

**Integrated Community Paediatric Services  
Paediatric Occupational Therapy Service**

**Worksheet F**

Pre-writing and Scissor Skills

Area of Difficulty	Strategy	Tick when strategy has been tried and add comments.
<p>Limited interest in holding a pen or pencil to mark make.</p>	<p>Encourage your child to engage in mark making at a more sensory level. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Making marks in the sand.</li> <li>– Making marks in foam in a tray.</li> <li>– Using large chinks to draw on a chalk board or outside on the pavement (with adult permission).</li> <li>– Painting with paint brushes or sponges.</li> </ul>	
<p>Pre-writing skills and mark making.</p>	<p>The skills involved in learning to write are called prewriting skills. These include the sensorimotor skills that contribute to a child holding and using a pencil, and the ability to draw, copy, and colour.</p> <p>Encourage your child to do prewriting activities by specifically setting up an area with a child size table and chair, and a range of fun and interesting crayons, coloured pencils and paper.</p> <p>Drawing and doing activities on a vertical surface is important for this age group as it helps to develop your child's arm and hand skills. For example, encourage your child to draw on a blackboard, paint at an easel, stick magnetic letters to the fridge or put stickers on a piece of paper taped to the wall.</p> <p>Do not be too eager to teach your child how to write letters. Instead have fun drawing together, copying shapes and colouring in.</p> <p><b>Pre-Writing Activities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Pathways – have the child draw along a pathway. This can be graded by including angles and curves and by varying the width of the pathway. Eventually the child could draw along a single line pathway.</li> <li>– Magic felt Tips can be purchased. These change colour when drawn over. Pathways could be drawn, or worksheets adapted.</li> <li>– Colouring within bold outlines. Wikki Stix (like sticky pipe cleaners) or string / ribbon, could be placed over the outline as a tactile cue.</li> </ul>	

**Integrated Community Paediatric Services  
 Paediatric Occupational Therapy Service**

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Spots – Use a picture involving various small circles. Can the child put a dot inside each circle?</li> <li>– Obstacle course – Can the child get from one side of the paper / chalkboard / sand tray to the other without touching any of the obstacles.</li> <li>– Dot to Dots.</li> <li>– Mazes.</li> <li>– Simple templates and stencils.</li> <li>– Spirograph.</li> <li>– Stopping and starting. Can the child trace over dotted horizontal and vertical lines, starting and stopping in the correct places.</li> <li>– Smudge Pathways – Draw a pathway on a chalkboard and have the child follow it with their finger. Some children can find this easier as it does not involve holding a writing implement.</li> <li>– Lazy 8 – This movement pattern involves many of the movement patterns involved in letter formation, have the child trace over this using a fluent movement pattern.</li> <li>– Include activities that involve a circular movement e.g. stirring, wiping windows, wiping side of the bath / car.</li> <li>– Use a magic wand using pool noodle, Jedi light sabre or ribbon sticks to create circular movements in the air.</li> <li>– Alternative mark making options eg Etch a Sketch, Magnadoodle or Aquamat activities.</li> <li>– Bring the child’s attention to shapes around them for example a pencil or row of buttons looks like a straight line, plates, coins and buttons look like circles. A treasure hunt game could be played. Look for shapes within certain objects e.g., yo-yo, necklace.</li> <li>– Place card cut outs of shapes under a sheet of paper and rub crayons across this.</li> <li>– Blind folded sorting game. Have the child sort plastic / cardboard shapes according to certain properties, e.g. those with a curved edge, or those with corners. Alternatively have the child identify shapes without looking.</li> <li>– Complete craft activities involving different shapes and patterns.</li> <li>– When playing with roadways / brio etc. discuss different properties e.g. curves, straight lines, corners.</li> <li>– Draw in shaving foam, sand, finger painting.</li> <li>– Random Crayon Walk – Draw dots randomly on a page. Have the child draw from dot to dot. Encourage child to change speed: slow to fast.</li> </ul>	
--	--	--

**Integrated Community Paediatric Services**  
**Paediatric Occupational Therapy Service**

	<p>If and when they do begin to mark make, you can begin copying the marks / scribbles that they are making whilst providing a verbal commentary e.g. “up and down, round and round”. You can then slowly and subtly start taking turns and encourage them to copy the marks that you make.</p> <p>Consider other fun ways to explore simple lines and shapes which may align with their areas of interest e.g. using a car to follow along roads, you could even strap a crayon to the front/back of the car so it makes a mark on the paper.</p> <p><u>Multi-Sensory Play</u>        Use various textures to practise drawing horizontal, vertical and circular scribble e.g...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Shaving foam can be smeared onto a mirror/easel or onto a tray.</li> <li>– Drawing with finger or stick in a tray of sand/shaving foam/mixture of cornflour and water.</li> </ul>	
<p>Holding a pencil.</p>	<p>Start with larger, thicker crayons or pens, whilst your child develops the ability to hold a writing tool. You can then progress them to a thinner pen or pencil as they are able (giving your child a very short crayon or piece of chalk will support them to naturally develop a more mature tripod grip).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Easy grip jumbo crayons</li> <li>– Palm grip crayons</li> <li>– Triangular crayons</li> </ul> <p>Are available from various website online.</p>	
<p>Pencil control e.g. your child may have difficulty forming recognisable shapes / letters or maintaining marks within a specific sector of the page.</p>	<p>Pathways – Child draws along a pathway. Start with wide, straight pathways and then make them narrower and include curves and angles to make it more tricky. This can be made more interesting by having pictures at either end of the pathway e.g. ‘get the mouse to the cheese’.</p> <p>Colouring within bold outlines. Wikki Stix (like sticky pipe cleaners) or string / ribbon could be placed over the outline as a tactile cue to stop the child going over the lines.</p> <p>Spots – use a picture which includes small circles e.g. a face with freckles. The child puts a dot inside each circle.</p>	


**Integrated Community Paediatric Services  
Paediatric Occupational Therapy Service**

	<p>Miss the obstacle – The child draws a line to get from one side of the paper/chalkboard/sand tray to the other without touching any obstacles e.g. toy cars in a sand tray, or dots on a piece of paper.</p> <p>Random crayon walk. Draw dots on a page. The child draws randomly from dot to dot.</p> <p>Stopping and starting – the child traces over dotted horizontal and vertical lines, starting and stopping in the correct places.</p> <p>Smudge pathways – a pathway is drawn on a chalkboard and the child smudges it with their finger.</p> <p>Encourage the child to follow between the lines of the following designs using a thick paint brush, felt pens, crayons or pencils. See if the child can complete it without stopping or going over the line. Start with large designs and gradually reduce the size. Encourage the child to go round in an anti-clockwise direction.</p> <div data-bbox="432 1066 1034 1240" style="text-align: center;"> </div> <p>Use mazes, dot to dots or following dotted lines.</p> <p>Tracing or Stencils.</p>	
<p>Pencil pressure (you may notice your child holds a pencil very tightly often pressing heavily on the page. As a result, mark making is slow and effortful and their hand is likely to tire easily, possibly causing some pain. Alternatively, your child may not use sufficient</p>	<p>The best pencil grip is a comfortable grip that allows the hands and fingers to move freely and easily when writing and drawing. Some children, however, hold their pencil very tightly and often press heavily on the page. As a result, a child may write in a slow and effortful manner, or their hand will tire easily and possibly cause some pain. Some children do not use sufficient pencil pressure and therefore their writing can be difficult to read.</p> <p>It is important for your child to learn to monitor their handwriting pressure for themselves.</p> <p><b>Pressing too hard on the pencil</b> Pressing too hard can slow writing significantly. – Encourage the child to write on a tissue without tearing it.</p>	

**Integrated Community Paediatric Services  
Paediatric Occupational Therapy Service**

<p>pencil pressure and therefore their drawings may not be clear).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Write or draw with a very sharp pencil on a piece of paper placed on a carpet square.</li> <li>– Roll a flat piece of Play Doh and cover with paper. Ask the child to write on the paper without making an impression on the Play Doh underneath.</li> <li>– Place several sheets of carbon paper or mouse mat underneath the writing paper. See if the child can press lightly so that no impression is made. Try not to make a hole in the paper.</li> <li>– Use self-propelling pencils that will snap if pressed too hard.</li> <li>– Use hard lead pencils such as H pencils.</li> <li>– “Light-up pens” press so the light doesn’t come on.</li> <li>– Encourage your child to listen to the sound of the pencil. If they press too hard it is louder than if they press more lightly. Biro’s and gel pens may make scratching sounds when pressure is too hard. Whiteboard pens will squeak if the child presses too hard.</li> <li>– Ask your child to use a grey lead pencil to colour in a picture using light grey, medium grey and dark grey. Then discuss how applying different amounts of pressure changes the shade of grey.</li> </ul> <p><b>Pressing too softly on the pencil</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Use chalk or crayons on their side to colour in large patterns, to do tree bark/brick wall rubbings or rub over stencils. Child holds the crayon flat on the paper between their index finger, middle finger and thumb (tripod grasp). Encourage the child to apply light pressure, then heavy pressure so they learn to feel the difference.</li> <li>– Write or draw with a felt pen or gel pens, or soft lead pencils.</li> <li>– Try using a softer lead pencil, such as B pencils.</li> <li>– “Light up pens”- press so the light comes on.</li> </ul> <p><b>Holding the pencil or pen too lightly</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Use a heavier pencil, weighted pencil or weighted wrist band.</li> <li>– Use a Handi-Writer.</li> <li>– Pencil grips and wider barrelled pens may enable a more stable grasp.</li> </ul> <p><b>Holding the pencil too tightly</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Regular stretch breaks.</li> <li>– Kush n Flex pencil grip (spikey).</li> </ul>	
--	---	--

**Integrated Community Paediatric Services  
Paediatric Occupational Therapy Service**

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Pencil grips and wider barrelled pens may enable a more stable grasp.</li> <li>– Walking up and down the pencil.</li> <li>– Wrap an unused strip of Blu-Tack around a pencil approximately 1cm from the drawing tip. If your child holds the pencil too tightly, they will squash the Blu-Tack. Help your child become aware of how tightly they hold the pencil by the marks on the Blu-Tack. Encourage them to hold the pencil less tightly and see if there is a difference to a new piece of Blu-Tack. Practice writing using a “just right” pressure.</li> </ul>	
<p>Early scissor skills (difficulty holding scissors correctly).</p>	<p>Adapted scissors can be easier to hold correctly, and can encourage children to take part in cutting:</p> <p>Mini Easi Grip scissors:</p> <p><a href="http://www.sensorydirect.com">www.sensorydirect.com</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.dyslexiashop.co.uk">www.dyslexiashop.co.uk</a></p>  <p>Initially try cutting activities that involve only the opening and closing movements and not the forward movement. For example, snip thin strips of card or straws; use the pieces to make legs on a spider, hair on a person or windows of a train. Play Doh sausages could also be cut.</p> <p>Some activities can also be completed during the day to help develop skills needed to be able to successfully use scissors.</p> <p>Try other opening and closing tools, or toys that involve a squeezing action. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Squeeze squirt guns or squeezey bottles to hit targets.</li> <li>– Use a bulb squeezer to play blow football.</li> <li>– Kitchen tongs and tweezers.</li> <li>– Action songs and sock/finger puppets.</li> </ul>	
<p>Scissor skills (for example difficulty with directing and controlling paper or scissors in one hand and/or using opposing hand to stabilise paper).</p>	<p>Initially cut cardboard as more control is offered. You can gradually use thinner paper.</p> <p>Use smaller pieces of paper, as larger pieces of paper can ‘flop’ and be harder to control.</p> <p>Encourage and prompt the child to move the paper rather than the scissors when changing direction.</p>	

**Integrated Community Paediatric Services  
Paediatric Occupational Therapy Service**

	<p>Encourage the child to hold scissors and paper with the thumb uppermost. A sticker on each thumbnail may be a useful visual cue.</p> <p>Draw wide pathways for child to cut between. Dots at intervals along the pathway or line may help to keep the child focused. Encourage the child to cut from dot to dot.</p> <p>Punch a line of holes along the edge of a piece of paper. Cut off the strip along the hole punched line.</p>	
--	---	--