

How Can I Support at Home?

There are many ways that you can be supporting your child with both developing your child to be 'ready' to write, as well as supporting them once they are able to write and form letters. Lots of these could be things you already do with your child at home.

Some ways to support your child include:

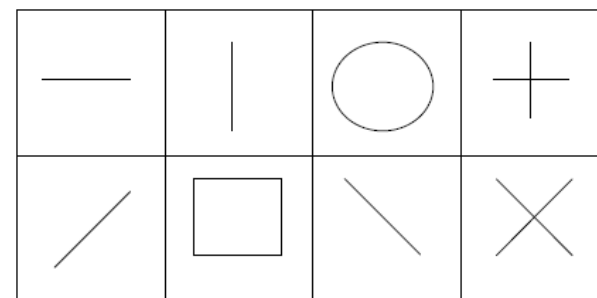
- Developing their gross motor skills. This is an important first step, as this supports children's fine motor skills (activities can be found on page 2).
- Developing their fine motor skills (activities can be found on page 3).
- Model correct letter formation – try and avoid writing in capitals when writing with your child, at this stage.
- Refer to the 'Handwriting Phrases' used at school. Children will find the consistency between home and school very useful!

Children's individual needs can always be discussed with your child's class teacher.



Preparing Your Child to Write:

A Guide for Parents



Eden Park Nursery and Primary School Academy



The Early Learning Goals:

The Early Learning Goals are what is expected of most children to achieve by the end of their first year in Reception, in terms of their Physical Development and Writing Development.

Fine Motor Skills:

- Hold a pencil effectively in preparation for fluent writing – using the tripod grip in almost all cases;
- Use a range of small tools, including scissors, paint brushes and cutlery;
- Begin to show accuracy and care when drawing.

Writing:

- 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.



Handwriting Phrases:

At Eden Park, we follow the Read, Write, Inc. scheme. To support children form their letters correctly, we use the following phrases, which helps them using both a visual and auditory aid.

- m Maisie, mountain, mountain
- a round the apple, down the leaf
- s slither down the snake
- d round his bottom, up his tall neck and down to his feet
- t down the tower, across the tower
- i down the body, dot for the head
- n down Nobby, over his net
- p down the plait and over the pirate's face
- g round her face, down her hair and give her a curl
- o all around the orange
- c curl around the caterpillar
- k down the kangaroo's body, tail and leg
- u down and under, up to the top and draw the puddle
- b down the laces to the heel, round the toe
- f down the stem and draw the leaves
- e lift off the top and scoop out the egg
- l down the long leg
- h down the head to the hooves and over his back
- r down his back and then curl over his arm
- j down his body, curl and dot
- v down a wing, up a wing
- y down a horn, up a horn and under his head
- w down, up, down, up
- z zig-zag-zig
- q round her head, up past her earrings and down her hair
- x down the arm and leg and repeat the other side



Development of Fine Motor Skills

Fine motor skills are the coordination of small muscles, in movements - usually involving the synchronisation of hands and fingers.

A child needs to have well-developed hand use, grasps and fine motor skills in order to

- control a pencil accurately
- grasp objects with their whole hand
- manipulate objects such as turning them over.
- pick up small objects using a pincer grip (tips of thumb and index finger)
- pick up objects or manipulate them using a tripod grip
- use co-ordinated fine motor skills during play.

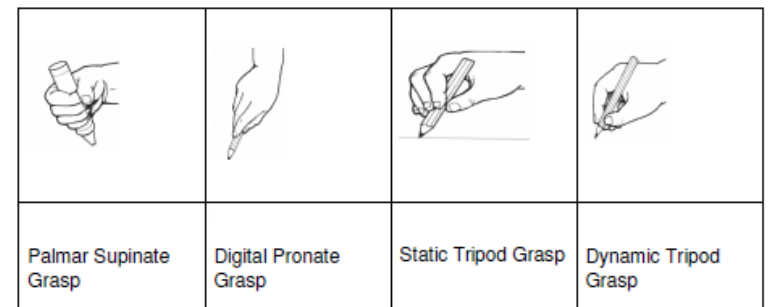
Some activities which support the development of fine motor skills include:

- Building blocks
- Lacing or threading activities
- Using tweezers or tongs to pick up small objects
- Craft activities, including collages, paper mache and cutting
- Puzzles
- Lego, Duplo, K'nex and other construction toys
- Dressing up using clothes with buttons, press-studs, zips and shoelaces
- Playing with playdough



Developing Tripod Grasp

Even when a child has good fine motor skills and well-developed grasp patterns, holding a pencil is a new and complex task. You may need to check the child's grip on the pencil while they are colouring or drawing. The pictures below show the developmental stages that a child may go through when learning to hold a pen.



(Erhardt, 1994)

Ideally, a child will be able to use a static or dynamic tripod grasp for writing, when they reach Reception. However, we are very aware that some children reach this stage at different times.

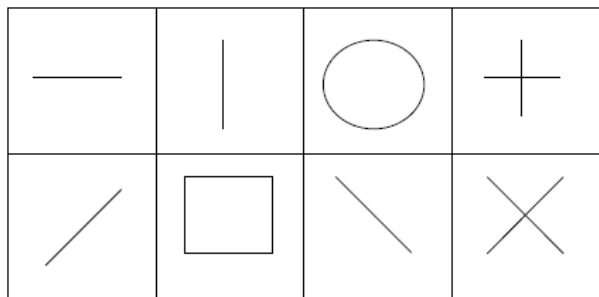
This means that:

- the pencil is held between the tips of the thumb, index and middle fingers
- the pencil is held in a relaxed way without too much pressure on the shaft of the pencil.
- the pencil rests on the hand between the thumb and index finger.



Development of Letter Formation

A child is said to be ready to form letters after they have managed to form the following pre-writing patterns.



Beery (1997)

Letter formation is part of the development of fluent handwriting and forms the foundation for joining letters in the later school years. It needs to become automatic so the child can concentrate on the content of their writing rather than having to use a lot of energy on how to write the letters. Lots of practice is the best way to help letter formation become automatic.

As part of the Read, Write, Inc. programme, there are specific times of the day allocated for children to practice their letter formation, as well as timetabled sessions where children will have opportunities to develop their fine and gross motor skills.



Developing Gross Motor Skills

Gross motor (physical) skills are those which require whole body movement and which involve the large (core stabilising) muscles of the body to perform everyday functions, such as standing and walking.

The gross motor skills involved in handwriting mainly refer to the postural control that is required for writing. Efficient control of the larger muscle groups in the neck, shoulder and trunk is necessary to maintain stability in order for the fingers and hands to move to complete the handwriting task.

Activities which support gross motor development:

- Playing on playground equipment such as climbing frames.
- Building obstacle courses
- Crawling, skipping, rolling and throwing balls/bean bags.
- Play games such as 'twister' or 'simon says' where instructions are focussed on body parts such as 'stand on one leg'.
- All sports such as trampolining, swimming, dancing.
- Helping with chores around the house.
E.g. washing the windows washing the floors.
- Large painting/drawing, particularly when on an easel.

