

Writing in the Early Years - Parents' Guide

What comes before writing?

The ability to write is a complex one, not only do children need to have the confidence to pick up a pencil and make marks on paper, they also need to be developmentally ready to write with a strong core and hand muscles. The hand is a really complex piece of machinery and is made up of lots of joints and muscle groups that interconnect and work together to provide maximum dexterity.



How do muscles develop?

Children's arms and hands contain a series of pivotal joints which develop from biggest to smallest (shoulder, elbow, wrist, fingers). Once the pivots have worked their way down to the wrist, the journey doesn't stop there, though for many children it becomes far trickier and they often face difficulties. The end of the pivot journey is when the mark making ends at the smallest set of pivots, right at the end of the fingers. If children can hold their mark making tool there, then they will have the fullest, most dextrous range of movement that their bodies can provide and be ready to write for life. This is fine motor control. However, it is important to remember that a child cannot master fine motor activities until gross motor skills are developed.



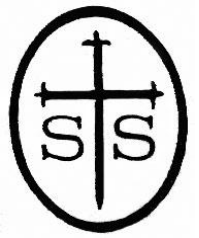
What can be done to improve gross motor skills?

Go to various parks	Dancing	Bikes and trikes	Gymnastics and trampolining
Obstacle courses	Painting with rollers	Walks	Brushing and mopping with large brooms and mops

What can be done to improve fine motor skills?

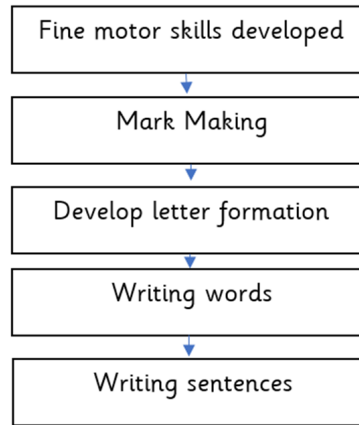
- Playdough and clay
- Threading
- Cooking
- Woodwork
- Weaving
- Sewing
- Painting and finger painting
- Sand and water play
- Building
- Transient art
- Collaging





Stages of writing

Children will begin with mark making and develop to pictures with meaning before finally beginning letter formation.



Mark Making

Once the muscles are fully developed we can move onto mark making with pencils. The children will develop their own grip and it is important not to constantly 'correct' it but to guide children carefully to feel more comfortable holding a pencil.

Resources we provide for mark making are:

- Chalks
- Paint brushes
- Mops and long handled brushes
- Sand
- Water sprays
- Gloop in trays
- Paper and pens
- Whiteboards and pens
- Paper on the wall inside and outside



Writing technique

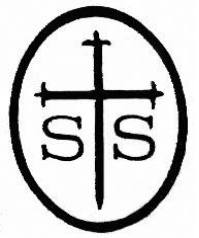
•It is important for children to learn the correct way to form a letter, from as early as they start writing, so that habits don't become an issue later on. When we see children writing we try to help them by guiding their letter formation.



•We use sound mats that children can access which contain the sounds that children have learnt through our phonics scheme.



•We also practise letter formation on white boards during our phonics sessions quickly and in a fun active way during a game for example find something under the parachute and write the letter it starts with.



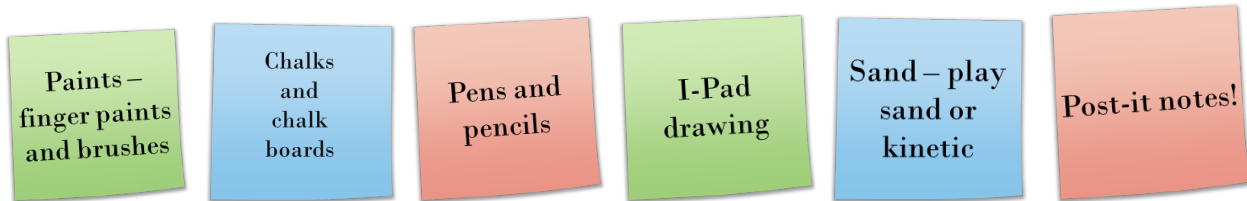
Writing words and sentences

At school we like to make writing or attempts to write meaningful and purposeful so that children enjoy it and see the reason to write. We can do this by facilitating their play, when children are engaged already then it is easy to give a reason to write for example building a Lego mansion and then labelling the parts with post it notes so that others can see what the parts are. Ways we can encourage writing during play are by:

- Writing message to their friends
- Writing shopping lists in the home corner
- Writing song lyrics
- Writing a phone number
- Writing cards
- Labelling their construction work
- Writing recipes
- Labelling art work
- Secret codes

Mark making at home

It is ideal to have resources available for children to mark make at home as and when they wish to, things they can access themselves for example:



Writing at home

You can encourage your child to write at home for a purpose or for fun in the following ways.

- Writing message to their friends
- Labelling their construction work
- Writing song lyrics
- Labelling art work
- Writing thank you cards to others
- Writing birthday cards and invitations
- Helping you write a shopping

