

## Occupational Therapy Handout



### GETTING READY FOR WRITING

Children enjoy making marks, drawing and painting. These activities help them to develop hand and finger coordination and prepare them for learning how to write.

There are lots of fun games and things you can do to help them.

#### **Making lines and shapes**

- ☺ Create lots of opportunities to make lines and shapes on a wide range of surfaces.
- ☺ Use something like a plastic tray, biscuit tin lid or other easy to clean surface. Fill it with different textures such as sand, dry rice, shaving foam and talcum powder. Or try making your own finger paints (see the recipes below).
- ☺ Encourage your child to make marks with the index finger of their preferred hand (or either if they do not have a dominant hand).

#### **Practice circular movements**

- ☺ Mixing a cake (real or pretend!), holding the bowl with one hand and stirring with the other, will help your child make circular movements. Or use a scarf, ribbon or kitchen roll so your child can draw in the air in anti-clockwise movements. You could try singing a song to go along with the actions.

#### **Try different positions**

- ☺ Your child shouldn't always be sat down to practice making shapes. Encourage them to make lines and circles in a variety of different positions, such as lying on their tummy propped up on their elbows, on all fours, standing up, or kneeling up at the table.
- ☺ You can also try using an upright surface, such as a window, mirror or easel.

#### **Make lines and shapes without drawing them**

- ☺ Try using things like cooked spaghetti, rolled out play dough or string to make lines, shapes and basic pictures.
- ☺ Mark out lines on the floor and ask your child to move along them in different ways, for example walking, crawling, hopping, jumping, big steps and little steps.
- ☺ Use a toy car and a road mat (or create your own) and ask your child to drive the car along the roads and around roundabouts.

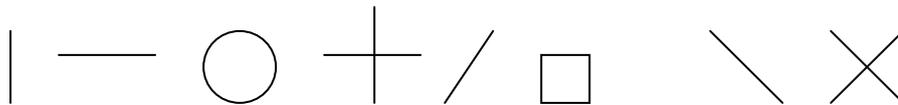
#### **Draw without a pencil**

- ☺ Drawing doesn't always have to be with a pencil and paper. Using different things to make marks on different surfaces will stimulate your child and help develop their skills. For example, draw patterns or faces on biscuits or cakes with tubes of icing or use a bucket of water and a large paintbrush to 'paint' on outdoor surfaces.

- ☺ Try using a variety of writing implements, such as crayons, chalks, washable felt-tip pens, paintbrushes and soap crayons for the bath.
- ☺ Giving your child the opportunity to experiment with both thick and thin chalks and crayons will help develop their skills and using ones that are very short will encourage them to practice holding them with their thumb and finger tips.
- ☺ Different textures for making marks on could include sugar paper, chalkboard, paving stones, sand paper and bubble wrap.

### **Learning to form shapes for writing**

- ☺ Once your child is comfortable using pens and pencils to scribble on paper, you can encourage them to copy simple shapes. These are usually learned in the following order:



- ☺ Start by making large shapes on large pieces of paper, to emphasise the direction of the line, before progressing to smaller ones.
- ☺ Encourage your child to watch you closely as you make the shapes, and then copy your drawing. If your child needs help, try putting your hand over theirs to show them the necessary movement and talk about the movement at the same time, for example “round, up and down”.
- ☺ Then you can take it in turns, asking your child to make a mark for you to copy, making sure that you encourage them to ‘keep looking’ at what they are doing.

### **Finger paint recipes**

#### ☺ **Snowflakes finger paint**

Combine washing flakes with enough water to make it ‘gooey’. Mix with a whisk or electric beater until it forms a gooey finger paint.

#### ☺ **Arrowroot finger paint**

Put two cups of arrowroot powder into a pan and add water. Stir until it is the consistency of glue. Heat, stirring constantly, until it forms a clear gel. Cool, then add optional food colouring or flavouring to give it a smell.

#### ☺ **Flour and salt finger paint**

Mix one cup of flour with four teaspoons of salt and just under one cup of cold water. Add food colouring or powder paint. Mix well. Store in the fridge.