

Activities and Resources

TO DEVELOP

FINE MOTOR SKILLS



SENSORY AND PHYSICAL TEACHING SERVICE



INTRODUCTION

Activities and resources to develop FINE MOTOR SKILLS

This booklet looks at a range of difficulties children may face with their fine motor skills, it provides activities and resources that will help improve the skills. This booklet can be used in conjunction with 'Assessment and Activities for Hand Skills and Fine Motor Development' by LEA Support Services.

HANDWRITING

Seating and posture

A good seating position aids stability and concentration, enabling pupils to work to the best of their ability. Two things need to be considered in order to provide this:

1. Provide tables and chairs of the correct height:

- a. Tables should be half pupil's height
- b. Chairs should be a third of a pupil's height and tucked under the table
- c. Swap furniture from another classroom if necessary
- d. Height adjustable furniture can be moved with the pupil and adjusted as necessary

2. Ensure correct seating position for all activities at a table:

- a. Feet flat on the floor; use a foot support if necessary
- b. Bottom towards the back of the chair
- c. Back in a comfortable 's' shape
- d. Head up and in the midline

Other things to think about:

- Children with hemiplegia (paralysis of one side of the body) may need space to rest their weaker hand or hold onto something for support.
- If children find it difficult to hold paper still on the desk, 'Dycem' mats can be used to prevent the paper from slipping.
- Children who lean forward when writing (affecting their posture) may require a writing slope. Writing slopes and boards provide a more ergonomic writing position, reducing strain on the neck, back, shoulders and eyes.

Letter formation

Multi-sensory letter formation experience

Forming letters on sandpaper, in shaving foam, sand or in the air. As this is done, verbalise the movements as they are drawn.

Teach letter families together

Such as; c, a, d, g, q and o (all starting with an anticlockwise circle); r, n, m, h, b and p (all beginning with a down stroke), k, v, w, x and z (all involving diagonals).

Roll and write

Roll and write using a roll and write set; roll the ball around the letters.

Letter tracing

Drawing over dots that form letters, using dry-wipe pens and whiteboards with pre-written letters on, use write and wipe worksheet pockets to form trace over the top of letters.

Handwriting programmes

Use handwriting programmes such as 'Write from the Start' to develop writing and perceptual skills.

Lined paper with additional guidelines

For children with erratic letter sizing, use lined paper with additional guidelines for ascenders and descenders, triple lined paper and books are available to purchase.

Pencil grasp

The standard tripod grip is not always the most appropriate or comfortable for some pupils. As long as the grip is effective and relaxed, allow the pupil to continue using it. It is generally possible to see if the grip is not effective, tension may be seen in the wrist, which is rigid and sometimes slightly hooked, resulting in stiff, spiky writing, which is erratically sized and lacking in fluency.

If it is felt that the child's grip is not effective in holding a pen/pencil, there are a number of pencil grips that can be purchased. Often a moulded grip such as the 'Grotto Grip', which requires the pupil to position his /her fingers correctly, proves beneficial in establishing an effective pencil grasp. This grip is suitable for primary aged children. For older pupils, grips such as the 'Tri-go' grip have been successful.

Angling the paper

Angle the paper to the right or left depending on the handedness – this reduces tension in the writing arm.

Left handers

Left handers should angle the paper to the right from 30 to 45 degrees as required. The paper should be positioned slightly to the left of the body.

Right handers

Right handers should angle the paper 30 degrees to the left and the paper should be positioned slightly to the right of the body.

Spacing

To assist with spacing between words, provide paper, card, pencil crayon or a pre-made spacer. The pupil may also use his/her finger to separate the words.

Fluency and speed

If a child has a difficulty with the speed of their handwriting, a hand writing speed test should be completed. This information will be required to assist with special arrangements for exams.

Writing programmes such as 'Speed Up' by Lois Addy is a book of exercises to help pupils build up fluency and writing speed. If a child's handwriting speed is still an issue, the use of ICT should be considered as a means of recording work.

HAND/FINGER STRENGTH

Children who have issues with fine motor skills find it difficult to develop strong muscles in their hands and wrists. Here are ideas for activities that can help them build the muscles needed for fine motor skills.

Theraputty

Theraputty can be purchased in a range of strengths. It can be pulled apart and rolled using the whole hand to strengthen the hand. Pulling it apart using individual fingers and thumbs will strengthen the fingers.

Hiding objects inside the Theraputty makes it more interesting for the child, the objects inside could also be linked to targets from the child's individual plan – letters, sounds, numbers.

Playdough

Squeezing and stretching playdough helps strengthen finger muscles, and touching it is a valuable sensory experience.

Finger painting

Using finger paint can strengthen a child's hand-eye coordination and manual dexterity.

Squeezing sponges

Set up two separate bowls, one filled with water and the other empty. Give the child a sponge and their aim is to transfer the water into the empty bowl. This simple game can strengthen hands and forearms. Using a timer can make it more interesting!

Lego

Use Lego to build a range of items.

Bubble wrap

Squeeze bubble wrap in-between thumb and fingers.

Threading

Thread beads onto string, if the child finds this easy, use straws that are cut up instead.

Finger exercises

Complete exercises regularly with fingers and thumbs, bending them and moving them in a range of directions.

Pipe cleaners

Create shapes and objects by manipulating pipe cleaners.

Finger football

Use scrunched up paper to create a ball and flick the ball towards a goal.

Pincer grip activities

Picking up small items, squeezing pegs, using tweezers and using finger puppets.

Wrist strengthening activities

Playing with screw toys, opening screw tops and sharpening pencils.

Tearing paper

Tear up paper for pasting or collage activities.

Tweezers

Use plastic tweezers to pick up objects, this activity can be played as part of a game and the objects can also be linked to the child's individual targets.

Water plants

Water plants using a spray bottle.

WRIST STRENGTHENING

Draw vertically

Encourage the pupil to draw or write on a vertical surface, for example, use an easel or tape some paper onto a wall.

Twisting and turning

Complete twisting and turning activities, such as opening the tops of drinks bottles, time the child to make it fun and competitive.

Wrist lift exercises

Complete wrist lift exercises, the child will need to place their arm on a table and hold their forearm with their opposite hand. Encourage them to make a fist and bend their wrist back as far as possible for five seconds. Repeat this five to ten times.

SHOULDER STABILITY & ARM STRENGTH

Weakness in the shoulder girdle will mean that a child has less control over his/her hands, affecting hand function and writing skills. Everyday tasks such as carrying, pushing and pulling are good for building up strength.

Allocate classroom jobs

Carrying the drinks tray, carrying the fruit, handing out the class books, cleaning the whiteboard, wiping down the tables.

Large scale writing patterns

Practise pre-writing patterns on a large scale; this can be on paper or whiteboard that is at shoulder level.

Writing on pavement

Writing on the pavement outside the class or in the playground using chalk and making large patterns.

Painting with water

Use a roller or brush to paint the outside walls with water.



@ specalistservices.hub@eastriding.gcsx.gov.uk

✉ The Specialist Services Hub
Springhead Lane
Anlaby Common
East Riding of Yorkshire
HU5 5YJ

☎ (01482) 394000

For more information on support for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities visit eastridinglocaloffer.org.uk or speak to a Special Educational Needs Coordinator in your child's school.



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☎ (01482) 394000

@ specalistservices.hub@eastriding.gcsx.gov.uk