

Occupational Therapy Service for Children and Young People

Pre Writing Skills

This is designed as a general guideline for those children who need help to develop a variety of skills prior to formalised writing activities. It has been found that regular practice for short periods each day is more beneficial than longer infrequent sessions.

Below you will find a list of suggested activities and hopefully you can select some which will interest your child for a minimum of 10 minutes.

Some of the following patterns and movements need to be included in your daily programme.

- Working from left to right.
- Working from top to bottom.
- Circles
- Diagonal lines in both directions.
- Curved lines.
- Zig-zag lines.

A varied approach is needed to increase the child's interest level. Please select activities from different areas.

VISUAL MEDIA

1. Try "writing" on aluminium foil.
2. Try "writing" on construction paper of different colours.
3. Try "writing" on different kinds of paper (brown paper bags, greaseproof paper, waxed paper).
4. Try using special colouring books in which the colour appears when children paint with water. ("Magic" painting books).
5. Try using different colours of chalk, markers, crayons, pens, pencils and paint (including finger paints, water-colours or powder).
6. Try using stencils of shapes, to rub over with wax crayon, or draw round with pencil.

OLFACTORY MEDIA

Child should be fully supervised to ensure safety. The sense of smell can be incorporated into pre-writing tasks.

1. Try "drawing" with scented markers.
2. Add a few drops of bubble bath or home-made finger paints.
3. Add vanilla, mint or cherry flavouring to finger paints. (These have strong smells, but be careful, the smell is so good that children want to taste the paint. Use it on edible finger paint!)
4. Use scented lotions for finger painting.
5. Try using bath soap paints at bath time.

TACTILE MEDIA

“Touch” media: include materials of different texture and temperature (ensure safety).

1. Try “writing” on sandpaper with different crayons, paintbrushes or chalk.
2. Try “drawing” around sandpaper or wooden stencils.
3. Try using finger paints, lotions, pudding, oatmeal, or cornflour to finger paint.
4. Change the temperature of the materials e.g. put the paint markers or crayons in the refrigerator before the activity. Lotion can be warmed in a microwave oven - ensure safety.
5. Try “drawing” in sandpit or sand tray using finger, sticks, toy cars etc.
6. Try “drawing” on a tray of pasta, peas, flour.
7. Try “drawing” in talc, sprinkled on table
8. Try “drawing” in shaving foam on table, tray or mirror.
9. Try making shapes with playdough, string, wool etc. And flatten them out.
10. Try a variety of painting media: brush, fingers, string, sponges, blocks, water

GUSTATORY MEDIA

Even the sense of taste can be incorporated in pre-writing activities for young children.

Child should be fully supervised.

Try the following:

1. Finger painting in whipped cream.
2. Drawing on a frosted cake to decorate it.
3. Drawing with cheese spread on crackers or bread.
4. Icing biscuits.
5. Cutting scones/biscuits with a variety of shapes.
6. Picking out letters of the alphabet from alphabet spaghetti.
7. Warming spaghetti lengths and make shapes.