



Penpals for Handwriting: Foundation 1 (3-5 year olds) Information

Preparation for handwriting involves developing four key areas:

- Gross motor control: the ability to control the body.
- Fine motor control: the ability to fine-tune the movements of the arm, hand and fingers.
- Visual control: the ability to co-ordinate hand-eye movements.
- Spatial control: the awareness of oneself in space, an awareness of direction (left/right) and plane (horizontal/vertical) and how to transfer that on to paper.

Here are some things you can do at home to develop these key areas:

- Play with a ball: kick, catch, throw, bounce, etc.
- Play with hoops, frisbees and stilts (the upside-down flowerpot kind).
- Encourage play on large climbing frames in parks.
- Encourage football and dance-type activities.
- Play with large-scale building kits.
- Enjoy finger rhymes.
- Encourage your child to make things and model things (cutting, sticking, moulding, cooking, sewing, threading, etc). Using a range of materials (play dough, Plasticine, wood, etc).
- Encourage your child to experiment with a range of tools and equipment (pens, pencils, crayons, felt tips, scissors, hole punches, tweezers, etc).
- Share jigsaw puzzles and board games.
- Provide opportunities for painting, colouring and 'making marks' on different sizes of paper.

As part of developing confidence in these key areas the children begin to explore patterns and basic letter shapes. We experiment with the following seven basic patterns, which are excellent preparation for more formal work on letter formation.

1) Straight lines



2) Upward loops



3) Downward loops



4) Circles



5) Zig-zags



6) Eights



7) Spirals



8) Enjoy exploring these patterns at home in as many different ways as possible. Make patterns using paint, water, sand, flour, etc. – don't always rush to find a pencil.