

Information for parents and teachers

Scribbling, drawing and pre-writing

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Writing is a complex activity involving many different skills, including motor, visual and language skills. Visual skills are especially important when writing, as acuity, visual perception and visual and sequential memory all enable the writer to see letters and words. Without the ability to see the forms of the letters, students would find it difficult to see similarities and differences among them, or to remember what they saw.

Some children exhibit poor co-ordination and poor perceptual motor skills and the following exercises may assist to develop finger and arm movement and letter formation:

- Encourage your child to pick up all manner of small objects such as cotton balls, beads, Lego, and marbles between their fingers and with a small pair of tweezers. Please be careful of small objects if you have under-five year olds around at the time you are doing this activity.
- Use an eyedropper to squeeze the paint from a clear plastic container and then drop it onto a piece of paper, especially blotting paper, which will soak it up and create many different and exciting patterns. These patterns can be turned into bookmarks or cards for presents. The use of clear contact to protect the finished object may be worth considering.
- Buy or make some play dough and allow your child to squeeze, poke, roll and make all manner of shapes and designs with this material. Play dough will keep for some days in the fridge so it can be used again and again. Small objects can be hidden in the dough and your child encouraged to search for the missing object.
- § Line up a series of ten cent pieces and see how quickly your child can turn them over from heads to tails or vice versa. Have a one and three-minute egg timer to time this activity and keep a record of the improvement in accuracy and speed that occurs.
- Arrange tiddly-winks of various colours and sizes in various patterns, or draught men on a draughtboard.
- After practising these activities you can start to encourage drawing and scribbling on paper. Try to spend about ten to fifteen minutes each day doing related writing activities. Encourage other family members, of all ages, to participate.
- Use large sheets of paper to begin with and do this activity on a table that can be cleaned if the child draws on the tabletop. You can also buy a plastic tablecloth and this can be easily wiped down at the conclusion of the activity. Encourage the young person to wear a plastic apron to protect clothing from paint.
- Draw large patterns on the paper and then you can, over time, reduced the size of the patterns and designs until your child can draw between lines on lined paper. Many shops have prewriting books that will outline additional activities as the child prepares for school.
- Finger painting using non-toxic paint is another favourite activity that enhances fine motor coordination. The finished design can be used to wrap up gifts.
- Shaving cream on the kitchen table or sprayed onto the shower screen when having a shower also assists arm and finger control. Edible food colouring can be added to change colour. Combs, spoons and spatulas can be used to help create designs in the cream.
- Remember: Take a photograph of some of these memorable art works so they can be displayed and shown to other significant people in the child's life.
- Many children enjoy threading beads and making bangles and necklaces for friends and family. Craft shops usually have a wide selection of materials available. Thick plastic tubing or pipe cleaners can be used to make these decorative objects.



- Sewing cards can also prove useful for fine motor control and can be made as well as purchased. Make sure any needle used has a thick eye and a blunt point.
- Some students enjoy joining dot-to-dot shapes and making different designs that can then be painted and coloured in. If available, use thicker paper so the finished piece of work is slightly more durable and will last a little longer.
- Tearing up old, unwanted magazines and making paper collages is another activity that assists with fine motor development. A coloured glue stick that tells where the glue has been applied assists and helps eliminate sticky fingers. The finished work can be laminated or covered with clear contact and can be used as a table mat or a tray cloth.

For more Information

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