midline

Hand dominance typically becomes established between the ages of 3-4. However, some children are still developing a dominant hand at 5 years of age. Trying to force a child to be right handed or left handed will only cause frustration and poor habits to form. When working on dominance, present the writing utensil, scissors or eating utensil in midline and allow the child to decide which hand to use. Once an activity (coloring, writing, cutting or eating) has started, be sure the child stays with the same hand for the duration. On the next activity, start again by presenting materials in midline and allowing for choice. Over time, your child will naturally become either right handed or left handed. If hand dominance is not clear by the end of the kindergarten year, have your teacher contact the school's occupational therapist.

Crossing the midline, means using part of one side of the body in the space of the other side. Some examples of crossing the midline include sitting cross-legged on the floor or drawing a horizontal line from one side of the paper to the other without switching the pencil to the other hand. It is important to be able to fluently cross midline in order to use both hands together to appropriately cut, colour, and form letters.

The following are some activities that help with midline orientation:

- Tracing crosses or horizontal figure 8's on the chalkboard or whiteboard.
- Pushing things together at midline and pulling them apart (pop beads or other things that snap together) or putty
- Playing with play-dough – pulling, pinching using both hands, rolling into balls, using a rolling pin with both hands.
- Clapping bubbles: blow bubbles for child to reach and pop by clapping hands together.
- Keeping time to music by tapping sticks together and apart, alternating clapping hands and patting knees, etc.
- Simple horizontally oriented mazes.
- Matching pages where the child has to draw a line from one side of the page to the other to match two items.
- Batting a balloon back and forth, having child only use dominant hand and making sure they reach across their body to tap balloon

Pencil Grasp



1-2 year age range: palmar grasp



2-3 year age range: pronated grasp



3-4 year age range: static tripod grasp. Using thumb, index and middle fingers. Using wrist or arm to make movements. Fingers are fixed.

4-5 year age range: dynamic tripod grasp. Using thumb, index and middle fingers. Moving and using fingers to make movements.

Teaching Handwriting to your Child

- Avoid dot-to-dot letter tracing; it only teaches how to get from one dot to the next instead of seeing the letter as a whole
- Good posture for writing, right table height (slightly above elbow height)
- The helping hand (non-dominant) needs to help hold paper; that is it's "job"
- Teach capital letters before lowercase
- **Letters start at the top!**
- All letters use the same basic terms:
 - Big Line, Small Line, Big Curve, Small Curve
- Frog Jump Capitals – F E D P B R N M ("Big line down; jump to the top")
- Starting Corner Capitals – H K L U V W X Y Z (All start at the same corner)
- Center Starting Capitals – C O G S A I T J (start at a midline point)
- Letters a, c, d, g, o, q, s all begin with letter c stroke ("magic c") and then continue. The teaching script for "a" – "magic c, bump up, back down"
- Teaching order for lowercase letters:
 - c o s v w (easier to write since they're the same as capitals only smaller) t (like a capital T only crossed lower)
 - a c d g q s ("Magic C" letters)
 - u i e (completes the vowels thus used frequently)
 - l k y j (transition group; starts above the lines or goes below the lines) p r n m h b ("diver letters"; dive down, come up and swim over to the right) f x z (difficult starting point (f) or infrequently used (x,z))

Practical Ways to Practice Handwriting and Learn Letters!

- Wet, Dry, Try – Teacher/Parent writes the letter on chalkboard first; student erases by tracing the letter with a damp sponge; student traces again using a finger to “dry” the chalkboard; student writes with chalk over the imprint of the letter
- One model – one practice (so students aren’t repeating errors)
- Teach top, middle, bottom of lines
- Letter Tic Tac Toe (instead of using X’s and O’s, use any two letters; multiple practices without feeling like practice)
- To create traceable letters, use Word Art on your Microsoft Word program. Use Comic Sans font for the correct “a” formation. You will have a hollow letter or word for your student to trace.
- Print your model using a yellow highlighter. Give your student a black marker and have them “make the yellow disappear” when tracing.
- Google “Free handwriting worksheets” for practice sheets at home.
- Paint with water – dip a Q-tip in water and practice spelling the words on a chalkboard. The words will disappear like magic, leaving the chalkboard clean.
- Shaving cream practice – write in shaving cream (or can use pudding or whipped cream)
- Scratch n’ Sniff – write letters using glue on paper, then sprinkle with Jell-O.
- Finger Paint Bags – place paint or hair gel in a freezer ziplock bag. Reinforce the opening with tape. Practice writing on the outside of the bag.
- Disappearing Act – use chalk to write on black construction paper; spray and watch the words disappear and reappear
- Spelling Magic – use a white crayon to write words on white construction paper. Go over them with watered down tempera paint or watercolors. Words appear like magic!
- Salt Box Spelling – place salt or sand in a box and write
- Twist Tie Spelling – use twist-ties from the grocery store to form letters



Strengthening From the Shoulders to the Fingers and Fine Motor Coordination



Shoulder and Core Work:

Crawling
Wheelbarrow Walking
Carrying books
Carrying bins of toys
Pull wagon with weighted items
Pull sibling / friend on a blanket

Hand Strengthening:

Squeeze Playdoh, cookie batter, goop, squirt bottle
Snap beads
Hammer / screwdriver work

Scissor activities
Tweezers and tong activities
Hid items in putty and dig for them

Tug of War
Wall push ups
Paint the house with water on a paintbrush
Crab walk
Climb on playground equipment
Climb trees

Soak up liquid with eyedropper or turkey baster

Open and close a variety of jars
“Pac Man” – cut a slit in a tennis ball and have your child “feed” it small items
Pop bubble wrap
Squeeze water from a sponge to fill a cup
Hole punch

Scissor Skills

What to look for:

- Make sure that when they secure scissors the small loop is on the thumb, otherwise they are upside down.
- Use of both hands – thumbs should be up on both the hand using the scissors and the hand holding the paper for proper cutting
- The index finger **should** be outside of the scissors for better control. If your child has difficulty, draw a dot on the outside of the lower handle for placement of the index finger. Otherwise, they can put both the index and middle in the opening. Ring and little fingers should always be out of the openings and held still.
- Always make sure they are cutting away from their body.



What you can do to help:

- If the child has trouble with the open/close motion, have them use tongs or large tweezers to pick up blocks or to move pieces in games.
- If the child has trouble with tearing the paper have them practice first with play-doh, then with construction paper or cardstock.
- Use a crayon or marker to enlarge the line if they have trouble staying on line. Begin with straight lines, then curves, zig-zags and finally shapes.

Clothing Fasteners

Tying

Tying shoes takes lots of practice. Here are two web links that show how to tie shoes and include a simple video with the script to use.

<http://www.wikihow.com/Tie-Your-Shoes>

<http://www.rkwest.com/left-handed/2007/03/08/how-to-tie-your-shoes/>



- Make practice time short and cut it into segments. Once a segment is accomplished, go to the next step. Finally, you can link the steps together
- It's easier learning when the shoes are sitting on a table in front of your child or on his/her lap.
- Try using flat shoe laces as they are easier for their fingers rather than the round shoe laces.
- When teaching them, sit behind them rather than sitting in front of them and bring your hands around so they can see what you are doing and join in.
- Another idea is to use two different colors laces and tie together so you can point out which lace you want the child to handle. For example, one side of the shoe has a white lace and the other side has a green lace.

*Children would not be expected to tie their own shoes until age 6 or 7

Buttoning

In order to get the concept of passing the button through, you can start with something like a paperclip. Using thumb and index finger, have the student pass the clip through the buttonhole and pull through with the opposite hand. Once they have that motion down, practice using large buttons on loose fitting clothing, then progress to buttons on pants and shirts. Starting with larger buttons first, then progressing to smaller buttons.



Zipping

To engage a separating zipper (such as on a jacket/coat), use a story! Show them the “mouse” (the part that you insert into the zipper pull) that needs to run into the “mouse house” (the bottom part with the zipper pull). Your child needs to hold onto the “mouse in his house” (keep both parts seated in together) and “pull his tail up” (pull the zipper pull up). Again, starting with the item on their lap or table in front of them is a bit easier, just make sure it is facing the way it would face if it were on their bodies!



Websites and Online Resources

www.uptoten.com

<http://www.handwritinghelpforkids.com/worksheets.html>

<https://www.senteacher.org/>

<https://www.lwtears.com/>

<http://www.childdevelopment.ca/SchoolAgeTherapy/SchoolAgeTherapyPLaPWorksheets.aspx>

