

From Scribbling to Writing

A guide to Fine Motor Development



Early Literacy Specialists

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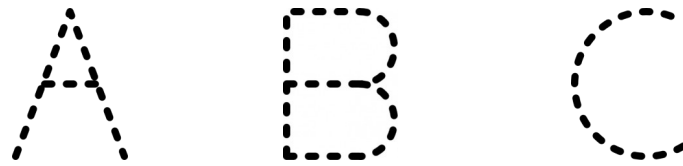
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We often believe that to prepare a child to write, we need to give them lots of practice holding and using writing tools. Tracing shapes, alphabets and numbers is a popular method for teaching young children to write. Although this can be helpful, before a child can even begin tracing, they must develop the physical ability to hold and manipulate a writing tool.



How can we help them develop this physical ability?

First, they must develop fine motor skills! Fine motor development not only leads to the ability to draw and write, but is essential for everyday activities. Getting dressed, washing, eating and playing all require a child to grasp objects and manipulate them with their hands.



In order to develop these skills, children need to be exposed to activities that involve grasping and manipulating. This booklet will highlight the specific skills that need to be developed and some ways to help build those skills.



6 skills children need to develop **BEFORE** they start to write

Separation of the sides of the hand

The ability to hold something in your hand while using your fingers

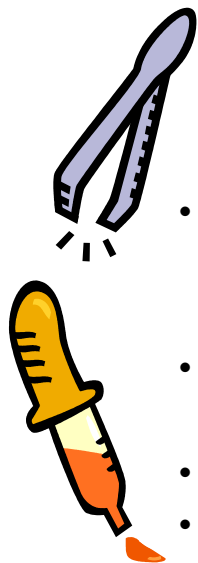
- Use a spray bottle to spray water in the tub or colored water on the snow
- Roll small balls of play dough with finger tips
- Sort various small objects into containers using thumb and index finger



Delicate touch

The ability to use different amounts of pressure

- Use both small tweezers and large tongs to pick up various objects without breaking or denting them (cornflakes, marshmallows)
- Use eye droppers to paint paper (coffee filters, tissue paper) and create a beautiful painting
- Line up dominos on their ends or sides
- Release and count drops of water from an eye dropper one at a time



The aches of the Hands

General hand development

- Roll small balls of play dough in the palm of the hand
- Roll a pair of dice with cupped hands
- Imitate animals walking



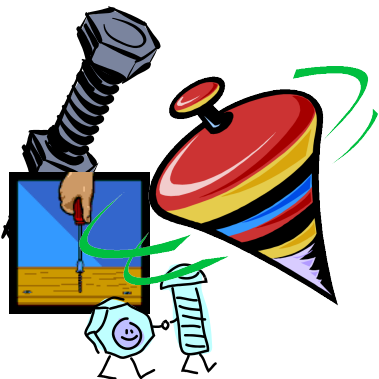
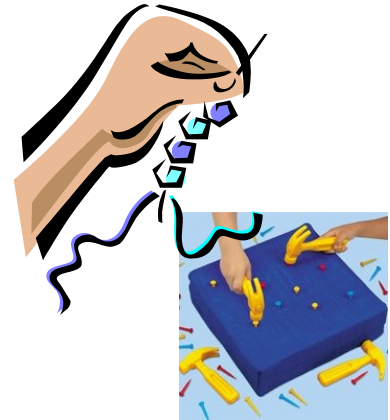
Wrist Stability Wrist strength



- Use a roller to flatten play dough
- Paint/draw/write on an inclined surface that is above eye level
- Use a rolling pin to flatten playdough, cracker crumbs, cookie dough, etc. and make sure that the hands are open rather than closed around the handles

Small muscles of the hand Muscle strength

- Stretch elastics over pegs or insert pegs into a board
- String beads



Precision of rotation Develop the ability to manipulate objects with fingertips

- Screw nuts and bolts together
- Open jars or containers
- Spin spinning tops

Don't force your child to do something they are not physically ready to do. Your child needs to develop all 6 areas listed above before they can even begin to trace or write letters and numbers!

If you are trying to teach your child the alphabet have them:

- Decorate or color in a letter
- Make letters out of play dough, cookie dough, blocks, etc.
- Read lots of books and point to the words while you read

Provide your child with various materials and see what they create!