



Occupational Therapy

Fine Motor Skills

Cutting Skills

The importance of Scissor Cutting Skills

Cutting helps children build up the little muscles in their hands with the open and close motion of the scissors. Cutting encourages children to use their hands and eyes together and both sides of their body at the same time. These skills are really important in your child's development as it helps with everyday activities including brushing teeth, using cutlery, managing zippers and buttons, writing, drawing and throwing and catching a ball.

Now let's have some fun practicing some of these skills.

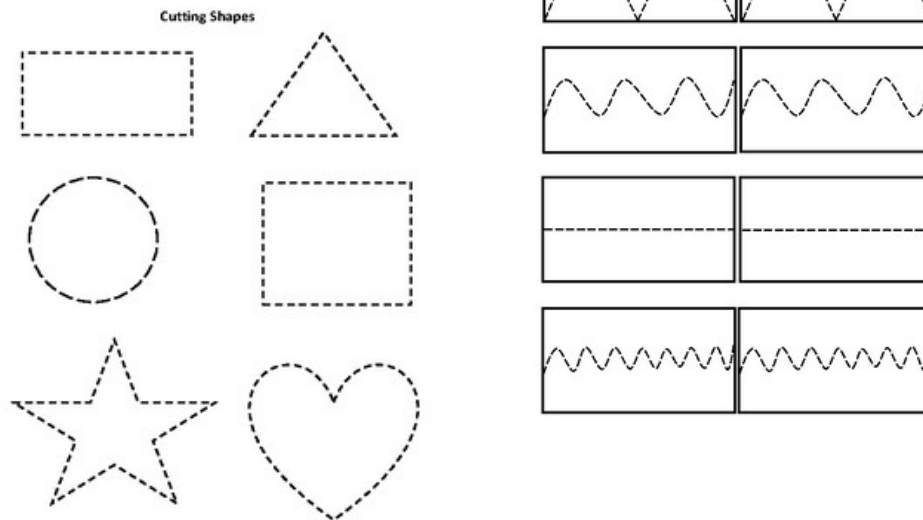
Here are some ideas:-

- Cut up an old magazine or newspaper, then with the scraps of paper stick them to a plain sheet of paper and make a picture.
- Draw a face on a used toilet roll or kitchen roll. Cut down the top to make it look like you've created some hair.
- Use a paper plate and be creative.



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- Draw some lines onto a sheet of paper then follow the lines with your scissors and just cut. Here's an example:-

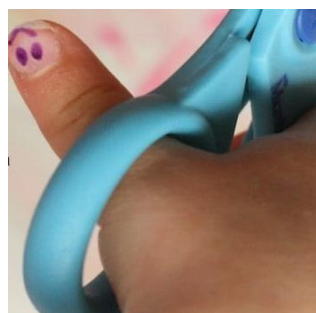


As the weather is nice, why not go outside and cut some grass, flowers (only if you are allowed), twigs or even leaves. Once you cut them, now stick them to some paper with either glue or some cellotape. See what pictures you can create. Can you make a square with some twigs or a star with some grass. Using different textures and objects will help your child's hand strengthening skills even more.



Here's a useful tip

A smiley face drawn on the thumbnail of your child's "cutting hand" serves as a reminder to keep their thumb facing upwards while he or she is cutting.



Handwriting

You will need:

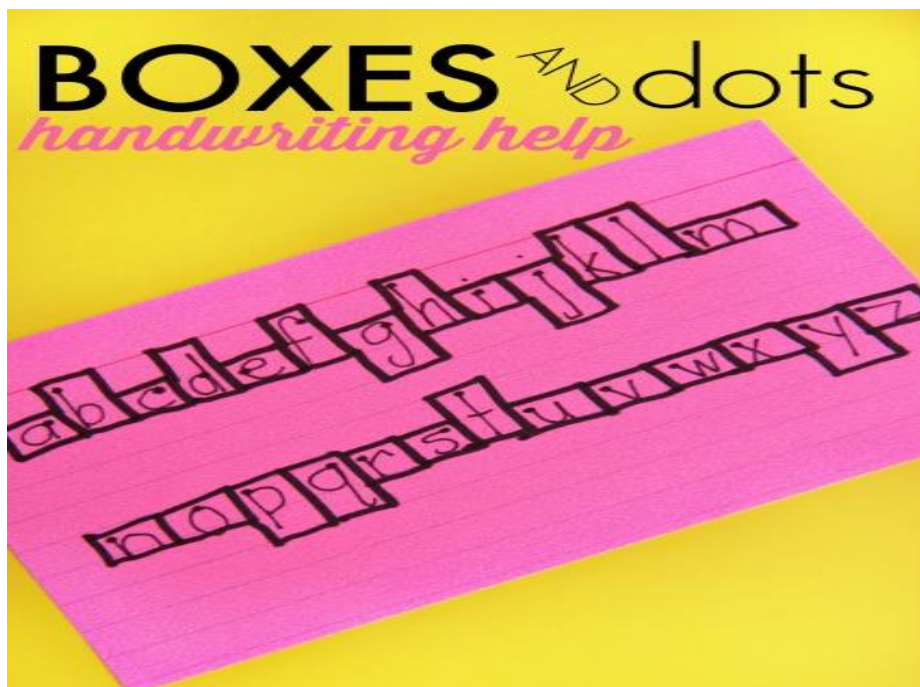
Lined paper (or draw on your own lines)

Sand Paper

Simply lay a piece of paper on top of a sheet of sandpaper. If you do not have sandpaper and its dry outside, see if you can place a piece of paper on a pathing slab? And then write. The sandy grit of the sandpaper/rough path provides feedback through the pencil and allows children to slow down their writing. It encourages them to use better pencil control and make them be more aware of how their pencil is moving and the space they have to write in. This one strategy can help your child slow down, respond to tactile sensory input and modify their pencil control giving them a connection with the position and movement of their body.

Box and Dot Handwriting Strategy

This is perfect for children who are working on placing letters appropriately on the lines with awareness of tall letters (b, d, f, h, k, l, t) that should touch the top line, small letters that should reach half-way between the top and base stimuli lines (a, c, e, i, m, n, o, r, s, u, v, w, x, z), and tail letters that should drop down below the base line (g, j, p, q, y).



The dots in the boxes allow children's letter formation by starting at the start point using the visual cue of a starting dot. This is perfect for children who are working on improving

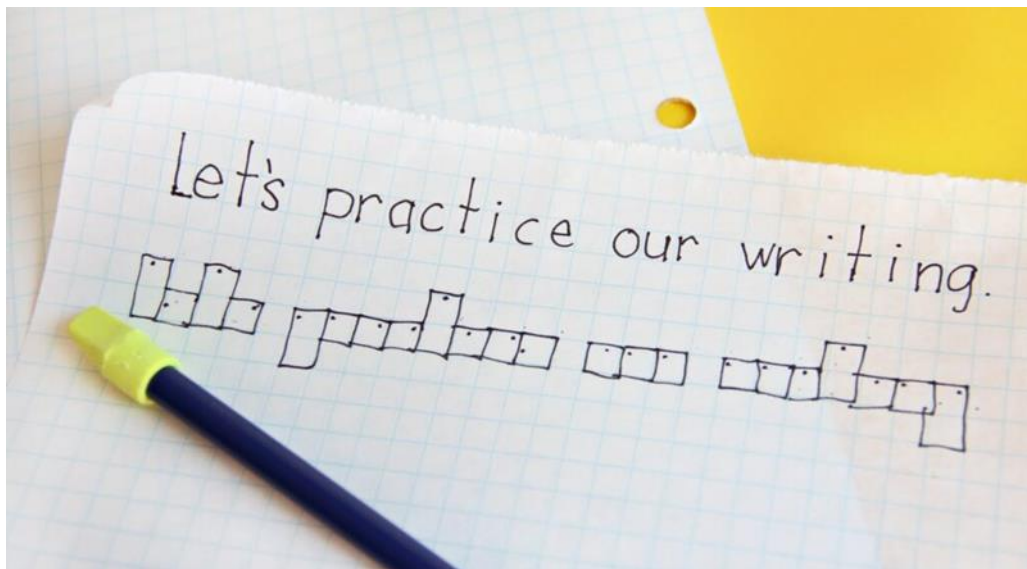
letter formation in a single stroke (r, m, n, etc) or letters that require the writer to pick up their pencil for portions of the letter formation (a, d, etc). Sometimes, children form the letters in “parts” as they build the letter instead of forming it accurately for speed and legibility. The starting dot can help with pencil placement to address this part of letter formation.

The sized boxes of this handwriting strategy are great for allowing children form letters with appropriate spacing, giving children a definite visual cue for spatial awareness between letters and words. This handwriting technique can be used as an accommodation that allows students to learn letter size, placement, and formation. This accommodation can be used on regular paper, graph paper, or worksheets. When students start to demonstrate better understanding on letter characteristics, the boxes and/or dots can be faded out and eventually removed.

One strategy for grading down this tool is to first remove the dots from the boxes. Other students may benefit from removing the boxes before the dots. Simply adding a dot to writing spaces can provide the visual prompt needed for letter formation and placement.

Another technique for lessening the amount of visual cue is to transition students to a highlighter space for the bottom space or bottom half of lined paper.

Other times, using the boxes and dots on the words that are being copied are all that are needed for carryover of line awareness, letter formation, and spatial awareness.



As shown below this is another idea on how to help children to visually see letter sizing by using highlighted paper.

Using highlighted paper
helps students with
letter size differentiation.

Pencil Control and Pencil Grip

Handwriting with fluidity, speed, accuracy and over longer periods of time requires a complex range of whole body and hand strengths and skills. So it is not surprising that many children can find handwriting a challenge.

For good handwriting style children need to develop their:-

- Gross Motor Skills – so they can sit correctly for periods of time
- Fine Motor Skills – so they can hold and control the pencil and move the paper up the table as they write.

The Dynamic Tripod Grip

The most efficient and widely used way to hold a pencil is the dynamic tripod grasp where the pencil is positioned between the thumb and index finger with the pencil resting on the middle finger.



Here are some others:-



The Adapted Tripod Grip

This unusual, but effective grip, has been especially useful for children and adults who have low muscle tone or painful joints.

The tips of the thumb, index and middle fingers hold the pencil, but the pencil rests between the index and middle fingers, instead of in the webspace next to the thumb.

This adapted tripod grip offers stability, but does not require as much pressure from the thumb to hold the pencil in place.

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The Dynamic Quadrupod Grip



In the dynamic quadrupod grip, the tips of the thumb, index, middle and ring fingers control the pencil. The thumb is opposed to the fingers, while the little finger is curled into the hand to give stability.

The presence of the fourth finger on the shaft tends to limit the range of movement a little, and there is a little less stability with only the little finger curled in on the side.

Lateral Tripod Pencil Grip



The lateral tripod uses the thumb, index and middle fingers to grip the pencil shaft. Although the tips of the index and middle fingers are used, it is the pad of the thumb that is used in this grip.

In a lateral grasp (whether tripod or quadrupod), the thumb crosses over the shaft of the pencil, and the pad of the thumb often rests against the index finger (instead of the pencil shaft). This often blocks the full range of finger movements when compared to a dynamic tripod grasp.

The webspace (between the thumb and index finger) is a bit smaller with a lateral grasp, which limits some of the movement, and requires a bit more effort from the thumb to hold the pencil steady.

Lateral Quadrupod Pencil Grip



The lateral quadrupod is very similar to the lateral tripod, except that the ring finger is also involved in holding the pencil and the stable arch is reduced.

Again, the pad of the thumb is used instead of the tip of the thumb.

Children using this grip may tire more easily during a long writing task than those using a more dynamic grip. This is possibly owing to the reduced stability on the side of the hand and/or the use of additional fingers to form the letters.

There are many activities that can help promote an effective grip and improve your hand strength, here are just a few to practice.

1. Toys with Tongs/Tweezers

Toys with tongs and tweezers encourage the use of the thumb, index and middle finger while working the tiny muscles in that nook between the thumb and index.

- Operation (Game) This is a good game to encourage stability and tweezer control.
- Use some tongs or tweezers to pick up small objects; marbles, stones or rolled up pieces of paper, then place them into a thin necked bottle to enhance control with hand-eye coordination.
- For this activity use some pegs, paper clips or bulldog clips. Place your peg for piece of paper. Once they've got to grips with this now encourage your child to position them around the top of a box, up the edge of a curtain, on their jumper or top, or around pieces of different thickness' and shapes (circles, flowers, stars). Alternate the hands being used to develop strength in both hands.

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2. Vertical Surfaces

Working on a vertical surface builds strength and stability in the arms and shoulders. It also places the wrist in a good position for writing. Practice this by using the following:-

- Easels
- Chalkboards
- Dry erase boards
- Paper taped to the wall slightly above shoulder height

3. Bubble Wrap!

Yes, so simple but so effective. I like the large bubbles for this activity. Have your child pop the bubbles using their tripod fingers. Or try squishing them in your hands which is a very good strengthening exercise too.