

# Fine Motor and Letter Practice for Home

Hand skills are crucial to successful handwriting. Small movements of the hand are referred to as fine motor skills. If you believe that your child needs extra activities to strengthen his/her hands or fine motor skills, here are a few suggestions of activities to do with your child.

- Do finger plays. Find books with finger plays at your library.
- Cut pictures from newspapers or magazines. Take a large black marker and draw a line around the picture to give a guideline.
- Put together small beads, Legos, Tinker Toys, Lincoln Logs, etc.
- Knead dough or clay and build an object.
- Find small objects hidden in the dough.
- Play pegboard games.
- Gather small objects from around the house (small buttons, beads, etc.) and place them in a container. Pick them up off the table with a pair of tweezers and place them back in the container.
- Play with any toys that require moving or placing little pieces.
- Squirt a water bottle outdoors on the sidewalk.
- Squeeze a kitchen baster to move cotton balls with air. Have a race on the table.
- Finger paint with Jell-O or cocoa on a paper plate.
- Use small marshmallows and toothpicks to form letters.
- String popcorn, buttons, or beads to make necklaces.
- Create a design on a piece of paper with a hole punch.
- Clip clothespins to a container.
- Lace cards.



You can do several fun activities at home to encourage letter practice. Make sure to always model the letter for your child. A few activities are listed below:

- While your child is in the bathtub, draw letters on the wall of the tub in shaving cream or soap paint.
- Take turns tracing letters on each other's backs and guess the letter. (Write the letter on a piece of paper.)
- Finger paint letters.
- Write letters on the sidewalk with chalk.
- Trace letters in the snow or in the sand.
- Form letters out of dough or clay.
- Make cookie letters. Form the letters by rolling the dough and putting the pieces together.
- Form letters out of French fries.
- Make letters with pipe cleaners.
- Draw letters on the carpet with your fingers.
- Decorate a letter collage using glitter, paint, and markers.
- Use different types of pencils for writing practice (gel pens, colored pencils, scented markers, crayons, etc.).
- Write your shopping lists together.
- Use a flashlight and make letters on the wall. Guess the letter that was made. Cut out letter templates to place in front of the flashlight.
- Put letters on a die. Roll the die and write a word that starts with the letter.
- Fish for words. Place cut-out fish in a shoebox. Write words or letters on the fish. Attach paper clips to the fish and adapt a small pole with a magnet. Come up with a word or sentence using the letter or word on the fish that is caught.
- Write with icing tubes.

# Help Me Hold the Crayon

There are easy ways to help your child. Even if you're not a teacher, and don't hold the pencil correctly yourself, you can still be a very good influence on your child. Here's how:

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1. Choose the right writing tools.
2. Show your child how to hold them.
3. Be a good example.

## How do I choose the right writing tools?

- As soon as your child is past age 3 or the puts-things-in-his-mouth swallowing stage, give him or her little broken pieces of chalk or crayon and lots of big sheets of paper for loose scribbling/drawing.
- Little pieces of finger food also encourage finger skills.

## Why little pieces?

Little pieces develop fingertip control and strength. They encourage the precise pinch that's used for crayons and pencils. Notice how well your child uses his/her fingers with little pieces. There's research to show that starting with small pieces encourages the correct grasp.

## What about regular crayons and pencils?

They're fine, but you must show your child how to hold and use them. Save the pencils for later. Pencils are sharp pointed sticks and really aren't appropriate for beginners. Fat pencils and crayons are too heavy for little hands.

## When should I start?

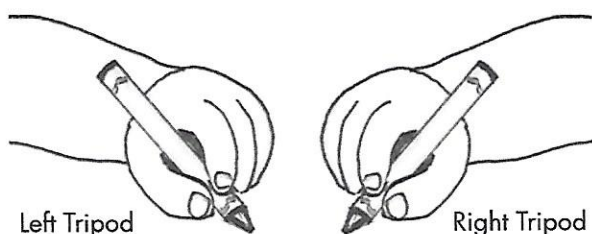
Right now. You can start showing your child how to use crayons as soon as your child wants to color.

## How do I show my child?

1. Teach your child to name the first 3 fingers – the thumb, the pointer, and the tall man.
2. Move them - Give a thumbs up and wiggle the thumb. Have your child point with the pointer finger and then put the tall man beside the pointer finger.
3. Make a big open O pinch – this positions the thumb and pointer correctly.

## What is the correct grip?

Here's a picture. Notice that there is a choice. Some children like to pinch with the thumb and pointer. That's the tripod (3—pinch with thumb and pointer, pencil rests on tall man). Others like the quadropod (4—pinch with thumb and pointer/tall man together, pencil rests on ring finger).



## What else can I do?

1. Pick up and Drop it! This is a fun way to practice placing the fingers correctly. Help your child pick up the pencil and get all the fingers placed. Then drop it! See if your child can put all the fingers back in the right place again. Repeat two or three times.
2. Aim and Scribble. Make tiny stars or spots on paper. Teach your child how to aim the crayon and land on a star to make it shine. Help the crayon hand rest on the paper, with the elbow down and the hand touching the paper. Help the helper hand hold the paper. Now just wiggle the fingers to scribble.
3. Show your child how to hold and move the crayon to make different strokes, back and forth, up and down, round and round.

# Help Me Write My Name

"That's my name. My name starts with \_\_\_\_." Maybe your child is trying to write or even make letters you can recognize. If so, then it's time to start demonstrating how to write a few letters. Here's how:

1. Be a good example.
2. Write in all capitals.
3. Start every letter at the top.
4. Teach letters step-by-step.
5. Write on paper strips with a smiley face in the top left corner.

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## How can I be a good example?

Hold the crayon correctly. Your child will be watching how you form letters and hold the crayon or pencil. Be a good model. You may need to make a special effort to hold the crayon correctly.

## Why should I use all capitals?

Capitals are the first letters that children can visually recognize and remember. They are the first letters children can physically write. If a child can write his or her name correctly in capitals, you may introduce lowercase letters.

## Does it matter where my student starts?

Yes, it does. English has one basic rule for both reading and writing: read and write from top to bottom, left to right. When you write with a child, always start at the top.

## What do I say when I teach the letters?

Always say, "I start at the top." Then describe the part you're making. Say "big" or "little" for size. Say "line" or "curve" for shape, like this:  
**D** = "I start at the top. I make a big line. Now I make a big curve."

## What do I use and how do I do this?

Use two strips of paper, one for you and one for the child. Place your strip directly above the child's strip and demonstrate the first letter in the child's name. Say each step as you make the letter. Be sure the child can see the strokes as you write. (Avoid blocking the child's view with your hand.) Then tell the child to make the letter on his/her paper. Say the steps as the child writes, encouraging the child to say the steps aloud with you. Continue letter by letter.

## NOTE:

**To Make Paper strips** – Use a standard sheet. Fold it in half the long way, and then in half again. Cut on folds to make 4 strips.

**Extra help** – If the child has difficulty imitating your letter, you may use a gray crayon to pre-write each letter on the child's paper. Do this letter by letter and let the child crayon trace over your letter. Make your gray letters progressively lighter and discontinue pre-writing as child gains ability.

