

Some Foundational Skills for Happier Handwriting

Shoulder Stability

Good shoulder stability provides the foundation for skilled movement right down at finger tip level. Provide lots of these activities for very young children before expecting too much from them at a desk.

Drawing on Vertical Surfaces

Why do it? Helps develop shoulder muscles, helps wrist to be in extension

Where: Blackboards, White board, Easel, Windows,

What do we need? Chalk, Whiteboard Markers, Poster Markers, Glass Markers or Window Chalk

How: Encourage drawing and colouring on the vertical surface

Ideas: Noughts and Crosses, Draw the family, tell a story, and Do giant doodles whilst listening to music.

Watch It: Make sure your child understands that the markers are for the particular surface only and not for your walls in general!

Games on all Fours

Why do it? Helps develop shoulder muscles, helps wrist to be in extension

Where: Safe level area to be on hands and knees

Ideas: Twister, Animal walks, Wheelbarrows,

Standing Games

Why do it? Helps develop shoulder muscles, helps wrist to be in extension

Where: Safe level area to be on hands and knees

Ideas: Push backs, Beach Ball Volleyball, Tug Of War (See Moovy Groovy Fun Activities)

Appropriate Arm Movements

Keeping the forearm down on the table gives more support to the pencil. Use these activities to help develop your child's awareness of how their arm needs to glide across the paper during drawing and writing activities.

Arm Glides

FOR: Encouraging development of appropriate arm movements across the paper during pencil activities.

MATERIALS: Large piece of paper e.g. A3 size
Pencils or crayons

HOW

- 1) Show your child how their arm must glide across the paper whilst drawing
- 2) Demonstrate how "wobbly" the pencil is if the forearm is held above the paper
- 3) Draw a shape on the left hand side of the paper and one on the right hand side.
- 4) Demonstrate drawing a line from the first shape to the second shape, pointing out how the arm glides across the paper, keeping the hand steady.
- 5) Draw another set of shapes
- 6) Let your child have a turn
- 7) Encourage the arm to stay down

EXTRA HELP Ask, "Can I help your arm feel the glide?" Provide gentle downward pressure on their arm as they move across the paper.

FEEDBACK Some students enjoy the use of novelty whistle that is blown by the helper any time the forearm is held high up off the paper. I call this the "arm police"!

VARIATIONS

Rainbows

Use as many different colours to make a Rainbow arc
Start at the bottom left hand side of the paper and finish at the bottom right hand side.

Shooting Stars

Draw a star on the left hand side of the page
Encourage your child to keep making different coloured tails for the shooting star.

Roads

Use rubber stamps to make a picture each side of the paper, left and right or top and bottom
Start at the left hand side or top of the paper and make one side of the road connect to the picture on the opposite side.

Mazes

Use simple maze worksheets to provide opportunities to practice arm glides.

Strengthening Finger Muscles

The small muscles of the hand allow our fingers to make the small, precise movements needed to control a pencil. If these muscles are weak or not well developed we tend to use the larger action of the wrist muscles to move our hand. This can mean that pencil control is not so precise and activities such as colouring in are done in a larger, messier manner. Having good stamina in using our finger muscles will help with handwriting as well as other fine motor tasks such as buttoning, opening food packaging and pulling up socks.

MARBLE GRAB

Why do we do it? Small hand muscle strength

What do we need? 15 marbles in a small container

How: Pick up one marble at time using index and thumb.
Drop the marble from this grip into the cupped hand (the same hand), with the fingers curling over.
Keep picking up one at a time.
Stop when a marble falls out of the bulging hand.
Count number of marbles grabbed.

Challenge: See if you can beat your record.

Change it Pick up other small objects eg pegs, paper scrunched balls.

PAPER SCRUNCH

Why do we do it? Small hand muscle strength

What do we need? Pieces of paper eg tissue, gift wrap, alfoil etc

How: Tear off small squares
With dominant hand only scrunch into small balls.
Count number of balls scrunched

Challenge: Can you flick them into the bin.

Change it Use to decorate a mosaic picture. Pick up with pegs.

PEG GAME

Why do we do it? Small Hand muscle strength

What do we need? Pegs and icecream container

How: Divide pegs into equal groups.
Using dominant hand only, squeeze open
and place around outside of container.

Challenge: Do with eyes shut.

Change it Race to take them off the container. Squeeze, don't pull!

PLASTICINE - ALPHABET

Why do we do it? Small hand muscle strength

What do we need? Plasticine, modelling clay,
Plastic Placemat.

How: Use plasticine to make individual letters of the alphabet.
Roll snakes and pinch together to form letters.

Change it Can you make your name? Can you do numbers?

PLASTICINE- MICRO DINOSAUR

Why do we do it? Small hand muscle strength, developing pinch strength

What do we need? Plasticine, Modelling Clay, Plastic Placemat.

How: Roll plasticine into a small ball.
Hold ball with non-dominant hand.
Pinch a small ridge along the top of the ball with index and thumb.
Squeeze out a small piece at one end to be the neck.
Squeeze out and shape a smaller piece at the other end to be the tail.
Pinch two legs on the lower section of each side.

Challenge: See how small you can make them!

PLASTICINE- BALL TOWER

Why do we do it? Small hand muscle strength

What do we need? Plasticine, Modelling Clay,
Plastic Placemat.

How: Pinch off a small amount of plasticine.
Roll between the fingers and thumb of the dominant hand.
Repeat until you have a number of balls.
Stack these one on top of each other.

Change it Try building a pyramid shape.

PAPER MONSTER MUNCHER

Why do it? Strengthens finger muscles and encourages independent use from the wrist muscles.

Where: Table top or on the floor

What do we need? Scrap paper with one corner folded up by approximately 5 cm

How: Show your child the piece of paper and explain that their hand is a monster that loves to munch paper.
Get them to rest their dominant hand and forearm on a flat surface. Explain that their arm and wrist has to stay flat.
Place the corner that is folded up closest to their hand.
Get them to munch up the paper by using just their dominant hand to scrunch the paper.
Once it's all munched up see if they can flick the paper by just curling their fingers under and flicking outwards.

PENCIL PATTERNS

Why do we do it? Improving small hand muscles used for writing and drawing.

What do we need? Pencils, crayons or markers, paper, Pencil Patterns Page (black line master)

How: Demonstrate a pattern on the left hand side of the paper.
Give the pattern a name e.g. pig's tails, spiky grass, castle etc
Encourage your child to complete the pattern to the right hand side of the paper.
Encourage the forearm and wrist to slide along the paper.

Change it Use Metallic pens and pencils on black paper. Use these patterns to make a border around a picture or handmade greeting cards.

Challenge: Create more complicated patterns as your child progresses

Individual Finger Control

Being the boss of our fingers! That's how I describe individual finger control to children. As children develop this skill you will see them being more skillful with a whole handful of fiddly tasks.

FINGER FLIPS

Why do we do it? Individual control of finger movements

What do we need? 5 counters or coins

How: Place hand palm down on table.
Lay counters or coins on top of each finger nail.
Try to flip off just one counter at a time.

Challenge: Do with eyes closed

Change it Turn hand over and do with finger tips

FINGER PUPPETS

Why do we do it? Individual control of finger movements

What do we need? Finger Puppets

How: Put finger puppets on thumb, index and middle fingers.
Make up stories to go with the characters.
Get the puppets to 'visit' the thumb puppet.

FINGER PLAYS

Why do we do it? Isolation and control of individual finger movements

What do we need? Fingers

How: Numerous traditional finger plays that use the individual movements of individual fingers.
eg Two little Dickie Birds sitting on a fence.
eg Here's the Church and here's the steeple.

MARBLE LIFT

Why do we do it? Isolation and control of individual finger movements

What do we need? 4 Marbles

How: Student lays hand palm down on table with fingers spread.
Place marbles between web space of each finger.
Slowly lift up hand, holding marbles between fingers.
Release only one marble at a time.

Challenge: Can you drop two at a time?

Finger Joint Position Awareness

We should be able to judge the position of our joints without having to look. This built in feedback allows us to get on with the job of movement, without having to visually inspect every aspect of what we are doing. For instance if a child can't judge the position of their fingers without checking visually, they are likely not to notice if their pencil grip changes. As they get older they may still need to watch every finger movement rather than writing more automatically.

These activities are also great to warm up the fingers just before writing and drawing activities.

FINGER TAPPING

Why do we do it? Enhancing joint position awareness in fingers

What do we need? Fingers, hard surface.

How: Tap fingers quickly and loudly on desk.
Pretend to play the piano with fingers moving very quickly.
Don't forget to use the thumb too.
Do until fingers start to buzz or tingle. About a minute or two.

Challenge: Try going backwards!!

Change it pretend to be spiders-hand cupped with all fingers tapping table at once.

FINGER HOOKS

Why do we do it? Enhancing joint position awareness of fingers

What do we need? Fingers.

How: Use the dominant thumb to take turns hooking onto the fingers of the opposite hand.
Try to pull both finger in the opposite direction.
Change to the index finger.
Change to the middle finger.

Challenge: Have a finger wrestle !

BUZZY FINGERS

Why do we do it? Enhancing finger joint position awareness

What do we need? Fingers of both hands

How: Hold your hands as if the fingers are gently curved around an invisible ball
Brush fingers rapidly and firmly against each other.
Do until finger tips buzz! (tingle).

Change it Do with eyes closed.

RUBBER STAMPING

Why do we do it? Finger Joint Position Awareness.

What do we need? Small rubber stamps, paper, non-toxic stamp pads

How: 1. Encourage your child to use their dominant hand to press the stamps onto the stamp pad.
2. Get your child to stamp the inked stamp onto the paper.

Change it Use potatoes (carved by an adult) to make simple geometric stamps.
Draw roads and other details around stamps to create a picture.

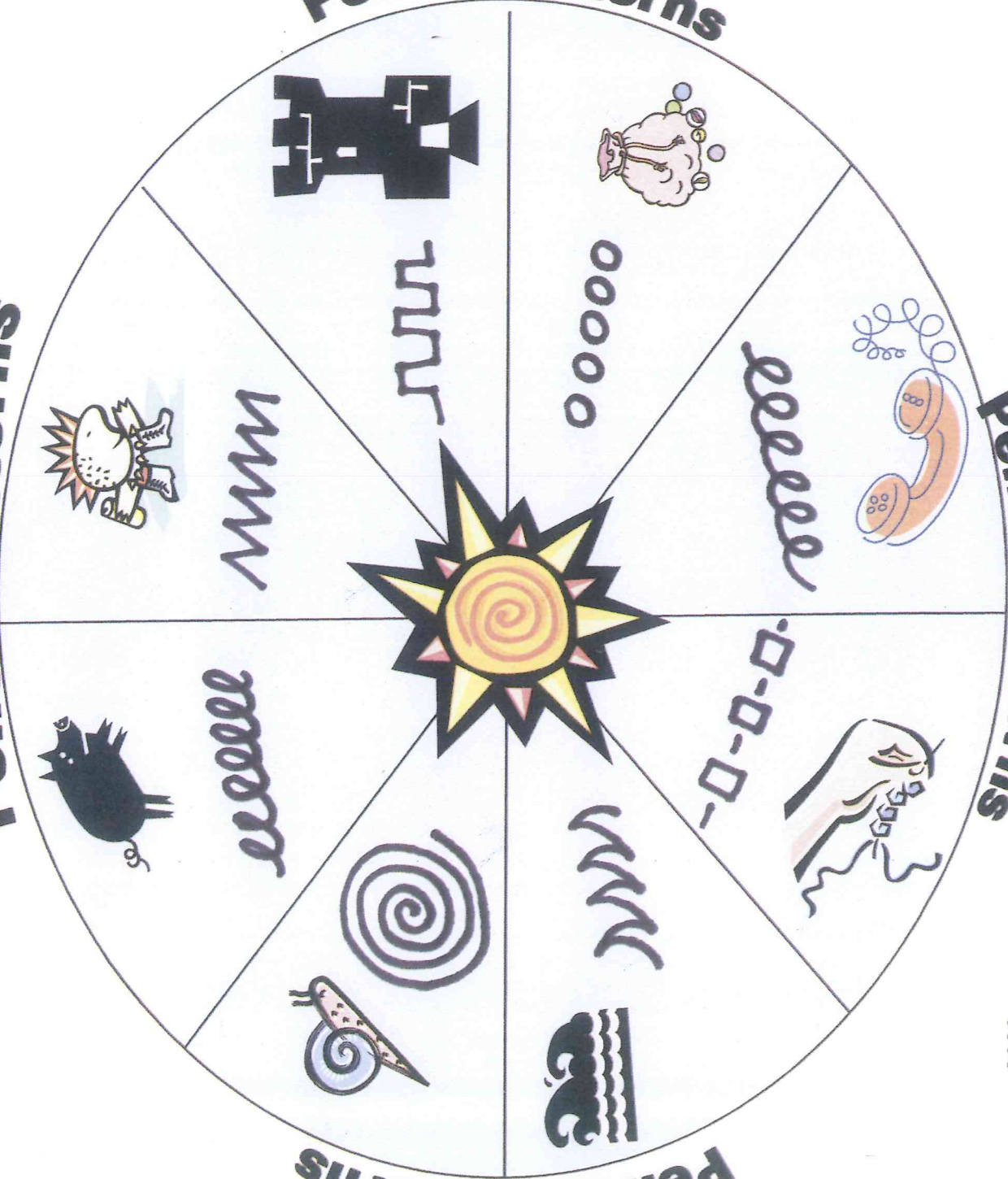
Challenge: Can you stamp with two hands at the same time.

Pencil Patterns

Pencil Patterns

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Pencil Patterns



SNAZZIER SCISSORS ACTIVITIES- RAINBOW ROUND THE CLOCK

SIMPLE ACTIVITIES

SNAKE SNIPPING

For: Scissor Skills- building up strength of snip!

Materials: Plasticine, scissors.

How: Child rolls a small snake out of plasticine.
Snip these snakes into baby snakes!

Variation: Snip straws to thread for making necklaces or a hanging decoration..

PAPER WEVERS

For: Scissor Skills for straight lines

Materials: A4 Coloured paper, pen scissors, sticky tape.

How: Mark cutting pattern as in diagram.
Child cuts along lines, stopping at the dots.
Roll up the paper so that end can be taped in place.
Use your waver at the Sports Day.



Variation: Make two different colours and roll them together.

PAPER CHAINS

For: Scissor Skills for straight lines

Materials: Various coloured pieces of A4 paper, scissors, sticky tape

How: Cut along the width of the A4 paper approximately 2 cm long.
Join the ends of one strip together with sticky tape.
Thread another strip through this ring, before fastening.
Continue to make the chain grow.

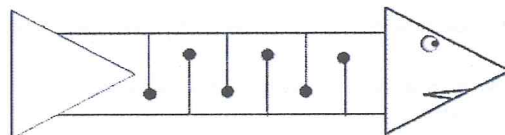
STRETCHY FISH

Why do it? Straight cutting

What do we need? Template for Stretchy Fish, coloured Paper

How: Use the template to make a rectangle 9 cm wide by 20 cm long. Copy the alternating pattern of lines. Encourage your child to cut along the lines. Tell them to stop at the dot.

Change It: Try doing this with animal pictures cut out from magazines. Cut around the animals and then cut them down the middle. Make a stretchy panel to put between the two halves.



FUNNY FACES

Why do it? Cutting straight lines to more advanced cutting for the outline

What do we need? Scissors, Lots of people pictures, sticky tape

How: Select three different faces that are similar in size. Draw a horizontal line just under the eyes, and nose of each face. Cut along the lines. Use the sticky tape to recombine the pieces to make some funny faces.

Challenge: Draw an outline and cut around the entire face to complete the funny face

SNAZZIER SCISSORS ACTIVITIES- RAINBOW ROUND THE CLOCK

MAKE A JIGSAW

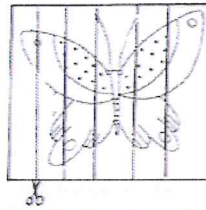
For: Scissor Skills

Materials: Picture from Calendars, Postcards, scissors

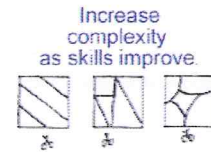
How: Parent draws one line on the back of the picture.
Child cuts along line.
Continue to do the puzzle one line at a time.
When finished Child reassembles the picture

Challenge: Increase complexity of lines.

Variation: Begin with straight lines, corners then curves.



Tip: for best results,
draw lines on
reverse side.

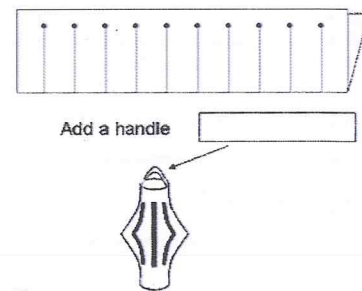


PAPER LANTERN

For: Scissor Skills

Materials: A4 size piece of coloured paper, pen, scissors

How: Fold paper in half width ways.
Mark cutting pattern as in diagram.
Child cuts along lines, stopping at the dot.
Unfold paper and roll together at right angles to bring edges together length ways.
Attach with sticky tape or staples to make Lantern.
Cut a small rectangular strip for the handle.



Challenge: How small a lantern can you make?

Variation: Make out of colourful glossy pages of magazines.

PIRATE MAP

For: Scissor Skills for curved lines

Materials: Various coloured papers, Large background Cardboard or Paper, scissors.
Pens

How: Tell the child that they are going to make a pirate map to show where to find the treasure.
Ask for ideas e.g. islands, a ship, palm tree, treasure chest.
Parent begins to draw simple outlines eg island for Child to cut around.
Glue these pieces down on the map as they are made.

Variation: Make a Space Map with rockets, planets and comets etc.

CUT AND FOLD PATTERNS

For: Scissor Skills

Materials: Squares of Coloured paper, scissors, pens.

How: Fold paper into half and then half again.
Draw various lines on paper for Child to cut around.
Child cuts along lines.
Unfold the paper to reveal the new pattern.

Challenge: Can you cut through more than 2 folds?

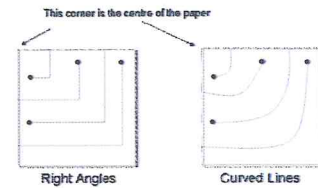
SNAZZIER SCISSORS ACTIVITIES- RAINBOW ROUND THE CLOCK

SPIRAL DECORATIONS

For: Scissor Skills for curved lines

Materials: Large Squares of coloured paper, scissors, pen.

How: Fold square in half.
Fold in half again.
Parent draws cutting pattern onto paper starting from the middle of the paper.
Child cuts along the lines carefully, stopping at the dots.
Carefully unfold the small square from the outside, back to the first fold.
Pick up the outside edges and peel back layers.



Challenge: Do a mix of curved and straight lines.

CRAZY CRITTERS

Why do it? Opportunity for more advanced cutting

What do we need? Scissors, Pictures of animals*, sticky tape

How: Select two different animals but of a similar size.
Cut around their bodies and then decide where to cut them in half. Join the two different halves with sticky tape to make two new crazy critters.

Challenge: What will you call your new crazy critter?
*Try Clip Art Animals, Magazines e.g. National Geographic's are great
