

3 steps to help your child to master writing skills

PART 1- FINE MOTOR SKILLS



10 EASY ACTIVITIES TO DEVELOP FINE MOTOR SKILLS

We all want our children to succeed academically. We all want them to be able to read and write as we know those are important skills that will help them to succeed in the future. Before we jump straight into writing however, we should remember that this skill, like all other skills should be practiced step by step. The same way when we teach a child how to swim, we prepare them first don't just throw them into the deepest swimming pool, the same way we should look at writing. You cannot hand a pencil to a toddler and show them how to use it straight away. Well, you can but it can do more harm than good! Before we start the process of teaching your child how to write, so before your child goes to primary school, we need to focus on developing all those muscles that will help your child in controlling his writing skills. We need to work on your child's fine motor skills first and the wrist control. If we do not go through this process your child's muscles may not develop correctly, and they may struggle in primary school.



So, what can you do to help your child to develop those so important skills?

First, we need to understand what we mean when we talk about fine motor skills.

Fine motor skills are the ability to manipulate small objects, make movements using small muscles in our hands. We as adults do not think about them as we do it all automatically, but when you look at a small child you see the difference how they for example will struggle to do certain tasks such as buttoning a shirt or putting objects into something etc.

It is important that we provide our children with opportunities to develop those motor skills in a fun way, that feels like play, before we ask them to do the tasks such as writing, colouring, or cutting. If your child does not have those skills developed and we ask them for example to colour, they may feel it to be too big of a challenge and get discouraged.

This can turn into a dislike of any written activities and therefore a dislike of school in general. So, as you can see a simple thing like that can have big consequences.

So, let's have a look what can we do to develop fine motor skills.

There are plenty of toys on the market that will advertise as great for fine motor skills. And they are fine, however you do not need to spend a fortune on the toys as you can easily provide great opportunities for developing fine motor skills using materials that you already have at home.



1. Working the hand muscles

Play dough

Play dough , plasteline, modelling clays- all the doughs that a child can use to squeeze and make a shape out of them are a fantastic resource for those hand muscles! Think about how much effort it takes for those small hands to squeeze the doughs and make some creation out of them. It's a real gym work out for the little hands!!



Our tip:

if you don't have a store bought play dough not to worry! use this recipe:

500g flour (all purpose)

1/4 cup of salt

1/2 cup of warm water

teaspoon of oil- mix it all together, you can add food colorant.

We have a video about different dough ideas on our youtube channel!

Squeezing a sponge



This activity will get the muscles of the whole hand working but will also bring your child the benefits of a sensory play. Set up two bowls. put some water in one bowl and then show you child how to put a sponge in the bowl, it will soak up the water then you put it over the second bowl and you squeeze it to let the water out. You repeat it until you get rid of all the water from the first bowl. Your child will enjoy this activity as playing with water is always fun, they also get to cross the middle line, work from left to right and learn about physics in a fun way! win-win!

Turkey baster

This activity also works great on the hand muscles but also helps with eye and hand coordination, working from left to right, teaches some physics concepts and lets the child to experiment with water enjoying the benefits of sensory play.

Set up two bowls or jars and pour water into one. show your child how to squeeze the top of the turkey baster and release. They will be amazed how the water flows up and then show them how to move the water to the other jar. This activity is great on so many levels!!



2. Working the fingers

Threading

Threading may not sound very exciting but we can make it so! Threading beads on strings help children to master many tasks so it's good to be practiced! To make it more exciting you can make competitions: who can make longer snake or let's make mommy a necklace etc.

If you don't have any beads at home- here is our tip: use penne pasta and a shoe lace! works just as well and you can go creative and paint the pasta as well!



Tweezers



tweezers are great tool to practice fine motor skills and get ready for holding a pencil and coordinating the movements of the wrist. You can set up this activity any way you want- you can take few bowls or an egg carton and put some small object into them- they could be beads, legos, small figures- anything that you have around. Ask your child to transfer the objects from one place to another. At first you can use big kitchen tongs and then progress to the small tweezers

Colander and pipe cleaners



This should keep your little one busy and boost their imagination as well! In this activity you just give them a colander and colorful pipe cleaners and let them experiment in what they what to create. My kids made an alien helmet last week :D there was loads of fun and when you look closely you will see how hard those fingers have to work to be able to stick the pipe cleaners into the little holes.

stickers

Kids are really attracted to stickers, so why not to use the stickers as a great work out for those fine motor skills!

You can get any sticker book of any characters that your child likes and then give them a page. You can draw something on the page such as park or house or anything you like and let your child peel the stickers off the sticker sheet and arrange them on the page.



3. Working the wrist

opening and closing jars

Get few clean jars such as face cream jars or any other containers with twistable lids. If you have good few of them you can set up a very nice activity at no cost!! First, show your child all the jars with the lids on, then slowly take of all the jars and put the lids on the side. then show your child how you take a lid check which jar does it fit and then how you twist it back on. This teaches so many things! the wrist control is obviously one of them but it also helps with problem solving, matching, math concept and logical thinking!



Squeezing a lemon

Working with any real life objects is much more interesting for the kids than just playing with toys. So this one can be a real winner! Not only your child will work with a kitchen utensil and a real fruit but also can make some yummy lemonade out of it!! And by doing all those fun things he will work on the wrist and the hand muscles and will learn about the world around him, making connections and experimenting.

So simple, yet so effective!



Nuts and bolts

This activity is great for the wrist but also for the little fingers. If you have few screws of different sizes, set them up like with the jar activity. Let your child to problem solve, match the right bolt to the right nut, work the little wrist and the fingers :)



For detailed instructions of all the activities check our youtube channel:
Really Cool Afterschool

