

Fun pre-writing activities for young children

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Kindergarten is a time for sparking children's love of learning. To prepare their children for the upcoming challenges, some parents urge their children to learn how to write even though they are at the pre-school stage. It is important that parents understand children tend to meet certain milestones before they can fully master the skills of handwriting. In order to prepare children's fundamental skills for handwriting, we can give them a helping hand by introducing the pre-writing activities.

In general, children at the age of 2-3 are able to imitate to draw horizontal and vertical lines using a crayon. Fine motor activities, such as play-dough, clothespin, threading beads and lacing etc., are highly recommended for children in this age group. Those aged 3-4 can demonstrate static tripod grasp by holding a pencil with their thumb, index and middle fingers, and copy simple lines or shapes such as vertical line, horizontal line and circle.

Drawing, coloring and mazes are great activities to help children improve pencil control. Children can perform better at fine motor and visual perception when they reach the age of 4-5. At this stage, they are able to copy simple Chinese characters, such as 山 ("mountain"), 日 ("day"), 田 ("field"), 石 ("stone") and 大 ("big"). Children's handwriting skill will be further enhanced by the age of 5-6. For example, they can write complicated Chinese characters, like 爸 ("dad"), 媽 ("mum"), 弟 ("brother") and 妹 ("sister").

Examples of multi-sensory activities for developing pre-writing skills:

A. Delivering "Snowball"

Children can:

1. Tear paper into large pieces.
2. Use both of your hands to crumple the pieces of paper into a paper ball.
3. Use a spoon to deliver the crumpled paper ball, aiming at a basket that is about 3 meters away.



B. I am a Painter

Children can:

1. Squeeze and press the play-dough to make a little drawing board.
2. Use a pen (without any refill) to draw lines or write simple words on the play-doh.

As the old saying goes, "well begun is half done". It is not only about the skills learnt through the pre-writing activities, the compliments children hear from their parents will also motivate them to write.

Children develop at their own pace. Parents are advised to learn more about their children's interest and help them acquire age-appropriate pre-writing skills. Consult Occupational Therapists (Pediatric) as soon as you suspect your child has difficulties in handwriting.