

Frequency of Activities

Engage the child with activities from this programme for up to 15 minutes for 3 focused sessions a week. Simply adjusting your current activities and encouraging the child's participation in activities they would not usually not normally choose will support development.

Improving Our Service

All of our Therapists have a degree or equivalent in Occupational Therapy or Physiotherapy, some to Masters level. All our therapists are registered with the Health Professions Council and receive regular post graduate training.

Our service is founded in evidence-based practice and is benchmarked against other local services and best practice groups.

We continue to review our service to make sure that it meets the needs of those who are using it.

We would appreciate any suggestions on how we may improve and also comments on what was good about the service.

If you have any compliments, suggestions or complaints, please write to or contact:

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PAEDIATRIC THERAPY SERVICE

EARLY YEARS

Information and Activity Ideas for



Pencil Skills – Pre-writing

Introduction

Writing is a complex perceptual, motor and cognitive skill. Pre-writing skills are all the activities children take part in to prepare them for writing instruction. A good wrist position makes it easier to develop hand skills. The best position for most activities is straight or slightly back. In this position the fingers can move more freely and the muscles in the hand are able to develop. This allows the child to do more complex activities such as dressing, drawing and writing.

Activities

- Experiment with different colours of chalk, markers, crayons, pens, pencils and paints.
- Try drawing on sandpaper, patterned wallpaper, in sand or mud.
- Draw with whole hand as well as index finger in lotions, pudding, whipped cream, icing sugar, chocolate spread and shaving foam.
- Draw on cakes with coloured icing tubes or draw with cheese spread on bread or crackers.
- Make feely name or shape by writing/drawing shapes on card board and then gluing rice sand or sprinkles on the glue. When dry the child can trace over the shapes with their fingers
- Cornflower and food colouring.
- Make shapes with noodles or spaghetti.
- Draw large shapes in paint on an easel or paper pinned to the wall.
- Use of mazes to encourage development of pencil control
- Start with getting the child to walk on large shapes/lines on the floor (masking tape or chalk) and drive toy cars through mazes, over crossing lines and diagonals. Then encourage drawing between a horizontal or vertical path. Gradually increase the complexity of the maze with curves, circles and dead ends. Gradually decrease the width of the maze to encourage increased control. These can be done with finger paints, crayons, pencils or paints on a table, at an easel or on paper on the floor or pinned to the wall
- Colour pictures of a child's favourite character for motivation. Encourage the child to grade from large to small movements with practice.

- Use streamers or ribbons to make shapes in the air
- Draw on a pavement with a wet brush or with chalks
- Draw with a wet brush on a chalk board
- Make shapes and lines out of rolled up play dough. When working on pre-writing skills encourage the child to experience a wide range of different mark-makers and surfaces on which to make their patterns. Materials used to stimulate the senses, are excellent to reinforce learning and will help keep the child's interest.
- Encourage large movements when doing the activities as this encourages use of the muscles of the whole arm and shoulder against gravity and helps to reinforce the 'mental picture' of the pattern. Gradually reduce the size to smaller, refined movements.
- Vegetable stamps

Strategies

- If the child finds these activities challenging they are likely to need 1:1 support to help them practice and learn these skills. Choose the activity and work with the child for a short time encouraging them to achieve the task
- Gauge how much help give the child. Initially you may need to use a hand over hand approach but try to reduce how much physical and verbal help you give the child so they become more independent. Praise and positively reward the child when they have achieved a part or all of the activity successfully.
- Vary positions for pre-writing activities, e.g. lying on tummy on floor, high kneeling at easel or low table, paper attached to a wall etc.
- If the child struggles with attention and perseverance, try doing the sensory activities before drawing with crayons or pens e.g. drawing in sand, play dough, as sensory input can help prepare a child to attend.
- Don't focus too quickly on forming letters, try to make drawing fun!