

Motor Skills and Writing in the Early Years

Tubbenden Primary School

How can I help my child at home?

It's all about hand/eye co-ordination!



Gross motor skills

In order to have pencil control, children first need to practise their gross motor skills. This will help to strengthen arm and shoulders. Try the following:

- Use climbing equipment, play tennis or swim.
- Use skipping ropes for jumping, skipping or walking/crawling along (on the floor!)
- Throw and catch a ball/balloon of different sizes.
- Make big shapes in the air with your fingers or paintbrush
- Make circles in the air with streamers.



Fine motor skills

In order to have a good pencil grip, children need to strengthen the muscles in their hands, wrists and fingers. Try the following:

- To help develop pincer grip, pick up small objects with thumb and first finger, rather than whole hand, or thumb and middle finger.
- To develop finger isolation, pop bubbles, do finger painting, use finger puppets.
- Use spray bottles for different purposes (water plants, food colouring paintings, spray hair with water)
- Write in sand, glitter, paint with finger, cotton bud or paint brush.



Fine motor skills

And there's more!:

- Cutting along lines or around shapes with scissors.
- Threading beads/buttons onto pipe cleaners or laces.
- Using stencils
- Using playdough to squeeze, pinch or roll
- Using tweezers or pegs to pick up objects
- Practise doing and un-doing zips, laces and buttons.
- Clip things together with paper clips.



Mark making

It is very important that children develop at their own pace. Pushing children too quickly into writing will upset them and also may hinder their development. There are lots of fun ways to mark make with your children at home.

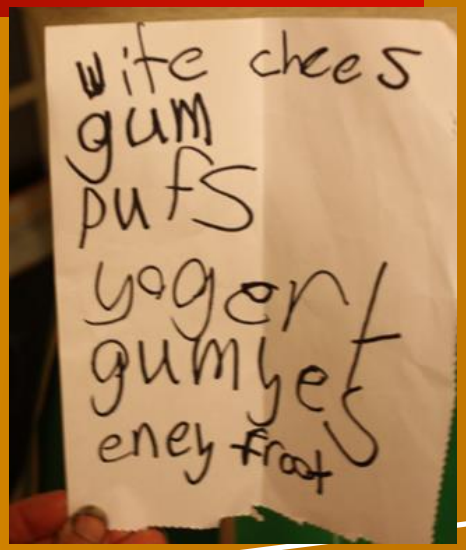
Use chalk to draw lines, dots, footprints, circles and spirals – encourage curves and changing direction.



Draw on the tiles in the bath – shapes and patterns and letters/numbers using bath crayons, shaving foam etc

Write for a purpose:

Make notices for your kitchen to warn of any safety issues. Label objects around the house. Make shopping lists together.



Developing pencil hold

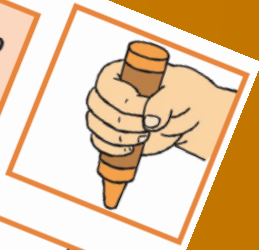
Children develop their pencil hold in different ways. Some children start with a fist grip whereas others proceed straight to a triangulation hold. We use a variety of techniques and pencil grips to assist your child with this. The important thing is to be guided by them and gently encourage.

pencil grip

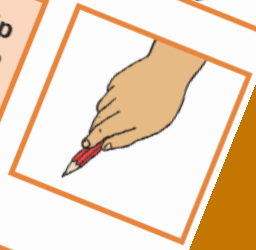


pinch flip grip

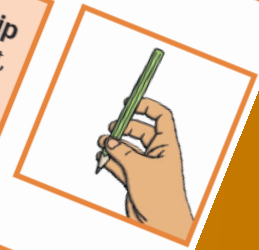
Palmar Grip
The pencil is held in the whole fist. Usually develops between the ages of one and two.



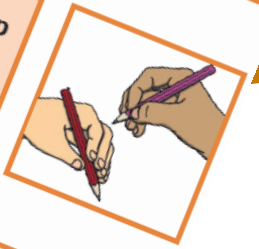
Digital Pronate Grip
All fingers are holding the pencil and the palm is facing downwards. Usually develops between the ages of two and four.



Splayed Four-Finger Grip
Looks similar to how adults would hold a dart, with four fingers opposite the thumb. Usually develops between the ages of two and four.



Static Tripod and Quadropod Grip
Pencil is held with the first three or four fingers. Usually develops between the ages of three and five.



Dynamic Tripod Grip
The pencil is held lightly between the thumb and index finger and middle finger. The ring and little finger curl gently into the palm of the hand. Usually develops before the age of seven.



Developing writing

1. Children should be able to write their name using recognisable letters.

2. Use phonics to segment a word into sounds.

The Early Learning Goals for writing by the end of Reception are:

- Write recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed.
- Spell words by identifying sounds in them and representing the sounds with a letter or letters.
- Write simple phrases and sentences that can be read by others.

(EYFS Statutory Framework July 2025)

Once your child has developed a comfortable pencil grip and has learnt some sounds, they will be encouraged and supported to write using these skills.

Our Workshop Resources











Thank You!

Reception Team