

Fun and Easy Strategies to Improve Young Children's Writing and Fine-Motor Skills

An Occupational Therapist's Perspective

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Nice to meet you!

Occupational Therapist for 17 years

25 years experience working with children and adults with developmental disabilities

School-based O.T. for 10 years

I am a mother of a child who dislikes writing and anything fine-motor.



2

What fine-motor and writing activities does your children engage in?

Discussion



3

What are the challenges you have when trying to facilitate your child's engagement in fine-motor or writing activities?

Discussion



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Let's start out with Fine Motor Play!

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Offer many manipulatives!

(essential for preparing hands for writing)



Rotate the toys often to keep their interest.

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The most "fine" of the fine-motor activities are those that use the intrinsic muscles of the hands and fingers and therefore require use of the tips of the thumb, index finger, and middle finger with small movements.


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Find toys that mimic the motor planning of cutting to prepare the hands to properly use scissors



8

Be creative and embed concept instruction into fine-motor activities



- Color identification
- Matching
- Sorting
- Counting
- Letter identification

9



Provide opportunities for fun, hand strengthening activities throughout the day



- Therapy putty
- Playdough
- Squishy fidget balls
- Stretchy toys


**This helps build strength in the intrinsic muscles of the hands, which is essential for grasping a writing utensil.*

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Learning to grasp and open a variety of containers is a great functional fine-motor skill to practice at home or in a classroom.

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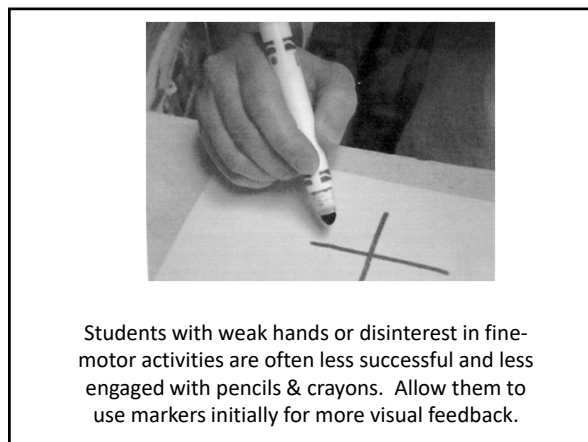
Make the fine-motor play multisensory!

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Offer a wide variety of writing utensils

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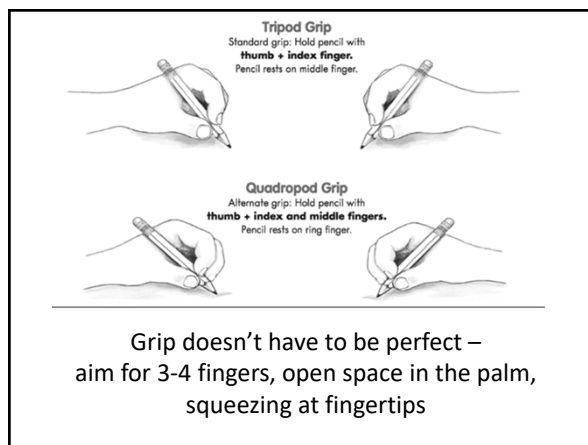
Students with weak hands or disinterest in fine-motor activities are often less successful and less engaged with pencils & crayons. Allow them to use markers initially for more visual feedback.

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Big vs. Small Movements

- BIG for motor planning (whole arm movements, constructing letters, large letters and shapes on paper, diagonals, air tracing)
- SMALL for fine motor control (coloring, pencil pick-ups, simple stroke details on pictures, dot to dots, trace a math, mazes)

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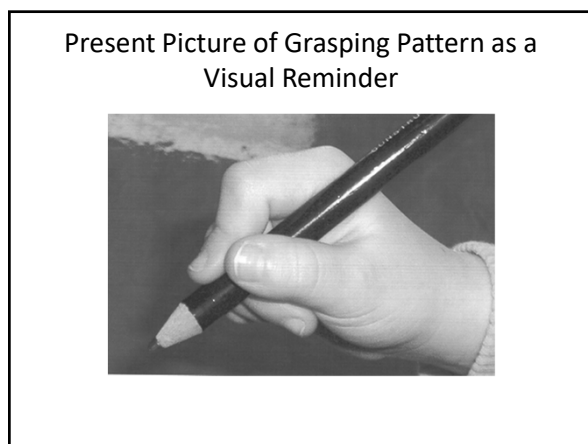
Grip doesn't have to be perfect – aim for 3-4 fingers, open space in the palm, squeezing at fingertips

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We need to teach our students how to grasp a pencil!

Different types of cues work for different kids, so have a few tricks up your sleeves!

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The Pom Pom Trick

Give the last 2 fingers a job, so the first 3 fingers can isolate movements.

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Incorporate music into fine-motor instruction to make it fun, and to provide prompting for motor planning



LWT Music for Learning
<https://shopping.lwtears.com>

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Warm Up Writing Fingers

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Where Do You Start Your Letters? At the Top!

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Where Do You Start Your Letters?



Where do you start your letters? At the top!
 Where do you start your letters? At the top!
 If you want to start a letter, then you better, better, better, remember to start it at the top!

Is this the top, top, top?
 No it's the bottom!

Is this the top, top, top?
 No it's the middle!

Is this the top, top, top?
 Yes, it's the top, top, top!

Where do you start your letters? At the top!

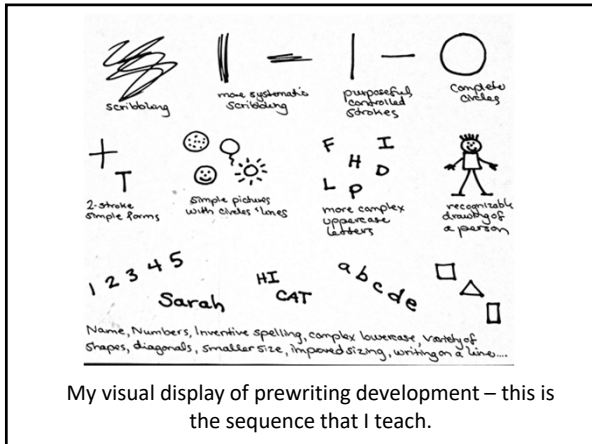



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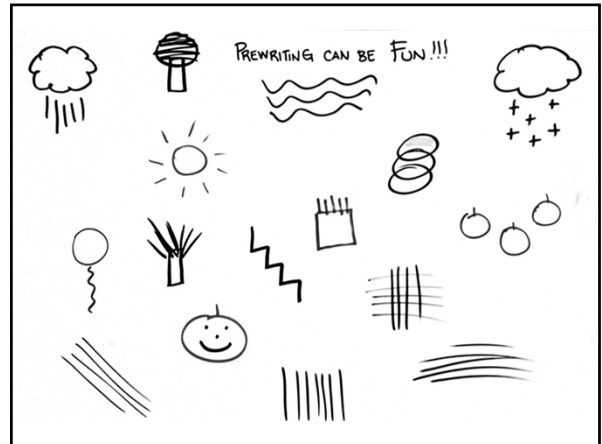
Foundational Language

- “stop” •“big” •“down”
- “start” •“little” •“across”
- “watch me” •“curve” •“around”
- “your turn” •“line” •“middle”
- “top” •“jump” •“bottom”
- “point” •“slide” •“trace”

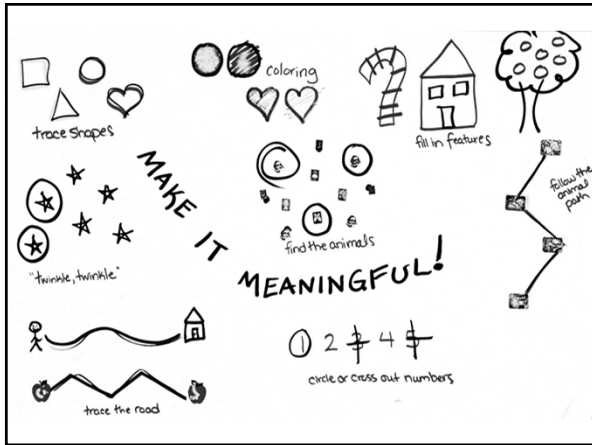
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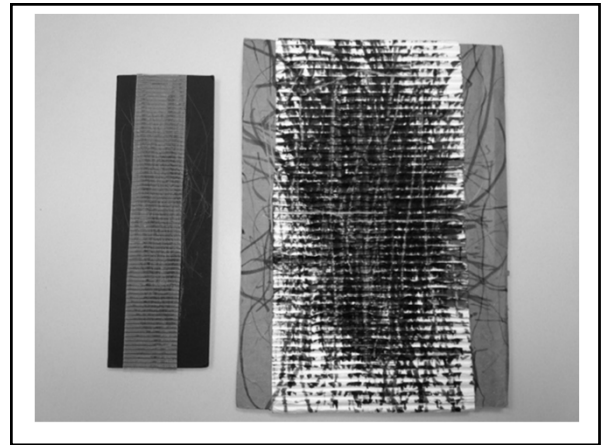
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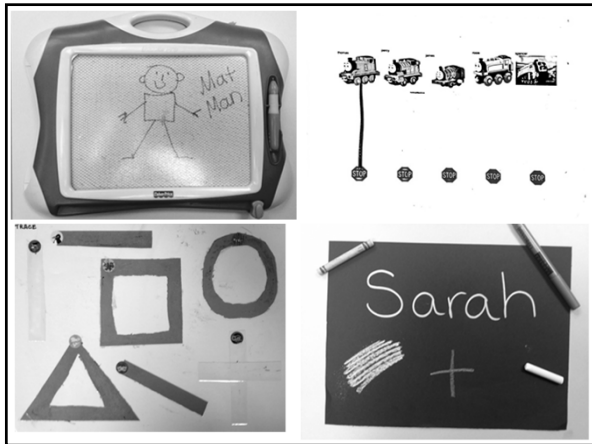
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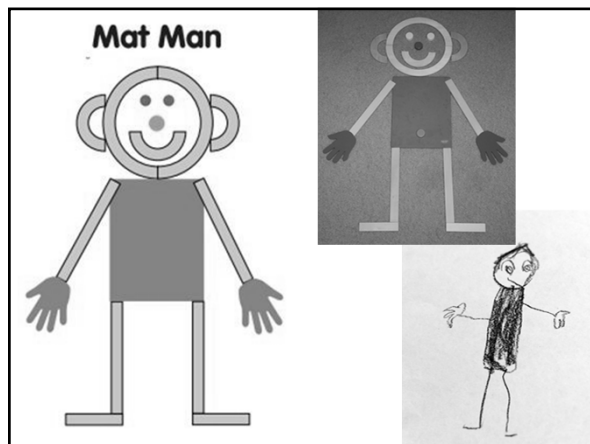
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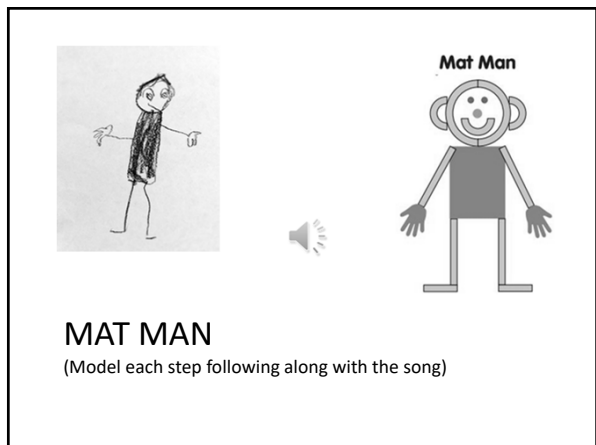
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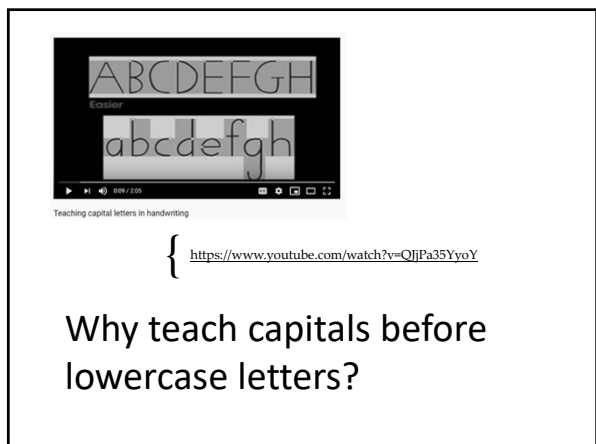
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Materials: wood pieces and blue mats

- Model, "This is a..."
- Identification: "Show me..."
- Imitate building simple letters
O, C, T, D, L, P, V, X



Build Letters
Big line, Little line,
big curve, little curve

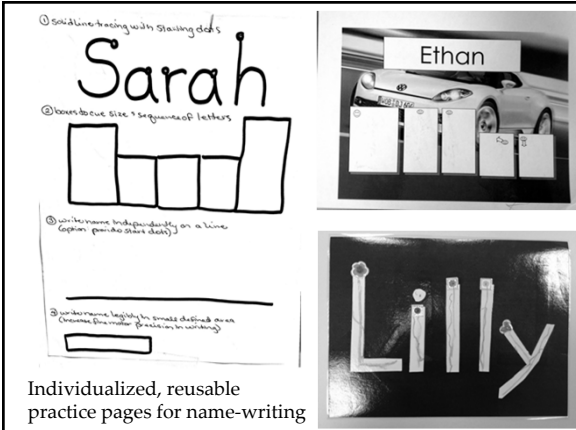
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① solid line tracing with glazing dots

Sarah

② boxes above line + sequence of letters

③ write name independently on a line (open guide to start desk)

④ write name legibly in small defined area (choose the motor practice to writing)

Individualized, reusable practice pages for name-writing

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Why I use box cues for name-writing?

Why I do not get stuck on tracing as a method of teaching writing?

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Predictable, verbal cueing is so important for learning consistent motor planning when starting to form letters.

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Verbal Cues for Number Formation

0	Around, around, you must go That's the way to make a zero.
1	Straight line down is lots of fun That's the way to make a one.
2	Around the track and back to you, That's the way to make a two.
3	Peek around the tree, peek around the tree, That's the way to make a three.
4	Halfway down and over some more, Down again to make a four.
5	Line back, go down, around the hive, That's the way to make a five.
6	Down around, sit and mix, That's the way to make a six.
7	Across the sky and down from heaven That's the way to make a seven.
8	Make an "S" but do not wait, Swings back up to make an eight.
9	Circle around and down with the line, That's the way to make a nine.

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Lowercase

"Magic C" c a d g q o

"hump" h r e "hit the ball" v w "slide" y z "bump" b k

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Technology AND Handwriting
We need to teach both.

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Use technology intermittently...

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Assistive technology is another tool in our tool belt when we need many options to facilitate skills in our students with multiple, complex needs.

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YouTube for Video Modeling of Handwriting Strategies

Learning Without Tears YouTube Channel

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Stylus = Highly Recommended

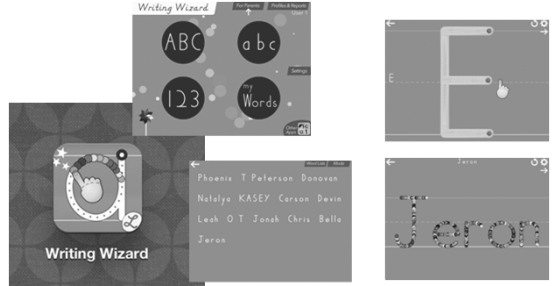


Try the short ones!!



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Writing Wizard
*My FAVORITE!
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XNvF8GW4GmY>



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<http://wetdrytry.com>
Learning Without Tears app

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THANK YOU
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