



**A guide to support your  
child with fine motor skills  
and handwriting**

Before your child is ready to write they need to have developed their fine motor skills in order to be able to hold the pencil correct and form the letters. This booklet is designed to give you some ideas on how you can develop your children's fine motor skills which will in turn support and aid their writing development

# What are fine motor skills?

Fine motor skills involve the use of small muscles in our hands, wrists, fingers, feet and toes. Fine motor skills involve the movement of small muscles that require your child's brain to coordinate between the action and what they are seeing. Fine motor skills can impact things like holding a fork to eat or using a pencil to write. For children of any early age fine motor skill development is very important.

Developing these muscles includes actions like grasping, holding, pressing or using the pincer grip (holding something between the fore-finger and the thumb – the correct hold for a pencil.)

Fine motor skills are vital for doing everyday every day activities like buttoning up a shirt, using utensils to eat, tying shoelaces, cutting with scissors and writing. If a child's fine motor skills are not developed and they are unable to do these everyday tasks, it can affect their self-confidence, ability to develop self-care and independence, and also their academic performance.



# Playdough recipe

## **You need:**

2 cups plain flour (all purpose)

2 cups of salt

4 tablespoons cream of tartar

2 cups of boiling water

gel food colouring (optional)

## **Method:**

Mix the flour, salt, cream of tartar in a large mixing bowl

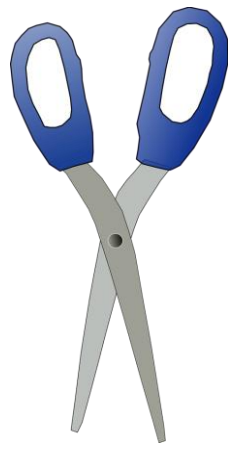
Add food colouring TO the boiling water then into the dry ingredients

Stir continuously until it becomes a sticky, combined dough

Allow it to cool down then take it out of the bowl and knead it vigorously for a couple of minutes until all of the stickiness has gone. \* This is the most important part of the process, so keep at it until it's the perfect consistency!\*

If it remains a little sticky then add a touch more flour until just right

# Additional ideas



**Puzzles-** These are great for children to help develop the pincer grip.

**Drawing, Colouring and Painting** –this not only helps with fine motor skills but also creativity and imagination. Try different types of painting and mediums, like crayons, chalk, finger paints, water, mud, charcoal to spark their interest and strengthen the hand eye coordination.

**Using tongs or tweezers** –this can be to pick up small objects like raisins, grapes, pasta and putting them into a bowl.

**Cutting with scissors** – Use different materials and age appropriate scissors.

**Bath time and water play**-Using cups and containers to fill and pour, sponges and squeaky toys to squeeze.

**Sand play** –pouring and filling buckets, scooping, digging and using moulds. Kinetic or magic sand can be used too.



# Even more ideas



**Building with blocks and lego** –stacking, connecting and building things together encourage fine pulling and pushing movement.

**Learning to brush their teeth**

**Threading and lacing** –pasta and beads as well as tying knots and bows.

**Gardening and planting** – Digging, weeding, pinching seeds to plant.

**Woodwork and construction**-using saws, hammers and nails -(age appropriate equipment with adult supervision)

**Encourage children to independently dress themselves** –fasten zips and buttons

**Baking and cooking activities** – cutting food with adult supervisor of course!



# Handwriting

Children will progress onto forming letters.

The mantras we use to form letters can be found on the next page.

You can practise letter formation using tradition pencil and paper but you can also do the following:

Paint letters

Use different colours over the top of each other






















Use chalk on the floor or wall

Use water on concrete floor or the wall






















Writing in the sand

Writing with mud





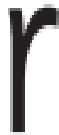

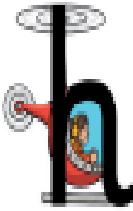

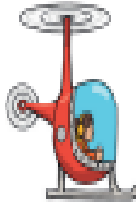







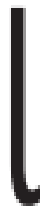

# Handwriting Mantras

Grapheme and mnemonic	Picture card	Pronunciation phrase	Formation phrase
 	 snake	Show your teeth and let the <b>s</b> hiss out <b>sssss sssss</b>	Down the snake from head to tail.
 	 astronaut	Open your mouth wide and make the <b>a</b> sound at the back of your mouth <b>aaa</b>	Around the astronaut's helmet and down into space.
 	 tiger	Open your lips; put the tip of your tongue behind your teeth and press <b>ttt</b>	Down the tiger and across its neck.
 	 penguin	Bring your lips together, push them open and say <b>ppp</b>	Down the penguin's back, up and around its head.
 	 iguana	Pull your lips back and make the <b>i</b> sound at the back of your mouth <b>iii</b>	Down the iguana and dot the leaf.
 	 net	Open your lips a bit, put your tongue behind your teeth and make the <b>nnnnn</b> sound <b>nnnnn</b>	Down, up and over the net.
 	 mouse	Put your lips together and make the <b>mmmmm</b> sound <b>mmmmm</b>	Down, up and over the mouse's ears.













# Handwriting Mantras

Grapheme and mnemonic	Picture card	Pronunciation phrase	Formation phrase
 	 duck	Put your tongue to the top and front of your mouth and make a quick <b>d</b> sound <b>d d d</b>	Round the duck's body, up to its head and down to its feet.
 	 goat	Give me a big smile that shows your teeth; press the middle of your tongue to the top and back of your mouth; push your tongue down and forward to make the <b>g</b> sound <b>g g g</b>	Round the goat's face and curl under its chin.
 	 octopus	Make your mouth into round shape and say <b>o o o</b>	All around the octopus.
 	 cat	Open your mouth into a little smile; make your tongue flat and move it up towards the top of your mouth to say <b>c c c</b>	Curl around the cat.
 	 kite	Open your mouth into a little smile; make your tongue flat and move it up towards the top of your mouth to say <b>k k k</b>	Down the kite, up to the top corner and down to the bottom corner.
 	 sock	Open your mouth into a little smile, make your tongue flat and move it up towards the top of your mouth to say <b>c k c k c k</b>	<b>c</b> Curl around the heel of the sock. <b>k</b> Down the sock, up and back down to the toe.  <b>Catchphrase:</b> Rock that sock!
 	 elephant	Open your mouth wide and say <b>e e e</b>	Around the elephant's eye and curl down its trunk.

# Handwriting Mantras

Grapheme and mnemonic	Picture card	Pronunciation phrase	Formation phrase
 	 <p>umbrella</p>	<p>Open your mouth wide and say u u u</p>	<p>Down and around the umbrella, and back to the ground.</p>
 	 <p>rainbow</p>	<p>Show me your teeth to make a rrrrr sound rrrrr rrrrr</p>	<p>From the cloud to the ground and over the rainbow.</p>
 	 <p>helicopter</p>	<p>Open your mouth and breathe out sharply h h h</p>	<p>Down, up and over the helicopter.</p>
 	 <p>bear</p>	<p>Put your lips together and say <b>b</b> as you open them <b>b b b</b></p>	<p>Down the bear's back, up and round its tummy.</p>
 	 <p>flamingo</p>	<p>Open your lips a little; put your teeth on your bottom lip and push the air out to make the sound <b>fffff</b> <b>fffff</b></p>	<p>Down the flamingo to its foot and across its wings.</p>
 	 <p>lollipop</p>	<p>Open your mouth a little; put your tongue up to the top of your mouth, behind your teeth, and press <b>lllll</b> <b>lllll</b></p>	<p>Down the lollipop stick.</p>

# Handwriting Mantras

Grapheme and mnemonic	Picture card	Pronunciation phrase	Formation phrase
		Pucker your lips and show your teeth use your tongue as you say <b>J J J</b>	Down the jellyfish and dot its head.
		Put your teeth against your bottom lip and make a buzzing <b>v v v v v v v v v v</b>	Down to the bottom of the volcano and back up to the top.
		Pucker your lips and keep them small as you say <b>w w w w</b>	Down and up and down and up the waves.
		Mouth open, then push the <b>cs/x</b> sound through as you close your mouth <b>cs cs cs (x x x)</b>	From the top, across the box to the bottom. From the top again across the box to the bottom.
		Smile, tongue to the top of your mouth, say <b>y</b> without opening your mouth <b>yyy</b>	Down, around the yo-yo and curl round the string.
		Show me your teeth and buzz the <b>z</b> sound <b>zzzzz zzzzz</b>	Across the top of the zebra's head, zig-zag down its neck and along.