

Activities/Suggestions Supporting Kindergarten and Writing Skills

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Go to a playground or play in your backyard! Climb. Pull. Tug of war. Hang from monkey bars with both hands. Negotiate the monkey bars. Rock walls if you can! Swimming. Karate, etc. Gym classes. Jump. Ride a bike. Skip. Wheel barrow walk. Do an obstacle course. Have a catch. Kick a ball.

Heavy work is great for kids. Pull, push, carry, rake, shovel. Practice putting back pack on back; can put heavy things in it for fun! Walk around with it; practice going up and down stairs... all great supportive activities.

Ball skills. Have a catch. Large ball (bounce and catch). Small ball, same. Try to catch with hands only. Can use a bean bag or koosh ball if it's tricky for them. Encourage stepping with opposite foot to develop good habits.

Body Awareness: Play Simon Says, Right and Left games, Cross over your body to do things (touch your right hand to your left knee; at the table, reach across midline to pick up something with your right hand on the left side and vice versa); clapping games (patty cake)

Tall kneeling or one knee up/one down (1/2 kneel): beach ball or balloon volley ball; catch

Modeling Clay/Silly Putty/ Playdoh: Roll it out to form shapes, letters, and numbers. Pull it, poke it, twist it, roll it into a ball and a worm, roll with a rolling pin, etc. Holding scissors properly, cut small pieces off after forming it into a log; cut across a "pancake". Can also simulate "cutting food" using a plastic knife and fork to practice.

Hole punchers: Punch holes following a straight line or simple shape drawn on paper. Also, count out a certain number as the holes are being punched.

Tearing paper: Rip out pages from a coloring book or work book; rip a magazine page or scrap paper, crumple with one hand and throw into trash basket. Help rip up junk mail or old phone books to recycle.

Tweezers, tongs, strawberry huller, clothespins, children's chopsticks: Use any of those to pick up/move/sort large and small items (peas, beans, cheerios, mini marshmallows, cotton balls, socks, mini koosh balls, etc) also try holding them and pop bubbles blown to them by pinching or poking them with the tool or your fingers.

Squeezing spray bottles (try to keep thumb opposite the index and middle fingers on the trigger when holding; the other 2 fingers hold the bottle). Support weight of the bottle with the other hand if needed. Can use the spray bottle to "erase" chalk writing outside on sidewalk or on a chalkboard; add food coloring and spray paint the snow; spray water on wall of a tub to clear off shaving cream spread around by your child (practices letters, numbers, drawing shapes or a person). You can also use a water gun (if you're ok with it) which also incorporates the two sides of the hand as well. Can also pinch rubber bath squirt toys to help strengthen the thumb, index and middle fingers.

Wring out wet sponges or wash cloths in tub or sink.

Bucket or plastic box filled with sand (or dried rice or oatmeal or beans or pasta): Squeeze a fist full; use fingers of the same hand to rub off; hide small common objects or mini plastic toys in the mixture and search for them.

Gravel for an aquarium: Wet it, squeeze it, and push it off with fingers of the same hand.

Feely Bag: Put common objects in a bag and identify it through touch alone. Add several objects when they are ready. You can use different textures. Try adding in plastic letters or shapes and see if they can guess the letter before they take it out.

Guess what letter: On your child's back, write a capital letter. Have the child guess / tell you what letter you wrote. Have them write it on paper. Correct formation as best you can. All capital letters should start at the top. Also play the alphabet game, when in the car or walking, look for certain letters on signs. Go through a magazine and find letter or cut them out. Can also do with colors, numbers, categories.

Chalkboard: Draw, make pictures, letters, shapes, numbers, dot to dots, etc. Shade in a shape by holding small piece of chalk on its side to encourage the 3point grasp. Can erase by re-tracing with a 1" piece of wet sponge or a spray bottle. Practice writing their name. Start on the left side of the paper. Do mazes and stay within a path or trace on top of a path. (Can also make tray with salt or sand and do letters, etc). Can also use a 1" paint brush or larger with water and paint letters on sidewalk or large chalkboard.

Coins: Pick up a coin with one hand, turn it over using only that hand, repeat; pick up one coin at a time, hold it in the same hand and try to pick up another coin without dropping the first. Do this for 5 coins without dropping; try to hold 5 coins in one hand and put into the top of a piggy bank slot one a time (without dropping and without help from the other hand).

Magnets: Use a magnet to pick up paper clips and other objects. Remove by pinching with thumb and pointer fingers. Arrange things or hang things on the refrigerator with the magnets.

Folding paper/put papers in folder or envelope: Make paper objects: cards, planes, hats, fans...Fold a letter and put in an envelope. Practice putting papers in a folder.

Bendaroos (wikki stix): Make letters, shapes, do dot to dots; trace a shape. Connect to make circle and make links.

Rubber bands: Stretch around a water bottle/or old vitamin/medicine bottles using both hands. For one hand, try to put rubber band around fingers (not too tight) and have them try and get the rubber band off with the same hand.

Scissors: Make sure the child is holding them correctly. Encourage good thumbs up position; arm/elbow of the cutting hand should not be "floating up", but closer to the body. Remind that the non dominant hand is the turning or the steering hand. Cut lines, curves, simple shapes. Cut straws with scissors.

String beads, uncooked pasta, cereal, pieces of a straw, etc.

Stencils: Trace shapes or designs on paper, can do crayon rub over stencil shape

Anything on a vertical or inclined surface is good! Gets the wrist and fingers into good position. Use an easel or the wall. Paint, write, color. Use push pins on a bulletin board or a cork board. You can also use a large 3 ring binder (binder part away from you so your forearm is inclined up for table top incline or when child is on floor on stomach, propped on elbows).

Hidden pictures, find the difference pages, I Spy.

Fastening and self help: Encourage fastening clothing. Zip back packs. Button. Snap. This will help when child needs to manage clothing by him/herself. Take time to introduce shoe tying. Try pipe cleaners or shoe string licorice as a sturdier means. Try using 2 different colored laces for easier instruction. Have the child wear back pack; walk up and down stairs; put on backpack over a jacket.



Pencil or crayon grasp: Look at wrist/forearm; make sure they are in good position on writing surface (you can put paper on an incline, wrist goes into better position and fingers tend to follow). If on table top, look at forearm and encourage resting on surface. Child should be holding instrument with **3 fingers**. If your child is holding a pencil or crayon with more than 3 fingers (including the thumb) have them hold a small cotton ball with the ring and pinky fingers of the writing hand, to keep them tucked in while writing. It helps break up the 2 sides of the hand, encourages the tripod grasp and keeps the other 2 fingers out of the way for better movement when writing. The **pencil should rest back in the web space of the thumb**, not held in a vertical position. Can use an XL rubber band, doubled on wrist; pull one loop around pencil to pull pencil back. After time, the child will feel how it's supposed to feel and hold it there themselves. Or use broken crayon or golf pencil which decreases the surface space so other fingers can't fit easily, limiting to 3 fingers. Good writing habits start with good position and grasp!

Encourage activities on the floor, on stomach, propped on elbows to do puzzles, read a book or even watch parts of a movie. Upper extremity strength supports coordination and hand skills.

Opening containers. Plastic zip loc bags. Water bottles. Snack packages (show them the seam down the back and pinch on both sides to open top).

Help your child get organized. Plan clothes the night before school. Have your child put items the need for school in their backpack to help develop independence and responsibility.

GAMES/ACTIVITIES:

Lite Brite/Lite Brix

Legos/Duplos

Battleship

K'Nex

Stickers/Felt Boards

Connect Four

Bed Bugs Game

Operation

High Q or Tic Tac Toe

Crafts

Checkers/Chinese Checkers

Perfection

Geoboards

Card Games

Hi Ho Cherry O

Kerplunk

Mastermind

Puzzles

Magna Doodle

Lacing Cards

Pick Up Sticks

Dot to Dots/Mazes

Mr. Potato Head

Ants in your pants

Roll dice/board games

Dominos

Spinning tops/jacks

Tongs/Chopsticks

Clothespins

Tweezers/strawberryhuller

Playdoh

Nuts and Bolts

Wind up toys