

Occupational Therapy

Handwriting Development checklist and activity ideas

1. Core stability

(Able to demonstrate good sitting and trunk control)

- Sitting/ bouncing on a gym ball
- Rolling over a peanut ball in prone
- Lying in prone (on front) to engage in an activity on the floor
- Trunk rotation – grasping items on one side of the body and moving them to the other

2. Shoulder stability

(Able to demonstrate good range of movement at shoulders and when reaching)

- Reaching activities – ideally reaching out of centre of gravity
- Weight bearing through upper limbs e.g. bear crawls, wheelbarrow walks, rolling over peanut ball and pushing up through arms
- Push ups against the wall
- Chair push ups
- Arm windmills (arms outstretched, creating circular motions)
- Throwing and catching a large ball such as a gym ball against the wall and catching

3. Arm control

(Able to control movement for large movements, and aiming at targets when throwing)

- TheraBand exercises/ stretches
- Creating shapes in the air with ribbon wands
- Wall painting outdoors with water
- Drawing or painting a rainbow for large motion
- Crossing midline activities reaching across the body to grasp items
- Target practise activities e.g. throwing beanbag into a hoop, bowling

4. Hand strength

(Able to demonstrate strength during activities such as squeezing giant tweezers)

- Play doh/ theraputty exercises
- Hand strengthening fidget toys or stress balls
- Use of giant tweezers to pick up pom poms
- Popper penguin or 'Hungry tennis ball'

5. Reciprocal skills

(Ability to support with one hand, and actively engage in a task with the other)

- Holding fabric or a pencil case with one hand and zipping with the other
- Holding onto a peg board with one hand, whilst posting pegs with the other
- Keeping paper still with one hand whilst drawing with the other

6. Hand dominance

(Consistently using the same hand for tasks such as picking up a pencil for writing)

- Engage in crossing midline activities (reaching across the middle of the body) when dancing, stretching, reaching for toys etc.
- Engage in hand strengthening exercises above (sometimes swapping hands is related to reduced strength)

7. Finger strength

(Able to isolate fingers and demonstrate strength through pushing down)

- Pop it toys
 - Jumping frog toys
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- Finger football (flicking a paper ball or pom pom into a goal)
- Playing on the keyboard

8. Functional grasp

(Able to demonstrate tripod grasp - thumb and two fingers, and pincer grasp - thumb and index finger)

- Coin activities / connect 4
- Inset jigsaws
- Use of giant tweezers to pick up pom poms
- Threading beads onto a lace
- Lacing board activity
- Mini hole punch activities
- Placing pegs on a peg board

9. Visual perception skills

(Ability to recognise shapes and match letters)

- Practise shape sorting games
- Match pictures or play snap
- Practise wordsearches
- Play Dobble

10. Pre-writing shapes

(Able to the 9 shapes essential for letter formation – I O / + \ □ X △)

- Practise understanding shapes through movement first. You can do this by walking around shapes on the floor, creating shapes in the air with ribbon wands, making shapes with play doh, and then tracing shapes with finger
- Create shapes in sensory trays such as in foam, custard, sand etc
- Practise matching shapes

11. In-hand manipulation

(Ability to move small objects around within one hand)

- Coin activities, picking up a number of coins, translating them from palm to fingertips and then posting them using just one hand
- Peg board activities
- Pencil exercises e.g. pencil push ups, walking up and down pencil with fingers
- Play doh and theraputty exercises e.g. creating peas using thumb and index finger

12. Fluency patterns

(Ability to demonstrate continuous movement, such as through joining up letters)

- Work on continuous movement joining up letters such as e's and l's
- Work on control of movement by staying within the lines of a pencil trail
- Incorporate fluency patterns into pictures e.g., swirly trees and spikey grass

13. Letter formations

(Ability to form letters of the alphabet)

- Look at activities in step 12, and use similar activities to practise letter formations
- Download apps on the ipad such as 'letter school' to work on letter formation
- Use 'write from the start' handwriting books

14. Organisation of letters and words

(Ability to organise letters on a line and words on a page)

- Use sky, grass, mud paper to support awareness of letter positioning on the line
- Practise finger spacing or using a wooden craft stick to help with spacing
- Try graph paper, practising writing one letter in each square and leaving a blank square between words

15. Pencil pressure

(Using just the right pressure through the pencil, not too hard or too soft)

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- Target practise activities, judging the correct force to reach targets
 - Coin rubbings
 - Scratch art
 - Drawing with a soft mat (mouse mat) under paper and practising not going through the paper
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