



Supporting Children's Writing: *Fine Motor Skills & Hand Strength*

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What are fine motor skills?

- Fine motor skills involve small muscles working with the brain and nervous system to control movements in areas such as the hands, fingers, lips, tongue and eyes.
 - Fine motor skills include reaching, grasping and manipulating objects with your hands.
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Why are fine motor skills important?

- The muscle development helps children to hold, grasp, pinch, and grip objects. Small movements such as picking up food and buttoning up clothes all lead to children being able to hold a pencil, and eventually write.



Why are fine motor skills important?



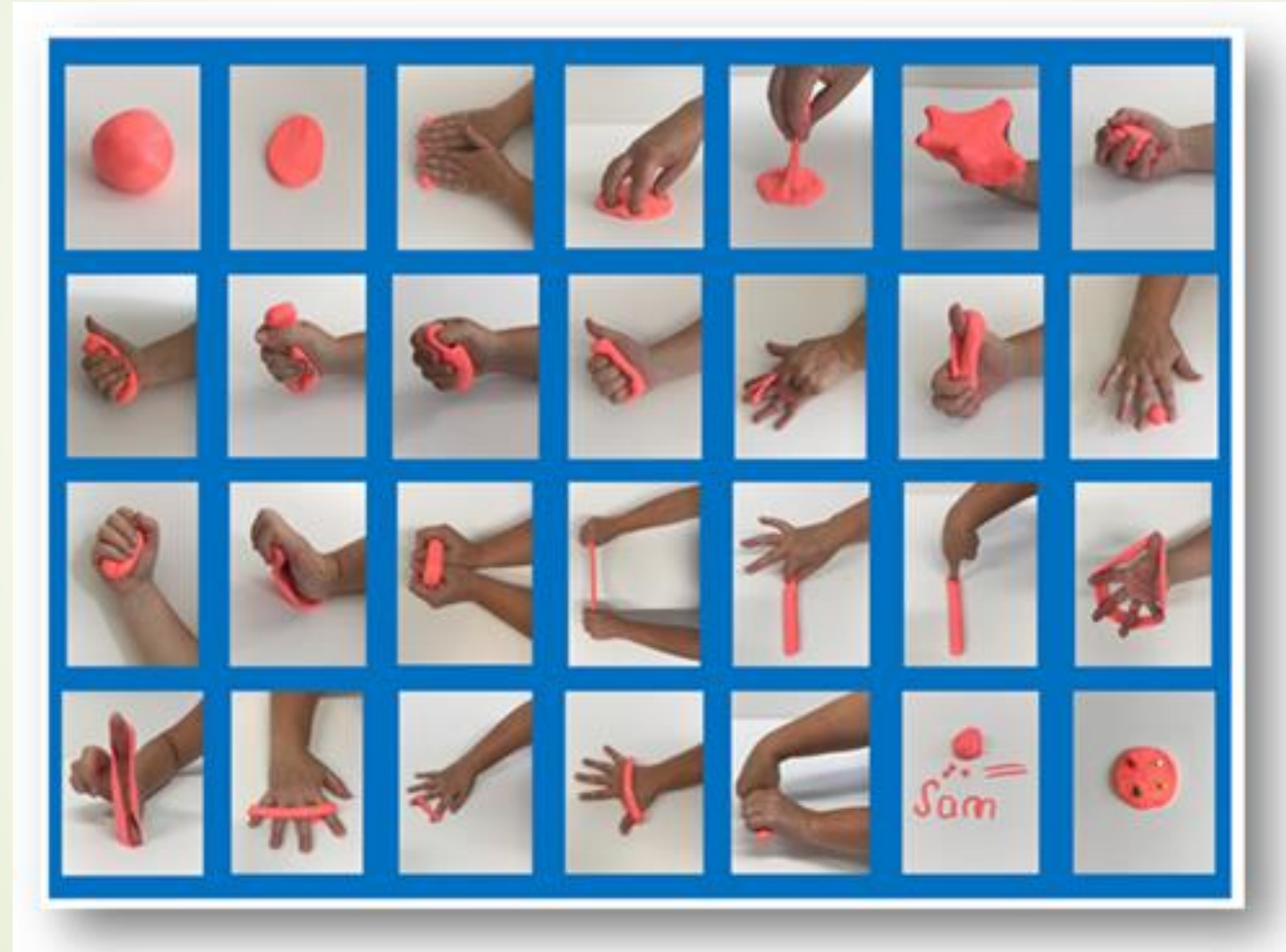
Fine motor skills development

Age	Developmental Milestones	Possible implications if milestones not achieved
3 – 4 yrs	- Builds tower of nine small blocks - Copies circle - Imitates cross - Manipulates clay material (rolls balls, makes snakes, cookies) - Uses non-dominant hand to assist and stabilise the use of objects - Snips paper using scissors	- Delayed pre-writing skill development - Frustration and/or avoidance of pencil-based tasks - Poor pencil grasp and pencil control - Poor self-care skills (such as eating) - Delayed drawing skills
4 -5 yrs	- Cuts on line continuously - Copies cross - Copies square - Writes name - Writes numbers 1-5 - Copies letters - Handedness is well established - Dresses and undresses independently	- Difficulties holding and manipulating a pencil - Difficulties learning to write name and other letters of the alphabet - Dependence on caregivers for every day activities such as dressing - Frustration and/or avoidance of pencil based tasks
5 – 6 yrs	- Cuts out simple shapes - Copies triangle - Colours within lines - Uses a 3 fingered grasp of pencil and uses fingers to generate movement - Pastes and glues appropriately - Can draw basic pictures	- Difficulties learning to form letters and numbers correctly - Poor handwriting - Difficulties demonstrating academic ability on paper - Fatigue during pencil based tasks - Frustration and/or avoidance of pencil based tasks
6 -7 yrs	- Forms most letters and numbers correctly - Writes consistently on the lines - Demonstrates controlled pencil movement - Good endurance for writing - Can build Lego, K'nex and other blocks independently - Ties shoelaces independently	- Difficulties getting ideas down on paper - Experiences fatigue during handwriting tasks - Difficulty keeping up in class due to slow handwriting speed - Poor legibility of handwriting - May impact on self-esteem when comparing work to peers - Possible frustration and/or behaviour difficulties due to avoidance of pencil based tasks
7- 8 yrs	Maintains legibility of handwriting for entirety of a story	- Difficulty completing handwriting tasks in a timely manner - Experiencing fatigue during handwriting tasks - Poor academic achievement due to difficulty getting ideas down on paper - Difficulties due to avoidance of pencil based tasks

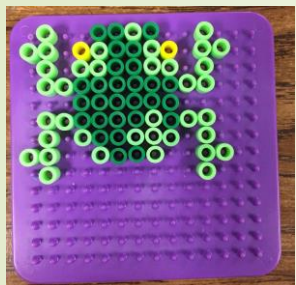
Supporting activities – Dough Disco



Supporting activities – Theraputty



Supporting activities – to buy



Hama beads



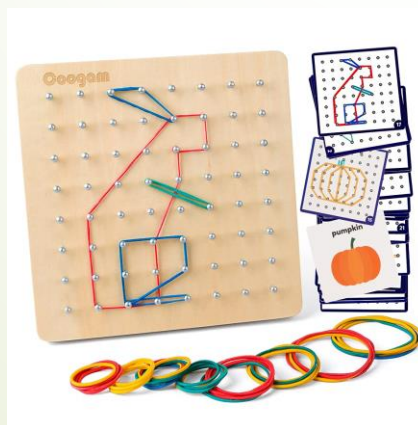
tap-tap board



Loop scissors/
Easi-grip scissors



Peg board



Geo board

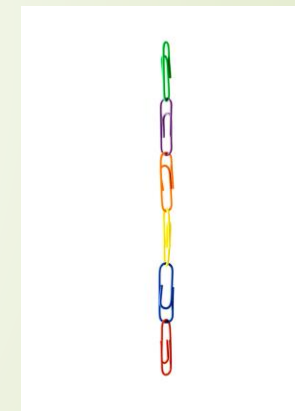
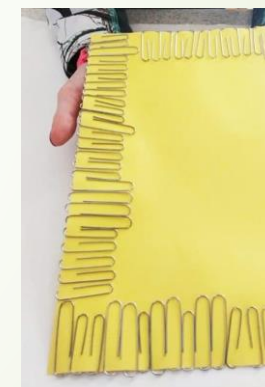
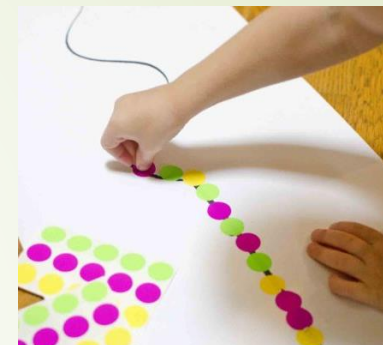


Lego



threading

Supporting activities - home made





Fine motor skills and writing

- Having good gross and fine motor skills are essential to developing writing.
- We need good fine motor skills to:
 - Be able to use the correct pencil grip
 - To prevent tiring during writing
 - To be able to form legible letters
 - To be able to control letter size

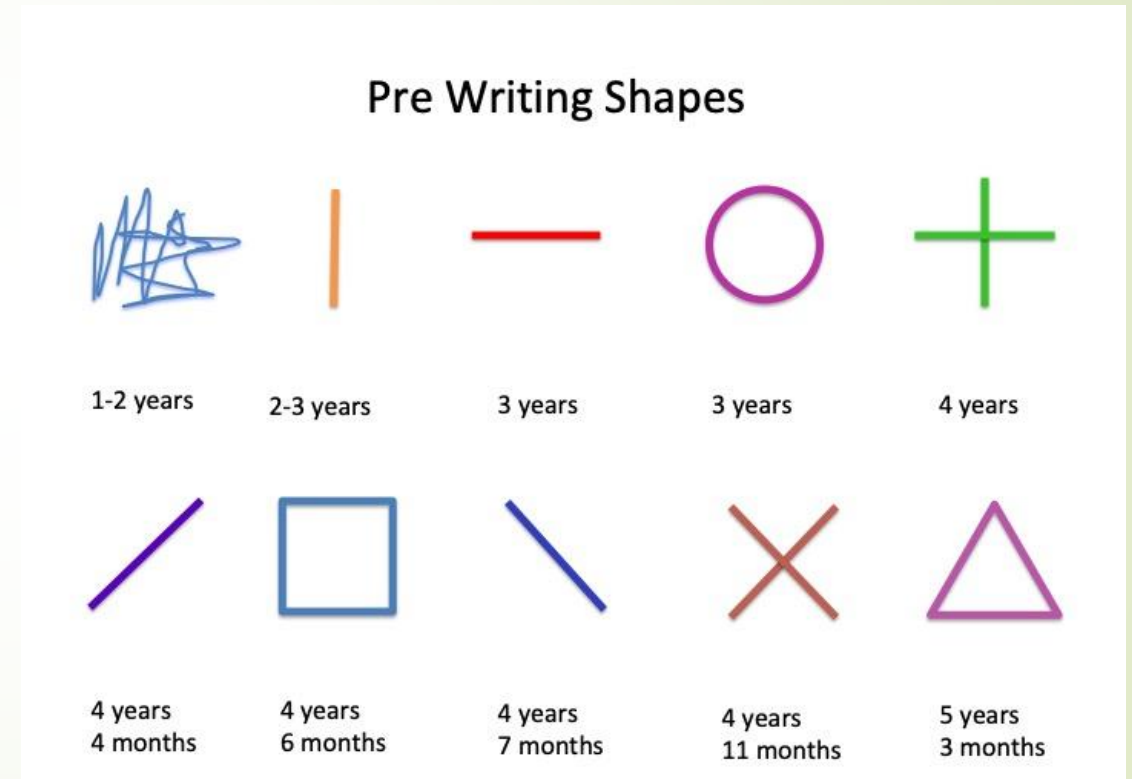
Writing development – early mark making opportunities

Early mark making is done through exploring. Mark making at the start is not intentional, and the marks themselves do not carry meaning. However, the process of this will help to develop their gross and fine motor skills.



Writing development – Next steps

- Children will start to give meaning to marks they make, such as drawing a scribble or a line and saying “mummy” or “spider”.
- Children will begin to copy simple patterns and pre-writing shapes
- They will then use simple shapes to create simple representation of things.
- It is important that children can form the pre-writing shapes, this shows that they are ready to form letters.





Writing development – mark making and writing opportunities

Mediums:

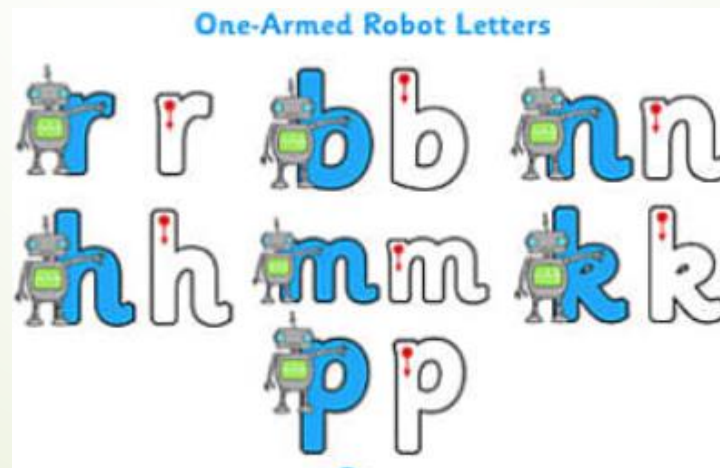
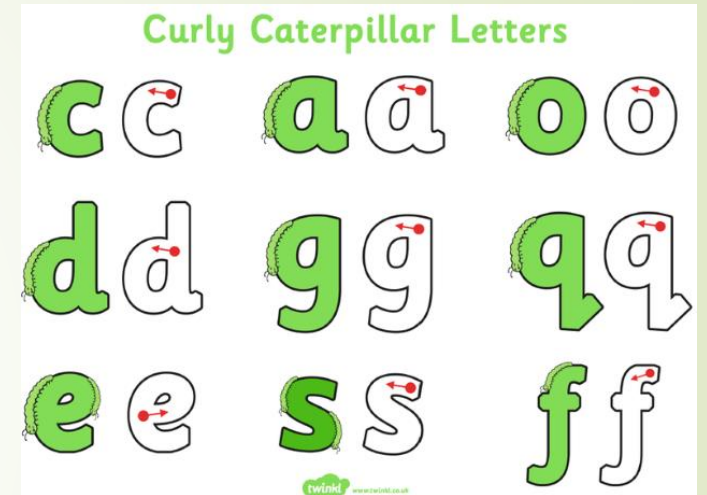
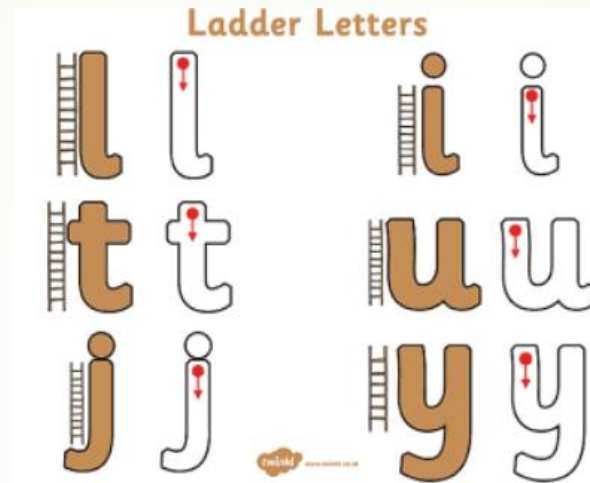
- Shaving foam
- Corn flour
- Water
- Rice
- Flour/Salt/Sugar
- Glitter
- Sand
- Mud
- Large paper
- On the floor outside
- Whiteboard/blackboard

Tools:

- Our hands!
- Paintbrushes
- Rollers
- Chunky chalk/pens/pencils/crayons
- Sponges
- Printing: potatoes, potato masher, cardboard cut outs, pom poms, cotton wool balls/buds
- *Cars/Animals*

Writing development – forming letters

- Children learn to print letters before doing cursive handwriting later on in school.
- Starting to learn letters in 'letter families' can help children to master the movement and pattern that letters have
- Keep practising them on a large and small scale



Writing development – forming letters

- When it's time to write on the line, the following paper can help
- Pencil grips and slightly thicker pencils can also help

