

Developing Early Writing Skills

- Practise drawing tasks at home to help with writing as simple pictures such as a house or a mountain are made up of the shapes and directional lines your child needs to master.
- Concentration and motivation to complete tasks can be a difficulty. Try using a timer with an alarm so your child knows he/she needs to concentrate fully for the time allocated. Use a reward as motivation such as a sticker, biscuit, time playing with a certain toy etc. You must however as a parent stick to these boundaries so if they do not work for the allocated time there is no reward.
- Children below the age of 6 have a short concentration span. It is advisable to only practise writing in 10-15 minute bursts as it is quality rather than quantity of practise that is important.
- It is essential that you correct your child's mistakes. Once incorrect patterns of movement are established it is very hard to change them past the age of 7. If your child starts letters in the wrong place for example this will affect his ability to do cursive writing.
- Most children respond well to directional verbal prompts e.g. make the line go towards Dad or following the adults finger with more difficult diagonal lines e.g. K
- Pre-writing patterns needs to be practised. These help to establish fluency in writing and therefore speed over time. These can be worked on using drawing tasks e.g. putting scales on the fish or teeth in the crocodile's mouth.
- Most children will struggle the most with the following sets of letters. Those with diagonal lines (K, M, W, Z) and those that can be reversed or presented in a different orientation (b,d,p,q). Pre-writing shapes help them to distinguish directions of lines.
- You don't always need to write on paper to practise the skills needed. For example ask your child to make a letter or shape playdoh, or using squirty soap or shaving foam, or food items as couscous on a tray.
- When practising letters try picking letters out of a bag (you can scrabble letters or magnetic letters or from a pile of cards with letters on). You can then set a rule such as your child does it once hand over hand, once tracing and then twice on his/her own.
- Use of a programme such as 'Write from the Start' available from Amazon is proven to help children learn to master movements required for writing.
- 'Handwriting Without Tears' is also a very good programme as it provides sheets for practising letters with arrows to show the correct place to start and finish letters. It is expensive but cheaper alternatives which are very similar are available.



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- Put cheap hair gel or paint into a zip lock bag and fasten. Next ask child to make shapes with his finger on the Zip lock bag.
- Chalk – Using chunky chalk draw patterns with on the paving stones garden. Start off with big swirling patterns then move to smaller patterns. This is a nice activity to carry out in the spring and summer You could also use a large sheet of paper on the wall or floor and use crayon if the weather is poor.
- Water – Another good outdoor activity is to paint the outside wall or garden fence with water. This encourages large movements from the shoulder which strengthens the shoulder. This will support handwriting in school.



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Stylus Recommendations

If your child enjoys playing on his I-Pad it is advised that when using this parents provide children with a stylus to use rather than using the index finger. By using a stylus children have opportunity to practice and develop their pencil grip while engaging in an activity that they enjoy.

It is also advised that parents purchase a thicker barrelled stylus. These are readily available by searching 'Chucky Stylus' or 'Stylus for Children'. Below are some examples from Amazon.



Fosmon Youth Series Kids Stylus Pen, approx. £7



SUCK UK Red Touch Screen Stylus Pencil, approx. £5



Thumbs Up iCrayon, approx. £5