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## **Needs and Strategies Tool Box Activity Selection Guide**

The Needs and Strategies Tool Box Activity Selection Guide directs you to activities designed to address specific developmental needs. You may want to keep the selection guide open next to the Needs and Strategies Tool Box for easy reference.

**[Click Here](#) to download the  
Needs and Strategies Tool Box Activity Selection Guide.**

## Right Hand-Left Hand

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

It is important to remember that, although hand dominance begins to emerge between the ages of 2 and 4, it is not expected to be fully developed until between the ages of 5 and 7. Most children will begin to use one hand primarily for writing and drawing between 5-6 years of age. However, some children may continue to switch hands during practice beyond that age.

Directional concepts (up/down, left/right, in front of/behind) are foundational skills for the development of hand dominance and are developed during movement activities that encourage the recognition of those concepts. Our internal awareness of these concepts (laterality) assists in the development of our understanding of those directions on our own bodies and our ability to move our bodies in those directions within the environment (directionality).

This activity encourages the understanding and development of the directional concepts of left-and right, as they relate to your child's own body.

### Materials You Will Need

- 2 hand puppets
- A mirror (optional)

### Directions

1. Play a puppet game where you and your child each use a hand puppet worn to point out objects in the room.
2. Begin by standing behind your child and pointing together at the objects that either of you calls out, announcing, "With my right (or left) hand I can point to...." (This provides an opportunity for your child to initiate the movement independently but also to use his or her eyes to match your movements, encouraging eye-hand coordination.)
3. Advance to standing next to your child and performing the same activity. (This positioning allows your child to match his or her movements with yours, if needed, while encouraging independent movement.)
4. When your child is able to perform the movements independently while standing next to you, reposition yourself across from him or her to perform the activity. (This encourages your child to move the correct hand without mimicking your movements.)
5. When your child demonstrates the ability to identify the chosen hand without the puppet independently at least 50% of the time, repeat the game with the opposite hand.
6. When independent identification of both hands has been mastered, play the game with puppets on both hands, calling out the objects with different hands, using the same verbal cues to reinforce right-left directional concepts.

### Tips to enhance your child's learning experiences:

1. Stand side-by-side in front of a mirror to perform the game. (Visual Learning Style)
2. To assist your child in understanding the game, provide various verbal cues for the game's procedures, such as "With my right (or left) hand, I see..." or "I can point with my right (or left) hand to find..." (Auditory Learning Style)
3. Provide hand-over-hand assistance in addition to the verbal cues to guide your child in pointing in the appropriate directions. (Tactile Learning Style)

### Tips to add movement skills to your child's experience:

1. After calling out, "With my right (or left) hand, I can point to....," have your child hop, skip, or jump over to the object and place his or her "puppeted hand" on it.
2. As your child's skills progress toward independence, play the game on the floor and have him or her, "roll like a log" toward the object. Each time your child's head turns to face the object, be sure that he or she "finds the object with

the eyes” and points at it with the “puppeted hand” before continuing to roll toward it. If necessary, have your child stop at that point and perform both of these actions before continuing.

3. Practice Games: Hokey Pokey, Simon Says

**Skills Addressed (A) / Skills Enhanced (E)**

- A - Body Awareness
- A - Position in Space
- A - Visual Attention
- E - Eye-Hand Coordination
- E - Spatial Awareness

# Cotton Ball Game

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

A legible and efficient handwriting style depends upon the coordinated movements between the eye and the hand, referred to as "eye-hand coordination." As the eye gathers information to guide the hand in forming letters and moving across the page, the hand guides the eye in the left-right, up-down directional movements.

Blowing through a straw exercises the group of eye muscles that help children focus from near-to-far when they are copying from the board. As children blow through the straw, their eyes move outward (diverge) to help them maintain attention toward the environment and away from their body. In reverse, if they suck on the straw, their eyes move inward (converge) to help them maintain attention close to their body for fine-motor work. (The Straws for Attention Game enhances convergence skills.)

This activity encourages the development of coordinated visual and motor movements.

## Materials You Will Need

- Straws
- Cotton balls
- A target (e.g., small open box or small object)
- Masking tape

## Directions

1. Set up a table game that provides your child with ample room to move cotton balls across the table by blowing at them through a straw. (Visual Motor and Spatial Awareness Skills)
2. Provide a target beginning at 3' and increasing the distance as his or her skills progress. (Visual Attention and Spatial Awareness Skills)
3. Demonstrate the activity and provide verbal directions to encourage understanding of the game's procedures. (Visual and Auditory Learning Styles)
4. Begin by providing a visual path (e.g., marking it with masking tape) from beginning to end and encouraging your child to send the cotton ball toward the goal along that path. (Visual Attention and Visual Spatial Skills)
5. As your child progresses, reduce or remove the visual path.

## Tips to enhance your child's learning experiences:

1. Stand behind the target, placing your hands on it to provide additional visual guidance. (Visual Learning Style)
2. Provide auditory cues during the game as reminders of the game's procedures. (Auditory Learning Style)

## Tips to add movement skills to your child's experience:

1. Play the game on the floor, advancing toward the goal either by crawling on hands and knees or by scooting forward with alternating arm and knee movements without raising his or her trunk off the floor. Utilize the same visual attention and spatial awareness tools (e.g., masking tape, target) in this version of the game.
2. As your child's skills progress, place 3-4 targets on the table or floor and create a game that asks him or her to blow the cotton ball toward a particular target.

## Skills Addressed (A) / Skills Enhanced (E)

- A Visual Attention
- A Spatial Awareness
- E Body Awareness

- E Eye-Hand Coordination
- E Pencil Control

# Show Me the Way

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Tracing, letter formation, and spacing skills rely heavily on the development of visual attention skills. As the hand moves the pencil over shapes or letters, the eye guides the hand to remain on or within the lines.

Eye-hand coordination refers to the coordinated control of our eye movements to direct precision movements of the hand. This skill is built during activities that encourage visual attention during fine-motor tasks.

**This activity encourages the development of coordinated visual attention and eye-hand coordination skills.**

## Materials You Will Need

- Yellow or light colored highlighter
- Crayons and/or pencils
- An age-appropriate tracing or maze activity

## Directions

1. Use a yellow or light-colored highlighter to create a visual cue to guide your child's crayon or pencil movements in these ways:
  - a. along the path between two points (e.g., the beginning and end points for a tracing or matching game), or
  - b. the entire length of a tracing line or maze, or
  - c. the boundaries of a tracing line or maze. (Visual Attention and Spatial Awareness Skills)
2. Begin with the path or boundary completely highlighted.
3. As your child's skill progresses, gradually decrease the amount of highlighting either at the
4. end of each path or the end points along the boundaries until the highlighting is eliminated. (Visual Motor and Visual Memory Skills)

## Tips to enhance your child's learning experiences:

1. Have your child trace the path with his or her finger or provide hand-over-hand assistance to guide crayon or pencil movements initially. (Tactile and Visual Learning Styles)
2. Have your child highlight the path or boundaries, independently if appropriate, or over your pencil-drawn guide. (Tactile and Visual Learning Styles)
3. Have your child trace the highlighted path using a paintbrush and water, chalk, a colored pencil, or a crayon. (No markers.) (Tactile and Visual Learning Styles)
4. Have your child point out and verbally define the beginning and end points or the boundaries of an activity before beginning the task. (Auditory Learning Style)

## Tips to add movement skills to your child's experience:

### Younger Children:

1. Create a maze or road pattern on a large piece of paper, leaving a 1-3" path between the lines, depending on your child's level of needs. Place or tape the paper on the floor, tabletop, or the wall.
2. Highlight the pathways as your child observes your movements. Have him or her "drive a car" or move an object along the pathways, encouraging him or her to look ahead to watch where the object is going along the path. (Large Movement Patterns for Motor Memory Skills, Visual Attention Skills, Auditory and Tactile Learning Styles)

3. To increase the gross motor movement component, have your child perform this activity on the floor, walking on hands and knees to move along the path.

**All Ages:**

1. Draw large patterns, such as Figure 8's or overlapping circles, on the board or a large piece of paper taped to the wall.
2. Have your child use colored chalk or pencils to trace over the patterns several times with his or her writing hand using your same directional movements. (No markers.) Provide different colors for each tracing to enhance independent editing of pencil control skills. (Visual and Tactile Learning Styles)

**Note:** The completion of visual skill activities on a vertical surface positions the eyes looking straight ahead for optimal performance. This position enhances the development of motor memory for letter formations. If you decide to utilize this strategy, be sure that the activity surface is positioned just slightly higher than your child's shoulder height to achieve this visual goal.

**Warm-Up Games**

- Ball Games
- Construction Toys
- Cut and Paste Crafts
- Puzzles
- Strategy Board Games

**Skills Addressed (A) / Skills Enhanced (E)**

- A Visual Attention
- A Eye-Hand Coordination
- A Pencil Control
- A Spatial Awareness
- A Visual Memory
- E Figure Ground
- E Letter Formation Foundations
- E Visual Closure



## Distraction-Free Zone

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Each year, the visual demands of handwriting increase at each grade level. In the lower grades, students are presented with more complicated workbook pages, while the speed and legibility requirements expand in the upper grades. Students often become overwhelmed with worksheets, classroom instruction, and homework assignments that include several different activities or large amounts of information.

The development of a fluid and legible handwriting style depends on the writer's ability to concentrate on composition while automatically producing letter formations that adhere to spatial constraints such as placement both on the line and with the boundaries of the space provided.

### **This activity encourages the development of coordinated visual attention and spatial awareness skills.**

#### Materials Needed:

- Yellow or light colored highlighter
- Crayons and/or pencils
- An age-appropriate tracing or maze activity

#### Directions:

1. Use a yellow or light-colored highlighter to create a visual cue to guide your child's crayon or pencil movements in these ways:
  - a. along the path between two points (e.g., the beginning and end points for a tracing or matching game),  
or
  - b. the entire length of a tracing line or maze, or
  - c. the boundaries of a tracing line or maze. (Visual Attention and Spatial Awareness Skills)
2. Begin with the path or boundary completely highlighted.
3. As your child's skill progresses, gradually decrease the amount of highlighting either at the end of each path or the end points along the boundaries until the highlighting is eliminated. (Visual Motor and Visual Memory Skills)

#### Tips to enhance your child's learning experiences:

1. Have your child trace the path with his or her finger or provide hand-over-hand assistance to guide crayon or pencil movements initially. (Tactile and Visual Learning Styles)
2. Have your child highlight the path or boundaries, independently if appropriate, or over your pencil-drawn guide. (Tactile and Visual Learning Styles)
3. Have your child trace the highlighted path using a paintbrush and water, chalk, a colored pencil, or a crayon. (No markers.) (Tactile and Visual Learning Styles)
4. Have your child point out and verbally define the beginning and end points or the boundaries of an activity before beginning the task. (Auditory Learning Style)

#### Tips to add movement skills to your child's experience:

##### Younger Children:

3. Create a maze or road pattern on a large piece of paper, leaving a 1-3" path between the lines, depending on your child's level of needs. Place or tape the paper on the floor, tabletop, or the wall.
4. Highlight the pathways as your child observes your movements. Have him or her "drive a car" or move an object along the pathways, encouraging him or her to look ahead to watch

where the object is going along the path. (Large Movement Patterns for Motor Memory Skills, Visual Attention Skills, Auditory and Tactile Learning Styles)

5. To increase the gross motor movement component, have your child perform this activity on the floor, walking on hands and knees to move along the path.

**All Ages:**

1. Draw large patterns, such as Figure 8's or overlapping circles, on the board or a large piece of paper taped to the wall.
2. Have your child use colored chalk or pencils to trace over the patterns several times with his or her writing hand using your same directional movements. (No markers.) Provide different colors for each tracing to enhance independent editing of pencil control skills. (Visual and Tactile Learning Styles)

**Warm-Up Games**

- Ball Games
- Construction Toys
- Cut and Paste Crafts
- Puzzles
- Strategy Board Games

**Skills Addressed (A) / Skills Enhanced (E)**

- A Visual Attention
- A Eye-Hand Coordination
- A Pencil Control
- A Spatial Awareness
- A Visual Memory
- E Figure Ground
- E Letter Formation Foundations
- E Visual Closure

# I Can Feel It!

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

A fluid and legible handwriting style relies on efficient eye-hand coordination, visual-motor memory, and pencil control skills. Tactile input from the fingers and hands allows the writer to apply the appropriate amount of pressure to the pencil and to master letter formation skills.

Pencil pressures that are too light or too heavy can interfere with a child's handwriting success. These types of pressures can be the result of poor sensory processing through the fingers and hand, leading to poor pencil control skills. As a result, a child may find it difficult to remember and recall correct letter formations.

**This activity encourages the development of eye-hand coordination, visual-motor memory, and pencil control skills.**

## Materials You Will Need

This activity can use a variety of sensory-based materials, based on your child's needs. These can include (but are not limited to) the following items:

- Sand
- Shaving cream
- Finger paints
- Paintbrushes
- Putty or clay
- Pipe cleaners
- Sand paper
- Tissue paper
- Chalk
- Construction paper
- Handwriting paper
- Pencils
- Food coloring (optional)

## Directions

Your younger child can:

1. Practice tracing shapes and letters with chalk on construction paper or painting with paintbrushes. Create rainbows by repeating the tracing over each with a different color.
2. Practice writing shapes and letter formations in sand, shaving cream, or finger paints, using the index finger of your child's writing hand.
3. Practice shapes and letter formations by creating them out of putty, clay, or pipe cleaners.

All of your children can:

Practice pencil pressure skills by drawing shapes or writing letters and words on a piece of handwriting paper placed over a piece of sandpaper of the same size, asking the child to "feel the pencil rub over the sand paper" (for pencil pressures that are too light) or by tracing or drawing on a piece of tissue paper over a picture or letter formation worksheet, encouraging the child not to tear the tissue paper or make a "dent" in it (for pencil pressures that are too heavy). Note: It's best not to use markers, as their smooth movements do not require the use of pressure and do not provide adequate tactile feedback for skill enhancement.

## Tips to enhance your child's learning experiences:

1. Draw large patterns, such as Figure 8's or overlapping circles, on the board or a large piece of paper taped to the wall, using chalk, colored pencils, or paint brushes. Instruct your child to first put "a lot of pressure" on the tool, then to "put a very little bit of pressure" on it. Ask him or her how each feels. Then, complete a tracing or drawing activity, and have your child describe the amount of pressure he or she is applying to the tool. (Sensory input through the small muscles, Tactile Learning Style, Visual-Motor Memory Skills, Visual Attention Skills)
2. For those children whose pressure is too heavy, encourage them to describe how that feels while they are writing or drawing (e.g., hand hurts, fingers ache, arm is stiff). Then have them complete the tissue paper activity from above

and ask them to tell you how they know when they are applying too much pressure (e.g., the tissue ripped or they made a “dent”). Then have them try the activity again, this time having them describe how they are preventing the tissue paper from ripping or denting. This activity can also be completed using the sand paper strategy, encouraging the children not to rip the handwriting paper by pressing too hard. (Sensory input through the small muscles, Tactile Learning Style, Auditory Learning Style, Visual-Motor Memory Skills, Visual Attention Skills)

3. For those children whose pressure is too light, encourage them to describe how that feels while they are writing or drawing (e.g., dropping the pencil, fingers hurt, writing is sloppy). Then have them complete the sand paper activity from above and ask them to tell you how they know when they are applying too little pressure (e.g., they can't feel the pencil rub on the sand paper). Then have them try the activity again, this time having them describe the amount of pressure they are using to feel the pencil rub on the sandpaper. This activity can be used with the tissue paper strategy, encouraging the children to press into the tissue paper to leave a “dent.” (Sensory input through the small muscles, Tactile Learning Style, Auditory Learning Style, Visual-Motor Memory Skills, Visual Attention Skills)
4. Provide hand-over-hand assistance during any of the activities to demonstrate appropriate pencil pressure. (Tactile Learning Style)
5. Provide colored chalk or pencils or add food coloring to the shaving cream. (Visual Learning Style)
6. Have your child call out the directions of the shape or letter formation movements as he or she traces or forms the shapes and letters. (Auditory Learning Style)
7. Have your child form shapes, letters, and words with chalk or a paintbrush on a piece of construction paper taped to the wall. (Tactile Learning Style; Visual-Attention and Visual-Memory Skills)
8. Have your child create putty or clay models and match them with flash card or visual models of the same shape or letter formation. (Visual Learning Style, Visual-Memory Skills)

#### Tips to add movement skills to your child's experience:

1. Have your child crawl on hands and knees through an indoor obstacle course (over pillows, under tables, and around large furniture) to find the letter formation you've called out. Continue the activity by having your child practice the letter formation using one of the strategies described above. (Sensory input through the large muscle groups, Visual Attention Skills)
2. Draw a letter formation in sand or shaving cream. Have your child “drive a car,” move an object, or trace with his or her finger along the formation. For pencil pressures that are too heavy: Have your child put very little pressure on the object or finger so that he or she does not leave any “dents” in your formation. For pencil pressures that are too light: Have your child put a sufficient amount of pressure of the object or finger so that his or her impressions press into yours, leaving a noticeable trace of their own. (Sensory Movement Patterns for Motor Memory Skills, Visual Attention Skills, Visual and Tactile Learning Styles)

**Note:** The completion of visual skill activities on a vertical surface positions the eyes looking straight ahead for optimal performance. This position enhances the development of motor memory for letter formations. If you decide to utilize this strategy, be sure that the activity surface is positioned just slightly higher than your child's shoulder height to achieve this visual goal.

#### Warm-Up Games:

- Ball Games,
- Construction Toys
- Cut and Paste Crafts
- Puzzles
- Strategy Board Games

#### Skills Addressed (A) / Skills Enhanced (E)

- |                         |                                |                                |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| A Visual Attention      | A Spatial Awareness            | E Letter Formation Foundations |
| A Eye-Hand Coordination | A Visual Memory                | E Visual Closure               |
| A Pencil Control        | E Figure-Ground Discrimination |                                |

# My Hand Has Two Sides

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Fast and efficient handwriting movements rely on the efficient use of both sides of the hand. The two sides are labeled the radial or “skill side” and the ulnar or “power side.” The radial side includes the thumb, index, and middle fingers and provides dexterity and manipulation skills for gripping and handling objects. The radial side provides the efficient fine motor control and thumb opposition required for proper pencil positioning and fluid and effortless handwriting. The ulnar side has been labeled the “power side of the hand” and consists of the ring and little fingers. Together, these two form a stable foundation to assist the skill side in keeping the hand and arm flowing across the page with efficient pencil control.

Children who have not developed an awareness of the two sides of their hands can experience difficulty with many activities of daily living, including buttoning a coat, manipulating eating utensils, cutting with scissors, and developing a functional pencil grasp for handwriting mastery.

This activity encourages the development of the two sides of the hand.

## Materials You Will Need

- Your two hands
- Your child's two hands
- Stickers (optional)

## Directions

1. Demonstrate the skill side on your hand by flexing your thumb, index, and long finger 2-3 times and naming it as the “worker side.”
2. Demonstrate the skill side on your child's hand using hand-over-hand assistance to flex his or her thumb, index, and long finger 2-3 times. Remind your child that it is called the “worker side.”
3. Demonstrate the power side of your hand by tucking your ring and pinky fingers inside your palm and naming it as the “helper side.”
4. Demonstrate the power side on your child's hand using hand-over-hand assistance to tuck the ring and pinky fingers inside his or her palm. Remind your child that it is called the “helper side.”
5. Have your child repeat the demonstration and their names for you before beginning tasks that address those skills.
6. For an extra visual reminder, you can place a sticker on the side of your child's hand that you are demonstrating on your hand, switching it to the other side of his or her hand when you move to that side.

## Tips to enhance your child's learning experiences:

1. Offer your child opportunities to develop the two sides of the hand with activities that encourage the use of them. These can include, but are not limited to, the following activities:
  - a. Tearing Paper for Collages
  - b. Dice Games
  - c. Scissor Use for Arts and Crafts
  - d. Beading and Lacing Activities
  - e. Sewing
  - f. Painting (e.g., airplane models, paint by number)
2. Place stickers on either the “worker” or “helper” sides during an activity and talk about how that side is doing its job. For example, during a collage activity, the “worker” side is placing the tissue paper pieces on the collage while the “helper” side is keeping the hand steady on the table so that the pieces are placed accurately.

**Skills Addressed (A) / Skills Enhanced (E)**

- A Body Awareness
- A Eye-Hand Coordination
- A Finger and Hand Strength
- E Pencil Control

## Directions and Sizes

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Legible handwriting consists of efficient letter formations that are placed adequately on the line, with appropriate spacing within and between the words. These skills are based on a child's understanding of directional and size concepts.

Children develop an understanding of directional and size concepts through fine and gross motor movement activities that encourage attention to detail directed at both their bodies and their environment.

This activity encourages the development of directional and visual perceptual skills.

### Materials You Will Need

- Straws and/or pipe cleaners
- Scissors
- Letter models (e.g., flash cards; workbook pages; pencil control worksheets; visual guides for up-down, top-bottom, left-right concepts)
- Tweezers or tongs (optional)

### Directions

1. Cut straws or pipe cleaners to match the size of the lines and/or shapes on your models (e.g., slanted lines, circles, crosses, and "X's").
2. Have your child place them accurately over the models, matching their direction and size. Be sure to have your child say the appropriate directional concepts while he or she is completing this (e.g., start at the top and travel down, for the beginning of the letter "b"). (Tactile Learning Style, Auditory Learning Style)
3. Provide your child with a variety of model sizes for the same shape or letter formation. (Visual Discrimination Skills)
4. Increase the challenge by providing your child with partially completed models and have him or her finish them independently with straws or pipe cleaners. (Visual Form Constancy Skills)

### Tips to enhance your child's learning experiences:

1. Have your child call out the directions as he places the straws or pipe cleaners on the models (e.g., "top/down, right-to-left). (Auditory Learning Style)
2. Have your child measure and cut the straws or pipe cleaners to help create the game. (Tactile Learning Style, Visual Learning Style, Fine-Motor Skills, Visual Attention Skills)
3. Have your child use tongs or tweezers to pick up and transfer the straw or pipe cleaner pieces to the models. (Fine-motor Skills)

### Tips to add movement skills to your child's experience:

1. Create a Treasure Hunt game and "hide" the cut straws or pipe cleaners on different levels of surfaces around the room. After your child has located the items, have he or she tell you where the items were found (e.g., on top, over, or under the table). (Visual Scanning Skills, Auditory Learning Style)
2. Have your child crawl on hands and knees to find and collect the cut straws or pipe cleaners. (Tactile input through the large and small muscles)

## Warm-Up Games:

- Ball Games
- Construction Toys
- Cut and Paste Crafts
- Puzzles
- Strategy Board Games

## Skills Addressed (A) / Skills Enhanced (E)

- |                              |                         |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| A Body Awareness             | A Spatial Awareness     |
| A Visual Attention           | A Visual Discrimination |
| A Eye-Hand Coordination      | A Visual Form Constancy |
| A Letter Foundational Skills | E Fine Motor Skills     |
| A Visual Closure             |                         |



## The Q-Tip Challenge

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

An efficient pencil grasp is one that allows the writer to produce legible handwriting with adequate speed for extended periods of time. It also plays an important role in the learning and mastery of letter formations.

Children who use a pencil grasp that is preventing them from developing an efficient handwriting style will benefit from activities that are directed toward pencil grasp remediation. It is important to note that not all pencil grasps that “look inefficient” are necessarily considered nonfunctional. Only those that are causing a child to struggle with handwriting mastery should be a target for therapy.

This activity encourages the development of pencil grasp and letter formation skills.

### Materials You Will Need

- A supply of Q-tips
- A small cup of water
- White and colored chalk
- Colored pencils (optional)
- Chalkboard and/or dark construction paper
- Letter formation models (e.g., flash cards; workbook pages; magnetic letters)

### Directions

1. Gather together a supply of chalk, Q-tips, and a cup of water.
2. If you do not have access to a chalkboard, or as an alternate version of the game, you can use dark construction paper.
3. Draw a shape or write a letter formation on the board or construction paper in chalk.
4. Have your child use a Q-tip dipped in water to trace your model to see if he can “make it disappear.” (Letter Formation Skills) **The Q-tip provides tactile feedback and the water guides his editing with visual cues.**
5. Be sure that your child is using an appropriate pencil grasp on the Q-tip. (Pencil Grasp Skills)
6. It is important to be sure that your child is using the correct directional concepts for the shape or letter formation. (Visual-Motor Memory Skills)
7. Encourage your child to self-edit his or her work to determine if any parts of the model were left behind. (Visual Scanning Skills)

### Tips to enhance your child's learning experiences:

1. Set the game up on a vertical surface (easel or wall) and provide larger models of the shapes or letters for your child to trace. Be sure that he or she is using an appropriate pencil grasp. (Visual-Motor Memory through large motor movements)
2. Have your child call out the directional concepts as he or she traces the models. Be sure that he or she is using an appropriate pencil grasp. (Auditory Learning Style, Letter Formation Skills)
3. If your child would benefit from an additional activity that focuses on pencil grasping skills, have him or her draw or write the shape or letter formation with chalk or colored pencils, using one color initially and then another to trace over it to “make the first color disappear.” Be sure that your child is using an appropriate pencil grasp with both the chalk and the colored pencils to allow for an effective carryover of skills. (Tactile Learning Style; Pencil Grasp Skills)

**Note:** The completion of visual skill activities on a vertical surface positions the eyes looking straight ahead for optimal performance. This position enhances the development of motor memory for letter formations. If you

decide to utilize this strategy, be sure that the activity surface is positioned just slightly higher than your child's shoulder height to achieve this visual goal.

### **Warm-Up Games:**

- Mazes
- Tweezer and Tong Activities
- Tennis Ball Gobbler
- Therapeutic Putty Exercises and Activities
- The Cotton Ball Game

### **Skills Addressed (A) / Skills Enhanced (E)**

- A Posture (vertical surface)
- A Visual Attention
- A Eye-Hand Coordination
- A Finger and Hand Strength
- A Pencil Control
- A Letter Foundational Skills
- A Visual Memory
- E Spatial Awareness

# Tweezers and Tongs

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

An efficient pencil grasp, as well as the mastery of letter formations, relies on sufficient finger, hand, wrist, arm, and shoulder strength for pencil control.

Children who experience diminished fine-motor, arm, and shoulder strength may develop an inefficient pencil grasp and have difficulty with learning letter formations. It is important to focus on these underlying skills using strengthening activities that target them before addressing letter formation skills, if possible. If the child has already begun letter formation instruction, then activities that focus on strengthening skills should be provided in tandem with handwriting instruction or remediation.

This activity encourages the development of fine-motor strength for pencil grasp and letter formation skills.

## Materials You Will Need

- A supply of pompoms
- A selection of tweezers and/or tongs in a variety of sizes
- Letter formation models (e.g., flash cards; handwritten models)
- Water dropper (optional)

## Directions

1. Provide your child with a large model of a letter formation. This model can be in the form of a flash card, handwritten on paper, one formed out of pipe cleaners or clay, or any large model that will provide adequate space for placement of the pompoms.
2. Have your child outline the models by placing pompoms over them using tweezers or tongs to transfer the pompoms. (Fine-Motor Skills: Finger and Hand Strength, Eye-Hand Coordination; Visual Attention)
3. Be sure that he or she is using the correct directional concepts for the letter formations (e.g., top-down for the beginning of the letter "b"). (Visual-Memory and Letter Formation Skills)
4. Have your child call out the appropriate directional concepts as he or she outlines the models. (Auditory Learning Style)

## Tips to enhance your child's learning experiences:

1. Begin by having your child use one color of pompom to complete each letter formation to create the "whole picture." (Visual Learning Style, Visual Discrimination, and Letter Formation Skills)
2. Increase the challenge gradually by adding different colored pompoms to each model. (Visual Discrimination Skills)
3. As your child's skills progress, provide models in a variety of sizes and have him or her create the letter formations beside them using the pompoms and tweezers or tongs. (Spatial Awareness and Visual Discrimination Skills)
4. Increase the challenge by providing your child with partially completed models to finish independently on top of the models or beside them. (Visual Form Constancy and Visual Memory Skills)

## To add movement skills to your child's experience:

1. Have your child use tweezers or tongs to transfer the pompoms from across the room to outline the models.
2. Have your child use a water dropper to outline the models using the correct directional concepts.
3. To add movement to this adaptation, have him or her cross the room to outline the models, keeping the water from dripping by holding the dropper closed tight.

## Warm-Up Games:

- Make Me Strong, Max! (Tennis Ball Game)
- Therapeutic Putty Exercises and Activities
- The Cotton Ball Game
- Fine Motor Boot Camp

## Skills Addressed (A) / Skills Enhanced (E)

- A Visual Attention
- A Eye-Hand Coordination
- A Letter Foundations
- A Finger and Hand Strength
- A Spatial Awareness
- A Visual Memory
- A Visual Discrimination
- A Visual Constancy
- E Pencil Control
- E Body Awareness

# Circle Movements

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

The circle shape plays an important role in the mastery of letter formations and handwriting legibility. The frequency of letters that include a full or partial circle demands that the writer understands the importance of closing the circle when appropriate to ensure legibility and readability.

It is important to note that the beginning/closing point for circles and letter formations that include the circle may be designated in slightly different places in various handwriting instruction programs. For instance, one program may have the writer begin the "o" at the top middle, whereas others may have the letter formation begin at the middle of the right side of the circle. Be sure that you are aware of the appropriate letter formations included in your child's handwriting instruction program.

This activity encourages the development of visual-motor memory for directional concepts for circles.

## Materials You Will Need

- A Mirror (optional)
- A Chalkboard or large paper or construction paper taped to the wall (optional)
- Chalk or paint brushes with water

## Directions

1. Stand with your back to your child, form large circles in the air with your arm, and have your child copy them while shouting out the directions with you (e.g., begin at the top, go left, down, around, right, and up). Use your right or left arm depending on your child's handedness for handwriting. (Visual Motor Memory through large movements, Visualization, Auditory Learning Style)
2. As your child progresses, have him or her shout out the directional concepts independently. (Auditory Learning Style, Visualization, Letter Formation Skills)
3. Increase the challenge by standing side-by-side with your child in front of a mirror as you both perform this activity. (Body Awareness and Position in Space Skills)
4. As your child's skills progress, stand facing him or her to perform the activity. Initially, begin by "mirroring" the arm movements by using the opposite arm that your child will be using. To increase the challenge, use the arm that matches your child's handedness for handwriting. (Body Awareness and Position in Space Skills)

## Tips to enhance your child's learning experiences:

1. If you have access to a chalkboard, have your child use large arm and shoulder movements to trace the circles with chalk or paint brushes with water. Note: A whiteboard does not provide the tactile input provided by chalk on a chalkboard. You can also provide this input by using chalk or the paint brushes on a piece of construction paper taped to the wall. Be sure your child is following the correct directional concepts for the circle. (Visual Motor Memory through large movements, Visual Attention Skills, Tactile Learning Style)
2. As your child progresses with large arm movement drawings of the circle, have him or her draw large circles on a chalk board or a piece of large paper taped to the wall using chalk or paint brushes with water. Be sure your child is following the correct directional concepts for the circle. (Visual Motor Memory through large movements, Visual Learning Style, Tactile Learning Style, and Letter Formation Skills)
3. Increase the challenge gradually by providing smaller pieces of paper or smaller circles to trace. (Visual Discrimination Skills, Pencil Control Skills)
4. As your child's skills progress, provide models in a variety of sizes and move the activity to a desk or table that is an appropriate height for him or her to work on either seated or standing. (Spatial Awareness, Visual Discrimination, Pencil Control, and Letter Formation Skills)

5. Increase the challenge by providing your child with a model of a circle or letter formation that includes one and have him or her copy the model beside or below it. (Fine Motor and Visual Memory Skills)
6. Increase the challenge by providing your child with partially completed models to finish independently on top of the models or beside them. These models can be formed out of various mediums, such pipe cleaners or clay or they can be handwritten. (Visual Form Constancy and Visual Memory Skills)

**Note:** The completion of visual skill activities on a vertical surface positions the eyes looking straight ahead for optimal performance. This position enhances the development of motor memory for letter formations. If you decide to utilize this strategy, be sure that the activity surface is positioned just slightly higher than your child's shoulder height to achieve this visual goal.

### Warm-Up Games:

- Make Me Strong, Max! (Tennis Ball Game)
- Therapeutic Putty Exercises and Activities
- The Cotton Ball Game
- Fine Motor Boot Camp
- Puzzles
- Mazes
- Construction Toys

### Skills Addressed (A) / Skills Enhanced (E)

- A Body Awareness
- A Visual Attention
- A Eye-Hand Coordination
- A Visual Memory
- E Spatial Awareness

# Blowing Bubbles

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

A legible and efficient handwriting style depends on efficient coordinated movements between the eye and the hand, referred to as “eye-hand coordination.” As the eye gathers information to guide the hand in forming letters and moving across the page, the hand guides the eye in the left-right, up-down directional movements. It is important to exercise the eye muscles to enhance eye-hand coordination skills.

Blowing bubbles exercises the eye muscles that help children focus from near-to-far when they are copying from the board. As a child blows through the wand, his eyes move outward to help him maintain his attention toward his environment and away from his body. In reverse, if he sucks on a straw, his eyes move inward to help him maintain his attention close to his body for fine-motor work.

This activity encourages the development of coordinated visual and fine-motor movements.

## Materials You Will Need

- A supply of bubbles

## Directions

Have your child blow bubbles using a wand with a small diameter opening for the bubbles. Be sure that your child engages in this task with slow, intentional movements as you encourage him or her to “watch” the bubbles come through the wand. (Visual Attention Skills, Auditory Learning Style)

## Tips to enhance your child's learning experiences:

1. If your child has difficulty blowing the bubbles independently at first, practice blowing a cotton ball across the table or floor. (See Cotton Ball Game.) Begin by having your child simply blow air from the mouth to move the cotton ball, advancing to using a straw as his or her skills progress. Be sure to encourage your child to “keep an eye on the cotton ball” as it travels toward the end of the table or a target. (Visual Attention Skills)
2. Have your child clap his or her hands together to “pop” the bubbles that you blow into the air. (Visual Attention, Position in Space, and Eye-Hand Coordination Skills; Kinesthetic/Tactile Learning Style)
3. Have your child chase the bubbles and then clap to “pop” them. (Visual Attention, Position in Space, and Eye-Hand Coordination Skills; Kinesthetic/Tactile Learning Style)
4. This activity can be used as a warm-up to get the eyes ready for fine-motor work, such as handwriting homework.

## Warm-Up Games:

- The Cotton Ball Game
- Ball Games
- Obstacle Courses
- Picture Perfect Gross Motor Boot Camp

## Skills Addressed (A) / Skills Enhanced (E)

- A Body Awareness
- A Position in space
- A Visual Attention
- A Eye-Hand Coordination

# Close Your Circles!

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

The circle shape plays an important role in the mastery of letter formations and handwriting legibility. The frequency of letters that include a full or partial circle demands that the writer understands the importance of closing the circle when appropriate to ensure legibility and readability.

It is important to note that the beginning/closing point for circles and letter formations that include the circle may be designated in slightly different places in various handwriting instruction programs. For instance, one program may have the writer begin the "o" at the top middle, whereas others may have the letter formation begin at the middle of the right side of the circle. Be sure that you are aware of the appropriate letter formations included in your child's handwriting instruction program.

This activity encourages the development of visual-motor memory for directional concepts for circles.

## Materials You Will Need

- A large piece of paper
- Construction paper
- Age-appropriate handwriting paper
- A supply of stickers
- Colored pencils or crayons
- Moderately course sandpaper
- A pencil
- A yellow highlighter (optional)

## Directions

### Grades K-1:

1. Draw a large circle on a large piece of paper or construction paper taped to the wall or on the floor.
2. Place a sticker or colored dot at the start-stop point and have your child trace the circle from beginning to end using large, fluid movements and correct directional patterns. (Visual Closure and Letter Formation Foundational Skills; Visual Memory Skills through large motor movements)
3. Next, draw circles that do not meet and have your child trace over your model and finish by making the connection across the open space. If needed, initially provide a yellow highlighted path between the two points to assist your child in making the connection. (Visual Closure and Visual Memory Skills)
4. As your child's skill progresses, draw circles with larger openings at the end. Provide yellow highlighting along the path of the incomplete portion of the circle for him or her to trace to close the circle. Decrease the amount of highlighting at the end of the circle until your child is completing it independently. (Visual Closure and Visual Memory Skills; Visual Learning Style)
5. Finally, provide your child with different sizes of circles for tracing, then completing, using the same steps above. (Visual Form Constancy)
6. Repeat this activity using age-appropriate handwriting paper to provide sufficient carryover to a functional task. (Visual Memory, Visual Form Constancy, Letter Formation Foundational Skills)

## TIPS FOR OLDER CHILDREN:

1. Provide your child with examples of letter formations that have appropriately closed and incomplete circles. Discuss the important role that closed circles play in legibility, using examples of how an open circle formation can confuse the reader. (For example, "a" can resemble a "u.")



2. Have your child edit his or her work along with you to discover those letters that are not sufficiently “closed.” If needed initially, highlight those letters to alert your child to them.
3. Ask your child to tell you where there needs to be closure and have him or her highlight that area.
4. Have your child, then, complete the closure over the highlighting and reproduce an accurate formation of the same letter on another paper or on a chalk board.
5. As your child’s skills progress with identifying closure errors, have him or her simply erase the incorrect formation and reproduce it correctly.

**Note:** The completion of visual skill activities on a vertical surface positions the eyes looking straight ahead for optimal performance. This position enhances the development of motor memory for letter formations. If you decide to utilize this strategy, be sure that the activity surface is positioned just slightly higher than your child’s shoulder height to achieve this visual goal.

#### Tips to enhance your child’s learning experiences:

1. Transfer this activity to a smaller piece of paper that is placed over a piece of fine or moderately coarse sand paper. Encourage your child to “feel” how the pencil or crayon moves across the sand paper as he or she draws the circle or letter formation. Note: Be sure to use a pencil or crayon and not markers, as their smooth movements do not provide sufficient tactile input. (Tactile Learning Style)
2. Have your child call out the directional concepts as he or she traces the circle and announce the “starting and stopping points” for the beginning and ending of the circle. (Auditory and Visual Learning Styles)

#### Warm-Up Games:

- Copy Cat Drawings
- Simply a Memory Game
- Matching Games
- Card games that include matching elements

#### Skills Addressed (A) / Skills Enhanced (E)

- A Visual Attention
- A Eye-Hand Coordination
- A Pencil Control
- A Letter Foundations
- A Visual Memory
- A Visual Closure
- A Visual Form Constancy
- E Body Awareness

## Match Me Up!

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Handwriting mastery relies on a student's ability to recognize and identify different letter formations accurately no matter their size or font, as well as recall them automatically. Children use their memory skills to acquire, store, and recall the formations as they learn them. They use their visual perceptual skills to recognize them in different orientations or text styles. These skills allow writers to copy and communicate with a fast and legible handwriting style and to keep up with their peers as they progress through school.

Children who experience difficulty with the initial learning of letter formations or the automatic recognition and recall of previously learned formations will benefit from activities that focus on visual perceptual skills, in particular visual discrimination and visual form constancy. Visual discrimination skills are those that allow us to distinguish between differences and similarities of forms (shape, color, orientation, size, pattern, and position). Visual form constancy skills allow us to identify objects by the specific details that define them, regardless of their size, configuration, color, or dimension. Both of these skills are important foundational elements in the identification, recall, and production of letter formations.

This activity encourages the development of visual discrimination and visual form constancy skills for letter and number formations.

### Materials You Will Need

- Letter and number formation models in various sizes (e.g., magnetic letters, flash cards, or those you have constructed out of any material)
- Workbook pages from your child's classroom handwriting instruction program

**Note:** The use of the classroom workbook will provide consistency in the development of letter formation foundational skills.

### Directions

1. **Hide** letter or number models that are the same size around the room. Have your child match them to letter or number models of the same size.
2. **Hide** letter or number models in various sizes around the room. Have your child match them to letter or number formations that are a different size.
3. **Hide** letter or number models in various sizes around the room. Have your child find and match them to the models in the workbook being used in class for handwriting instruction. (Visual Attention, Visual Discrimination, and Visual Form Constancy Skills; Tactile and Visual Learning Styles)

### Tips to enhance your child's learning experiences:

1. Place the models around the room so that they are **visible** (e.g., on the wall, board, or floor) and call out a letter or number formation one at a time. Ask your child to "discover it" and match it to the models in the workbook used in his or her classroom for handwriting instruction. Have your child "announce" the name of the letter formation as he or she is matching the two models together. (Visual and Auditory Learning Styles, Visual Attention Skills)
2. Have your child trace the model with his or her finger, and then the model in the workbook, before declaring them "a match." (Eye-Hand Coordination Skills, Tactile Learning Style)

### Warm-Up Games:

- Copy Cat Drawings

- Simply a Memory Game
- Matching Games
- Card games that include matching elements

**Skills Addressed (A) / Skills Enhanced (E)**

- A Visual Attention
- A Figure Ground Discrimination
- A Letter Foundations
- A Visual Memory
- A Visual Discrimination
- A Visual Form Constancy
- E Body Awareness
- E Position in Space
- E Eye-Hand Coordination
- E Spatial Awareness

## Find Me If You Can!

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Handwriting mastery relies on a student's ability to recognize and identify different letter formations accurately no matter their size or font, as well as recall them automatically. Children use their memory skills to acquire, store, and recall the formations as they learn them. They use their visual perceptual skills to recognize them in different orientations or text styles. These skills allow writers to copy and communicate with a fast and legible handwriting style and to keep up with their peers as they progress through school.

Children who experience difficulty with the initial learning of letter formations or the automatic recognition and recall of previously learned formations will benefit from activities that focus on visual perceptual skills, in particular visual discrimination and visual form constancy. Visual discrimination skills are those that allow us to distinguish between differences and similarities of forms (shape, color, orientation, size, pattern, and position). Visual form constancy skills allow us to identify objects by the specific details that define them, regardless of their size, configuration, color, or dimension. Both of these skills are important foundational elements in the identification, recall, and production of letter formations.

This activity encourages the development of visual discrimination and visual form constancy skills for letter and number formations.

### Materials You Will Need

- Magnetic letter and number formation models in various sizes
- Workbook pages from your child's classroom handwriting instruction program

**Note:** The use of the classroom workbook will provide consistency in the development of letter formation foundational skills.

### Directions

Note: The completion of visual skill activities on a vertical surface positions the eyes looking straight ahead for optimal performance. This position enhances the development of motor memory for letter formations. If you decide to utilize this strategy, be sure that the activity surface is positioned just slightly higher than your child's shoulder height to achieve this visual goal.

1. Tape a copy of a page from your child's handwriting instruction workbook on a metal cookie sheet or the side of a metal filing cabinet.
2. Begin with letter or number magnets that are the same size, transitioning to a mix of various sizes as his skill progresses. (Visual Memory and Visual Form Constancy Skills)
3. Provide your child with the magnetic letter or number formations included in the workbook lesson and ask him or her to find the letters that match those on the workbook page.
4. Have your child announce the letter's name and place the magnetic letters on top of those on the workbook page as they are matched. (Auditory Learning Style)
5. As your child's skills progress, provide him or her with a supply of magnets that contains both letters and numbers that are included on the workbook page, as well as those that are not included there. You can also mix the magnet sizes.

### Tips to enhance your child's learning experiences:

1. Place the magnets around the room so that they are visible and call out a letter or number formation one at a time. Ask your child to "discover it" and match it to the models in the workbook used in his or her classroom for

handwriting instruction. Have your child “announce” the name of the letter formation as he or she is matching the two models together. (Visual and Auditory Learning Styles, Visual Attention Skills)

2. Have your child trace the model with his or her finger, and then the model in the workbook, before declaring them “a match.” (Eye-Hand Coordination Skills, Tactile Learning Style)

#### To add movement skills to your child’s experience:

1. Hide the magnetic letters around the room (e.g., under tables or in corners) and have a treasure hunt before beginning the matching game. (Visual Attention)
2. Combine the treasure hunt and matching games if your child is able to maintain attention to both tasks. (Visual Attention)

#### Warm-Up Games:

- Copy Cat Drawings
- Simply a Memory Game
- Matching Games
- Card games that include matching elements

#### Skills Addressed (A) / Skills Enhanced (E)

- |                                |                         |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| A Visual Attention             | A Visual Discrimination |
| A Figure Ground Discrimination | A Visual Form Constancy |
| A Letter Foundations           | E Eye-Hand Coordination |
| A Visual Memory                | E Spatial Awareness     |

# Room for a Spy

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Handwriting legibility and accuracy depend on the writer's ability to "pay attention to details." Visual attention and scanning skills play important roles in a student's ability to spot likenesses and differences as they edit their own work. For beginning writers, editing is an important step toward learning good handwriting skills.

Children who experience difficulty editing their own work will benefit from activities that focus on visual attention and visual perceptual skills, in particular visual discrimination. Visual discrimination skills are those that allow us to distinguish between differences and similarities of forms (shape, color, orientation, size, pattern, and position).

This activity encourages the development of visual attention and visual discrimination skills for editing.

## Materials You Will Need

- A room or place that contains objects familiar to your child (e.g., living room, back yard, playground)

## Directions

**Note:** The objective of this activity is to encourage visual scanning efficiency by having your child use eye and head movements only versus moving about the room to locate objects.

1. Find a room or outside environment that contains objects familiar to your child and that allows for at least 3-5' between him or her and the objects.
2. Have your child stand in a location that provides visual access to many of the objects.
3. Name an object in the room or environment that is within your child's visual range and ask him or her to locate it just by using eye and head movements. Remind your child to keep his or her body and feet "still" while looking around the room for the objects. (Visual Scanning and Visual Attention Skills)
5. Name objects that can be separated by a distinguishing feature (e.g., "Where is the square table?" or "Find the red raincoat.") and have your child locate them just by using eye and head movements. Remind your child to keep his or her body and feet "still" while looking around the room for the objects. (Visual Attention, Visual Scanning, and Visual Discrimination Skills)
6. Have your child announce the name of the object again once it is located. (Auditory Learning Style)
7. Ask your child to name the items on the left and right of the object. (Spatial Awareness)
8. If your child has difficulty locating the objects in a cluttered room, transfer this activity to one that contains fewer objects, adding more objects as his or her skill progresses.

## Tips to enhance your child's learning experiences:

1. Have your child locate objects in the room and describe them for you to find (versus naming them). (Visual Learning Style, Auditory Learning Style, Visual Discrimination Skills)
2. Have your child look around the room using eye and head movements only to gather information about the objects there. Then have your child close his or her eyes and name the objects that he or she can remember. (Visual Learning Style, Auditory Learning Style, Visual Memory Skills)

## Warm-Up Games:

- Posture Perfect Gross Motor Boot Camp
- Ball Games
- Puzzles
- Construction Toys

## Skills Addressed (A) / Skills Enhanced (E)

- A Position in Space
- A Visual Attention
- A Figure Ground Discrimination

- A Spatial Awareness
- A Visual Discrimination

## Sandpaper and Tissue Paper Tracing – Letter Formation Skills

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

The mastery of letter formations is a critical element for the development of a fluid and efficient handwriting style, one that allows students to copy and compose information that is legible and adequately conveys their knowledge to the teacher.

Children who experience difficulty with letter formation skills would benefit from activities designed to provide kinesthetic (tactile) input to assist in the development of efficient motor planning skills.

This activity encourages the development of letter formation skills.

### Materials You Will Need

- Age-appropriate handwriting paper
- Light-colored tissue paper or tracing paper
- Fine or moderately coarse sandpaper
- A pencil

### Directions

Note: The completion of visual skill activities on a vertical surface positions the eyes looking straight ahead for optimal performance. This position enhances the development of motor memory for letter formations. If you decide to utilize this strategy, be sure that the activity surface is positioned just slightly higher than your child's shoulder height to achieve this visual goal.

1. Place a sheet of age-appropriate handwriting paper over fine or moderately coarse sand paper of equal size.
2. Provide a written model on the paper of the formations being addressed and have your child trace over them. Encourage your child to "feel" how the letter formation is drawn as he or she rubs the pencil over the sand paper. Be sure he is using the appropriate directional concepts during this tracing activity. (Eye-hand coordination, Pencil Control, and Letter Formation Skills; Visual and Tactile Learning Styles)
3. Substitute the sandpaper with a piece of tracing paper over the top of the model to add a visual reinforcement for learning that allows your child to compare his movements to the model instantly. (Visual Learning Style)

### Tips to enhance your child's learning experiences:

1. Transfer this activity to a vertical surface by taping or tacking the paper and sandpaper to a wall or an easel. (Visual Attention and Postural Skills, Arm and Shoulder Strength)
2. Have your child trace the letter formation over the sandpaper with his or her finger before tracing it with a pencil. If your child does not feel comfortable tracing with a finger over the sandpaper, a similar tactile experience can be obtained by tracing with the finger over a chalk model on a chalkboard or a model drawn on a piece of construction paper. (Visual Memory Skills; Visual and Tactile Learning Styles)
3. Draw large patterns, such as Figure 8's or overlapping circles, on the board or a large piece of paper taped to the wall. Have your child trace them using chalk, colored pencils, or paint brushes. Instruct your child to trace them first by putting "a lot of pressure" on the tool, then by putting "a very little bit of pressure" on it. (Sensory input through the small muscles, Tactile Learning Style, Visual-Motor Memory Skills, Visual Attention Skills)
4. Have your child call out the directions of the shape or letter formation movements as he or she traces or forms the shapes and letters. (Auditory Learning Style)
5. Have your child form shapes, letters, and words with chalk or a paintbrush with water on a piece of construction paper taped to the wall. (Tactile Learning Style; Visual-Attention and Visual-Memory Skills)
6. Have your child create putty or clay models and match them with flash card or visual models of the same shape or letter formation. (Visual Learning Style, Visual-Memory Skills)



### Warm-Up Games:

- Copy Cat Drawings or completing mazes over sand paper
- Tracing Copy Cat Drawings on tissue or tracing paper
- Puzzles
- Construction toys or games
- Letter Formations using clay, putty or pipe cleaners

### Skills Addressed (A) / Skills Enhanced (E)

- A Visual Attention
- A Eye-Hand Coordination
- A Letter Foundations
- A Pencil Control
- A Visual Memory
- E Posture (vertical surface)

## Sandpaper and Tissue Paper Tracing – Pencil Control Skills

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

The mastery of letter formations is a critical element for the development of a fluid and efficient handwriting style, one that allows students to copy and compose information that is legible and adequately conveys their knowledge to the teacher. Inappropriate pencil pressure, hand fatigue, and poor letter formation skills can prevent a student from achieving this educational goal.

Children who experience difficulty with pencil control, including pencil pressure and grasp, are often unaware that they are putting too much or too little pressure on their pencil. Poor pencil control and pencil pressure can affect the students' ability to learn letter formations correctly. These students would benefit from activities that focus on kinesthetic (tactile) input regulation.

This activity encourages the development of pencil control, pencil pressure, and letter formation skills.

### Materials You Will Need

- Age-appropriate handwriting paper
- Fine or moderately coarse sandpaper
- Light-colored tissue paper or tracing paper
- A pencil

### Directions

Note: The completion of visual skill activities on a vertical surface positions the eyes looking straight ahead for optimal performance. This position enhances the development of motor memory for letter formations. If you decide to utilize this strategy, be sure that the activity surface is positioned just slightly higher than your child's shoulder height to achieve this visual goal.

1. Practice pencil pressure skills by drawing shapes or writing letters and words on a piece of handwriting paper placed over a piece of sandpaper of the same size, asking the child to "feel the pencil rub over the sand paper" (for pencil pressures that are too light) or by tracing or drawing on a piece of tissue paper over a picture or letter formation worksheet, encouraging the child not to tear the tissue paper or make a "dent" in it (for pencil pressures that are too heavy). Be sure he or she is using the appropriate directional concepts during this tracing activity. Note: It's best not to use markers, as their smooth movements do not require the use of pressure and do not provide adequate tactile feedback for skill enhancement. (Eye-hand coordination, Pencil Control, and Letter Formation Skills; Visual and Tactile Learning Styles)
2. For those children whose pressure is too heavy, encourage them to describe how that feels while they are writing or drawing (e.g., hand hurts, fingers ache, arm is stiff). Then have them complete the tissue paper activity from above and ask them to tell you how they know when they are applying too much pressure (e.g., the tissue ripped or they made a "dent"). Then have them try the activity again, this time having them describe how they are preventing the tissue paper from ripping or denting. This activity can also be completed using the sand paper strategy, encouraging the children not to rip the handwriting paper by pressing too hard. Ask them to describe the way that each of the strategies feels, noting their differences. (Sensory input through the small muscles, Tactile Learning Style, Auditory Learning Style, Visual-Motor Memory Skills, Visual Attention Skills)
3. For those children whose pressure is too light, encourage them to describe how that feels while they are writing or drawing (e.g., dropping the pencil, fingers hurt, writing is sloppy). Then have them complete the sand paper activity from above and ask them to tell you how they know when they are applying too little pressure (e.g., they can't feel the pencil rub on the sand paper). Then have them try the activity again, this time having them describe the amount of pressure they are using to feel the pencil rub on the sandpaper. This activity can be used with the tissue paper strategy, encouraging the children to press into the tissue paper to leave a "dent." If a child does not respond to the need to place more pressure on the pencil, provide him or her with a

comparison of tactile experiences by substituting the sandpaper with tissue paper. Ask the child to describe the way that each of them feels, noting their differences. (Sensory input through the small muscles, Tactile Learning Style, Auditory Learning Style, Visual-Motor Memory Skills, Visual Attention Skills)

4. Provide hand-over-hand assistance during any of the activities to demonstrate appropriate pencil pressure. (Tactile Learning Style)
5. To add additional kinesthetic (tactile) input, you can also draw a shape or letter formation directly on the sand paper and have your child trace over it. (Visual Learning Style)

#### Tips to enhance your child's learning experiences:

1. Transfer these activities to a vertical surface by taping or tacking the paper with the sand paper or tissue paper to a wall or an easel. (Visual Attention and Postural Skills, Arm and Shoulder Strength)
2. Have your child trace the letter formation over the sandpaper with his or her finger before tracing it with a pencil. If your child does not feel comfortable tracing with a finger over the sandpaper, a similar tactile experience can be obtained by tracing with the finger over a chalk model on a chalkboard or a model drawn on a piece of construction paper. (Visual Memory Skills; Visual and Tactile Learning Styles)
3. Draw large patterns, such as Figure 8's or overlapping circles, on the board or a large piece of paper taped to the wall, using chalk, colored pencils, or paint brushes. Instruct your child to first put "a lot of pressure" on the tool, then to "put a very little bit of pressure" on it. Ask him or her how each feels. Then, complete a tracing or drawing activity, and have your child describe the amount of pressure he or she is applying to the tool. (Sensory input through the small muscles, Tactile Learning Style, Visual-Motor Memory Skills, Visual Attention Skills)

#### Warm-Up Games:

- Copy Cat Drawings or completing mazes over sand paper
- Tracing Copy Cat Drawings on tissue or tracing paper
- Crayon and Pencil Rubbings
- Therapeutic Putty Exercises and Games

#### Skills Addressed (A) / Skills Enhanced (E)

- A Visual Attention
- A Eye-Hand Coordination
- A Pencil Control
- E Letter Foundations
- E Visual Memory
- E Posture (vertical surface)
- E Body Awareness

# Wash Away

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Visual motor patterns for letter formations are developed through practice activities that target the use of correct directional concepts for writing the letter. The development of these patterns is essential to a student's ability to produce handwritten work automatically without having to think about each letter formation before writing it.

Children who struggle with learning letter formations or the recall of previously learned letter formations would benefit from activities that focus on motor planning skill development. This skill can be enhanced with the addition of sensory experiences to heighten awareness through the eyes and hands.

This activity encourages the development of letter formation skills.

## Materials You Will Need

- Age-appropriate handwriting paper
- A small eraser
- A pencil with an eraser tip

## Directions

Note: The completion of visual skill activities on a vertical surface positions the eyes looking straight ahead for optimal performance. This position enhances the development of motor memory for letter formations. If you decide to utilize this strategy, be sure that the activity surface is positioned just slightly higher than your child's shoulder height to achieve this visual goal.

1. Write a model of the letter or number formations that are being addressed on a piece of age-appropriate handwriting paper in pencil. To enhance visual attention skills, place the paper on the wall or work on a chalk board. (No white boards, as they do not provide adequate tactile input for motor planning enhancement.)
2. Have your child "wash away" your model by erasing it completely with a small eraser. If you are using a chalk board, have the child wash away your model with a small piece of paper towel or a cotton ball. Be sure your child is using the correction directional movements for each letter or number. (Visual Memory, Visual-Motor, and Letter Formation Skills; Visual and Tactile Learning Styles)

## Tips to enhance your child's learning experiences:

1. Ask your child to announce the stroke directions aloud as he or she "washes away" your model. (Auditory Learning Style)
2. Transfer this activity to paper taped or tacked to a wall or on an easel. (Visual Attention and Postural Skills, Arm and Shoulder Strengthening)
3. Complete this activity on a chalkboard, having your child use a small piece of paper towel or a cotton ball to "wash away" your model. (Tactile Learning Style)
4. To add additional tactile feedback to the activity, use more pencil pressure to write a model of the letter or number formation, making it more difficult to erase.
5. Have your child complete this activity by holding a pencil with the eraser-side down and using the appropriate pencil grasp while erasing. Be sure that he or she is following the appropriate directional concepts as the model is "washed away." (Pencil Grasping Skills; Tactile and Visual Learning Styles)

## To add large-movement skills to your child's experience:

Have your child complete this activity by erasing large letter or number formations on a piece of paper taped to the wall or on the floor, using large arm movements and the appropriate directional concepts to “wash away” your models. (Visual-Motor, Visual Memory, and Postural Skills; Tactile and Visual Learning Styles)

### Warm-Up Games:

- Crayon and pencil rubbings
- Therapeutic putty exercises and games
- Fine motor boot camp

### Skills Addressed (A) / Skills Enhanced (E)

- A Visual Attention
- A Eye-Hand Coordination
- A Finger and Hand Strength
- A Letter Foundations
- A Visual Memory
- A Visual Discrimination
- A Visual Form Constancy
- E Pencil Control

# See It and Say It Jar

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Automatic letter formation is the primary building block for a fluid handwriting style. Handwriting that is slow and tedious can result in hand fatigue and diminished comprehension as the student struggles to recall and produce letter formations. The ability to write letters quickly and efficiently depends on how well the letter formations were learned initially. Strong visual discrimination skills, especially the ability to visualize the letter without a model, allow the student to recognize the distinctive features of letter and number formations, such as their shape, orientation, and size, in order to remember and use them efficiently in handwriting tasks.

Children who struggle with learning letter formations or the recall of previously learned letter formations would benefit from activities that focus on visual perceptual skills, particularly those that address memory and formation likenesses and differences.

This activity encourages the development of visual perceptual skills for learning letter and number formations.

## Materials You Will Need

- A collection of small pictures, drawings, or paper models of letter and number formations
- Glue
- Transparent tape
- Craft sticks or pencils
- A jar that will hold the craft sticks or pencils
- A laminator (optional)

## Directions

### To Create the Activity:

2. Create a collection of small pictures, drawings, or paper models of letter and number formations that are presented:
  - a. in different sizes;
  - b. in different orientations (e.g., a picture of a "c" right-side up and one on its side; and
  - c. as both complete and incomplete (e.g., a picture of both a completed "m" and a partially completed "m").
3. Laminate the pictures, if possible, or wrap them in transparent tape to preserve them.
4. Tape or glue the pictures to a craft stick or a pencil, or on any other "fun" medium to encourage participation. Place them in a jar.

### For Completing the Activity:

1. Have your child pull one of the sticks or pencils out of the jar.
2. Instruct him to
  - a. Look at it.
  - b. "See" it by closing his eyes and thinking about what it looks like.
  - c. Say its name out loud.
3. (Visualization, Visual Memory, and Letter Formation Skills; Visual and Auditory Learning Styles)

## Tips to enhance your child's learning experiences:

6. Ask your child to announce the stroke directions necessary for making the letter or number formation. (Auditory Learning Style)

7. Have your child draw the letter or number formation in the air using large arm movements. Be sure he or she is using the correct directional movements during this activity. (Visualization, Visual Memory, Tactile Learning Style)
8. Have your child compare two “look-alike” letter formations (e.g., “b and d” or “p and q”) and describe the likenesses and differences.

#### To add movement skills to your child’s experience:

1. Tape a one part of each of the matching pairs around the room or place them randomly on a table or on the floor (e.g., either the “c” right side up or the “c” on its side, two copies of a letter each in a different font).
2. Then have your child pull one stick from the jar, look at the letter or number formation, visualize it, and then say its name.
3. Then have him find its partner on the wall, table, or floor and collect it.
4. Finally, ask him to look at it, visualize it, and name it again before matching to its partner.

#### Warm-Up Games:

- Memory Games
- Hidden Pictures
- Treasure Hunts

#### Skills Addressed (A) / Skills Enhanced (E)

- A Visual Memory
- A Visual Closure
- A Visual Discrimination
- A Visual Form Constancy
- A Letter Foundations

# Copy Cat Drawings

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Handwriting is a complex activity that calls upon cognitive, visual, and physical skills to produce a fluid handwriting style. It depends on efficient memory skills for the learning and automatic recall of letter formations, accurate visual scanning skills for copying and creating text, and sufficient pencil control to produce legible written material in a timely manner. Handwriting relies on a student's visual perceptual skills to determine the correct spacing between letters and words on the line and on a page, as well to effectively edit his own work.

Children who struggle with the efficient production of handwritten work would benefit from activities that focus on the developmental skills based in art and drawing. These skills form the foundation for handwriting and act as the beginning stages for handwriting development.

This activity encourages the development of visual attention, eye-hand coordination, and pencil control skills.

## Materials You Will Need

- Paper
- Pencils
- Examples of Simple Art Drawings (optional)

## Directions

**Note:** The completion of visual skill activities on a vertical surface positions the eyes looking straight ahead for optimal performance. This position enhances the development of motor memory for letter formations. If you decide to utilize this strategy, be sure that the activity surface is positioned just slightly higher than your child's shoulder height to achieve this visual goal.

1. Draw a simple picture on the board or a piece of paper taped to the wall. Note: This version of the activity addresses copying from the board and visual focusing between near and far distances. For copying from text and to address close visual work, present the picture on the desk beside or above your child's writing space.
2. Ask your child to copy your picture. (Visual Attention, Visual Memory, and Pencil Control Skills)
3. Have your child edit his or her work by comparing it with your drawing and describing out loud any differences he or she may find. (Visual Attention, Visual Scanning, Visual Memory, and Visual Discrimination Skills; Visual and Auditory Learning Styles)
4. Alert your child to any differences that were not discovered, asking him or her to compare both drawings once again in order to recognize the differences independently. (Visual Attention and Visual Discrimination Skills; Visual and Auditory Learning Styles)
5. Finally, have your child copy your picture again and edit for differences to reinforce visual attention and scanning skills.
6. Advance the complexity of the picture as your child progresses with this task. If appropriate, use drawings collected from worksheets or books.

## Tips to enhance your child's learning experiences:

1. Use simple letter formations to copy. Be sure that your child follows the appropriate directional concepts during this activity.
2. Advance toward coping words that make a sentence by gradually adding one word at a time until you are providing an age-appropriate sentence.



## Warm-Up Activities for Visual Skills

### Distance Vision:

- Ball or Balloon Toss
- The Cotton Ball Game
- Room for a Spy

### Close Vision:

- Simply a Memory Game
- Puzzles
- Construction Toys and Games
- Board Games That Include Strategic Elements

### Skills Addressed (A) / Skills Enhanced (E)

- A Visual Attention
- A Eye-Hand Coordination
- A Visual Closure
- A Spatial Awareness
- A Visual Discrimination
- E Pencil Control
- E Letter Foundations

## Crayon and Pencil Rubbings

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Handwriting legibility and speed depend on the writer's ability to place the appropriate amount of pressure on his or her pencil. Too much pressure results in hand fatigue, slowing the writer down as the amount of handwritten work increases in school. Too little pressure results in an illegible handwriting style that is difficult to read and understand. Both of these concerns can prevent students from keeping up with their peers as they progress through school.

Children who experience difficulty with pencil control, including pencil pressure and grasp, are often unaware that they are putting too much or too little pressure on their pencil. Poor pencil control and pencil pressure can affect the students' ability to learn letter formations correctly. These students would benefit from activities that focus on kinesthetic (tactile) input regulation.

This activity encourages the development of pencil control skills.

### Materials You Will Need

- Paper
- Tissue or Tracing Paper
- Pencils
- Crayons
- Fine or Mildly Coarse Sandpaper

### Directions

#### For children who use "too little pressure:"

9. Provide your child with a piece of blank paper over a piece of sandpaper cut to the same size.
10. Demonstrate the activity by rubbing the side of a pencil or crayon tip across the paper to create a "picture" as it rubs across the sandpaper beneath it.
5. Demonstrate and explain how "too little pressure" will prevent the picture from showing up. (Visual and Auditory Learning Style)
6. Provide your child with ample opportunities to practice with simple rubbings. (Tactile Learning Style)
7. Transition to tracing with a pencil over a drawing or letter formation to allow for functional carryover of the skill. (Letter Formation and Pencil Control Skills; Tactile Learning Style)
8. Have your child edit his or her work during this process by pointing out how times he or she felt too little pressure had been applied and/or when appropriate pressure had been applied. (Visual Attention, Visual Perception, and Pencil Control Skills; Tactile and Auditory Learning Styles)

#### For children who use "too much pressure:"

11. Provide your child with a piece of tissue or tracing paper placed over a piece of sandpaper cut to the same size.
12. Demonstrate the activity by rubbing the side of a pencil or crayon tip across the tissue or tracing paper to create a "picture" as it rubs across the sandpaper beneath it.
13. Demonstrate and explain how "too much pressure" will tear the tissue or tracing paper. (Visual and Auditory Learning Style)
14. Provide your child with ample opportunities to practice with simple rubbings. (Tactile Learning Style)
15. Transition to tracing with a pencil over a drawing or letter formation to allow for functional carryover of the skill. (Letter Formation and Pencil Control Skills; Tactile Learning Style)
16. Have your child edit his or her own work during this process by pointing out how times he or she felt too little pressure had been applied and/or when appropriate pressure had been applied. (Visual Attention, Visual Perception, and Pencil Control Skills; Tactile and Auditory Learning Styles)

### Tips to enhance your child's learning experiences:

1. Use simple letter formations for tracing by rubbing over them with either of the above strategies. Be sure that your child follows the appropriate directional concepts during this activity.
2. Provide your child with each of the above strategies and discuss how his or her hand or fingers feel as they rub over the sand paper using light and heavy pressure.

### To add large-movement skills to your child's experience:

To provide opportunities to use large shoulder movements on a surface that also provides the eyes with the optimum writing surface, have your child complete this activity on a vertical surface. Tape or tack a large piece of blank paper or tissue/tracing paper over sandpaper of the same size on a wall or easel. Note: The completion of visual skill activities on a vertical surface positions the eyes looking straight ahead for optimal performance. This position enhances the development of motor memory for letter formations. If you decide to utilize this strategy, be sure that the activity surface is positioned just slightly higher than your child's shoulder height to achieve this visual goal. (Visual Memory Skills through large arm movements, Pencil Control and Visual Attention Skills; Upper Body Strengthening; Tactile and Visual Learning Styles)

### Warm-Up Activities

- Fine Motor Boot Camp
- Therapeutic Putty Exercises
- Make Me Strong, Max (Tennis Ball Game)

### Skills Addressed (A) / Skills Enhanced (E)

- A Eye-Hand Coordination
- A Pencil Control
- E Finger and Hand Strength

# Make Me Strong, Max!

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Pencil control is a key element in a legible and smooth handwriting style. It relies on sufficient eye-hand coordination and fine-motor strength. Weak finger, hand, wrist, arm, and shoulder muscles can lead to frequent fatigue during handwriting tasks and prevent a student from mastering handwriting skills.

Children who experience difficulty with pencil control would benefit from activities that focus on finger, hand, wrist, arm, and shoulder strengthening and provide enhanced kinesthetic (tactile) input.

This activity encourages the development of finger, hand, wrist, arm, and shoulder strength to enhance pencil control skills.

## Materials You Will Need

- A "Max" Tennis Ball designed according to the directions below.
- Bingo chips, small coins, or other small objects
- Magnetic Letters (optional)

## Directions

### For creating a "Max" tennis ball:

3. Using an old tennis ball for "max" economy, cut a 3" horizontal slit across its surface so that when it is squeezed, it opens like a mouth. (You can use a new tennis ball, of course, if you prefer!)
4. Have your child draw or glue on 2 eyes and a nose above the mouth, adding as many features as he or she wants!

### For the "Make Me Strong" game:

1. Gather together your "Max" tennis ball and a supply of small objects.
2. Demonstrate the way that Max "opens his mouth" when you squeeze him just right. (Visual Learning Style)
3. Provide your child with opportunities to get Max to open his mouth. If he needs help, allow him to use two hands to get Max's mouth open. If he needs additional help, provide him with hand-over-hand assistance to open the mouth. (Tactile Learning Style)
4. Demonstrate, using your small objects, how Max will eat just about anything that you put into his mouth.
5. Have your child squeeze Max's mouth open as you place the objects inside for him to eat up. (Fine-Motor Strengthening)
6. Reverse the roles and have your child place the objects in Max's mouth. (Eye-Hand Coordination Skills)
7. As your child's skills progress, have him squeeze the mouth open and then raise his arm up toward the ceiling or lower it down toward the floor before you place objects inside. (Arm and Shoulder Strengthening)

## Tips to enhance your child's learning experiences:

1. Have your child reach up or down to take small magnetic letter formations from your grasp. Then have him or her write the letter formation on age-appropriate paper.
2. Have your child shake out coins that Max has eaten, first by using two hands to hold his mouth open, progressing to one hand.

## Warm-Up Activities

- Fine Motor Boot Camp

- Therapeutic Putty Exercises

**Skills Addressed (A) / Skills Enhanced (E)**

- A Eye-Hand Coordination
- A Finger and Hand Strength
- E Pencil Control

# Simply a Memory Game

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Automatic letter recognition allows a writer to produce words without having to think about how to form the letters. Children begin to use their memory skills around the age of 3 years old to acquire, store, and recall information across time and to recognize the same letters or objects in a matching game. This skill allows them to visualize what an object looks like without having to see it or touch it. They will continue to use these skills throughout their lives as they master new learning experiences.

Children who struggle with learning letter formations or the recall of previously learned letter formations would benefit from activities that focus on visual perceptual skills, particularly those that address memory and formation likenesses and differences.

This activity encourages the development of visual memory, visualization, and visual discrimination skills for letter formation recall.

## Materials You Will Need

- A selection of small objects familiar to your child (3-10)
- A paper bag

## Directions

**Note:** This variation of the activity is designed to address visual memory, visualization, and visual discrimination skills only and involves no handwriting on your child's part.

1. Select 3-5 small objects that are familiar to your child and place them on the table in front of him or her. For example: an eraser, a paper clip, a rubber band, a crayon, and a penny.
2. Have your child name each one out loud, pick each one up and manipulate it, and then describe its features before placing it in a paper bag. (Tactile and Auditory Learning Styles)
3. Ask your child to name the objects that he or she can remember. (Memory Skills)
4. Encourage your child to think about the ones he or she cannot remember by asking:
  - a. What did they look like on the table? Were they close together or spread wide apart?
  - b. Which objects were next to those that you remember?
  - c. What did they feel when you picked them up? How did the objects you remembered feel? How were they different from the others? Were the others smaller, harder, or thinner? (Visual Memory and Visualization Skills; Auditory Learning Style)
5. Remove the objects from the bag to refresh your child's memory for those that he or she could not remember. Have your child manipulate them all again and describe their features out loud.
6. Place all of the objects back into the bag and play the game once more.
7. As your child's skills progress, increase the challenge by adding more objects to the game.

## Tips for Older Children

1. Revise the activity as follows:
  - a. Select items that are familiar but presented in different shapes or materials. For example, a miniature model of a lighthouse, a small seashell, a plastic racing car, a small rubric's cube, and a small notebook. Have your child describe the items and their purpose or where they can be found or used.
  - b. Place the items in a bag and ask your child to name the ones he or she can remember.
  - c. Encourage your child to think about the ones he or she cannot remember by asking:
    - 1) What did the objects look like on the table? Were they close together or spread wide apart?
    - 2) Which objects were next to those that you remember?

- 3) How were the objects you remembered used? Where could you find them?
  - 4) What were some of the ways that the other objects on the table could be used? (Visual Memory and Visualization Skills; Auditory Learning Style)
2. Continue with the procedures for the original game.

### Warm-Up Activities

#### Grades K-1:

- Room for a Spy
- Any matching game
- Any sensory experiences, including those that utilize sand, shaving cream, putty, or “Goo Dough”\*

#### Grades 2+:

- Games that include strategies
- Card games that include speed and memory techniques
- The Number 10 Game

### Skills Addressed (A) / Skills Enhanced (E)

- A Visual Memory
- A Visual Discrimination
- E Visual Attention
- E Letter Foundation Skills

\*The recipe for “Goo Dough” is available from your child’s Occupational Therapist.

## Simply a Memory Game with a Twist

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Handwriting mastery begins in the early education years and continues to build until students reach their middle school years. During each stage, they are asked to use the letter formations they have learned to copy text and to produce independent writings. Visual memory skills are important foundations for the storage and retrieval of letter and word formations, while visualization skills are those that allow the writer to “see” the letters in order to reproduce them quickly from memory.

Children who struggle with learning letter formations or the recall of previously learned letter formations would benefit from activities that focus on visual perceptual skills, particularly those that address memory and formation likenesses and differences.

This activity encourages the development of visual memory, visualization, and visual discrimination skills for letter formation skills.

### Materials You Will Need

- A selection of upper- and lower-case magnetic letters and/or numbers that your child has been previously taught (3-10)
- A paper bag
- Age-appropriate handwriting paper
- A pencil

### Directions

**Note:** The completion of visual skill activities on a vertical surface positions the eyes looking straight ahead for optimal performance. This position enhances the development of motor memory for letter formations. If you decide to utilize this strategy, be sure that the activity surface is positioned just slightly higher than your child's shoulder height to achieve this visual goal.

1. Select 3-5 magnetic letters or numbers that your child has been previously taught and place them on the table in front of him or her. Depending on your child's needs, you can select either upper- or lower-case letter magnets, mix upper- and lower-case, mix letter formations with numbers, or select numbers only, in that order.
2. Have your child name each one out loud, pick them up and manipulate them, and describe their features before placing them in a paper bag. (Tactile and Auditory Learning Styles)
3. Ask your child to name the letters or numbers that he or she can remember and write their names on age-appropriate handwriting paper.
4. Encourage your child to think about the ones he or she cannot remember by asking:
  - a. What did they look like on the table? Were they close together or spread wide apart?
  - b. Which letters or numbers were next to those that you remember?
  - c. How did the letters or numbers you remembered feel? Did they have straight lines or curvy ones?
  - d. How were they different from the others? (Visual Memory and Visualization Skills; Auditory Learning Style)
5. Remove the magnets from the bag to refresh your child's memory for those that he or she could not remember. Have your child manipulate them all again and describe their features out loud. Place all of the magnets back into the bag and play the game once more.
6. As your child's skills progress, increase the challenge by adding more letters or numbers to the game, eventually mixing upper- and lower-case, mixing letter formations with numbers, or finally selecting numbers only, in that order.



### Tips to enhance your child's learning experiences:

1. If you have access to a chalkboard, have your child write the letters there with chalk to enhance his or her tactile learning experience. This can also be accomplished by having your child write them with chalk on dark colored construction paper. (Tactile Learning Style)
2. After your child has manipulated, described, and named the letter or number formations, hide the magnets in a bin filled with sand. After your child has named the ones he or she can remember, have your child dig in and find the magnets to refresh his memory. (Tactile Input)

### Tips for Older Children

1. Revise this activity as follows:
  - a. Select items that are familiar but presented in different shapes or materials. For example, a miniature model of a lighthouse, a small seashell, a plastic racing car, a small rubric's cube, and a small notebook. Have your child describe the items and their purpose or where they can be found or used.
  - b. Place the items in a bag and ask him to name the ones that he can remember.
  - c. Have him write the names of those he remembers on age-appropriate handwriting paper.
    - a. Encourage your child to think about the ones he or she cannot remember by asking:
      - 1) What did the objects look like on the table? Were they close together or spread wide apart?
      - 2) Which objects were next to those that you remember?
      - 3) How were the objects you remembered used? Where could you find them?
      - 4) What were some of the ways that the other objects on the table could be used? (Visual Memory and Visualization Skills; Auditory Learning Style)
2. Continue with the procedures for the original game.

### Warm-Up Activities

K-1:

Therapeutic Putty Exercises and Activities

Room for a Spy

Any matching game

Any sensory experiences, including those that utilize sand, shaving cream, putty, or "Goo Dough"\*

2+

Therapeutic Putty Exercises and Activities

Games that include strategies

Card games that include speed and memory techniques

The Number 10 Game

### Skills Addressed (A) / Skills Enhanced (E)

- A Visual Memory
- A Visual Discrimination
- A Letter Foundation Skills
- E Visual Attention

\*The recipe for "Goo Dough" is available from your child's Occupational Therapist.

## Bag of Tricks Game

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Handwriting that is an automatic skill will become a valuable communication tool for students for the rest of their lives. They will be asked to copy from text and other handwritten products, create written material, and present information to a reader through the use of forms and notes. Automatic handwriting requires the writer to “think and write” about his topic and relies on his ability to recall letter and word formations without having to take time to think about them.

Children who struggle with learning letter formations or the recall of previously learned letter formations would benefit from activities that focus on visual perceptual skills, particularly those that address memory and formation likenesses and differences.

This activity encourages the development of visual memory, visualization, and visual discrimination skills for letter formation skills.

### Materials You Will Need

- A selection of small objects familiar to your child (3-10)
- A paper bag

### Directions

Note: This variation of the activity is designed to address visual memory, visualization, and visual discrimination skills only and involves no handwriting on your child's part. \*

1. Select 3-5 small objects that are familiar to your child and place them on the table in front of him or her. For example: an eraser, a paper clip, a rubber band, a crayon, and a penny.
2. Have your child name each one out loud, pick them up and manipulate them, and describe their features before placing them in a paper bag. (Visual Memory Skills; Tactile and Auditory Learning Styles)
3. Ask your child to reach into the bag, select an object, and name it before removing it from the bag. If your child is unable to manipulate the objects with one hand, replace the bag with a larger one or a different container and have him or her reach in with both hands. (Visualization Skills; Tactile Experience)
4. Encourage your child to think about the ones he or she cannot name by asking:
  - a. What does it feel like? Is it hard or soft? Is it thin or thick? Is it stiff or squishy?
  - b. Can you turn it over in your hand and find its “top?”
  - c. How did the objects you remembered feel differently than this one? Were the others smaller, harder, or thinner? (Visual Memory and Visualization Skills; Auditory Learning Style)
5. Have your child remove those objects that he or she could not identify, manipulate them again, and describe their features out loud.
6. At the end of the game, place all of the objects back into the bag and play the game once more.
7. As your child's skills progress, increase the challenge by adding more objects to the game.

### Tips to enhance your child's learning experiences:

After your child has manipulated, described, and named the objects, hide them in a bin filled with sand. Have him or her reach in and find one, naming it before removing it from the bin. (Tactile Input)

## Tips for Older Children

1. Revise this activity as follows:
  - a. Select items that are familiar but presented in different shapes or materials. For example, a miniature model of a lighthouse, a small seashell, a plastic racing car, a small rubric's cube, and a small notebook. Have your child describe the items and their purpose or where they can be found or used.
  - b. Encourage your child to think about the ones he or she cannot remember by asking:
    - What did the objects look like on the table? Were they close together or spread wide apart?
    - Which objects were next to those that you remember?
    - How were the objects you remembered used? Where could you find them?
    - What were some of the ways that the other objects on the table could be used? (Visual Memory and Visualization Skills; Auditory Learning Style)
  - c. Continue with the procedures for the original game.
2. \*Exception: To enhance an older child's learning experience, have him or her write down the name of the object on a piece of age-appropriate writing paper.

## Warm-Up Activities

### Grades K-2

Activities that encourage in-hand manipulation skills:

- Drop It and Pick It Up Game
- One-Handed Tricks
- Therapeutic Putty Exercises and Activities

Activities that encourage using the two-sides of the hand:

- Cutting
- Lacing
- Sewing
- Painting
- Room for a Spy
- Any matching game

Sensory experiences including items such as sand, shaving cream, putty, or Goo Dough. \*\*

### Grades 2+

Games that include strategies:

- Card games that include speed and memory techniques
- The Number 10 Game

## Skills Addressed (A) / Skills Enhanced (E)

- A Visual Memory
- A Visual Discrimination
- E Visual Attention
- E Letter Foundation Skills

## Bag of Tricks Game with a Twist

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Visual memory skills are important foundations for the storage and automatic retrieval of letter and word formations, while visualization skills are those that allow the writer to “see” the letters in order to reproduce them quickly from memory. Handwriting mastery, as well as the functional use of handwriting skills, relies on the writer’s ability to produce words and sentences without having to think about forming the letters.

Children who struggle with learning letter formations or the recall of previously learned letter formations would benefit from activities that focus on visual perceptual skills, particularly those that address memory and formation likenesses and differences.

This activity encourages the development of visual memory, visualization, and visual discrimination skills for letter formation skills.

### Materials You Will Need:

- A selection of upper- and lower-case magnetic letters and/or numbers that your child has been previously taught (3-10)
- A paper bag
- Age-appropriate handwriting paper
- A pencil

**Note:** The completion of visual skill activities on a vertical surface positions the eyes looking straight ahead for optimal performance. This position enhances the development of motor memory for letter formations. If you decide to utilize this strategy, be sure that the activity surface is positioned just slightly higher than your child’s shoulder height to achieve this visual goal.

### Directions

1. Select 3-5 magnetic letters or numbers that your child has been previously taught and place them on the table in front of him. Depending on your child’s needs, you can select either upper- or lower-case letter magnets, mix upper- and lower-case, mix letter formations with numbers, or select numbers only, in that order.
2. Have your child name each one out loud, pick them up and manipulate them, and describe their features before placing them in a paper bag. (Tactile and Auditory Learning Styles)
3. Ask your child to reach into the bag, select a magnet, and name it before removing it from the bag. If your child is unable to manipulate the magnets with one hand, replace the bag with a larger one or a different container and have him or her reach in with both hands. (Visualization Skills; Tactile Experience)
4. Have your child write the names of the letters or numbers that he or she is able to identify inside the bag on age-appropriate handwriting paper after he has withdrawn it from the bag. (Visual Motor and Letter Formation Skills) Encourage him to think about the ones he cannot remember by asking:
  - a. What did they look like on the table? Were they close together or spread wide apart?
  - b. Which letters or numbers were next to those that you remember?
  - c. How did the letters or numbers you remembered feel? Did they have straight lines or curvy ones?
  - d. How were they different from the others? (Visual Memory and Visualization Skills; Auditory Learning Style)
5. Have your child withdraw those letters he or she could not identify, manipulate them again, and describe their features out loud.
6. Place all of the magnets back into the bag and play the game once more.
7. As your child’s skills progress, increase the challenge by adding more letters or numbers to the game, eventually mixing upper- and lower-case, mixing letter formations with numbers, or finally selecting numbers only, in that order.

### Tips to enhance your child's learning experiences:

After your child has manipulated, described, and named the letter and number formations, hide the magnets in a bin filled with sand. Have your child reach in and find one, naming it before removing it from the bin. (Tactile Input)

### Tips for Older Children

Revise this activity as follows:

1. Select items that are familiar but presented in different shapes or materials. For example, a miniature model of a lighthouse, a small seashell, a plastic racing car, a small rubric's cube, and a small notebook. Have your child describe the items and their purpose or where they can be found or used.
2. Place the items in a bag and ask your child to name the ones that he or she can remember.
3. Have your child write the names of those he or she remembers on age-appropriate handwriting paper.
4. Encourage your child to think about the ones he or she cannot remember by asking:
5. What did the objects look like on the table? Were they close together or spread wide apart?
6. Which objects were next to those that you remember?
7. How were the objects you remembered used? Where could you find them?
8. What were some of the ways that the other objects on the table could be used? (Visual Memory and Visualization Skills; Auditory Learning Style)
9. 2. Continue with the procedures for the original game.

### Warm-Up Activities

#### Grades K-2

Activities that encourage in-hand manipulation skills:

- Drop It and Pick It Up Game
- One-Handed Tricks
- Therapeutic Putty Exercises and Activities

Activities that encourage using the two-sides of the hand:

- Cutting
- Lacing
- Sewing
- Painting
- Room for a Spy
- Any matching game
- Sensory experiences including items such as sand, shaving cream, putty, or Goo Dough. \*\*

#### Grades 2+

Games that include strategies:

- Card games that include speed and memory techniques
- The Number 10 Game

### Skills Addressed (A) / Skills Enhanced (E)

A Visual Memory

A Visual Discrimination

A Letter Foundation Skills

E Visual Attention

\*\*The recipe for "Goo Dough" is available from your child's Occupational Therapist.

## Can You Spot It? Book (K-4)

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Figure-ground discrimination is the visual skill that allows children to find what they are looking for in their desk, on a page in their workbook, or on the board during copying tasks. It helps them to focus on the important item that they are looking for and to filter out the distracting ones, such as pictures on the page or a poster displayed beside the board. It also assists children in locating their friends on the playground or their mom at the park.

Children who struggle with figure-ground discrimination skills can have difficulty copying from a book or the board, either by omitting information contained there or including extraneous information, and will have trouble locating errors in their handwriting. They would benefit from activities that focus on the visual skills that lay the foundation for accurate handwritten products.

This activity encourages the development of figure-ground discrimination, visual attention, and visual scanning skills for efficient copying skills.

### Materials You Will Need

- A selection of small objects familiar to your child (see Materials for the Set-Up below.)
- A paper bag
- Age-appropriate handwriting paper
- A pencil
- A Laminator (optional)

**Note:** This activity takes a little preparation beforehand for completion.

### Materials for the Set-Up:

**Step 1:** A selection of objects that are familiar to your child (3-10)

For K-1, select objects that measure about 2-3;" for ages 2-4 select objects that measure 1-2."

Examples: For K-1 Magnetic letter formations  
Small pencils  
Large erasers  
Checkers  
Plastic cars or trucks  
Scissors

For 2-4: Paper clips  
Coins  
Rubber bands  
Pegs  
Marbles  
A key

You can also select items from nature that will not die or "spoil," such as a stick, seashell, or stone.

**Step 2:** Place the items you've selected on a piece of black construction paper.

For K-1: Place the objects approximately 2" apart.

For 2-4: Place the objects approximately 1" apart.

**Step 3:** Take a photograph of the objects on the construction paper and laminate the picture (lamination optional)

**Step 4:** Place the picture and the objects included in the photo into a plastic zip-lock bag and store.

## Set-Up Hints:

1. It would be helpful and efficient to produce a number of “Can You Spot It?” Book Pages that range from less difficult visual scanning and attention challenges, using less objects and more space, and that build toward pages that encourage the development of these skills by adding more objects to the pages. Place them in a binder and the objects in a plastic box labeled for the page they correspond with in the book. This will assist your work with your child as you continue to provide challenges to enhance his or her progress.
2. A time-saver or when you are in a “pinch” for a more challenging page: Use two sets of identical representations, placing one set on a piece of construction paper and covering it with a piece of plastic wrap or other transparent material. Have your child match the loose representations with those on the page.

## Materials for the Activity:

- Your “Can You Spot It?” Book
- The objects that are pictured in the book

## Directions

**Note:** This variation of the activity is designed to address figure-ground discrimination, visual attention, and visual scanning skills only and involves no handwriting on your child’s part. \*

1. Select an appropriate page from your “Can You Spot It?” Book to address your child’s particular skill needs, along with the selection of objects that are included on that page.
2. Have your child name the objects out loud, handle and manipulate them, and describe their features before introducing him or her to the page.
3. Have your child divide the number of objects into two groups and place one set on each side of the desk or table, leaving room at his or her midline for the page.
4. Two Strategies:
  - a. Strategy No. 1: Show your child the page and explain that it contains the same objects that he or she has been talking about. Tell your child that you would like him or her to match the items by selecting one object on the PAGE and finding it among those that have been divided into groups. Note: This strategy, selecting the object on the page first and then locating it on the table, challenges the visual attention, visual scanning, and figure-group discrimination skills but also addresses midline crossing skills.
  - b. Strategy No. 2: Show your child the page and explain that it contains the same objects that he or she has been talking about. Tell your child that you would like him or her to match them by selecting one of the objects on the TABLE and finding it among those that are located on the page. Note: This strategy, selecting the object from the table first, works primarily on the visual attention, visual scanning, and figure-ground discrimination skills.
5. As your child’s skills progress, increase the challenge by selecting pages that include more or smaller items.

## Tips to enhance your child’s learning experiences:

1. K- 1: After your child has manipulated, described, and named the objects, hide them in a bin filled with sand. Have your child reach in and find one, naming it once again before matching it to its partner on the page. (Tactile Input, Auditory Input)
2. All grade levels: Select objects that are similar to those pictured on the page to enhance visual discrimination and form constancy skills. For example:
  - a. Select two similar sea shells – referring to the objects as shells.
  - b. Select a red car to match with the blue car on the page – referring to the objects as cars.
  - c. Select a penny to match with the dime on the page – referring to the objects as coins.



### To add large movement skills:

1. K-1: After your child has manipulated, described, and named the objects, have your child cover his or her eyes while you hide the objects around the room, placing them in spaces where your child will need to crawl or climb to retrieve them. Then have your child match them to their partners on the page. This will encourage movement as well as visual attention, visual scanning, and figure-ground discrimination skills.
2. For all grade levels: Have your child perform a Gross Motor Boot Camp Exercise\*\* after he has located and matched an object. (Proprioceptive Input)

### Warm-Up Activities

For all grade levels: Gross motor activities, such as playing catch with a ball or performing Gross Motor Boot Camp Exercises\*\* while following your visual demonstration, will warm up the large muscles and encourage visual attention skills.

### Skills Addressed (A) / Skills Enhanced (E)

- A Visual Attention
- A Visual Scanning
- A Figure-Ground Discrimination
- E Visual Memory
- E Visual Discrimination
- E Visual Form Constancy

\* Exception: To further enhance the learning experience for children in Grades 2-4: Have your child write down the name of the object on a piece of age-appropriate handwriting paper. (Visual Input, Tactile Input)

\*\* Gross Motor Boot Camp Exercises are available from your child's Occupational Therapist.

## Can You Spot It? Book with a Twist

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Figure-ground discrimination is the visual skill that allows children to find what they are looking for in their desk, on a page in their workbook, or on the board during copying tasks. It helps them to focus on the important item that they are looking for and to filter out the distracting ones, such as pictures on the page or a poster displayed beside the board. It also assists children in locating their friends on the playground or their mom at the park.

Visual memory skills are important foundations for the storage and automatic retrieval of letter and word formations that allow a writer to produce words and sentences without having to think about forming each letter.

This activity encourages the development of figure-ground discrimination, visual attention, and visual scanning skills for efficient copying skills, as well as visual memory skills for handwriting speed and legibility.

### Materials You Will Need

- See Materials for the Set-Up below.
- Age-appropriate handwriting paper
- A pencil
- A Laminator (optional)

**Note:** This activity takes a little preparation beforehand for completion.

### Materials for the Set-Up:

#### Step 1:

For children who are using manuscript, gather a selection of manuscript letter and number formations that are familiar to the student (3-10) in formats such as magnetics, tiles, or copies of text representations.

For children who are using cursive, copies of those used in the handwriting instruction workbook or handwritten samples would be appropriate.

**Step 2:** Place the letter and number formations you've selected on black construction paper.

For K-1: Place the objects approximately 2" apart.

For 2-4: Place the objects approximately 1" apart.

**Step 3:** Take a photograph of the letter and number formations on the construction paper and laminate the picture. (lamination optional)

**Step 4:** Place the picture and the objects included in the photo into a plastic zip-lock bag and store.

### Set-Up Hints:

1. It would be helpful and efficient to produce a number of "Can You Spot It?" Book Pages that range from less difficult visual scanning and attention challenges, using less representations and more space, and building toward more challenging pages that encourage the development of these skills by adding more representations to the pages. Place them in a binder and the letter and number formations in a plastic box labeled for the page they correspond with in the book. This will assist your work with your child as you continue to provide challenges to enhance his or her skill progression.

2. A time-saver, or when you are in a “pinch” for a more challenging page: Use two sets of identical representations, placing one set on a piece of construction paper and cover it with a piece of plastic wrap or other transparent material. Have your child match the loose representations with those on the “page.”

### Materials for the Activity:

- Your “Can You Spot It?” Book
- The letter and number formations that are pictured in the book
- Age-appropriate handwriting paper
- A pencil

### Directions

1. Select an appropriate page from your “Can You Spot It? Book to address your child’s particular skill needs, along with the selection of letter and number formations that are included on that page.
2. Have your child name the letter and number formations out loud, handle and manipulate them, and describe their features before introducing him or her to the page. (Tactile and Auditory Learning Styles)
  - a. An example for the manuscript letter “A.” I start at the top in the middle and draw a slanted line down to the left. Then I go back to the top and draw a slanted line down to the right, and then put a straight line from left to right to connect them in the middle.
  - b. An example for the cursive letter “t”: I start at the bottom line and draw a curved line up to the top. Then I travel back down that line and draw a curve up, and stop.”
  - c. Of course, it is important to use the directional cues that are provided in your child’s handwriting instruction workbook or ones that he or she has used in class or in previous experiences.
3. Have your child divide the letter and number representations into two groups and place one set on each side of the desk or table, leaving room at his or her midline for the page at the top and a piece of handwriting paper below it. (This paper arrangement can be modified to meet the child’s needs.)
4. Two Strategies:
  - a. Strategy No. 1: Show your child the page and explain that it contains the same letter and number formations that he or she has been talking about and that you would like him or her to match them by selecting one representation on the PAGE and finding it among those that have been divided into groups. Note: This strategy, selecting the representation on the page first and then locating it on the table challenges the visual attention, visual scanning, and figure-group discrimination skills but also addresses midline crossing skills.
  - b. Strategy No. 2: Show your child the page and explain that it contains the same letter and number formations that he or she has been talking about and that you would like him or her to match them by selecting one of the representations on the TABLE and finding it among those that are located on the page. Note: This strategy, selecting the representation from the table first, works primarily on the visual attention, visual scanning, and figure-ground discrimination skills.
5. Two Strategies for handwriting skills:
  - a. Strategy No. 1: Have your child write the names of the letters or numbers that he or she has matched. This strategy enhances automatic production of letter and number formations.
  - b. Then, after your child has matched all of the representations on the page and written them on the handwriting paper, remove the page and have your child turn the paper over. Ask your child to write the letters and numbers included on the page as you dictate them. This strategy addresses visual memory skills for letter and number formations, as well as the automatic recall of their motor plans.
  - c. Strategy No. 2: Have your child write the directions for forming the letters or numbers that he or she has matched. This strategy works to address motor planning skills for students who struggle with the formation of letters and numbers.
6. As your child’s skills progress, increase the challenge by selecting pages that include more representations or ones where they are placed more closely together.

### Tips to enhance your child's learning experiences:

1. K- 1: After your child has manipulated and described the features of the letter and number formations, hide them in a bin filled with sand. Have your child reach in and find one, naming it once again before matching it to its partner on the page. (Tactile Input, Auditory Input)
2. All Grade Levels: Have your child write the names or directions for forming the letters and numbers on a piece of paper taped to the wall or the chalk board. \* This strategy provides large upper body movement and enhances visual attention, visualization, and motor planning skills.
3. All Grade Levels: Select letter and number formation representations that are different from those presented on the page to enhance visual discrimination and form constancy skills. For example:
  - a. Select an upper case "A" model to match with the lower case "a" on the page.
  - b. Select a manuscript "B" model for the cursive "B" on the page.

\* **Note:** The completion of visual skill activities on a vertical surface positions the eyes looking straight ahead for optimal performance. This position enhances the development of motor memory for letter formations. If you decide to utilize this strategy, be sure that the activity surface is positioned just slightly higher than your child's shoulder height to achieve this visual goal.

### To add large movement skills:

1. K-1: After your child has manipulated, described, and named the letter and number formations, have your child cover his or her eyes while you hide the formations around the room, placing them in spaces where your child will need to crawl or climb to retrieve them before matching them to their partners on the page. This will encourage movement as well as visual attention, visual scanning, as well as figure-ground discrimination skills.
2. For all grade levels: Have your child perform a Gross Motor Boot Camp Exercise\*\* after he or she has located and matched an object. (Proprioceptive Input)

### Warm-Up Activities

For all grade levels: Gross motor activities, such as playing catch with a ball or performing Gross Motor Boot Camp Exercises\*\* while following your visual demonstration, will warm up the large muscles and encourage visual attention skills.

### Skills Addressed (A) / Skills Enhanced (E)

- A Visual Attention
- A Visual Scanning
- A Figure-Ground Discrimination
- A Visual Memory
- A Visual-Motor: Letter Formations
- E Visual Motor- Eye-Hand Coordination
- E Visual Form Constancy
- E Visual Discrimination

\*\* Gross Motor Boot Camp Exercises are available from your child's Occupational Therapist.

## Match the Hidden Pictures

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Visual scanning and visual attention skills are important foundations for tasks that ask students to move their eyes from place to place during copying tasks – from the desk to the board or from a textbook to paper. Students who fall behind in their handwritten work or appear to be disinterested or distracted during copying or independent writing activities can be struggling with these skills.

It is important to note that if students continue to struggle with visual scanning and visual attention skills after therapy strategies to address those skills have been implemented, it would be wise to consult with the child's pediatrician regarding a referral for a vision assessment conducted by a developmental optometrist.

This activity encourages the development and enhancement of visual scanning and visual attention skills for copying tasks.

### Materials You Will Need

Two copies of a hidden picture activity that includes fairly good sized images of the hidden objects, as well as the copies provided for clues.

Scissors

Pencil

Laminator (if available)

**Note:** This activity takes a little preparation beforehand for completion.

### Set-Up:

1. Select two copies of an age- and skill-level appropriate hidden picture activity.
2. On one copy, cut out the objects provided as cues.
3. Laminate, if possible, both the complete copy of the activity and the cut outs of the objects used for cues.

### Directions

**Note:** This variation of the activity is designed to address figure-ground discrimination, visual attention, and visual scanning skills only and involves no handwriting on your child's part.\*

1. Provide your child with the opportunity to name the cut-out objects used as cues and describe their characteristics (e.g., a dog with big ears, a pencil with an eraser tip).
2. Have your child divide the number of objects into two groups and place one set on each side of the desk or table, leaving room at his or her midline for the page.
3. Two Strategies:
  - a. Strategy No. 1: Show your child the activity page and explain that it contains the same objects that he or she has been talking about and that you would like him or her to match them by selecting one object on the PAGE and finding it among those that had been divided into groups. Have your child cross off the item on the page as he or she locates its partner on the table. Note: This strategy, selecting the object on the page first and then locating it on the table challenges the visual attention, visual scanning, and figure-group discrimination skills but also addresses midline crossing skills.
  - b. Strategy No. 2: Show your child the page and explain that it contains the same objects that he or she has been talking about and that you would like him or her to match them by selecting one of the objects on the TABLE and finding it among those that are located on the page. Note: This strategy, selecting the object from the table first, works primarily on the visual attention, visual scanning, and figure-ground discrimination skills.

4. As your child's skills progress, increase the challenge by selecting hidden picture activities that include more or smaller items.

#### Tips to enhance your child's learning experiences:

1. K-1: After your child has manipulated, described, and named the cut-out objects, hide them in a bin filled with sand. Have your child reach in and find one, naming it once again before matching it to its partner on the page. (Tactile Input, Auditory Input)
2. \*Exception: Grades 2-4: Have your child write down the name of the objects on a piece of age-appropriate handwriting paper. (Visual Input, Tactile Input)

#### To add large movement skills:

1. K-1: After your child has manipulated, described, and named the cut-out objects, have your child cover his or her eyes while you hide the cut-outs around the room, placing them in spaces where your child will need to crawl or climb to retrieve them before matching them to their partners on the page. This will encourage movement as well as visual attention, visual scanning, as well as figure-ground discrimination skills.
2. For all grade levels: Have your child perform a Gross Motor Boot Camp Exercise\*\* after he or she has located and matched an object. (Proprioceptive Input)

#### Warm-Up Activities

For all grade levels: Gross motor activities, such as playing catch with a ball or performing Gross Motor Boot Camp Exercises\*\* while following your visual demonstration, will warm up the large muscles and encourage visual attention skills.

#### Skills Addressed (A) / Skills Enhanced (E)

- A Visual Attention
- A Visual Scanning
- A Figure-Ground Discrimination
- A Visual Memory
- E Visual Spatial Relationships
- E Position in Space

\*\* Gross Motor Boot Camp Exercises are available from your child's Occupational Therapist.

## Match the Hidden Pictures with a Twist

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Visual scanning and visual attention skills are important foundations for tasks that ask students to move their eyes from place to place during copying tasks – from the desk to the board or from a textbook to paper. Students who fall behind in their handwritten work or appear to be disinterested or distracted during copying or independent writing activities can be struggling with these skills. Visual memory skills are important foundations for the storage and automatic retrieval of letter and word formations that allow a writer to produce words and sentences without having to think about forming each letter.

It is important to note that if students continue to struggle with visual scanning and visual attention skills after therapy strategies to address those skills have been implemented, it would be wise to consult with the child's pediatrician regarding a referral for a vision assessment conducted by a developmental optometrist.

This activity encourages the development and enhancement of visual scanning and visual attention skills for copying tasks, as well as visual memory skills for automatic letter and number reproduction.

### Materials You Will Need

- Two copies of a hidden picture activity that includes fairly good sized images of the hidden objects, as well as the copies provided for clues.
- Scissors
- Age-appropriate handwriting paper
- Pencil
- Laminator (if available)

**Note:** This activity takes a little preparation beforehand for completion.

### Set-Up:

1. Select two copies of an age- and skill-level appropriate hidden picture activity.
2. On one copy, cut out the objects provided as cues.
3. Laminate, if possible, both the complete copy of the activity and the cut outs of the objects used for cues.

### Directions

1. Provide your child with the opportunity to name the cut-out objects used as cues and describe their characteristics (e.g., a dog with big ears, a pencil with an eraser tip).
2. Have him or her divide the number of objects into two groups and place one set on each side of the desk or table, leaving room at your child's midline for the page at the top and a piece of handwriting paper below it. (This paper arrangement can be modified to meet your child's needs.)
3. Two Strategies:
  - a. Show your child the activity page and explain that it contains the same objects that he or she has been talking about and that you would like your child to match them by selecting one object on the PAGE and finding it among those that had been divided into groups. Have your child cross off the item on the page as he or she locates its partner on the table. Note: This strategy, selecting the object on the page first and then locating it on the table challenges the visual attention, visual scanning, and figure-group discrimination skills but also addresses midline crossing skills.
  - b. Show your child the page and explain that it contains the same objects that he or she has been talking about and that you would like your child to match them by selecting one of the objects on the TABLE and finding it among those that are located on the page. Note: This strategy, selecting the object from

the table first, works primarily on the visual attention, visual scanning, and figure-ground discrimination skills.

4. Two Strategies:
  - a. Strategy No. 1: Have your child write the names of the objects as he or she matches them. This strategy enhances visual memory skills for letter formations.
  - b. Then, after your child has matched all of the representations on the page and written them on handwriting paper, remove the page and have your child turn the paper over. Ask him or her to write the names of the objects included on the page as you dictate them. This strategy addresses visual memory skills for letter formations, as well as the automatic recall of their motor plans.
  - c. Strategy No. 2: Have your child write a description of the objects that he or she has matched. This strategy works to address automatic letter production during compositional writing tasks.
5. As your child's skills progress, increase the challenge by selecting hidden picture activities that include more or smaller items.

#### **Tips to enhance your child's learning experiences:**

1. K- 1: After your child has manipulated, described, and named the cut-out objects, hide them in a bin filled with sand. Have your child reach in and find one, naming it once again before he or she matches it to its partner on the page. (Tactile Input, Auditory Input)
2. Grades 2-4: Have your child draw a representation to match some or all of the cut-out objects. (Visual Memory)

#### **To add large movement skills:**

1. K-1: After your child has manipulated, described, and named the cut-out objects, have your child cover his or her eyes while you hide the cut-outs around the room, placing them in spaces where your child will need to crawl or climb to retrieve them before matching them to their partners on the page. This will encourage movement as well as visual attention, visual scanning, as well as figure-ground discrimination skills.
2. For all grade levels: Have your child perform a Gross Motor Boot Camp Exercise\*\* after he or she has located and matched an object. (Proprioceptive Input)

#### **Warm-Up Activities**

For all grade levels: Gross motor activities, such as playing catch with a ball or performing Gross Motor Boot Camp Exercises\*\* while following your visual demonstration, will warm up the large muscles and encourage visual attention skills.

#### **Skills Addressed (A) / Skills Enhanced (E)**

- A Visual Attention
- A Visual Scanning
- A Figure-Ground Discrimination
- A Visual Memory
- A Visual Motor: Letter Formations
- E Visual Motor: Eye-Hand Coordination
- E Visual Spatial Relationships
- E Position in Space



## Spot It First! Game

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Visual scanning and visual attention skills are important foundational skills for editing in both coping and compositional writing activities. Visual discrimination and visual form constancy allow a student to transcribe from one text to another (e.g., manuscript to cursive, from handwritten work on the board) and to distinguish between similar looking letter formations (e.g., “b” and “d.”)

It is important to note that if students continue to struggle with visual scanning and visual attention skills after therapy strategies to address those skills have been implemented, it would be wise to consult with the child's pediatrician regarding a referral for a vision assessment conducted by a developmental optometrist.

This activity encourages the development and enhancement of visual scanning, visual attention, visual discrimination, and visual form constancy skills for editing tasks.

### Materials You Will Need

- A list of age-appropriate sentences that you've gathered or can “dream up” on your own!
- A chalkboard or paper taped to the wall.
- Chalk
- Pencils
- A yellow highlighter
- Age-appropriate handwriting paper

### Directions

1. Discuss the skills that we use while editing our work: moving the eyes from word to word across the page, top to bottom on the page, slowly at first while we are learning the skill.
2. Discuss the directions for the game: Let your child know that you will be writing sentences on the board or paper that include errors such as poor letter formation, spacing, or letter alignment. Tell your child that he or she is the teacher and this it is your child's responsibility to edit your handwriting and tell you where you've made mistakes by SPOTTING THEM FIRST!
3. Let your child know that, in the end, he or she will write the sentences using correct handwriting rules on handwriting paper.
4. Provide your child with age-appropriate handwriting paper and a pencil.
5. Write your sentences on the board or paper and have him or her come up and use the highlighter or chalk to show you where you've made a mistake. If your child does not accurately spot all of the errors, you can point them out, perhaps providing your child with hints first to steer him in the right direction.
6. After each sentence where your child has made the corrections, have him or her sit at the desk and write it on the handwriting paper correctly.
7. Then, have your child edit his or her own work by SPOTTING HIS OWN ERRORS FIRST!
8. If your child has not accurately spotted his or her own errors, give your child some hints to help locate them, pointing out their location in the end if he or she is unable to recognize the errors.
9. Continue with the process until you've written all of your intended sentences. It's best to limit this activity to 2-3 sentences, depending on your child's skill and attention level.
10. Review and discuss the skills that we use while editing our work: moving the eyes from word to word across the page, top to bottom on the page, slowly at first while we are learning the skill.

### Tips to enhance your child's learning experiences:

1. Be sure that your child reports the nature of the error aloud, for example, “the tail of the letter “p” should be placed below the bottom line,” to utilize auditory input for learning.

2. Have your child write the directions for correcting your errors. For example: "When you write the lowercase letter "p," the tail should be placed below the line." This will provide visual as well as auditory input for the enhancement of motor memory skills.
3. Allow your child to read the sentence aloud as he or she searches for errors. (Auditory Input)

### Tips for Older Children:

1. This task can be adapted for an older child by presenting him or her with a handwritten paragraph that includes letter and number formation, letter alignment, and spacing errors. Ask your child to scan and edit the material, using a highlighter to mark the errors that are found.
2. Have your child describe aloud the corrections that he or she would make to the errors. (Auditory Input)
3. Then, have your child produce the corrections that he or she has described on handwriting paper. (Tactile Input, Visual Memory Skills)
4. "Copy Cat Drawings" and "What Is Missing" activities can warm up the visual skills for scanning and attention to detail before beginning this task.

### To add large movement skills:

Have your child write his or her sentences on paper taped to the wall or on a chalk board below your sentence to enhance motor planning skills by utilizing large arm movements that provide proprioceptive input and tactile input provided by writing on the board.

**Note:** The completion of visual skill activities on a vertical surface positions the eyes looking straight ahead for optimal performance. This position enhances the development of motor memory for letter formations. If you decide to utilize this strategy, be sure that the activity surface is positioned just slightly higher than your child's shoulder height to achieve this visual goal.

### Warm-Up Activities\*\*

1. Gross motor activities, such as playing catch with a ball or performing Gross Motor Boot Camp Exercises\* while your child follows your visual demonstration, will warm up the large muscles and encourage visual attention skills.
2. Therapeutic putty exercises warm up the fingers, hand, and wrist for handwriting activities.
3. "One-Handed Tricks" and the "Drop It and Pick It Up Game" encourage in-hand manipulation and pencil control skills.
4. "Room for a Spy" or card games that include speed and memory techniques, including "The Number 10 Game," enhance visual scanning and attention skills.
5. "What is Missing" picture activities warm up the visual skills for scanning and attention to detail.
6. "Copy Cat Drawing" encourage visual attention skills development.
7. Worksheets that ask your child to scan for the correct letter encourage left-to-right eye movements for scanning.

### Skills Addressed (A) / Skills Enhanced (E)

A Visual Attention

A Visual Scanning

A Figure-Ground Discrimination

A Visual Memory

A Visual Spatial Relationships

A Position in Space

E Visual Motor: Letter Formations

E Fine Motor: Pencil Control

\*Gross Motor Boot Camp Exercises are available from your child's Occupational Therapist.

\*\* Some of the activities recommended in the Warm-Up section are available from your child's Occupational Therapist.

# Speak It, Find It, Write It Bingo

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Visual memory skills allow a student to identify a letter or number formation quickly during reading and handwriting tasks, while visual scanning and visual attention skills provide important foundational skills for editing in both coping and compositional writing activities.

It is important to note that if students continue to struggle with visual scanning and visual attention skills after therapy strategies to address those skills have been implemented, it would be wise to consult with the child's pediatrician regarding a referral for a vision assessment conducted by a developmental optometrist.

This activity encourages the development and enhancement of visual memory, visual scanning, and visual attention skills for handwriting and editing tasks.

## Materials You Will Need

- Bingo Boards\* that include the letter or number formations familiar to your child.
- Models of the letters of the alphabet and numerals (e.g., magnetic, letter tiles, flash cards)
- A yellow highlighter
- A pencil
- Age-appropriate handwriting paper

## Directions

1. Place the letter and numeral models upside down in a pile or hidden in a box or paper bag.
2. Discuss the details of the game as described below.
3. Provide your child with a Bingo board.
4. Have him or her select a letter or numeral from the pile, box, or bag without looking at it first.
5. Have your child turn it over, name it aloud, and search the Bingo board to see it has that letter or numeral on it. (Auditory Input)
6. If it does, have your child highlight it and then write it on his or her paper. (Tactile Input)
7. If it doesn't appear on the board, then your child can place the letter or numeral in a pile off to the side and then write it on his or her paper.

## Tips to enhance your child's learning experiences:

1. Have your child trace the letter or number formation on the model or the Bingo board with the index finger of his or her writing hand before writing it on handwriting paper. (Visual and Tactile Input)
2. Have your child trace the letter or number formation on a piece of paper over sandpaper before writing it on handwriting paper. (Visual and Tactile Input)

## To add large movement skills:

Have your child complete this activity on a Bingo board taped to a large piece of paper on the wall or on a chalk board. Then have him or her write the letters on the paper or chalkboard below or beside the Bingo board. This provides tactile and proprioceptive input, as well as large upper extremity movements.

**Note:** The completion of visual skill activities on a vertical surface positions the eyes looking straight ahead for optimal performance. This position enhances the development of motor memory for letter formations. If you decide to utilize this strategy, be sure that the activity surface is positioned just slightly higher than your child's shoulder height to achieve this visual goal.

## Warm-Up Activities\*\*

1. For all grade levels: Gross motor activities, such as playing catch with a ball or performing Gross Motor Boot Camp Exercises while following your visual demonstration, will warm up the large muscles and encourage visual attention skills.
2. Therapeutic putty exercises warm up the finger, hand, and wrist for handwriting activities.
3. “One-Handed Tricks” and the “Drop It and Pick It Up Game” encourage in-hand manipulation and pencil control skills.

## Skills Addressed (A) / Skills Enhanced (E)

- A Visual Attention
- A Visual Scanning
- A Figure-Ground Discrimination
- A Visual Memory
- A Visual Spatial Relationships
- A Position in Space
- E Visual Motor: Letter Formations
- E Fine Motor: Pencil Control

\*Blank Bingo Board forms are available from your child’s Occupational Therapist.

\*\*The activities recommended in the Warm-Up section are available from your child’s Occupational Therapist.

## Searching for Letters in Books

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Visual discrimination and form constancy skills allow students to recognize letter and number formations produced in different fonts, sizes, and in different media formats. This is a valuable skill for reading and copying tasks.

Visual memory skills provide the foundation for the automatic recall of letter and number names and formations for fluid production of legible handwritten work.

This activity encourages the development and enhancement of visual discrimination, visual form constancy, and visual memory skills for fluid and legible handwritten work.

### Materials You Will Need

- An age-appropriate book (e.g., textbook or reading material)
- Various representations of letter and number formation models
- A chalkboard or paper taped to the wall
- Chalk (if using a chalkboard) and a pencil

### Directions

**Note:** This activity is designed to address figure-ground discrimination, visual attention, and visual scanning skills only and involves no handwriting on your child's part.\*

1. Discuss the directions for the game as outlined below.
2. Provide your child with a book or have him or her select one, if appropriate.
3. Select a letter or number formation model that represents that which you would like your child to search for in the book. If you do not have models, present the letter or number formation in different sizes (upper or lower case) or text styles by handwriting them on the board or paper on the wall, perhaps using cursive, if appropriate.
4. Have your child name the presented letter or number aloud. (Auditory Input)
5. Then, have your child select a page and begin the search, pointing to the letter each time he or she has located an example of it, saying it aloud once more.
6. Continue until your child has searched throughout a paragraph or a page and then select another letter or number formation for the search.

### Tips to enhance your child's learning experiences:

1. Have your child trace the letter formation model with the index finger of his or her writing hand before searching for it in the book.
2. \*Exception for Older Children: Allow your child to produce the letter formation he or she is familiar with on handwriting paper, or on paper placed over sandpaper, before searching for the letter in the book. (Tactile Input, Visualization and Visual Form Constancy Skills)

### To add large movement skills:

1. Pre-select the letter or number formations that you want your child to search for in the book. Hide them around the room in places where he or she would have to crawl, climb, or reach for them. Have your child search the room first for a letter and then continue with the process above until he or she has located all of the models in the room and their matches in the book.
2. Include movement during the game by having your child perform one of the activities in the Gross Motor Boot Camp Exercises\* in the break between searches.

## Warm-Up Activities\*\*

1. For all grade levels: Gross motor activities, such as playing catch with a ball or performing Gross Motor Boot Camp Exercises while following your visual demonstration, will warm up the large muscles and encourage visual attention skills.
2. Activities that encourage visual and fine-motor skills will enhance close work skills: construction activities, lacing boards, board games that include strategies, or games that require matching similar items within categories.

## Skills Addressed (A) / Skills Enhanced (E)

- A Visual Attention
- A Visual Scanning
- A Figure-Ground Discrimination
- A Visual Memory
- E Visual Motor: Letter Formations
- E Fine Motor: Pencil Control

\*Gross Motor Boot Camp Exercises are available from your child's Occupational Therapist.

# The Touch and Say Game

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Visual memory and eye-hand coordination are skills that children develop as they learn to name and form letters and numbers during their handwriting instruction. The development of these skills results in the formation of motor plans that lay the foundation for the automatic production of letter and number formations. This is a key element in a fluid and legible handwriting style.

Kinesthetic learning strategies provide children with the opportunity to understand directional concepts and spatial relationships as they handle, manipulate, and explore materials.

This activity encourages the development and enhancement of visual memory and eye-hand coordination skills for the development letter formation skills using kinesthetic learning strategies.

## Materials You Will Need

**Note:** This activity takes a little preparation beforehand for completion.

### Set-Up for Kinesthetic Letter Formations:

1. Collect your "raw materials:" pieces of sandpaper, felt, and heavy cardboard.
2. Create a set of large representations of the upper and lower case manuscript letter formations using the heavy cardboard.
3. Glue sandpaper and/or felt to the different letter formations to create 2 different kinesthetic options. You can add other raw materials to glue to the cardboard to add a bit of variety or as alternatives if your child prefers not to touch the sandpaper and/or felt.

**Helpful Hint:** You can use the above project as an activity for older children who are working on fine-motor, visual-motor, and planning skills!

### Materials for the Activity:

- Your Kinesthetic Letter Formations
- A box to put them in
- A large piece of paper taped to the wall
- Chalk (colored and/or white)

## Directions

1. Explain the activity to your child as described below.
2. Pull out your Kinesthetic Letter Formation box and explain that you will be playing the "Touch and Say Game" with alphabet letters.
3. Allow your child to explore the contents of the box and get a sense of the textures that he or she will be touching in the game. This will give you an idea of your child's tolerance for fine and rough materials.
4. Have your child place all of the letters back into the box and begin the game.
5. Ask your child to reach in and pull one out (without peeking!) and to name the letter that was selected.
6. Next, have your child use the index finger on his or her preferred writing hand to trace the letter formation using the correct directional concepts for that letter. As your child is doing this, ask him or her to say aloud the letter formation "rules." For example: The "A" has 3 lines. This one starts at the top and slants to the left. This one starts back at the top and slants to the right. Then this line goes left to right." (It is important to use the same directional language that is being taught in your child's classroom handwriting instruction.) (Tactile and Auditory Input)

7. Then, ask your child to go up to the paper taped to the wall and draw a large representation of the letter with chalk. (Tactile input for forming motor plans)
8. Continue with the activity until it is completed or when your “homework” goals have been reached.

### Tips to enhance your child’s learning experiences:

1. To encourage and use your child’s visualization skills, have your child trace the letter formations using the index finger on the preferred writing hand while keeping his or her eyes closed. If needed, you can guide your child’s finger with a light hand-over-hand assistance. You can suggest that your child say the directional formation rules aloud as well to provide additional auditory learning benefits. (Visual Attention/Visualization skills)
2. To provide additional visual learning benefits, tape the letter formations you will be working with to the wall or a chalk board in a horizontal row positioned slightly higher than your child’s shoulder height.\* Have your child recite them, standing a short distance away (e.g., 3-4’). Then have your child trace them with his or her index finger, reciting the directional rules as described above. This strategy will provide additional visual attention benefits as it allows the eyes to work in their most efficient position. This activity will also provide additional postural and upper extremity strengthening work. (Vision and Postural Skills)

**\*Note:** The completion of visual skill activities on a vertical surface positions the eyes looking straight ahead for optimal performance. This position enhances the development of motor memory for letter formations. If you decide to utilize this strategy, be sure that the activity surface is positioned just slightly higher than your child’s shoulder height to achieve this visual goal.

### To add large movement skills:

1. Place the Kinesthetic Letter Formations box across the room and have your child run, hop, or crawl over to it to make a selection.
2. Hide the letters that you are working with around the room and have your child go on a Treasure Hunt to find them.
3. If you have access to a scooter board, you can include it in the search for letters by having your child use it for a pirate ship!

### Warm-Up Activities

1. For all grade levels: Gross motor activities, such as playing catch with a ball or performing Gross Motor Boot Camp Exercises\*\* while following your visual demonstration, will warm up the large muscles and encourage visual attention skills.
2. Activities that encourage visual and fine-motor skills will enhance close work skills: construction activities, lacing boards, board games that include strategies, or games that require matching similar items within categories.

### Skills Addressed (A) / Skills Enhanced (E)

- A Visual Motor – Eye-Hand Coordination
- A Visual Motor – Letter Formations
- A Visual Memory
- E Vision Skills
- E Visual Attention
- E Postural Efficiency

\*\*Gross Motor Boot Camp Exercises are available from your child’s Occupational Therapist.



# Letter Straws

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Learning is best achieved when the learner is involved in the creation and completion of the educational process. Kinesthetic learning strategies that involve students in the creation of a “finished product” provide the opportunity to understand directional concepts and spatial relationships and develop eye-hand coordination and fine motor strength and dexterity as they handle, manipulate, and explore materials.

Fine motor skills are those that we use to perform precision tasks such as handwriting. Eye-hand coordination is our ability to coordinate our eye movements to guide our hand movements. These two skills are key elements in the development of a fluid and legible handwriting style.

This activity encourages the development and enhancement of fine motor and eye-hand coordination skills and the development of letter recognition skills.

## Materials You Will Need

- A bag of straws
- Scissors appropriate for your child
- Stickers that include the letters of the alphabet (uppercase, lowercase, or both) or
- Letters of the alphabet that you have created on the computer using a text such as American Typewriter - 14
- Tape (for the computer-generated letters)
- A gallon-size zip lock bag

## Directions

1. Discuss the project with your child as described below.
2. Provide him with the straws and stickers or computer-generated alphabet. Explain that you will be helping him or her to create letter straws that will help with learning the alphabet.
3. Demonstrate how he or she will place a sticker on one end of the straw, pressing it firmly so that it stays in place. If you are using computer-generated letters, show your child how to position it there and how you will assist with taping it in place.
4. Allow your child to discover the best strategy for performing this task – with the straw resting on the table or holding it upright with one hand while he or she places the sticker on with the other. This will provide you with some insight relative to your child's planning and problem-solving skills.
5. Depending on your child's attention skill level, you can ask him or her to announce the name of the letter aloud as it is being placed it on the straw or wait until your child has completed the activity to have him or her read the letters aloud. (Auditory Input)
6. Finally, have your child line them all up in alphabetical order. (Visual Input)
7. Before you finish this activity, have your place the letter straws in the zip lock bag to store in a safe place!

## Tips to enhance your child's learning experiences:

1. You can substitute colors, shapes, sight words, or spelling words depending on your child's skill level needs.
2. You can create a second set of straws with letters, colors, shapes, sight or spelling words to use as a matching game. (Visual Memory)
3. You can have your child match the letter on the straw with a letter model. (Visual Form Constancy)
4. You can use the Letter Straws in conjunction with “The Cotton Ball Game.”\* Have your child select a letter straw and blow the cotton ball across the table or floor toward the target that displays the same letter. This could be a letter model on the table or taped to the wall near the floorboard. This activity can also be adapted to include the suggestions above. (Vision Skills, Visual Form Constancy)

### To add large movement skills:

1. You can use “The Cotton Ball Game” adaptation above to add movement as well as visual attention skills.
2. Hide the letter formation models (or those for color, shape, sight words, and spelling words) around the room in places that will encourage your child to climb, crawl, go under, and maneuver around objects in the room. (Tactile Learning Style, Visual Attention Skills)
3. Have your child perform a Gross Motor Boot Camp Exercise \* after each match.

### Warm-Up Activities

1. For all grade levels: Gross motor activities, such as playing catch with a ball or performing Gross Motor Boot Camp Exercises\* while following your visual demonstration, will warm up the large muscles and encourage visual attention skills.
2. Activities that encourage visual and fine-motor skills will enhance close work skills: construction activities, lacing boards, board games that include strategies, or games that require matching similar items within categories.

### Skills Addressed (A) / Skills Enhanced (E)

- A Visual-Memory - Letter Recognition
- E Visual Attention
- E Visual Form Constancy
- E Fine-Motor – finger and hand strength and dexterity

\*The Cotton Ball Game and the Gross Motor Boot Camp Exercises are available from your child’s Occupational Therapist.

## Letter Puzzles (K-1)

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Letters are created from parts that form a whole, much like a puzzle. Children learn the alphabet letter formations through a visual process that breaks down the letters into their parts, learning the formation of lines and shapes, then progressing toward putting them together to complete the puzzle. As children learn the strokes and their sequencing for letter formations, they are building motor plans that will allow them to produce letters and words automatically.

Handwriting skill development for students in kindergarten and first grade depends on the early development of visual memory skills to facilitate their advancement in handwriting mastery. The first step in this process is letter recognition and naming, progressing toward the production of letter formations, first for uppercase letters, then for lowercase formations.

This activity encourages the development of visual memory skills for automatic letter formation.

**Note:** An additional activity guide has been created for use with Grades 2-6. The activities offered on each guide are presented in developmental order.

### Materials You Will Need

Select from the following materials depending on your child's needs, the activity you select below, and your resources:

1. Two sets of manuscript alphabet models fabricated from heavy cardboard or card stock or printed on the computer one letter to a page in a large font size. Laminate them if possible to preserve their quality.
  - a. Set No. 1 is a complete set that been cut into halves or thirds to create a puzzle, the sizes of the pieces will depend on your child's skill level.
  - b. Set No. 2 is a complete set that has not been cut into pieces.
2. Manuscript letter models handwritten on paper in large print or created on the computer, one letter to a page.
3. Therapeutic putty or play dough
4. Straws or pipe cleaners cut into letter formation line strokes and shaped into curves when possible
5. Pompoms
6. Tongs and/or tweezers
7. Large sheets of paper
8. Age-appropriate handwriting paper
9. Pencils

### Activities and Directions:

Note: The completion of visual skill activities on a vertical surface positions the eyes looking straight ahead for optimal performance. This position enhances the development of motor memory for letter formations. If you decide to utilize this strategy, be sure that the activity surface is positioned just slightly higher than your child's shoulder height to achieve this visual goal.

#### 1. Puzzle Pieces: Letter Naming and Identification Skills

Explain the activity to your child as it is presented below:

- a. Present your child with manuscript alphabet models that are complete (have not been cut into puzzle pieces). If your child is having difficulty with naming the letter formations, recite their names aloud as he or she flips through them in alphabetical order. Have your child repeat the names for you for additional auditory input. Take note of those letters which he or she is able to name independently. (Auditory Input)

- b. Select the letter puzzles that correspond to the letters that challenged your child in the activity above and ask him or her to complete the puzzle, first without a visual model. A visual model can be introduced for letters that your child is not familiar with or later in the activity to assist with challenging letters
- c. If your child struggles with the completion of the letter puzzle without a visual model, guide him or her by offering auditory clues such as: "Can you remember where this piece might go? Which part does it sit next to? Does it sit this way or should I turn it around?" Provide your child with visual cues as you discuss the part by turning the piece or having him or her turn it around to explore it with different views.
- d. If your child struggles with the presentation of three pieces, present the puzzle as a backwards chaining activity by placing two of the pieces together and asking him to position the last one.
- e. If your child continues to struggle with the completion of the puzzle, or you feel he or she is becoming anxious over the activity, present a visual model to guide your child's work.

## 2. Putty Puzzle Pieces: Letter Formation Skills

Explain the activity to your child as it is presented below:

- a. Present your child with manuscript letter models (fabricated or handwritten) for the letter formations the he or she is working on. Have your child name them aloud.
- b. Ask your child to trace the letter formation with the index finger of his or her preferred writing hand, using the correct directional concepts for that letter. If your child is struggling with this letter, chances are he or she will need some assistance with this task. You can:
  - 1) Recite the formation strokes and directional concepts aloud to use as cues as he or she traces the letter. (Auditory Input)
  - 2) Have your child listen to you recite them and then recite them after you as he or she traces the letter formation. (Auditory Input)
  - 3) Provide your child with light hand-over-hand assistance in the completion of the tracing, reciting the correct letter formation strokes and directional concepts for or with your child. (Tactile Input)
- c. Provide your child with therapeutic putty or play dough and ask him or her to form the letter below the model using the same formation strokes and directional concepts that were used when he or she traced the model. It is important here that your child complete the putty letter formation in the correct order to encourage the development of correct motor planning skills. (Kinesthetic Learning Style)
- d. If your child struggles with the initiation of the formation, present the putty puzzle as a forward chaining activity by positioning the beginning of the letter formation for your child and asking your child to position the rest of the puzzle. (Visual Learning Style)
- e. Have your child recite the stroke formations and directional concepts as he or she is completing the task to enhance auditory learning skills. (Auditory Learning Style)
- f. To encourage the development of motor plans, as well as to transfer this skill to handwriting tasks, have your child produce the letter using a pencil on a large piece of paper taped to the wall or with chalk on a chalkboard. A vertical surface promotes large motor movements that assist in the development of letter formation motor plans. It's better to use pencils and chalk versus markers, as markers do not provide adequate tactile input to develop motor memory skills.
- g. To provide additional visualization skill enhancement, have your child draw the letter formation in the air, reciting the strokes and directional concepts aloud as he or she does so.

## 3. Straw, Pipe Cleaner, and Pompom Puzzles:

Explain the activity to your child as it is presented below:

- a. Provide your child with the pompoms and the straws and/or pipe cleaners that have been pre-cut into letter formation strokes and curves.
- b. Select a letter formation that your child is working on and draw it on a large piece of paper with a pencil or a yellow highlighter.
- c. Ask your child to trace the letter formation with the index finger of his or her preferred writing hand, using the correct directional concepts for that letter. If your child is struggling with this letter, chances are he or she will need some assistance with this task. You can:
  - 1) Recite the formation strokes and directional concepts aloud to use as cues as he or she traces the letter. (Auditory Input)
  - 2) Have your child listen to you recite them and then recite them after you as he or she traces the letter formation. (Auditory Input)
  - 3) Provide your child with light hand-over-hand assistance in the completion of the tracing, reciting the correct letter formation strokes and directional concepts for or with your child. (Tactile Input)
- d. Have your child use the straws, pipe cleaners, or pompoms to form the letter using the correct letter formation strokes and directional concepts. It is important here that your child complete the letter formations in the correct order to encourage the development of correct motor planning skills.

To enhance the development of fine motor strengthening and/or visual attention skills, have your child use tongs or tweezers to pick up, transport, and place the pieces.

- e. Have your child recite the stroke formations and directional concepts as he or she is completing the task to enhance auditory learning skills.
- f. Have your child produce the letter using a pencil on a large piece of paper taped to the wall or on a chalkboard. A vertical surface promotes large motor movements that assist in the development of letter formation motor plans. It's better to use pencils and chalk versus markers, as markers do not provide adequate tactile input to develop motor memory skills. (visual attention and visual memory and visual-motor skills for letter formations)
- g. To provide additional visualization skill enhancement, have your child draw the letter formation in the air, reciting the stroke and directional concepts aloud as he or she does so.

#### 4. Putting Pencil to Paper Puzzles:

Explain the activity to your child as it is presented below:

- a. Tape a large piece of paper to the wall. Draw the handwriting line configuration that your child uses in class (e.g., red line at the bottom, blue line at the top, and dotted line in the middle) with the line configuration being approximately 6-10" in height.
- b. Select a letter formation that your child is working on and present a handwritten representation of it on the line.
- c. Ask your child to trace the letter formation with the index finger of his or her preferred writing hand, using the correct directional concepts for that letter. If your child is struggling with this letter, chances are he or she will need some assistance with this task. You can:
  - 1) Recite the formation strokes and directional concepts aloud to use as cues as he or she traces the letter. (Auditory Input)
  - 2) Have your child listen to you recite them and then recite them after you as he or she traces the letter formation. (Auditory Input)
  - 3) Provide your child with light hand-over-hand assistance in the completion of the tracing, reciting the correct letter formation strokes and directional concepts for or with your child. (Tactile Input)

The above activity will provide you with information that will indicate the appropriate strategies to consider in the following steps.

- d. Depending on your child's skill level with tracing the letter formation, you can provide him with variations of the strategy described below:

Example: Using the letter "A,"

- 1) First, provide yellow highlighting on the first two strokes (/ and \). Have your child trace those strokes and complete the formation by forming the horizontal line to connect them just below the middle line. (visual attention skills)
  - 2) Next, reduce the amount of highlighting to the initial strokes.
  - 3) Finally, reduce the highlighting to the starting point only.
- e. Transfer this strategy to age-appropriate handwriting paper, continuing with the process as described above.

#### **Tips to enhance your child's learning experiences: \***

Have your child trace or complete a partially drawn letter formation

1. with chalk on construction paper to provide a tactile learning experience,
2. on a piece of paper over sandpaper of equal size using a pencil to provide a tactile learning experience, and/or
3. on the chalkboard or a piece of construction paper using a Q-tip dipped in water to provide both a visual and a tactile learning experience.

#### **Warm-Up Activities: \***

1. For the "Puzzle Pieces: Letter Naming and Identification Skills;" the "Straw, Pipe Cleaner, and Pompom Puzzles;" and the "Puzzle Pieces: Letter Formation Skills" activities, present your child with games or tasks that enhance visual memory skills such as the "Simply a Memory Game" or the "Bag of Tricks Game," or the "Copy Cat Drawings."
2. For the "Putting Pencil to Paper Puzzles" activity, offer your child the opportunity to handle and manipulate letter models created with therapeutic putty or play dough before beginning the handwritten task. (Kinesthetic Learning Style)

#### **Skills Addressed (A) / Skills Enhanced (E)**

- A Visual Attention
- A Visual Motor: Eye-Hand Coordination and Letter Formations
- A Visual Memory
- A Visual Form Constancy
- E Visual Discrimination
- E Fine-Motor: Finger and hand strength and pencil control

\*Handouts for the activities recommended in the "Enhance your child's learning experiences" and "Warm-Up Activities" sections are available from your child's Occupational Therapist.

## Letter Puzzles 2-6+

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Letters are created from parts that form a whole, much like a puzzle. Children learn the alphabet letter formations through a visual process that breaks down the letters into their parts, learning the formation of lines and shapes, then progressing toward putting them together to complete the puzzle. As children learn the strokes and their sequencing for letter formations, they are building motor plans that will allow them to produce letters and words automatically.

Handwriting skill development for students in second and third grade depends on the efficient development of letter formation motor plans to facilitate their advancement in handwriting mastery. The first step in this process is the development of letter strokes and the correct directional concepts for letter formations.

This activity encourages the development of visual memory skills for automatic letter formation.

Note: An additional activity guide has been created for use with Grades K-1. The activities offered on each guide are presented in developmental order.

### Materials You Will Need

Select from the following materials depending on your child's needs, the activity you select below, and your resources:

- Manuscript or Cursive alphabet models, store-bought, fabricated from heavy cardboard or card stock, printed on the computer one letter to a page in a large font, or handwritten on paper in a large size
- Therapeutic putty or play dough
- Large sheets of paper
- Age-appropriate handwriting paper
- Pencils
- A yellow highlighter

### Activities and Directions:

**Note:** The completion of visual skill activities on a vertical surface positions the eyes looking straight ahead for optimal performance. This position enhances the development of motor memory for letter formations. If you decide to utilize this strategy, be sure that the activity surface is positioned just slightly higher than your child's shoulder height to achieve this visual goal.

#### 1. Putty Letter Puzzles: Letter Formation Skills – a warm-up activity

Explain the activity to your child as it is presented below:

- a. Present your child with manuscript or cursive letter models (fabricated or handwritten) for the letter formations that he or she is working on. Have your child name them aloud.
- b. Ask your child to trace the letter formation with the index finger of his or her preferred writing hand, using the correct directional concepts for that letter. If your child is struggling with this letter, chances are he or she will need some assistance with this task. You can:
  - 1) Recite the formation strokes and directional concepts for your child to use as cues as he or she traces the letter. (Auditory Input)
  - 2) Have your child listen to you recite them and then recite them after you as he or she traces the letter formation. (Auditory Input)
  - 3) Provide your child with light hand-over-hand assistance in the completion of the tracing, reciting the correct letter formation strokes and directional concepts for or with your child. (Tactile Input)

- c. Provide your child with therapeutic putty or play dough and ask him or her to form the letter below the model using the same formation strokes and directional concepts that were used when he or she traced the model. It is important here that your child complete the putty letter formation in the correct order to encourage the development of correct motor planning skills. (Kinesthetic Learning Style)
- d. If your child struggles with the initiation of the formation, present the puzzle as a forward chaining activity by positioning the beginning of the letter formation for your child and asking your child to position the rest of the puzzle. (Visual Learning Style)
- e. Have him recite the stroke formations and directional concepts as he is completing the task to enhance auditory learning skills. (Auditory Learning Style)
- f. To encourage the development of motor plans, as well as to transfer this skill to handwriting tasks, have your child produce the letter using a pencil on a large piece of paper taped to the wall or on a chalkboard. A vertical surface promotes large motor movements that assist in the development of letter formation motor plans.
- g. To provide additional visualization skill enhancement, have your child draw the letter formation in the air, reciting the stroke and directional concepts aloud as he does so.

## 2. Putting Pencil to Paper Puzzles:

Explain the activity to your child as it is presented below:

- a. Tape a large piece of paper to the wall. Draw the handwriting line configuration that your child uses in class (e.g., red line at the bottom, blue line at the top, and dotted line in the middle) with the line configuration being approximately 6-10" in height.
- b. Select a manuscript or cursive letter formation that your child is working on and present a handwritten representation of it on the line.
- c. Ask your child to trace the letter formation with the index finger of his or her preferred writing hand, using the correct directional concepts for that letter. If your child is struggling with this letter, chances are he will need some assistance with this task. You can:
  - 1) Recite the formation strokes and directional concepts for him to use as cues as he traces the letter. (Auditory Input)
  - 2) Have him listen to you recite them and then recite them after you as he traces the letter formation. (Auditory Input)
  - 3) Provide him with light hand-over-hand assistance in the completion of the tracing, reciting correct letter formation strokes and directional concepts for or with your child. (Tactile Input)

This activity will provide you with information that will indicate the appropriate strategies to consider in the following steps.

- d. Depending on your child's skill level with tracing the letter formation, you will provide him or her with variations of the strategies below:

Example: Using the letter manuscript letter "S,"

- 1) First, provide yellow highlighting along the complete letter formation and have your child trace over the highlighted path. (visual attention and pencil control skills)
- 2) Next, provide yellow highlighting on the curves of the letter formation. Have your child trace those strokes first, then have him or her begin at the starting point and complete the formation. (visual attention skills)
- 3) Then, reduce the amount of highlighting to just one curve, depending on the curve that he continues to find difficult.
- 4) Finally, reduce the highlighting to the starting point only.



Example: Using the cursive letter “S,”

- 1) First, provide yellow highlighting along the complete letter formation and have your child trace over the highlighted path. (visual attention and pencil control skills)
- 2) Next, provide yellow highlighting on the majority of strokes in the letter formation – the first upward stroke, the backwards loop, the curve downward. Have your child trace those strokes and complete the formation independently.
- 3) Then, reduce the amount of highlighting to two of the steps, then the initial step, finally highlighting the starting point only.

Example: Using the manuscript letter “W,”

Strategy No. 1:

- 1) Have your child make two manuscript letter “V’s” with the index and long finger on both hands mentioning that these form two “V’s.”
- 2) Then have your child connect the two index fingers along their sides and turn his or her attention to the manuscript “W” that they form.
- 3) Have your child write two V’s side by side but not connecting on a large piece of paper taped to the wall or on a chalkboard.
- 4) Next, have your child write two V’s that touch at their connecting point in a “W.”
- 5) Highlight the connecting point (with highlighter on the paper or colored chalk on the board) and have your child trace the two “V’s,” stopping at the highlighted connection for emphasis.
- 6) Finally, have your child trace the entire model fluently without stopping at the connection point.
- 7) Finally, provide your child with a handwritten model of the manuscript letter “W” and ask him or her to trace it first then reproduce it next to it or below it.

Strategy No. 2:

- 1) Provide your child with a handwritten model of the manuscript letter “W” on a large piece of paper taped to the wall or on a chalkboard.
- 2) Begin by highlighting the first “V” in the letter (with highlighter on the paper or colored chalk on the board) calling attention to the letter “W” containing two “V’s.”
- 3) Have your child trace over the highlighted path and continue to complete the letter formation independently.
- 4) Finally, provide highlighting at the connecting point of the two “V’s” only or at the starting point of the letter “W.”
- 5) Adaptation: You can use a backward chaining strategy by first highlighting the second “V” in the letter and having your child begin by tracing the first “V” and end with tracing the highlighted path.

Example: Using the Cursive letter “W,”

- 1) Provide your child with a handwritten model of the cursive letter “W” on a large piece of paper taped to the wall or on a chalkboard.
- 2) Highlight the first three strokes – curve, downward slope, and slant upward – and call attention to the connection it makes with the second formation that is similar to it.
- 3) Have your child trace over your highlighted path and continue to complete the letter formation independently.
- 4) If your child finds the last two strokes difficult, highlight them, leaving the first three strokes for him or her to complete independently then continuing to complete the letter formation along the highlighted path. (forward chaining)

5) Finally, provide highlighting at the connection point only.

- e. Transfer this strategy to an age-appropriate handwriting paper, continuing with the process as described above.

**Tips to enhance your child's learning experiences: \***

Have your child trace or complete a partially drawn letter formation

2. with chalk on construction paper to provide a tactile learning experience,
3. on a piece of paper over sandpaper of equal size using a pencil to provide a tactile learning experience, and/or
4. On the chalkboard or a piece of construction paper using a Q-tip dipped in water to provide both a visual and a tactile learning experience.

**Warm-Up Activities: \***

1. Hands and fingers: Therapeutic putty exercises and activities
2. Visual-motor skills - Eye-hand coordination: construction games, "Copy Cat Drawings"
3. Visual attention skills: card games such as "The Number 10 Game," board games that include strategies, hidden picture activities
4. Visual memory skills: "The Bag of Tricks Game," or "The Simply a Memory Game"

**Skills Addressed (A) / Skills Enhanced (E)**

- A Visual Attention
- A Visual Motor: Eye-Hand Coordination and Letter Formations
- A Visual Memory
- A Visual Form Constancy
- E Visual Discrimination
- E Fine-Motor: Finger and hand strength and pencil control

\*Handouts for the activities recommended in the "Enhance your child's learning experiences" and "Warm-Up Activities" sections are available from your child's Occupational Therapist.

# Spacing Challenges K-1

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Handwriting legibility depends on both efficient letter formation and spacing skills. The writer must be aware of a letter's position in space, which is the recognition of the space it occupies in the overall product – the word. The writer must also recognize the visual spatial relationships between the groups of words that form the sentence. This awareness allows the writer to leave “just the right amount” of space for a legible handwritten product.

Position in space skills are those that allow us to recognize the orientation of letters, words, numbers, or drawings on a page.

Visual spatial relationship skills are those that allow us to understand the position of two objects in relationship to each other and the space around them.

This activity encourages the development of position in space and visual spatial relationship skills for spacing skills.

**Note:** An additional activity guide has been created for use with Grades 2-6+. The activities offered on each guide are presented in developmental order. They are offered as opportunities to address spacing needs in the clinic and at home and to facilitate the transfer of skills to the classroom. Therefore, they are not designed to be used as classroom adaptations.

## Materials You Will Need

Select from the following materials depending on your child's needs, the activity you select below, and your resources:

- Magnetic letter models
- A piece of string – approximately 3” in length
- A supply of very small stickers
- Chalk (colored or white)
- Q-tips and a cup of water
- Large pieces of paper
- Tape
- Pencils
- Age-appropriate handwriting paper

## Activities and Directions

Note: The completion of visual skill activities on a vertical surface positions the eyes looking straight ahead for optimal performance. This position enhances the development of motor memory for letter formations. If you decide to utilize this strategy, be sure that the activity surface is positioned just slightly higher than your child's shoulder height to achieve this visual goal.

Explain the activities to your child as they are presented below:

### 1. Magnetic Letter Challenge

For Spacing within Words:

- a. Demonstrate this activity on a table or a magnetic surface (e.g., the side of a filing cabinet) by creating words using magnetic letters that model correct and incorrect spacing between the letters within a word.

The string is used to demonstrate “just the right amount” of space between letters in a word. Stretched vertically, the string should just fit between the letters in a word without touching the letters. Describe the spacing problems as “too much” or “too little” amount of space. (Visual and Auditory Learning Styles)

- b. Have your child create words with the magnets and check the spacing using the string, describing any spacing problems as you demonstrated above.
- c. Next, have your child practice this strategy by checking the spacing in samples of your writing that present both correct and incorrect spacing and describing the spacing problems as you had done in your demonstration. (Kinesthetic Learning Style)
- d. Transfer this activity to a piece of age-appropriate handwriting paper taped to the wall or a vertical surface.
- e. Tape a copy of a word above your child’s writing area and ask him or her to copy it onto the paper.
- f. Ask your child to check the spacing with the string. When a spacing error is detected, have your child describe it as either “too much” or “too little” space. (Auditory Learning Style)
- g. Return to the table or magnetic surface and assist your child with “rewriting” the word with magnetic letters by placing the string in between the letters as he or she positions them on the surface. (Note: Since I do not recommend sending adaptive strategies such as this into the classroom, I suggest that you provide the visual awareness of space demonstrated by the string, allowing your child to concentrate on spacing and handwriting.) (Visual Learning Style)
- h. Finally, have your child rewrite the word once again on the paper without the use of the string adaptation, using it later to check his or her work upon its completion.

For Spacing between Words in a Sentence:

- a. Demonstrate this activity on a table or a magnetic surface (e.g., the side of a filing cabinet) by creating words and placing them in a short sentence that model correct and incorrect spacing between the words. The string is used to demonstrate “just the right amount” of space. The string rolled into a ball should just fit between the words without leaving too much space or touching the beginning and ending letters of the two words. Describe the spacing problems as “too much” or “too little” amount of space. (Visual and Auditory Learning Styles)
- b. Have your child create a short sentence with the magnets and check the spacing using the string, describing spacing problems as “too much” or “too little” amount of space. (Visual and Auditory Learning Styles)
- c. Next, have your child practice this strategy by checking the spacing in samples of your writing that present both correct and incorrect spacing and describing the spacing problem as you had done in your demonstration. (Kinesthetic Learning Style)
- d. Transfer this activity to a piece of age-appropriate handwriting paper taped to the wall or a vertical surface.
- e. Provide your child with a word to copy and tape or write it above the writing area. (When spacing within words is the activity’s goal, it is best to focus on one word at a time rather than words that are included in a sentence. This will allow your child to attend to one spacing concern at a time without the distraction of spacing concerns between words in a sentence.)
- f. Next, ask your child to check the spacing with the string. When a spacing error is detected, have your child describe it as either “too much” or “too little” space. (Auditory Learning Style)
- g. Return to the table or magnetic surface and assist your child with “rewriting” the sentence with magnetic letters by placing the string in between the words as he or she positions them on the surface. (Note: Since I do not recommend sending adaptive strategies such as this into the classroom, I suggest that you provide the visual awareness of space demonstrated by the string, allowing your child to concentrate on spacing and handwriting.) (Visual Learning Style)
- h. Finally, have your child rewrite the sentence again on the paper without the use of the string adaptation, using it later to check his or her work upon its completion.

## 2. The String Challenge:

For Spacing within Words:

- a. Demonstrate the string challenge on a chalkboard or a piece of paper taped to the wall. Tape typewritten models of correct and incorrect spacing within words on the board or paper. The string is used to demonstrate the “just right amount of space” between letters in a word. Stretched vertically, the string should just fit between the letters in a word without touching the letters. Describe the spacing problems as “too much” or “too little” amount of space. (Visual and Auditory Learning Styles)
- b. Have your child practice this strategy by checking the spacing in samples of your writing that present both correct and incorrect spacing and describing the spacing problem as you had done in your demonstration. (Kinesthetic Learning Style)
- c. Using the large piece of paper taped to the wall, draw the handwriting line configuration that your child uses in class (e.g., red line at the bottom, blue line at the top, and dotted line in the middle) on the paper with the line configuration being approximately 1-2” in height. Be sure that the lines are positioned slightly higher than the level of your child’s shoulder to facilitate arm movement and an optimal position for the eyes.
- d. Provide your child with a word to copy and tape or write it above the writing area. (When spacing within words is the activity’s goal, it is best to focus on one word at a time rather than words that are included in a sentence. This will allow your child to attend to one spacing concern at a time without the distraction of spacing concerns between words in a sentence.)
- e. Ask your child to check his or her spacing using the string. When an error is detected, have your child describe it as either “too much” or “too little” space. (Auditory Learning Style)
- f. Assist your child in rewriting the word by placing the string in between the letters as he or she writes the word. (Note: Since I do not recommend sending adaptive strategies such as this into the classroom, I suggest that you provide the visual awareness of space demonstrated by the string, allowing your child to concentrate on spacing and handwriting.) (Visual Learning Style)
- g. Finally, have your child rewrite the word once again without the use of the string adaptation, using it later to check his or her work upon its completion.
- h. Transfer this strategy to an age-appropriate handwriting paper on a desk or table, continuing with the process as described above.

For Spacing between Words in a Sentence:

- a. Demonstrate this activity on a chalkboard or a piece of paper taped to the wall using typewritten models of correct and incorrect spacing between words within a sentence. The string rolled into a small ball should just fit between the words without leaving too much space or touching the beginning and ending letters of the two words. Describe the spacing problems as “too much” or “too little” amount of space. (Visual and Auditory Learning Styles)
- b. Next, have your child practice this strategy by checking the spacing in samples of your writing that present both correct and incorrect spacing and describing the spacing problem as you had done in your demonstration. (Kinesthetic Learning Style)
- c. Using the large piece of paper taped to the wall, draw the handwriting line configuration that your child uses in class (e.g., red line at the bottom, blue line at the top, and dotted line in the middle) on the paper with the line configuration being approximately 1-2” in height. Be sure that the lines are positioned slightly higher than the level of your child’s shoulder to facilitate arm movement and an optimal position for the eyes.
- d. Provide your child with a sentence to copy and tape or write it above the writing area.
- e. Ask your child to check his or her spacing using the string. When an error is detected, have your child describe it as either “too much” or “too little” space. (Auditory Learning Style)
- f. Assist your child in rewriting the sentence by placing the ball of string in between the words as he writes the sentence. (Note: Since I do not recommend sending adaptive strategies such as this into the classroom, I suggest that you provide the visual awareness of space demonstrated by the string, allowing your child to concentrate on spacing and handwriting.) (Visual Learning Style)
- g. Finally, have your child rewrite the sentence once again without the use of the string adaptation, using it later to check his or her work upon its completion.

- h. Transfer this strategy to an age-appropriate handwriting paper on a desk or a table, continuing with the process as described above.

## 2. The Chalk, Sticker and Q-tip Challenge:

For Spacing within Words:

- a. Begin by demonstrating the use of chalk in measuring the just right amount of space between letters in a word. Provide samples of your writing that model both correct and incorrect spacing within a word, checking the spacing with a chalk mark. A thin line of chalk should easily fit in between the letters. Describe the spacing problems as “too much” or “too little” amount of space. (Visual and Auditory Learning Styles)
- b. Have your child practice this strategy by checking the spacing in additional samples of your writing that present both correct and incorrect spacing in a word and describing the spacing problem as you had done in your demonstration. (Kinesthetic Learning Style)
- c. Transfer this activity to a large-piece of paper taped to the wall. Begin by drawing the handwriting line configuration that your child uses in class (e.g., red line at the bottom, blue line at the top, and dotted line in the middle) on the paper with the line configuration being approximately 2-3” in height. Be sure that the lines are positioned slightly higher than the level of your child’s shoulder to facilitate arm movement and an optimal position for the eyes.
- d. Provide your child with a word to copy and tape or write it above the writing area. (When spacing within words is the activity’s goal, it is best to focus on one word at a time rather than words that are included in a sentence. This will allow your child to attend to one spacing concern at a time without the distraction of spacing concerns between words in a sentence.)
- e. Ask your child to check his or her spacing with the chalk. When an error is detected, have your child describe it as either “too much” or “too little” space. (Auditory Learning Style)
- f. Assist your child in rewriting the word by placing a chalk line in between the letters as he or she writes the word. (Note: Since I do not recommend sending adaptive strategies such as this into the classroom, I suggest that you provide the visual awareness of space demonstrated by the chalk marks, allowing your child to concentrate on spacing and handwriting.) (Visual Learning Style)
- g. Finally, have your child rewrite the word once again without the use of the chalk adaptation, using it later to check his or her work upon its completion.
- h. Transfer this strategy to an age-appropriate handwriting paper on a desk or table, continuing with the process as described above.

For Spacing between Words in a Sentence:

- a. Demonstrate this activity on a chalkboard or a piece of paper taped to the wall using models of correct and incorrect spacing between words within a sentence written. You can either place a sticker or a dot to create a spacing cue between words. For a spacing dot, dip the Q-tip in water to create a spacing dot between the words. The small sticker and the Q-tip dot should just fit between the words without leaving too much space or touching the beginning and ending letters of the two words. Describe the spacing problems as “too much” or “too little” amount of space. (Visual and Auditory Learning Styles)
- b. Have your child practice this strategy by checking the spacing in samples of your writing that present both correct and incorrect spacing and describing the spacing problems as you had done in your demonstration. (Kinesthetic Learning Style)
- c. Using the large piece of paper taped to the wall, draw the handwriting line configuration that your child uses in class (e.g., red line at the bottom, blue line at the top, and dotted line in the middle) on the paper with the line configuration being approximately 1-2” in height. Be sure that the lines are positioned slightly higher than the level of your child’s shoulder to facilitate arm movement and an optimal position for the eyes.
- d. Provide your child with a sentence to copy and tape or write it above the writing area.
- e. Ask your child to check his or her spacing with the sticker and/or the Q-tip dot. When an error is detected, have your child describe it as either “too much” or “too little” space. (Auditory Learning Style)

- f. Assist your child in rewriting the sentence by placing the sticker and/or a dot in between the words as he or she writes the sentence. (Note: Since I do not recommend sending adaptive strategies such as this into the classroom, I suggest that you provide the visual awareness of space demonstrated by the sticker or dot, allowing your child to concentrate on spacing and handwriting.) (Visual Learning Style)
- g. Finally, have your child rewrite the sentence once again without the use of the sticker or Q-tip adaptation, using them later to check his or her work upon its completion.
- h. Transfer this strategy to an age-appropriate handwriting paper on a desk or table, continuing with the process as described above.
- i. The Highlighter Challenge – an advanced strategy:

For Spacing between Words in a Sentence:

- a. Demonstrate this activity on a piece of age-appropriate handwriting paper using handwritten models of correct and incorrect spacing between words in a sentence. (This activity can be completed on a vertical or horizontal surface.) Draw a thin yellow highlighted mark on the bottom handwriting line between the words, indicating those that are “too close” and those that are “too far,” as well as those that are “just right.” You might want to use one of the strategies above to provide additional visual input.
- b. Have your child practice this activity by highlighting the spaces on additional copies, labeling them aloud as “too close,” “too far,” or “just right.” (If your child has participated in the activities above and is familiar with “too much” and “too little” to indicate spacing between words, then it would benefit him or her to continue with these descriptions.)
- c. Next, provide your child with a sentence to copy and place it above the handwriting paper. As visual cues for appropriate spacing, highlight the places on your child’s paper where the spaces between the words would occur and have him or her copy the sentences using the highlighting as a guide for spacing. Note if your child does not heed the highlighted cues and writes over them, remind him or her that they are there to act as reminders about the correct amount of spacing to leave between words. If your child struggles with this advanced strategy, return to one of the strategies above to reinforce spacing concepts.
- d. Using the same sentence model, have your child repeat the copying task without the highlighted cues. Have your child edit his or her own work by highlighting the spaces and labeling them as “too close,” “too far,” or “just right.”

#### Tips to enhance your child’s learning experiences:

Be sure to encourage your child to report aloud any errors he or she finds during the activities or in his or her own spacing skills. (Auditory Input)

#### Warm-Up Activities: \*

1. Visual Attention skills: “Copy Cat Drawings,” hidden picture activities, mazes, word searches
2. Position in Space and Spatial Relationship Skills: “Graph Paper Drawings,” “Dot Grid Challenges,” Gross Motor Boot Camp Exercises, construction activities, board games that include strategies

#### Skills Addressed (A) / Skills Enhanced (E)

- A Visual Attention
- A Position in Space
- A Visual Spatial Relationships
- E Postural Efficiency (vertical surface work)

\*Handouts for the activities recommended in the “Warm-Up Activities” section are available from your child’s Occupational Therapist.

## Spacing Challenges 2-6+

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Handwriting legibility depends on both efficient letter formation and spacing skills. The writer must be aware of a letter's position in space, which is the recognition of the space it occupies in the overall product – the word. The writer must also recognize the visual spatial relationships between the groups of words that form the sentence. This awareness allows the writer to leave “just the right amount” of space for a legible handwritten product.

Position in space skills are those that allow us to recognize the orientation of letters, words, numbers, or drawings on a page.

Visual spatial relationship skills are those that allow us to understand the position of two objects in relationship to each other and the space around them.

This activity encourages the development of position in space and visual spatial relationship skills for spacing skills.

**Note:** An additional activity guide has been created for use with Grades K-1. The activities offered on each guide are presented in developmental order. They are offered as opportunities to address spacing needs in the clinic and at home and to facilitate the transfer of skills to the classroom. Therefore, they are not designed to be used as classroom adaptations.

### Materials You Will Need

Select from the following materials depending upon your child's needs, the activity you select below, and your resources:

- Graph paper with 1, 2, and/or 3 lines per inch
- A piece of string – approximately 3” in length
- Chalk (colored or white)
- Q-tips and a cup of water
- Large pieces of paper
- Tape
- A yellow highlighter
- Pencils with erasers
- Age-appropriate handwriting paper

### Activities and Directions:

**Note:** The completion of visual skill activities on a vertical surface positions the eyes looking straight ahead for optimal performance. This position enhances the development of motor memory for letter formations. If you decide to utilize this strategy, be sure that the activity surface is positioned just slightly higher than your child's shoulder height to achieve this visual goal.

Explain the activities to your child as they are presented below:

#### 1. Graph Paper Drawings:

This activity can also be performed on a vertical surface to facilitate arm movements and an optimal position for the eyes.

Step 1:

- a. Provide your child with graph paper that offers the spacing options that would best meet his or her current strengths and needs. For example, the 1-line per inch graph paper can enhance visual attention for spacing, while the 2-3 lines per inch paper would challenge the visual spatial relationship skills. You



might show your child all three options to provide a perspective of “space.” (You can consult with your child’s Occupational Therapist to determine the best fit to meet your child’s needs and skill level.)

- b. Discuss the perspectives of “space” beginning with the boundaries; open areas; connecting lines that form the boundaries and corners; boxes that meet at the top, bottom, and sides; and finally the overall picture of connected boxes. (Visual and Auditory Learning Styles)
- c. Then have your child trace the boundaries of the boxes in a horizontal line by:
  - 1) tracing one box,
  - 2) skipping the next and tracing the third box,
  - 3) skipping the next and tracing the fifth box, and so on across the page for 2-3 lines.
- d. Next, ask your child to trace the boundaries in a vertical line using the same technique. (Visual and Tactile Learning Styles)
- e. Encourage your child to self-edit his or her work, alerting your child to errors during the completion of the first line, then allowing him or her to increase awareness by independently editing on the second and third lines. (Visual attention skills)
- f. After your child has completed the activity, assist him or her in reviewing the work and with highlighting any errors that may have been missed during independent editing.

## Step 2:

- a. Select a Graph Paper Drawing provided by your child’s Occupational Therapist or have your child select one if appropriate. Be sure to have two copies of the selection to allow you to demonstrate on your copy.
- b. Discuss the use of the boundaries and corners of the boxes to create the design or picture. Demonstrate this concept by tracing over a portion of the drawing on your copy. Have your child trace on your copy, as well, to provide visual and tactile feedback for pencil control and visual attention. (Visual, auditory, and tactile learning styles)
- c. Demonstrate the copying portion of the task by reproducing a portion or the picture on your graph paper.
- d. Then, have your child reproduce the picture on his or her graph paper. Encourage your child to self-edit along the way, with guidance from you should it be required.
- e. When your child has completed the picture, have him or her compare that product with the original for any deviations that may have occurred. Review it with your child and discuss any changes that should be made.
- f. An additional strategy: Have your child trace the graph paper drawing using tracing paper before completing the drawing on the graph paper. After your child has completed the picture on the graph paper, have him or her place the tracing paper drawing over the top to check for accuracy.

## 2. The String Challenge:

### For Spacing Within Words:

- a. Demonstrate the string challenge on a chalkboard or a piece of paper taped to the wall. Tape typewritten models of correct and incorrect spacing within words on the board or paper. The string is used to demonstrate the “just right amount of space” between letters in a word. Stretched vertically, the string should just fit between the letters in a word without touching the letters. Describe the spacing problem as “too much” or “too little” amount of space. (Visual and Auditory Learning Styles)
- b. Have your child practice this strategy by checking the spacing in samples of your writing that present both correct and incorrect spacing and describing the spacing problem as you had done in your demonstration. (Kinesthetic Learning Style)
- c. Using the large piece of paper taped to the wall, draw the handwriting line configuration that your child uses in class (e.g., red line at the bottom, blue line at the top, and dotted line in the middle) on the

paper with the line configuration being approximately 1-2" in height. Be sure that the lines are positioned slightly higher than the level of your child's shoulder to facilitate arm movement and an optimal position for the eyes.

- d. Provide your child with a word to copy and tape or write it above the writing area. (When spacing within words is the activity's goal, it is best to focus on one word at a time rather than words that are included in a sentence. This will allow your child to attend to one spacing concern at a time without the distraction of spacing concerns between words in a sentence.)
- e. Ask your child to check his or her spacing with the string. When an error is detected, have your child describe it as either "too much" or "too little" space. (Auditory Learning Style)
- f. Assist your child in rewriting the word by placing the string in between the letters as he or she writes the word. (Note: Since I do not recommend sending adaptive strategies such as this into the classroom, I suggest that you provide the visual awareness of space demonstrated by the string, allowing your child to concentrate on his spacing and handwriting.) (Visual Learning Style)
- g. Finally, have your child rewrite the word once again without the use of the string adaptation, using it later to check his or her work upon its completion.
- h. Transfer this strategy to an age-appropriate handwriting paper on a desk or a table, continuing with the process as described above.

For Spacing Between Words in a Sentence:

- a. Demonstrate this activity on a chalkboard or a piece of paper taped to the wall using models of correct and incorrect spacing between words within a sentence. The string rolled into a small ball should just fit between the words without leaving too much space or touching the beginning and ending letters of the two words. Describe the spacing problems as "too much" or "too little" amount of space. (Visual and Auditory Learning Styles)
- b. Next, have your child practice this strategy by checking the spacing in samples of your writing that present both correct and incorrect spacing and describing the spacing problem as you had done in your demonstration. (Kinesthetic Learning Style)
- c. Using the large piece of paper taped to the wall, draw the handwriting line configuration that your child uses in class (e.g., red line at the bottom, blue line at the top, and dotted line in the middle) on the paper with the line configuration being approximately 1-2" in height. Be sure that the lines are positioned slightly higher than the level of your child's shoulder to facilitate arm movement and an optimal position for the eyes.
- d. Provide your child with a sentence to copy and tape or write it above the writing area.
- e. Ask your child to check his or her spacing with the string. When an error is detected, have your child describe it as either "too much" or "too little" space. (Auditory Learning Style)
- f. Assist your child in rewriting the word by placing the ball of string in between the words as he or she writes the sentence. (Note: Since I do not recommend sending adaptive strategies such as this into the classroom, I suggest that you provide the visual awareness of space demonstrated by the string, allowing your child to concentrate on his spacing and handwriting.) (Visual Learning Style)
- g. Finally, have your child rewrite the sentence once again without the use of the string adaptation, using it later to check his or her work upon its completion.
- h. Transfer this strategy to an age-appropriate handwriting paper on a desk or table, continuing with the process as described above.

### 3. The Chalk, Sticker and Q-tip Challenge:

For Spacing Within Words:

- a. Begin by demonstrating the use of chalk in measuring the just right amount of space between letters in a word. Provide samples of your writing that model both correct and incorrect spacing within a word, checking the spacing with a chalk mark. A thin line of chalk should easily fit in between the letters.

Describe the spacing problems as “too much” or “too little” amount of space. (Visual and Auditory Learning Styles)

- b. Have your child practice this strategy by checking the spacing in additional samples of your writing that present both correct and incorrect spacing in a word and describing the spacing problems as you had done in your demonstration. (Kinesthetic Learning Style)
- c. Transfer this activity to a large-piece of paper taped to the wall. Begin by drawing the handwriting line configuration that your child uses in class (e.g., red line at the bottom, blue line at the top, and dotted line in the middle) on the paper with the line configuration being approximately 2-3” in height. Be sure that the lines are positioned slightly higher than the level of your child’s shoulder to facilitate arm movement and an optimal position for the eyes.
- d. Provide your child with a word to copy and tape a copy or write it above the writing area. (When spacing within words is the activity’s goal, it is best to focus on one word at a time rather than words that are included in a sentence. This will allow your child to attend to one spacing concern at a time without the distraction of spacing concerns between words in a sentence.)
- e. Ask your child to check his or her spacing using the chalk. When an error is detected, have your child describe it as either “too much” or “too little” space. (Auditory Learning Style)
- f. Assist your child in rewriting the word by placing a chalk line in between the letters as he or she writes the word. (Note: Since I do not recommend sending adaptive strategies such as this into the classroom, I suggest that you provide the visual awareness of space demonstrated by the chalk marks, allowing your child to concentrate on his spacing and handwriting.) (Visual Learning Style)
- g. Finally, have your child rewrite the word once again without the use of the chalk adaptation, using it later to check his or her work upon its completion.
- h. Transfer this strategy to an age-appropriate handwriting paper on a desk or table, continuing with the process as described above.

For Spacing Between Words in a Sentence:

- a. Demonstrate this activity on a chalkboard or a piece of paper taped to the wall using models of correct and incorrect spacing between words within a sentence written. You can either place a sticker or a dot to create a spacing cue between words. For a spacing dot, dip the Q-tip in water to create a spacing dot between the words. The small sticker and the Q-tip dot should just fit between the words without leaving too much space or touching the beginning and ending letters of the two words. Describe the spacing problems as “too much” or “too little” amount of space. (Visual and Auditory Learning Styles)
- b. Have your child practice this strategy by checking the spacing in samples of your writing that present both correct and incorrect spacing and describing the spacing problems as you had done in your demonstration. (Kinesthetic Learning Style)
- c. Using the large piece of paper taped to the wall, draw the handwriting line configuration that your child uses in class (e.g., red line at the bottom, blue line at the top, and dotted line in the middle) on the paper with the line configuration being approximately 1-2” in height. Be sure that the lines are positioned slightly higher than the level of your child’s shoulder to facilitate arm movement and an optimal position for the eyes.
- d. Provide your child with a sentence to copy and tape or write it above the writing area.
- e. Ask your child to check his or her spacing with the sticker and/or the Q-tip dot. When an error is detected, have your child describe it as either “too much” or “too little” space. (Auditory Learning Style)
- f. Assist your child in rewriting the sentence by placing the sticker and/or a dot in between the words as he or she writes the sentence. (Note: Since I do not recommend sending adaptive strategies such as this into the classroom, I suggest that you provide the visual awareness of space demonstrated by the sticker or dot, allowing your child to concentrate on spacing and handwriting.) (Visual Learning Style)
- g. Finally, have your child rewrite the sentence once again without the use of the sticker or Q-tip adaptation, using them later to check his or her work upon its completion.
- h. Transfer this strategy to an age-appropriate handwriting paper on a desk or table, continuing with the process as described above.

#### 4. Graph Paper Spacing (Between Words in a Sentence):

- a. Provide your child with graph paper that offers the spacing options that would best meet his or her current strengths and needs. For example, the 1-line per inch graph paper can enhance visual attention for spacing, while the 2-3 lines per inch paper would challenge the visual spatial relationship skills. (You can consult with your child's Occupational Therapist to determine the best fit to meet your child's needs and skill level.)
- b. Next, draw the handwriting line configuration that your child uses in class (e.g., red line at the bottom, blue line at the top, and dotted line in the middle or notebook paper) on the graph paper using one line of blocks for each section of the line configuration. Note: If you have taped the paper to the wall, be sure that the lines are positioned slightly higher than the level of your child's shoulder to facilitate arm movement and an optimal position for the eyes.
- c. Provide your child with a short sentence to copy (5-7 words) and position it at the top or beside the writing area. Depending upon your child's strengths and needs, you can:
  - 1) point out the number of squares for each word and place a yellow highlighted dot in the square that indicates "the place for a space," or
  - 2) have your child perform this portion of the activity before he or she begins to write.
- d. Next, have your child copy the sentence in the blocks, skipping the yellow spaces and paying attention to letter alignment as well.
- e. Below his or her handwritten work, have your child copy the sentence on a fresh line configuration without the yellow dot adaptation.
- f. Transfer this strategy to an age-appropriate handwriting paper on a desk or table, continuing with the process as described above.
- g. Finally, have your child practice his or her copying and word spacing skills without the use of the adaptation.

#### 5. The Make Way for Margins Rule

- a. Provide your child with a piece of age-appropriate handwriting paper. Discuss the area that marks the end of the lines on the right side of the page and label it as a "margin." Talk about how the words in a sentence do not have to touch the margin. Explain that it is all right to leave some space there and move to the next line if the next word will not fit into the space left before the margin.
- b. Have your child use a yellow highlighter to draw a vertical line at the right margin of the paper, with assistance if necessary.
- c. Make it a "rule" that no pencil marks can be placed on the highlighted margin during writing activities.
- d. Have your child participate in a handwriting activity that will allow him or her to use the margin rule.
- e. As your child is completing the task, remind him or her to check to see if any pencil marks have found their way into the margin area. If marks are discovered there, then your child can erase them and move that word down to the next line.
- f. Remind your child that it is necessary to keep his or her eye on the margin during this activity to avoid having to erase and rewrite the work if marks are found in the highlighted area after the task is finished.

#### 6. The Highlighter Challenge – an advanced strategy:

For Spacing Between Words in a Sentence:

- a. Demonstrate this activity on a piece of age-appropriate handwriting paper using handwritten models of correct and incorrect spacing between words in a sentence. (This activity can be completed on a vertical or horizontal surface.) Draw a thin yellow highlighted mark on the bottom handwriting line between the words, indicating those that are "too close" and those that are "too far," as well as those that are "just right." You might want to use one of the strategies above to provide additional visual input.

- b. Have your child practice this activity by highlighting the spaces on additional copies, labeling them aloud as “too close,” “too far,” or “just right.” (If your child has participated in the activities above and is familiar with “too much” and “too little” to indicate spacing between words, then it would benefit him or her to continue with these descriptions.)
- c. Next, provide your child with a sentence to copy and place it above the handwriting paper. As visual cues for appropriate spacing, highlight the places on your child’s paper where the spaces between the words would occur and have him or her copy the sentences using the highlighting as a guide for spacing. Note if your child does not heed the highlighted cues and writes over them, remind him or her that they are there to act as reminders about the correct amount of spacing to leave between words. If your child struggles with this advanced strategy, return to one of the strategies above to reinforce spacing concepts.
- d. Using the same sentence model, have your child repeat the copying task without the highlighted cues. Have your child edit his or her own work by highlighting the spaces and labeling them as “too close,” “too far,” or “just right.”

#### For Spacing Between Words on Paper Without Lines:

- a. Begin this activity with a review of the first step in the “Spacing Between Words in a Sentence” Highlighter Challenge above.
- b. Discuss the transfer of this skill from lined paper to paper without lines, such as worksheets or test answer sheets.
- c. First, begin with a practice session using handwriting paper. Provide your child with a sentence to copy that is written on handwriting paper. On the lines below the model sentence, trace the portions of the lines that indicate the appropriate spacing between each word using a fine yellow highlighter.
- d. Next, have your child copy the sentence using the highlighted tracing as a guide for placement of the words. Note if your child does not heed the highlighted cues and writes over them, remind him or her that they are there to act as reminders about the correct amount of spacing to leave between words. If your child struggles with this advanced strategy, return to one of the strategies above to reinforce spacing concepts.
- e. After your child completes the copying task, have him or her edit the work to detect any spacing errors, labeling them as “too close” or “too far.”
- f. Next, provide your child with the sentence model again without the highlighting cues. Have him or her copy it on a piece of blank, unlined paper.
- g. Again, after your child completes the copying task, have him or her edit the work to detect any spacing errors, labeling them as “too close” or “too far.”
- h. Transfer this skill to a handwriting activity from the classroom or a homework assignment that uses paper without lines.

#### For Spacing on Worksheets or Test Answer Sheets:

- a. Begin this activity with a discussion of the types of school assignments that ask students to write in boxes or small spaces without the assistance of lines or margins.
- b. Provide your child with a pre-printed worksheet or answer sheet or one that you’ve designed for this activity. Process diagrams work well for this strategy. Discuss the spaces that are available for answers.
- c. Demonstrate the Highlighting Challenge for spacing in this area: Highlight the “invisible boundaries that form the box or answer space by drawing a thin line around the box or space, indicating that this is the space available for him or her to write in.
- d. Have your child highlight the boundaries for the rest of the boxes or spaces. Note the accuracy of your child’s perception of the boundaries and his or her accuracy in forming the lines to define them. Remind your child that it is important to include any space that is available so that the work will not be crowded. Have your child note the highlighting that he or she draws outside of the “invisible boundaries and have him or her make corrections.

- e. Next, have your child write or copy words into the boxes or spaces to simulate a test or homework assignment. Have your child edit his or her work for occurrences where words were written outside the highlighted boundaries. Note times when your child tends to place his or her work in the middle or on either side of the box or space, avoiding or ignoring the remaining available space. Discuss this behavior with your child to better understand his or her reasons for doing so and to help you make adaptations that could assist in this task.
- f. Finally, have your child transfer this skill by writing or copying words into boxes or spaces that do not provide the highlighted cues. Again, have your child edit his or her work to check for occurrences when words went outside the boundaries.

### **Additional Strategy:**

The Homework Helper:

Homework assignment lists can be used for daily practice of spacing between words on unlined paper. This activity is designed as a partner task to accompany the work on spacing that your child is completing in therapy or at home and to facilitate the transfer of skills to the classroom.

1. Design a homework assignment sheet that offers boxes with ample space for writing that day's assignments.
2. Have your child use this sheet for one week. At the end of the week, discuss his or her handwriting skills using the spaces provided.
3. Each week, design revised versions of the homework assignment sheet that offer diminished amounts of space, with discussion following each week to determine your child's progress toward spacing mastery.

### **Tips to enhance your child's learning experiences:**

Be sure to encourage your child to report aloud any errors he or she finds during the activities or in his or her own spacing skills. (Auditory Input)

### **Warm-Up Activities: \***

1. Visual Attention skills: "Copy Cat Drawings," hidden picture activities, mazes, word searches
2. Position in Space and Spatial Relationship Skills: "Graph Paper Drawings," "Dot Grid Challenges," Gross Motor Boot Camp Exercises, construction activities, board games that include strategies

### **Skills Addressed (A) / Skills Enhanced (E)**

- A Visual Attention
- A Position in Space
- A Visual Spatial Relationships
- E Postural Efficiency (vertical surface work)

\*Handouts for the activities recommended in the "Warm-Up Activities" section are available from your child's Occupational Therapist.

# Graph Paper Drawings

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Spacing between letters in words and words in a sentence are critical factors in handwriting legibility. The ability to determine “just the right amount” of space in handwritten work relies upon efficient visual spatial relationship skills.

Visual spatial relationship skills are those that allow us to understand the position of two objects in relationship to each other and the space around them, like letters in a word and words in a sentence.

This activity encourages the development of visual spatial relationship skills for spacing skills.

Note: An additional activity guide has been created for use with Grades K-1. The activities offered on each guide are presented in developmental order. They are offered as opportunities to address spacing needs in the clinic and at home and to facilitate the transfer of skills to the classroom. Therefore, they are not designed to be used as classroom adaptations.

## Materials You Will Need

- Graph paper with 1, 2, and/or 3 lines per inch
- Pencils with erasers
- Age-appropriate handwriting paper

## Activities and Directions:

**Note:** The completion of visual skill activities on a vertical surface positions the eyes looking straight ahead for optimal performance. This position enhances the development of motor memory for letter formations. If you decide to utilize this strategy, be sure that the activity surface is positioned just slightly higher than your child's shoulder height to achieve this visual goal.

Explain the activities to your child as they are presented below:

### Graph Paper Drawings:

This activity can also be performed on a vertical surface to facilitate arm movements and an optimal position for the eyes.

#### **Step 1:**

1. Provide your child with graph paper that offers the spacing options that would best meet his or her current strengths and needs. For example, the 1-line per inch graph paper can enhance visual attention for spacing, while the 2-3 lines per inch paper would challenge the visual spatial relationship skills. You might show your child all three options to provide a perspective of “space.” (You can consult with your child's Occupational Therapist to determine the best fit to meet your child's needs and skill level.)
2. Discuss the perspectives of “space” beginning with the boundaries; open areas; connecting lines that form the boundaries and corners; boxes that meet at the top, bottom, and sides; and finally the overall picture of connected boxes. (Visual and Auditory Learning Styles)
3. Then have your child trace the boundaries of the boxes in a horizontal line by:
  - 1) Tracing one box,
  - 2) skipping the next and tracing the third box,
  - 3) skipping the next and tracing the fifth box, and so on across the page for 2-3 lines.

4. Next, ask your child to trace the boundaries in a vertical line using the same technique. (Visual and Tactile Learning Styles)
5. Encourage your child to self-edit his or her work, alerting your child to errors during the completion of the first line, then allowing him or her to increase awareness by independently editing on the second and third lines. (Visual attention skills)
6. After your child has completed the activity, assist him or her in reviewing the work and with highlighting any errors that may have been missed during independent editing.

### **Step 2:**

1. Select a Graph Paper Drawing provided by your child's Occupational Therapist or have your child select one if appropriate. Be sure to have two copies of the selection to allow you to demonstrate on your copy.
2. Discuss the use of the boundaries and corners of the boxes to create the design or picture. Demonstrate this concept by tracing over a portion of the drawing on your copy. Have your child trace on your copy, as well, to provide visual and tactile feedback for pencil control and visual attention. (Visual, auditory, and tactile learning styles)
3. Demonstrate the copying portion of the task by reproducing a portion or the picture on your graph paper.
4. Then, have your child reproduce the picture on his or her graph paper. Encourage your child to self-edit along the way, with guidance from you should it be required.
5. When your child has completed the picture, have him or her compare that product with the original for any deviations that may have occurred. Review it with your child and discuss any changes that should be made.
6. An additional strategy: Have your child trace the graph paper drawing using tracing paper before completing the drawing on the graph paper. After your child has completed the picture on the graph paper, have him or her place the tracing paper drawing over the top to check for accuracy.

### **Tips to enhance your child's learning experiences:**

Be sure to encourage your child to report aloud any errors detected in his or her copies of the drawings or in his or her spacing skills. (Auditory Input)

### **Warm-Up Activities:**

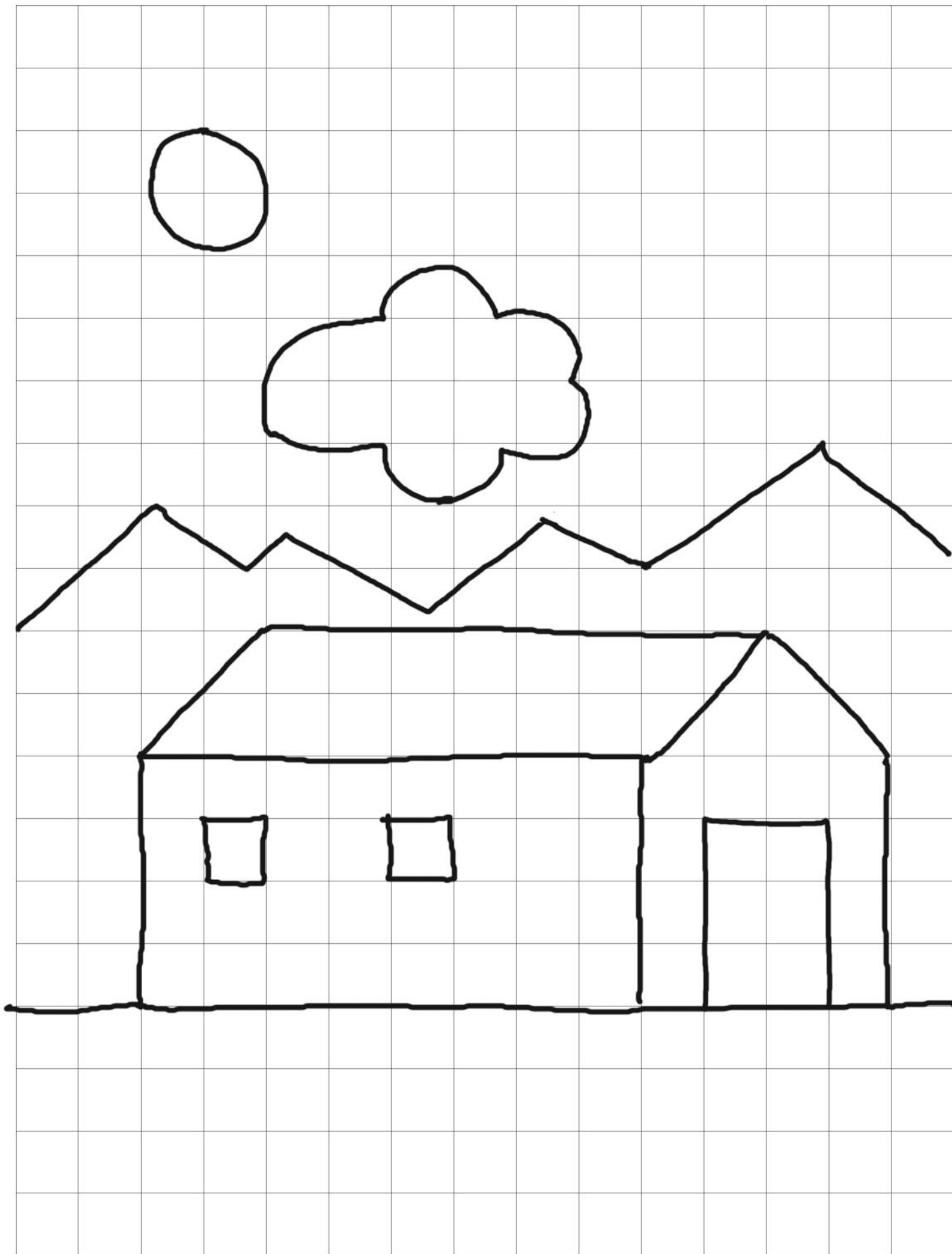
- "The Number 10 Game" \*
- Puzzles, hidden picture activities, mazes, word search activities, and Games that include strategies

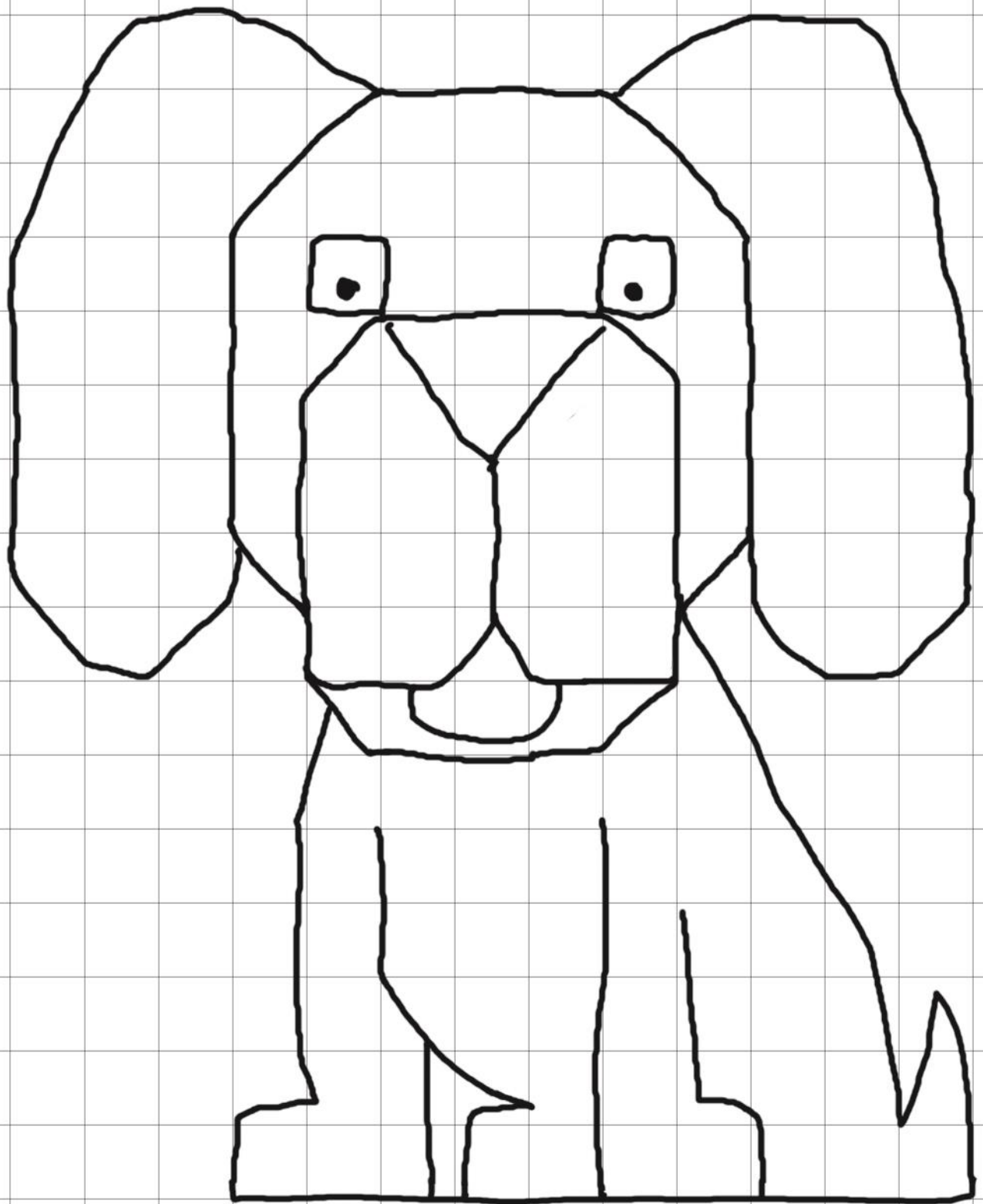
### **Skills Addressed (A) / Skills Enhanced (E)**

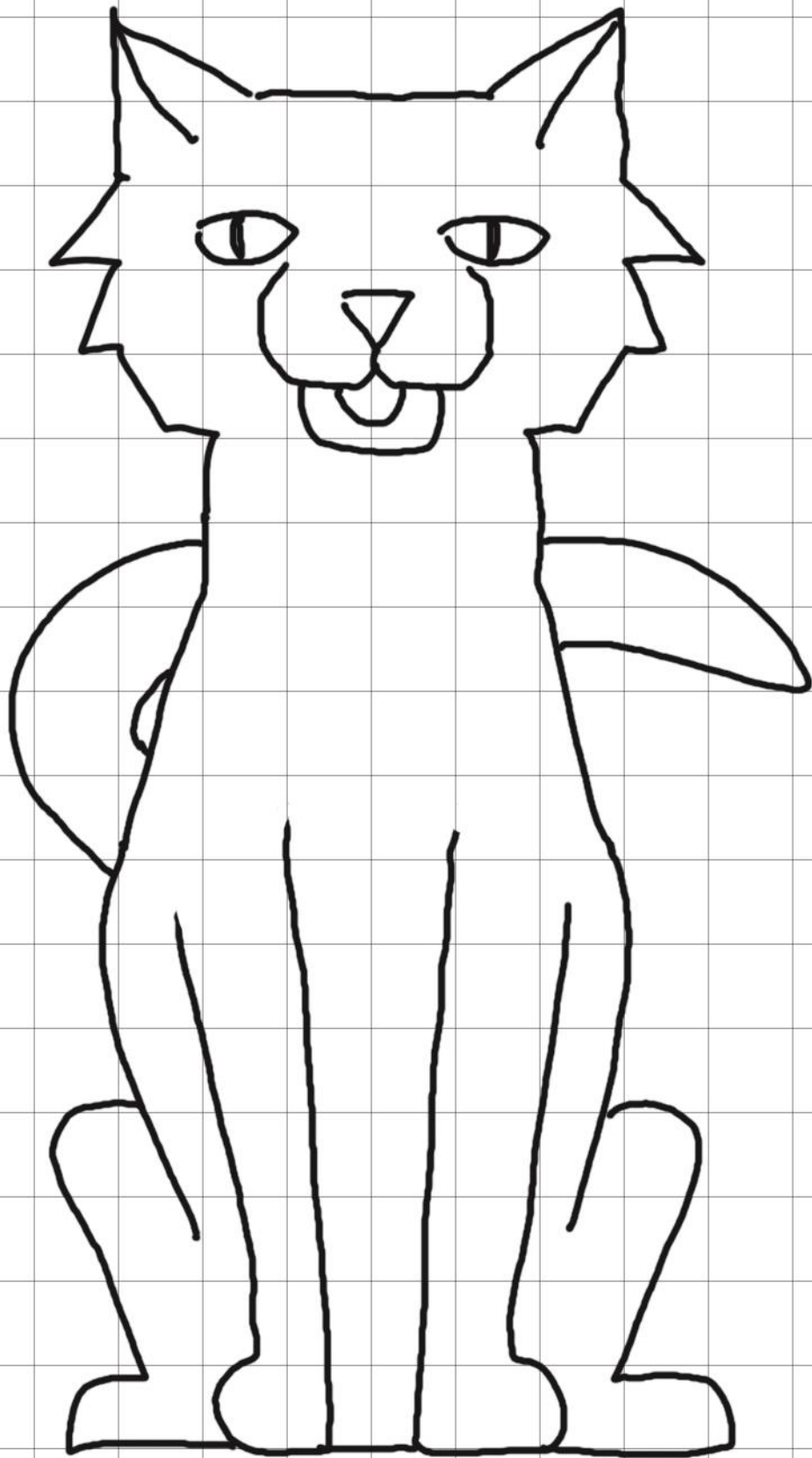
- A Visual Attention
- A Position in Space
- A Visual Spatial Relationships
- E Postural Efficiency (vertical surface work)

\*Handouts for "The Number 10 Game" are available from your child's Occupational Therapist.

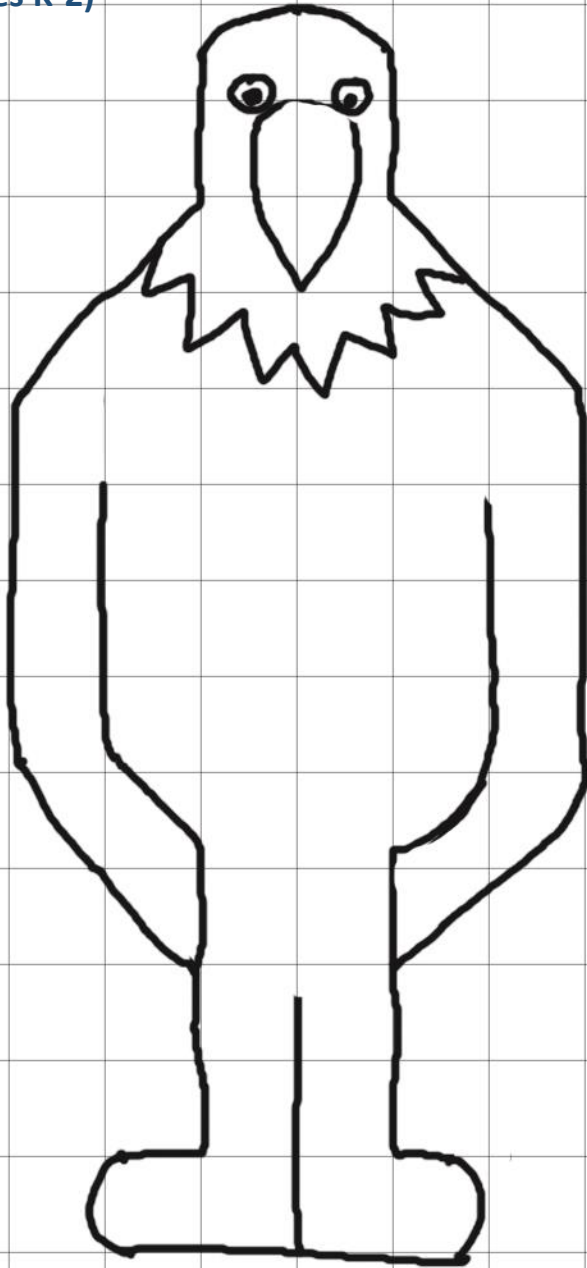


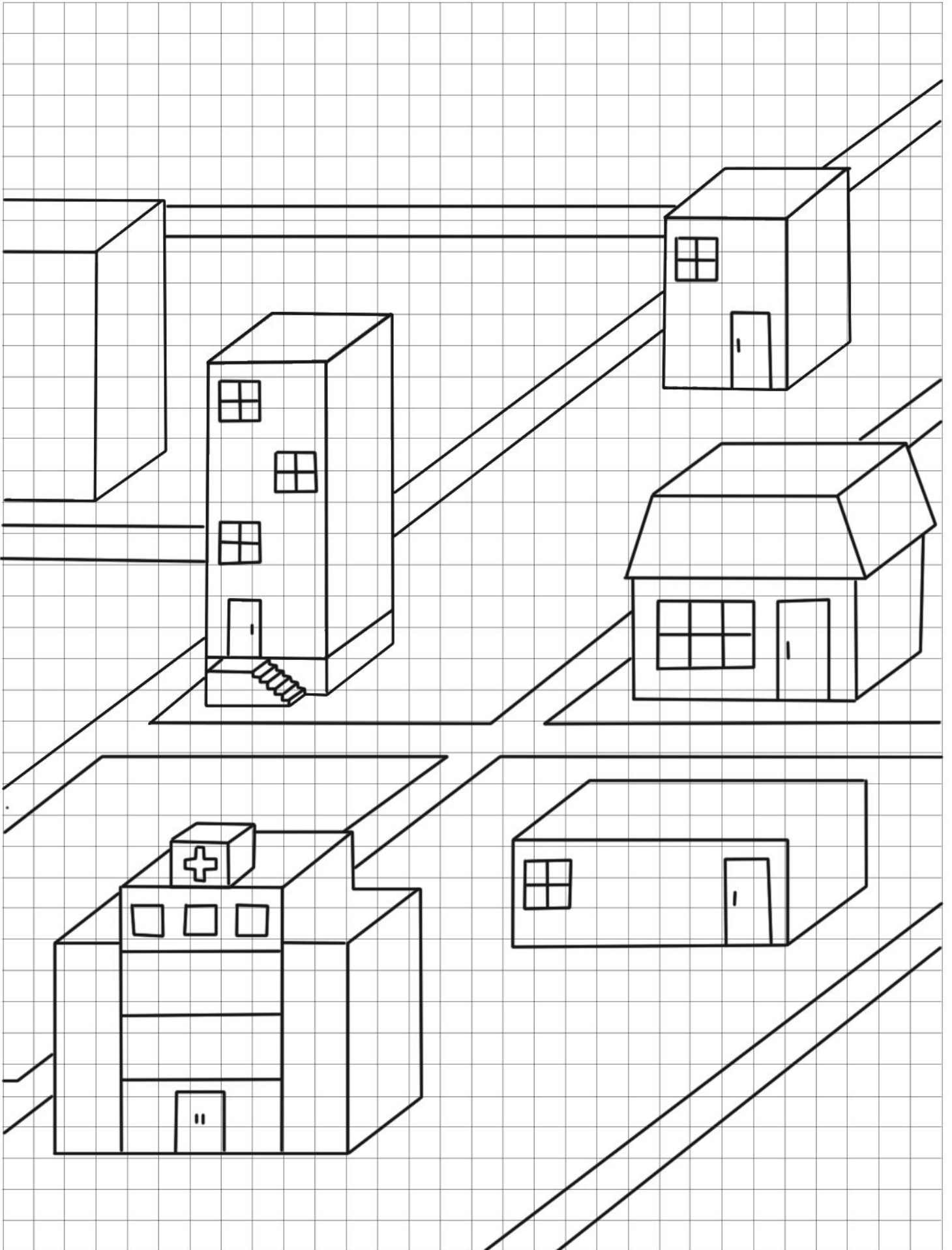


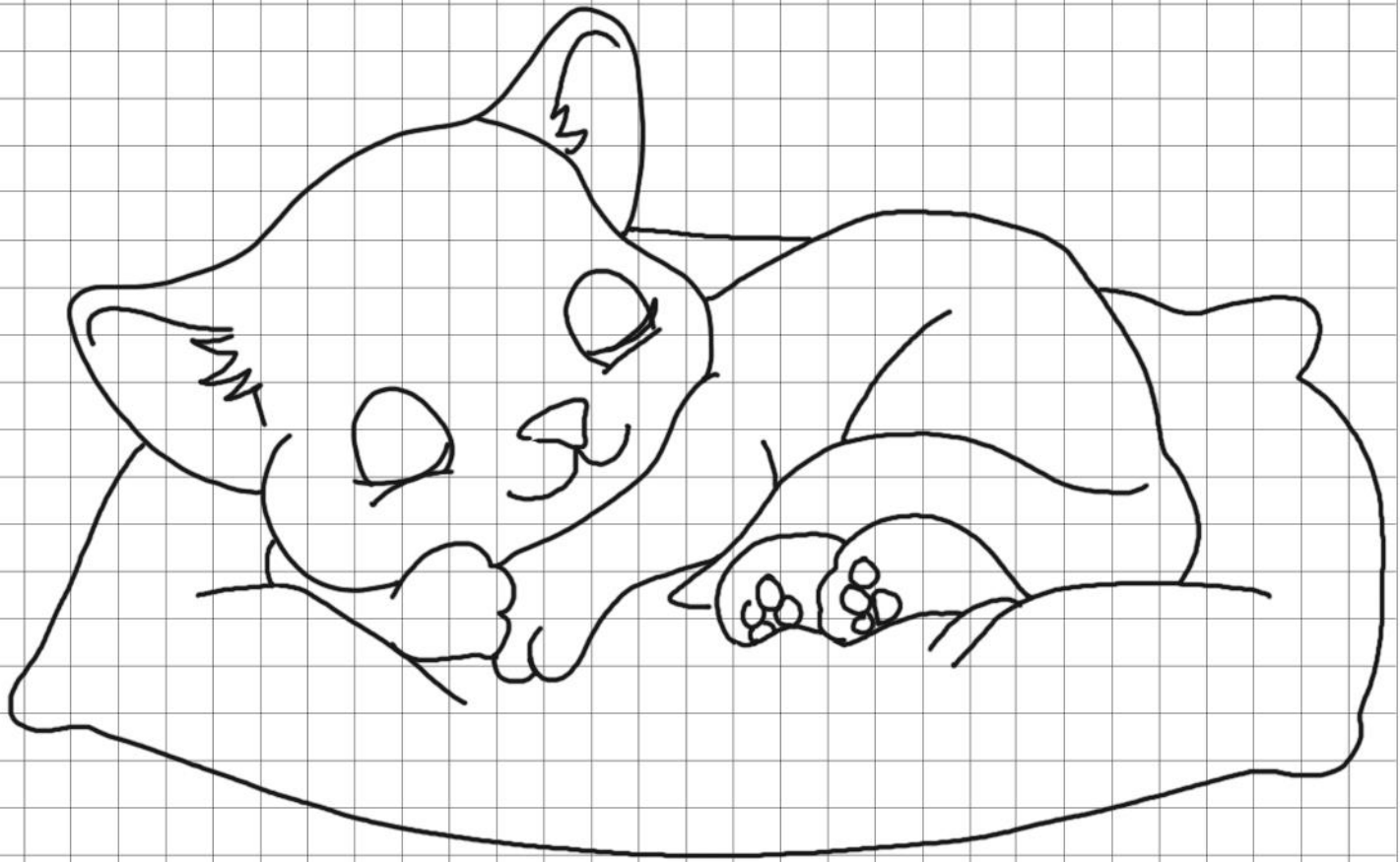


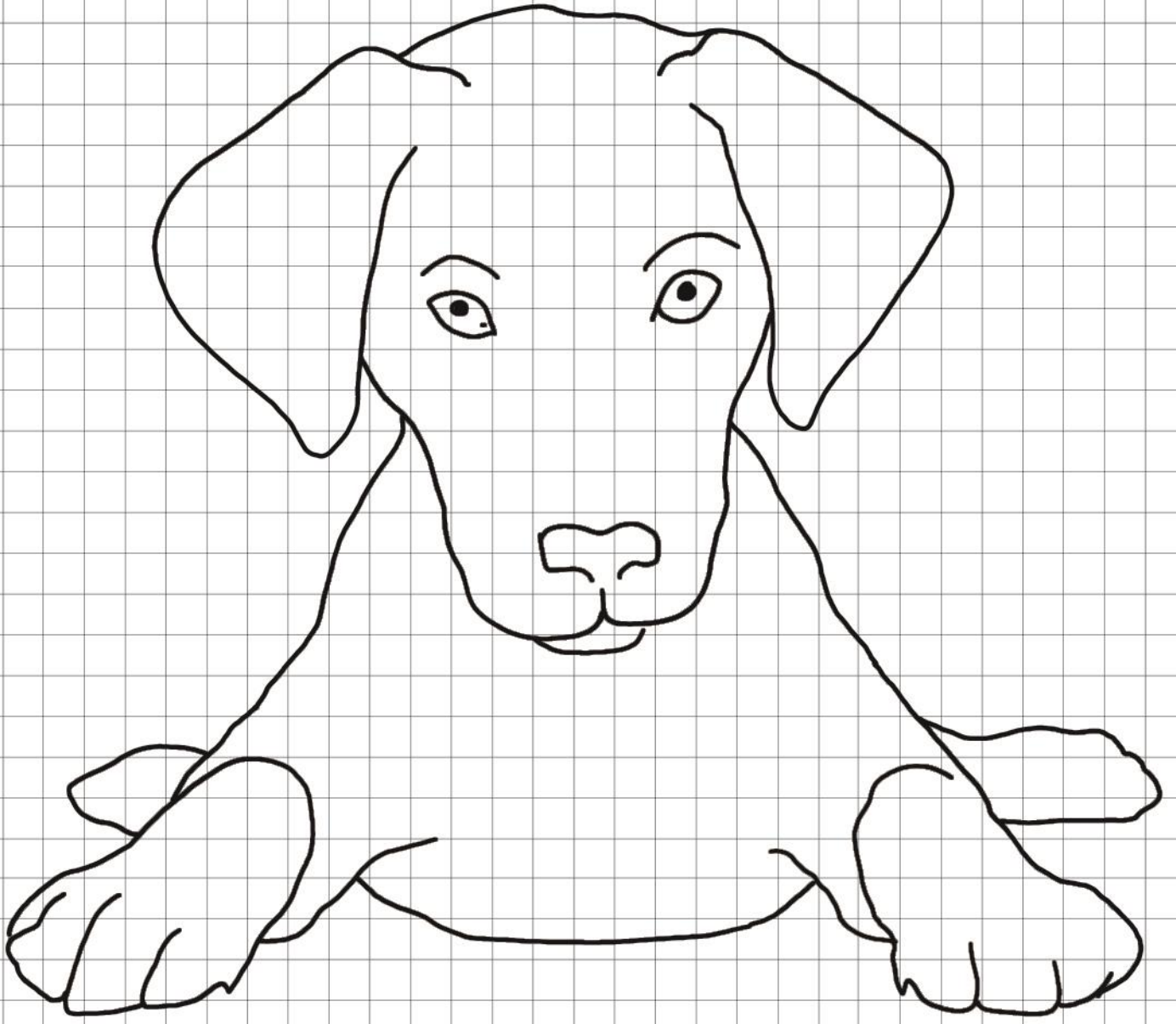


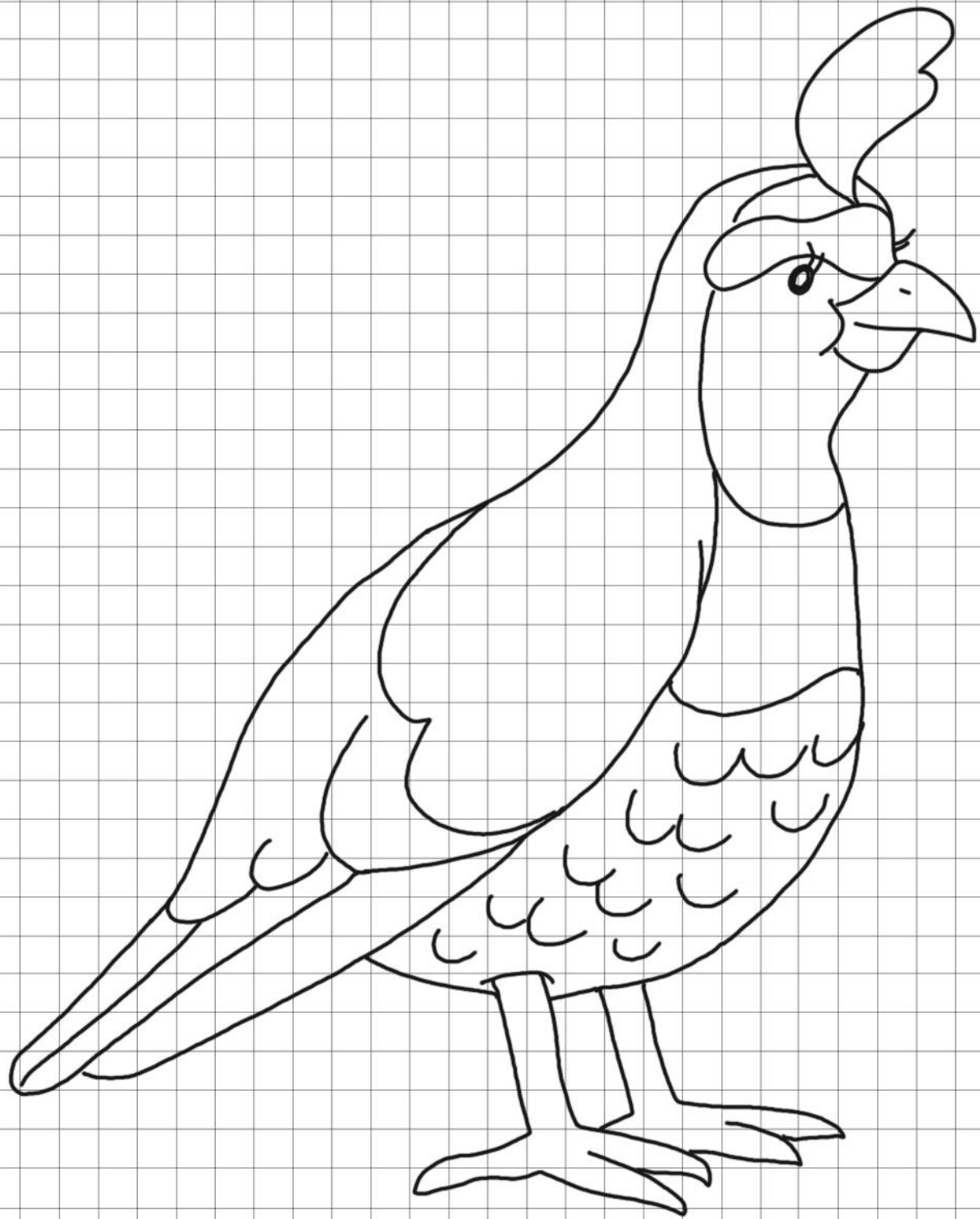
**Eagle Graph Paper Drawing  
(Grades K-2)**













## Boxed-Up Letter Practice

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Letter formations come in all sizes, with lines that go to the top, the bottom, below the line, and across. They have bumps and loops in all different places and on both sides. Accurate placement of all these formation components can become confusing and result in illegible handwritten products. Line alignment skills require efficient visual motor control and a multitude of visual perceptual skills: position in space, visual spatial relationships, and visual discrimination.

Visual perceptual skills are those that we use to gather, process, analyze, and interpret visual information.

Visual-motor control is the ability to use visual information to control our motor output. This skill helps us to produce accurate letter formations legibly and with correct line alignment.

This activity encourages the development of visual-motor control and visual perceptual skills for line alignment.

### Materials You Will Need

- Graph paper with 1, 2, and/or 3 lines per inch
- Colored pencils
- Pencils with erasers
- Age-appropriate handwriting paper
- Unlined paper

### Activities and Directions:

**Note:** The completion of visual skill activities on a vertical surface positions the eyes looking straight ahead for optimal performance. This position enhances the development of motor memory for letter formations. If you decide to utilize this strategy, be sure that the activity surface is positioned just slightly higher than your child's shoulder height to achieve this visual goal.

Practice activities designed for lined handwriting paper:

Explain the activities to your child as they are presented below:

This first activity can also be performed on a vertical surface to facilitate arm movements and an optimal position for the eyes.

#### 1. Warm-up:

- a. Provide your child with graph paper that offers the spacing options that would best meet his or her current developmental level, strengths, and needs. For example, the 1-line per inch graph paper can enhance visual attention for spacing, while the 2-3 lines per inch paper would challenge the visual spatial relationship skills. You might show your child all three options to provide a perspective of "space." (You can consult with your child's Occupational Therapist to determine the best fit to meet your child's needs and skill level.)
- b. Discuss the perspectives of "space" beginning with the boundaries; open areas; connecting lines that form the boundaries and corners; boxes that meet at the top, bottom, and sides; and finally the overall picture of connected boxes.
- c. Then have your child trace the boundaries of the boxes in a horizontal line by:
  - 1) tracing one box,
  - 2) skipping the next and tracing the third box,
  - 3) skipping the next and tracing the fifth box, and so on across the page for 2-3 lines.

- d. Next, ask your child to trace the boundaries in a vertical line using the same technique.
- e. Encourage your child to self-edit his or her work, alerting your child to errors during the completion of the first line, allowing him or her to increase awareness by independently editing on the second and third lines.
- f. After your child has completed the activity, assist him or her in reviewing the work and with highlighting any errors that may have been missed during independent editing.

## 2. Practice for Individual Letter Alignment:

- a. Provide your child with a new sheet of graph paper with the same lines-per-inch as the one used above. Explain that you will be using the boxes to form the shape of letters that he or she will copy into the boxes.
- b. Select the letter formations that are the focus of your child's "homework" and write them on a piece of age-appropriate handwriting paper to demonstrate correct line alignment. Use a colored pencil to outline the shape of each letter to reflect its alignment on the line, drawing the line just outside the letter formation itself. As you do this, describe the placement of the boundaries of the letter parts. For example:
  - 1) For the manuscript letter "p:" The lowercase letter "p" occupies the bottom space and the space below the line."
  - 2) For the manuscript letter "k:" "The lowercase letter "k" occupies the entire line at the beginning but only half the line for the last portion."
  - 3) For the cursive letter "y:" "The lowercase letter "y" occupies the bottom line and the space below the line."
  - 4) For the cursive letter "R:" "The uppercase letter "R" occupies the entire space but does not go below the bottom line.
- c. Next, draw the handwriting line configuration that your child uses in class (e.g., red line at the bottom, blue line at the top, and dotted line in the middle or notebook paper) on the graph paper using one line of blocks for each section of the line configuration. Note: If you have taped the paper to the wall, be sure that the lines are positioned slightly higher than the level of your child's shoulder to facilitate arm movement and an optimal position for the eyes.
- d. Write a letter formation on the lines with appropriate letter alignment. Have your child use a colored pencil to outline your letter formation creating a boundary around it.
- e. Next to it, draw the outline of the letter formation with a colored pencil. Refer to this as the "letter alignment box."
- f. Then have your child use a pencil to write that letter formation within the boundaries of the letter alignment box. Encourage your child to self-edit his or her work, assisting your child with cues when needed. For example: "How does your letter "p" compare to the one that I've written?" Does the tail occupy the same space as the one I demonstrated?" "How can you change it so that it will look like my model?"
- g. As your child's letter alignment skills progress, have him or her write the letter on the graph paper without a model or a letter alignment box.
- h. Transfer this strategy to an age-appropriate handwriting paper, continuing with the process as described above.

## 3. Practice for Letter Alignment Within a Word:

- a. Provide your child with a new sheet of graph paper with the same lines-per-inch as the one used above. Explain that you will be using the boxes to form the shape of letters and words that he or she will copy into the boxes.
- b. Select age-appropriate words (perhaps from your child's spelling list) that include the letter formations that are the focus of your child's "homework" and write them on a piece of age-appropriate handwriting paper to demonstrate correct line alignment. Use a colored pencil to outline the shape of the words to reflect the alignment of each letter on the line, drawing the line just outside the letter formations

themselves to create a letter alignment box around the word. As you do this, describe the placement of the boundaries of the letter parts. For example, for the word “stay:”

- 1) For the manuscript letter “s:” The lowercase letter “s” occupies the bottom space only.”
  - 2) For the manuscript letter “t:” “The lowercase letter “t” occupies the entire top and bottom space but does not go below the line.”
  - 3) For the cursive letter “a:” “The lowercase letter “a” occupies the bottom space only.”
  - 4) For the cursive letter “y:” “The lowercase letter “y” occupies the bottom space and goes below the line.
- c. Next, draw the handwriting line configuration that your child uses in class (e.g., red line at the bottom, blue line at the top, and dotted line in the middle or notebook paper) on the graph paper using one line of blocks for each section of the line configuration. Note: If you have taped the paper to the wall, be sure that the lines are positioned slightly higher than the level of your child’s shoulder to facilitate arm movement and an optimal position for the eyes.
  - d. Write a word on the lines with appropriate letter alignment. Have your child use a colored pencil to outline your word formation creating a letter alignment box as above.
  - e. Next to it, draw the outline of the word with a colored pencil that reflects the alignment of each letter on the line. Refer to this as the “letter alignment box.”
  - f. Then have your child use a pencil to write that word using the correct letter alignment within the boundaries of the letter alignment box.
  - g. Encourage your child to self-edit his or her work, assisting with cues when needed. For example: “How does your letter “p” compare to the one that I’ve written?” Does the tail occupy the same space as the one I demonstrated?” “How can you change it so that it will look like my model?”
  - h. As your child’s letter alignment skills progress, have him or her write the word on the graph paper without a model or a letter alignment box.
  - i. Transfer this strategy to an age-appropriate handwriting paper, continuing with the process as described above.

### **Practice activities designed for unlined paper (e.g., worksheets or process diagrams):**

**Note:** This activity is designed to assist your child in the transfer of handwriting skills from lined to unlined spaces. Children who have difficulty with letter size, line alignment, and spacing on lined paper would benefit from remediation for those skills using the visual guides on lined paper first before addressing skill needs on unlined paper.

Explain the activity to your child using the steps as presented below:

#### 1. Letter size, alignment and spacing:

Step No. 1:

- a. On a blank piece of paper, draw boxes or shapes that represent answer boxes on worksheets such as short answer tests or process diagrams. (Perhaps you could ask his teacher to provide samples of those that your child uses in class.) Discuss the “open spaces” that are presented there that do not provide lines for letter size and alignment or guides for spacing. Ask your child how that affects his or her handwriting and work.
- b. On a chalk board or piece of paper taped to the wall, write a sample of a short answer or words that could be included easily in the answer space or process diagram.
- c. Begin by practicing line alignment skills: Provide your child with a piece of age-appropriate handwriting paper and a pencil and ask him or her to copy the answer or words onto the paper. Have your child edit his or her work for letter size and line alignment, as well as spacing.
- d. Discuss the cues he or she used during the editing to determine if the words were written with appropriate sizing, letter alignment, and spacing.

For example:

The letter formations are placed on, above, or below the line correctly.

The letters in the words sit close together but do not crowd each other.

The words in the sentence do the same.

(Visual Attention, Position in Space, and Visual Spatial Relationship Skills, Auditory and Visual Input)

- e. Use a highlighter to outline the cues that your child describes to you to demonstrate the shapes of letters and their line alignment. Refer to this as the “letter alignment box.”

For example, if the word was “sharp,” then you would have highlighted the letter formations and alignment to indicate “on-above-on-on-below” the line, creating a “shape” for the word, as you did in Activity 3 above. Do not highlight the spaces between words, labelling them instead as “empty spaces.”

**Note:** If any portion of your child’s sizing, alignment, or spacing is incorrect, be sure to adjust your highlighting to ensure that the letter formations follow the correct formation rules. Discuss the need to follow letter formation rules in order to produce legible work.

- f. Remind your child that these highlighted cues are the same ones he or she will be using when working with spaces without lines.
- g. Next, have your child practice writing the letter formations that needed sizing or line alignment adjustment in Step 5 above before continuing to the next step.

Step No. 2:

- a. On the worksheet or process diagram you created in Step 1, transfer the highlighting you provided for the shapes of the words from your child’s paper to the appropriate boxes or spaces.

For example, if the word was “sharp,” then you would have highlighted the letter formations as “on-above-on-on-below” the line, creating a shape for the word. Transfer this shape to your child’s paper. Do not provide cues for spacing. Simply remind him or her that this is an “empty space.”

**Note:** Be sure to adjust the size of the highlighting to ensure that the words fit into the space. Discuss the need to adjust the size of his or her handwriting to produce legible work.

- b. Have your child copy the words or sentence from his or her paper onto the worksheet where you’ve provided the highlighted letter alignment box. Remind your child that these cues match those on the handwriting paper.
- c. Have your child edit his or her work, with assistance if needed, to determine if the writing stayed within the boundaries of the worksheet spaces, as well as the letter alignment box. Provide extra practice if necessary before transferring this activity to a worksheet without highlighted cues.
- d. Transfer this activity to a worksheet or process diagram that does not provide highlighted cues to check for the transfer of skills.
- e. If your child would benefit from additional practice, continue to Step 3.

Step No. 3:

- a. Have your child highlight the shapes of the words on his or her handwritten paper copy and then transfer the word shapes, leaving empty spaces between them, on the worksheet or process diagram. This strategy will provide additional visual and tactile input. Be sure to have your child adjust the size the highlighting to ensure that the words fit into the space. Discuss the need to adjust the size of his or her handwriting to produce legible work.
- b. Transfer this activity to a worksheet or process diagram that does not provide highlighted cues to check for the transfer of skills.

## 2. Spacing Between Words:

- a. On a copy of your child's handwritten work that has not been highlighted with spacing cues, draw a thin highlighted line under each word, leaving an "empty space" between the words to demonstrate word placement and spacing. You can also have your child complete this task.
- b. Highlight the same number of word spaces on your child's worksheet or process diagram, resizing the highlighting to ensure that the words fit into the space. Discuss the need to adjust the size of his or her handwriting to produce legible work.
- c. Have your child copy his or her work onto the worksheet or process diagram, using the highlighted areas as cues for word placement and spacing.
- d. Transfer this activity to a worksheet or process diagram that does not provide highlighted cues to check for the transfer of skills.

### **Tips to enhance your child's learning experiences:**

Be sure to encourage your child to report aloud any errors detected in his or her work. (Auditory Input)

### **Warm-Up Activities:**

- "The Number 10 Game" \*
- Puzzles, hidden picture activities, mazes, word search activities, and Games that include strategies

### **Skills Addressed (A) / Skills Enhanced (E)**

- A Visual Attention
- A Visual Motor: Eye-hand coordination and letter formations
- A Position in Space
- A Visual Spatial Relationships
- E Postural Efficiency (vertical surface work)

\*Handouts for "The Number 10 Game" are available from your child's Occupational Therapist.

## Mind Your “P’s” and “Q’s!”

Student’s Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Letters with similar formations, such as the Partner Letters included in the “b-d,” “p-q,” and “g-q” combinations, can be a challenge for some students. The differences between their left and right configurations are confusing to writers and the mistakes students make when they use them in a sentence result in confusion for the reader.

The ability to distinguish between the left and right configurations in Partner Letters relies on an efficient understanding of directional concepts and line alignment rules. These skills are built on an accurate sense of several visual perceptual skills: body awareness (the foundation for directional concepts), position in space (the direction and position of letter parts in relation to the other parts), visual spatial relationships (the relationship between one letter or word and the others on the page), and visual discrimination (the ability to distinguish between differences and similarities of letter formations).

This activity encourages the development of visual perceptual skills for distinguishing between similarly formed letter formations.

### Materials You Will Need

- A large piece of paper taped horizontally to the wall or a chalkboard
- Construction paper or unlined paper of the same size
- Age-appropriate handwriting paper
- Models that depict an accurate representation of the letters for the session
- Chalk (colored and/or white)
- A supply of Q-tips and a cup of water
- Pencils
- Pipe cleaners
- Therapeutic putty or play dough
- Fine to moderately course sand paper

### Directions

#### 1. A Visual Demonstration: A Focus on Movement Patterns

**Note:** The completion of visual skill activities on a vertical surface positions the eyes looking straight ahead for optimal performance. This position enhances the development of motor memory for letter formations. If you decide to utilize this strategy, be sure that the activity surface is positioned just slightly higher than your child’s shoulder height to achieve this visual goal.

- a. As you begin to work on the skills your child needs to recognize the differences between similarly formed letter formations, it is important to focus on movement patterns that he or she can learn through visualization. Your first sessions should include mainly visual demonstrations and offer only a minimal amount of handwritten work on the part of your child. This will allow your child to utilize his or her visualization skills and to focus attention on the direction of the movement patterns that distinguish the direction of the circles (that make a “b” different from a “d” and a “p” from a “q”) and the tail formations” (that make a “g” different from a “q”). You may want to define these sets of letters as “Partner Letters” to offer a description that will connect them for discrimination and editing.
- b. Tape a large piece of paper to the wall so that its width is about 12” wider than both of your shoulders. You can also use a chalkboard if one is available to you.
- c. Draw the handwriting configuration that your child uses in class (e.g., red line at the bottom, blue line at the top, and dotted line in the middle) on the paper or board with the line configuration being approximately 1-2” in height. Be sure that the lines your child will be using are positioned slightly higher than the level of his or her shoulder to facilitate arm movement and an optimal position for the eyes.
- d. Have your child stand about 5’ behind you as you face the paper or board.

e. First, have your child observe your actions as you follow these steps:

For “b” and “d:”

- i. Writing in the Air: Raise your left arm above your head and “draw” a line in the air down to the side of your head, saying “line down” aloud. Raising your hand above your head will assist your child in visualizing the position of these letters on a line, with the first stroke starting at the top. (Steps 1-6 are demonstrations for visualization only and do not use the paper or the board.)
  - j. Then continue up the line to draw the circle outward for the “d,” saying aloud, “The circle for the letter “d” is on my left side.”
  - k. Raise your right arm above your head and “draw” a line in the air down to the side of your head, saying “line down” aloud.
5. Then continue up the line to draw the circle outward for the “b,” saying aloud, “The circle for the letter “b” is on my right side. (Visual learning style)
  6. Perform this activity again and have your child imitate your actions and recite aloud the directions and letter formations with you. (You will have to peek around to see if your child is doing it accurately!) (Visualization skills, visual motor skills for letter formation, proprioceptive input)
  7. Turn around and have your child perform the actions as you observe. (If you decide to perform this step with your child, remember to use the opposite hand to create a mirror image. For some children, however, this may cause confusion.)
  8. Writing on the Paper or Board: Next, perform this activity using a pencil or chalk and drawing the lines and circles on the handwriting lines you have drawn on the paper or board. Have your child imitate your actions in the air and recite the directions and letter formations with you. (Visual learning style, visualization skills, proprioceptive input)
  9. Switch places with your child and have your child demonstrate this activity on the paper or board using the same steps as above. Be sure that the handwriting lines are positioned slightly higher than the level of your child’s shoulder.
  10. Transfer this activity to age-appropriate handwriting paper using the verbal cues from the Practice Activity.

For “p” and q:”

- a. Writing in the Air: Position your left arm by your side and “draw” a line in the air down your side, saying “line down” aloud. Performing this step with your arm by your side will assist your child in visualizing the position of these letters on a line, with the first stroke beginning at the middle line. (Steps 1-6 are demonstrations for visualization only and do not use the paper or the board.)
- b. Then continue up the line to draw the circle outward for the “q,” saying aloud, “The circle for the letter “q” is on my left side.”
- c. Position your right arm by your side and “draw” a line in the air down your side, saying “line down” aloud.
- d. Then continue up the line to draw the circle outward for the “p,” saying aloud, “The circle for the letter “p” is on my right side. (Visual learning style)
- e. Perform this activity again and have your child imitate your actions and recite aloud the directions and letter formations with you. (You will have to peek around to see if your child is doing it accurately!) (Visualization skills and proprioceptive input)
- f. Turn around and have your child perform the actions as you observe. (If you decide to perform this step with your child, remember to use the opposite hand to create a mirror image. For some children, however, this may cause confusion.) (Visualization Skills, Visual Motor Skills for Letter Formations, proprioceptive input)
- g. Writing on the Paper or Board: Next, perform this activity using a pencil or chalk and drawing the lines and circles on the paper or board using the handwriting lines you have drawn on the paper or board. Have your child imitate your actions in the air and recite the directions and letter formations with you. (Visual learning style, visualization skills, proprioceptive input)

- h. Switch places with your child and have your child demonstrate this activity on the paper or board using the same steps as above. Be sure that the handwriting lines are positioned slightly higher than the level of your child's shoulder.
- i. Transfer this activity to age-appropriate handwriting paper using the verbal cues from the Practice Activity.

For "g" and "q:"

- 1) Writing in the Air: Position your left arm by your side and "draw" a circle in the air outward and a line down your side, saying "left circle and line down" aloud. Performing this step with your arm by your side will assist your child in visualizing the position of these letters on a line, with the first stroke beginning at the middle line. (Steps 1-6 are demonstrations for visualization only and do not use the paper or the board.)
- 2) Then continue up the line to draw the tail for the "g," saying aloud, "The tail for the letter "g" is on my left side."
- 3) Position your right arm by your side and "draw" a circle in the air inward and a line down your side, saying "right circle and line down" aloud.
- 4) Then continue up the line to draw the tail for the letter "q," saying aloud, "The tail for the letter "q" is on my right side. (Visual learning style)
- 5) Perform this activity again and have your child imitate your actions and recite aloud the directions and letter formations with you. (You will have to peek around to see if your child is doing it accurately!) (Visualization skills and proprioceptive input)
- 6) Turn around and have your child perform the actions as you observe. (If you decide to perform this step with your child, remember to use the opposite hand to create a mirror image. For some children, however, this may cause confusion.)
- 7) Writing on the Paper or Board: Next, perform this activity using a pencil or chalk and drawing the lines and circles on the handwriting lines you have drawn on the paper or board. Have your child imitate your actions in the air and recite the directions and letter formations with you. (Visual learning style, visualization skills, proprioceptive input)
- 8) Switch places with your child and have your child demonstrate this activity on the paper or board using the same steps as above. Be sure that the handwriting lines are positioned slightly higher than the level of your child's shoulder. (Visual and Tactile Learning Styles)
- 9) Transfer this activity to age-appropriate handwriting paper using the steps in the Practice Activity.

#### **Adaptations for Older Children:**

- a. As you begin to work on the skills your child needs to recognize the differences between similarly formed letter formations, it is important to focus on movement patterns that he or she can learn through visualization. This will allow your child to utilize his or her visualization skills and to focus attention on the direction of the movement patterns that distinguish the direction of the circles (that make a "b" different from a "d" and a "p" from a "q,") as well as the tail formations (that make a "g" different from a "q.") If it is appropriate for your child, you may want to define these sets of letters as "Partner Letters" to offer a description that will connect them for discrimination and editing.
- b. Stand about 5' in front of your child with your back to him or her. Draw one of the Partner Letters in the air, naming it and describing its formation as you complete the drawing. Continue with the same process for the Partner Letter. Turn and have your child draw the same letter in the air, naming and describing it as he or she completes the drawing. Continue with the same process for the Partner Letter. (If you decide to perform this step with your child, remember to use the opposite hand to create a mirror image.) (Visualization Skills, Visual-Motor Skills for Letter Formations, proprioceptive input)
- c. Tape a large piece of paper to the wall so that its width is about 12" wider than both of your shoulders. You can also use a chalkboard if one is available to you. With your back to your child, draw the Partner



Letters on the side that reflects their distinguishing features, for example, “d” on the left and “b” on the right, naming and describing their formations. (Visual and Tactile Learning Styles)

- d. Depending upon your child’s needs, you can either have your child trace your letter formations as he or she names and describes them, or have your child practice the formations by imitating your demonstration independently. (Tactile Learning Style)
- e. Transfer this activity to age-appropriate handwriting paper using the verbal cues from the Practice Activity.

## 2. A Visual Representation:

The Visual Demonstration above can be used as a warm-up to a handwriting activity or as a refresher for this activity.

- a. Provide your child with pipe cleaners, therapeutic putty, or play dough.
- b. Present and discuss the letter models for the letters that will he or she will be practicing. Describe the location of the lines, circles, or tails for each letter. (Auditory learning style) You may want to define the set of letters you are working with as “Partner Letters” to offer a description that will connect them for discrimination and editing.
- c. Allow your child to trace the letter formations with the index finger of his or her preferred writing hand and describe the directions of the circles and tails aloud. (Auditory and Tactile Learning Styles)
- d. Select pipe cleaners, putty, or play dough and demonstrate how your child will use them to form letter models. (Pipe cleaners will provide a good tactile model and can be reused; however, therapeutic putty and play dough offer a different tactile experience and may be a good medium to begin your work.)
- e. Demonstrate the formation of the two letters you are working on, let’s say the “b” and “d,” and describe aloud the shapes and directional concepts as you create them. For example: “The “b” has a long line that travels from the top and goes down (or from top to bottom) and has a circle at the bottom on the right.” (Visual and auditory learning styles)
- f. Have your child create his or her own letter formations from the same material, describing the shapes and directional concepts aloud while doing so. (Auditory and Tactile Learning Styles)
- g. Then, have your child place his or her Partner Letter formations (e.g., “b and d”) on the desk above a sheet of construction paper or unlined paper, with their distinguishing features facing in the appropriate directions. For example, the “d” would be positioned on the left and the “b” would be on the right.
- h. Have your child fold the paper in half and return it to the flat position with the fold at his or her midline. (By having your child fold the paper in half, he or she can focus attention on the left side for those letters whose distinguishing features lie there, and the right for their Partner Letters.) Using the letter formations that he or she has created as models, have your child draw a large representation of the Partner Letter that faces to the left (let’s say the “d”) on the left side of the paper with chalk. (If your child needs assistance, you can draw it first and have him or her trace it. You can also provide light hand-over-hand-assistance to guide your child’s motor planning.) As your child draws, traces, or is guided through the letter formation, have him or her recite the shapes and directional concepts that form that letter.
- i. Next, have your child draw its “Partner Letter on the right side of the paper, following the same procedure as above.
- j. Finally, have your child perform the Q-Tip Challenge\* by erasing the letter formations! Have your child dip the Q-tip in water and trace over his or her letter formations, using the appropriate directional concepts, erasing it as he or she goes along. Have your child edit his or her work to determine if the Q-tip tracing accurately followed the lines and shapes.
- k. For Therapists: If you would like your student to have a visual representation to use at home for practice, have him or her create his Partner Letters out of pipe cleaners. Store them in a plastic zip lock bag and they are ready to take home and use again!

## Adaptations for Older Children:

Children in all grade levels can benefit from the activity above. You can accommodate it to match your child's needs and age by adapting it in these ways:

- a. After your child has created the Partner Letters, have him or her practice their formations using the Graph Paper Drawings\* activity. This activity uses boxes to define the outline of the letter formations and provides additional visual cues for learning the formations. (Visual Attention, Visual Motor, Visual Discrimination)
- b. If you would like your child to have an additional visual representation practice that adds another motor component, have him or her create Partner Letters models from cardstock by drawing them and cutting out in the shapes of the letter formations. Put them in an envelope and they are ready for future practice!

### 3. A Practice Activity:

The above activities can be adapted for use as warm-up or refresher tasks for the following activity. The practice activity is appropriate for all grade levels. It can be completed on a vertical surface to allow for large arm movements for motor planning skills. Be sure that the lines your child will be using on a vertical surface are positioned slightly higher than the level of his or her shoulder to facilitate arm movement and an optimal position for the eyes.

- a. When your child has attained a better understanding of the directional characteristics that distinguish each of the Partner Letters, he or she is ready for pencil-and-paper practice.
- b. Provide your child with age-appropriate handwriting paper and a piece of fine or moderately course sand paper of equal size. Allow your child to have the models he or she has created, or other forms of letter models, available as cues if needed.
- c. Begin by having your child write one set of the Partner Letters side by side on the first line of the handwriting paper, reciting aloud the directional concepts described in the Visual Demonstration Activity. This will help you assess your child's current level of recognition for the letter names. Be sure that your child has positioned them with their distinguishing features facing in the appropriate direction and appropriately on the line. For example, the "d" would be positioned on the left and the "b" would be on the right. This facilitates the transfer of skills learned in the previous activities. When your child becomes more proficient, random placing of letters will challenge his or her skills toward mastery. (Tactile and Visual Learning Styles)
- d. As your child begins this practice activity, look for behaviors that indicate that he or she would benefit from additional tactile input for letter identification. For example, look for behaviors such as a continual need to reference the models, frequent erasing and beginning the letter again, or frequent errors without detection. If you feel your child would benefit from additional tactile input for letter identification, have him or her trace letter formations using the same procedure above on paper over sand paper. (Sand Paper Tracing\*)
- e. If you feel that your child would benefit from an additional focus on visual attention skills, provide visual scanning worksheets that include the focus letters as well as other letters. (Visual Attention and Scanning Skills)
- f. The Graph Paper Drawings\* activity is also a good medium to address visual attention skills as it provides visual boundaries for letter formations and a further indication of their distinguishing features. (Visual Attention Skills, Visual Motor Skills, Visual Discrimination Skills)
- g. When you feel that your child has a good command of the letter formations, remove the models and have him or her write words that include the focus letters that you dictate, spelling them if necessary. Encourage your child to self-edit this work, describing any errors aloud, and making the necessary corrections.

### Tips to enhance your child's learning experiences:

Be sure to encourage your child to report aloud any errors detected in his or her work. (Auditory Input)

### Warm-Up Activities: \*

- Visual Attention skills: "Copy Cat Drawings," hidden picture activities, mazes, word searches
- Position in Space and Spatial Relationship Skills: "Graph Paper Drawings," "Dot Grid Challenges," Gross
- Motor Boot Camp Exercises, construction activities, board games that include strategies

### Skills Addressed (A) / Skills Enhanced (E)

- A Visual Attention
- A Visual Motor: Eye-hand coordination and letter formations
- A Position in Space
- A Visual Spatial Relationships
- E Postural Efficiency (vertical surface work)

\*Handouts for the recommended activities are available from your child's Occupational Therapist.

# The Ghost Writer's Game

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Visual motor skills, or eye-hand coordination, guide the learning of correct motor patterns for the production of letter and number formations. They work together with visual skills to facilitate the production of legible handwritten messages.

Visual attention and visualization skills are the vision skills that we use for learning and mastering letter formation motor patterns.

This activity encourages the development of visual attention and visualization skills for the development of letter formation patterns.

## Materials You Will Need

- Large Pieces of Paper (or a chalk board if one is available to you)
- Tape
- Blank 8.5" x 11" paper
- Pencils
- Chalk (if needed)

## Directions

**Note:** The completion of visual skill activities on a vertical surface positions the eyes looking straight ahead for optimal performance. This position enhances the development of motor memory for letter formations. If you decide to utilize this strategy, be sure that the activity surface is positioned just slightly higher than your child's shoulder height to achieve this visual goal.

### The Ghost Writer's Game:

Explain the activity to your child as it is presented in the strategies below:

a. Strategy 1:

- 1) Select a shape or letter formation that is the focus of your child's work and draw it on a chalkboard or a piece of paper taped to the wall. Recite the directional concepts for the shape or letter formation as you complete it. (Visual and Auditory Input)
- 2) Next, demonstrate Air Tracing, as you form the shape or letter formation in the air using the index finger of your writing hand at shoulder height. Be sure to use large arm movements and recite the directional concepts.
- 3) Have your child perform the same task with you, using the index finger of his or her preferred writing hand, reciting the directional concepts, as well. Ask your child to "see" the letter in his or her "mind's eye" as it is being traced in the air. (Visualization skills, Proprioceptive and Auditory Input)
- 4) Next, have your child trace the shape or letter formation you drew on the paper or board two or three times with the index finger of his or her preferred writing hand, labelling the directional concepts as they are being traced. (Visual and Tactile Input)
- 5) Then ask your child to close or cover his or her eyes and use the same index finger to trace over it again. (Visualization Skills and Tactile Input)
- 6) Transfer this strategy to a blank piece of 8.5" x 11" paper, following the same procedures above but using a pencil to trace and reproduce the shape or letter formation.

b. Strategy 2:

- 1) Draw a simple picture on the board such as a stick figure, snowman, or smiley face circle. Recite the names of the shapes and lines that you use as you draw it. (Visual and Auditory Input)
- 2) Next, demonstrate Air Tracing, as you draw your picture in the air at shoulder height with the index finger of your writing hand. Be sure to use large arm movements and label the shapes and lines out loud once again.
- 3) Have your child perform the same task with you, using the index finger of his or her preferred writing hand, labelling the shapes and lines, as well. Ask your child to “see” the shape in his or her “mind’s eye” as it is being traced. (Visualization skills, Proprioceptive and Auditory Input)
- 4) Next, have your child trace the drawing you created on the paper or board two or three times with the index finger of his or her preferred writing hand, labelling the shapes and lines aloud as they are traced. (Visual and Tactile Input)
- 5) Then ask your child to close or cover his or her eyes and draw the same picture next to yours using the index finger of his or her preferred writing hand, reciting the names of the shapes and lines as they are drawn. (Visualization Skills and Tactile Input)
- 6) Transfer this strategy to a blank piece of 8.5” x 11” paper, following the same procedures above but using a pencil to trace and reproduce the drawing.

**Tips to enhance your child’s learning experiences:**

To add additional tactile input to the strategies above, draw your shapes or letter formations on a piece of paper taped to the floor. Have your child trace your drawings while he or she is positioned on hands and knees!

**Warm-Up Activities: \***

- The Simply a Memory Game
- The Bag of Tricks Game
- The Cotton Ball Game
- Blowing Bubbles

**Skills Addressed (A) / Skills Enhanced (E)**

A Visual Attention  
A Visualization  
E Pencil Control

\*Handouts for the activities recommended in the “Warm-Up” section can be obtained from your child’s Occupational Therapist.

# The “I’ve Got Your Back” Game

Student’s Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Visual motor skills, or eye-hand coordination, guide the learning of correct motor patterns for the production of letter and number formations. They work together with visual skills to facilitate the production of legible handwritten messages.

Visual attention and visualization skills are the vision skills that we use for learning and mastering letter formation motor patterns.

This activity encourages the development of visual attention, visualization, and visual motor skills for the development of letter formation motor patterns.

## Materials You Will Need

- Age-appropriate selections from the Copy Cat Drawings\*
- Blank paper taped to the wall
- Pencils with erasers

## Directions

**Note:** The completion of visual skill activities on a vertical surface positions the eyes looking straight ahead for optimal performance. This position enhances the development of motor memory for letter formations. If you decide to utilize this strategy, be sure that the activity surface is positioned just slightly higher than your child’s shoulder height to achieve this visual goal.

Explain the activity to your child as it is presented below:

1. Select an age-appropriate activity from the Copy Cat Drawings. Do not show it to your child.
2. Provide your child with a pencil with an eraser, a blank piece of 8.5” x 11” paper, or paper taped to the wall. This activity can also be completed on a chalkboard.
3. Be sure that you are positioned, preferably behind him, so that your child cannot see your Copy Cat Drawing selection.
4. Provide your child with directions for producing the Copy Cat Drawing using words that describe the lines, shapes, and directions that form the picture. For example: Place a straight line at the top of the page. Draw a vertical line down from the middle of that line. Add a circle at the bottom of that line. Put one dot in the middle of the circle. Draw a square around the dot.) (Auditory and Tactile Input and Visualization, Eye-Hand Coordination, Position in Space, and Visual Spatial Relationships Skills)
5. When the picture is finished, have your child compare it with the Copy Cat Drawing. This should produce some laughs and giggles!
6. Switch places and have your child select a new Copy Cat Drawing and describe it to you following the same procedure. Your child’s participation in this portion of the activity asks him or her to identify and label lines and directional concepts and uses auditory input to enhance visual memory skills for this information.

**Note:** This activity works well with two children, sitting back-to-back, using blank paper and clipboards, and following the same procedure.

## Tips to enhance your child’s learning experiences:

To add additional tactile input to the game, have your child produce his or her drawing while on hands and knees!

### Warm-Up Activities: \*

- The Simply a Memory Game
- The Bag of Tricks Game
- The Cotton Ball Game
- Blowing Bubbles

### Skills Addressed (A) / Skills Enhanced (E)

A Visual Attention

A Visualization

E Visual Motor Skills: Eye-Hand Coordination

\*Handouts for the recommend activities can be obtained from your child's Occupational Therapist.

# Memory Drawings

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Visual motor skills, or eye-hand coordination, guide the learning of correct motor patterns for the production of letter and number formations. They work together with visual skills to facilitate the production of legible handwritten messages.

Visual attention and visualization skills are the vision skills that we use for learning and mastering letter formation motor patterns and that assist in our ability to automatically produce them during handwriting tasks.

This activity encourages the development of visual attention, visualization, and visual motor skills for the development of automatic letter formation.

## Materials You Will Need

- Blank sketch or 8.5" x 11" paper or large paper taped to the wall
- Pencils with erasers

## Directions

Explain the activity to your child as it is presented below:

1. Provide both your child and yourself with a piece of sketch paper or blank paper and a pencil with an eraser.
2. First, depending upon your child's grade and skill level, select an object or place that you know well and describe aloud. As you do so, draw a representation of it on your paper. For example, you might draw your house and street, the playground at the school, the diagram of your living room furniture, the road map from your house to the library, or the placement of the keys on your computer keyboard. (Auditory and Visual Input)
3. Ask your child to think of an object or place that he or she is familiar with, uses, or goes too frequently; and then draw it, describing it as he or she goes along. (Visualization, Eye-Hand Coordination, Position in Space, Visual Spatial Relationships, and Visual Memory Skills)
4. Transfer this activity to the development of letter formation skills by having your younger child describe and write the upper or lower case letters that he or she can remember in alphabetical order. An older child can produce words that you dictate. Remind your child that he or she is using the same "thinking skills" for this activity that were used with the memory drawings. For this portion of the activity, allow your child to write his or her letter formations or words on unlined paper, allowing him or her to maintain focus on the automatic recall of the formation rather than line alignment or spacing. Of course, it is important that your child is producing the letters using the correct directional and formational concepts.

## Tips to enhance your child's learning experiences:

Have your child produce his or her drawings, letters, or words on a vertical surface.

**Note:** The completion of visual skill activities on a vertical surface positions the eyes looking straight ahead for optimal performance. This position enhances the development of motor memory for letter formations. If you decide to utilize this strategy, be sure that the activity surface is positioned just slightly higher than your child's shoulder height to achieve this visual goal.



### **Warm-Up Activities: \***

- The Simply a Memory Game
- The Bag of Tricks Game
- The Cotton Ball Game
- Blowing Bubbles

### **Skills Addressed (A) / Skills Enhanced (E)**

A Visual Attention

A Visualization

E Visual Motor Skills: Eye-Hand Coordination

\*Handouts for the activities recommended in the “Warm-Up” section can be obtained from your child’s Occupational Therapist.

# The Secret Message Game

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Short-term memory skills are those that we use to store information that we are “thinking about writing” until we are ready to produce it during copying or compositional writing tasks. The ability to produce that information legibly and in a timely manner is enhanced by the student’s ability to automatically recall and produce letter formations. The quick retrieval of letter formation patterns that have been placed in visual memory allows the writer to get his or her thoughts down on paper before the information is lost in short-term memory.

The capacity for storage in short-term memory is limited to about seven items of information being held for approximately 15-30 seconds before they are lost. Therefore, if a writer needs extra time to recall the appropriate letter formations, it is likely that he or she will have lost the idea or thread of the composition.

**This activity encourages the development of visual memory, visual discrimination, and visual closure skills for the automatic production of letter formations.**

## Materials You Will Need

- Letter dice or tiles
- Age-appropriate handwriting paper
- Pencils with erasers

## Directions

**Note:** The completion of visual skill activities on a vertical surface enhances the development of motor memory for letter formation plans as it encourages large arm movements and positions the eyes looking straight ahead for optimal performance. If you decide to utilize this strategy, be sure that the activity surface is positioned just slightly higher than your child’s shoulder height to achieve the visual goals.

Explain the activity to your child as it is presented below:

1. Shake out letter dice or tiles and have your child form 3 or 4 words from those that are displayed. Have your child write them down on a piece of age-appropriate handwriting paper. (Visual attention and scanning skills)
2. Next, ask your child to take a look at the words, reading them aloud, and to place them into his or her “memory bank” to remember them. (Visual memory skills) Explain that the “memory bank” is where you store things you want to remember for a little while, such as how many cookies are left in the box before you begin to eat them!
3. Remove the dice or tiles and take your child’s paper. Keeping the words out of your child’s view, select one and draw the appropriate number of lines for the word you’ve chosen on the board or a piece of paper taped to the wall, similar to the game Hang Man. Have your child think of the words that he or she had written, match one of them with the number of lines on the board, and discover the “secret message” by filling in the lines with the letters of the word.
4. Of course, there may be more than one word that used the same number of letters. If your child has not chosen the correct word, have him or her erase the letters and think of another word that had been written down on the paper.
5. If your child has difficulty retrieving the word you have chosen, provide him or her with clues that will guide toward experiencing success. For example: “I saw this word on a sign yesterday.” “It was a red sign.” (Can YOU guess what the word is?)
6. Continue with this activity using the rest of the words that your child had created and written down. (Visualization and Visual Memory Skills)

### **Tips to enhance your child's learning experiences:**

Have your child write his words on a piece of paper placed over a fine grade of sand paper to enhance the development of motor memory skills for letter formations. (Tactile Learning Style)

### **Warm-Up Activities: \***

- The Simply a Memory Game
- The Bag of Tricks Game
- Puzzles
- Construction Games with directions and visual models
- Cryptogram Activities

### **Skills Addressed (A) / Skills Enhanced (E)**

- A Visual Closure
- A Visual Memory
- A Visual Discrimination

\*Handouts for the activities recommended in the "Warm-Up" section can be obtained from your child's Occupational Therapist.

# Tricky Letter Tic-Tac-Toe Manuscript/Cursive

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Visual Motor Skills, or eye-hand coordination, provide the foundation for efficient pencil control skills and the automatic production of letter and word formations. Tracing activities enhance visual motor control as the eye guides the hand during the task.

Games are an excellent way for children to practice academic skills. They provide the essential information as a form of play and sometimes contain a bit of competition.

This activity encourages the development of visual attention, visual motor, and pencil control skills for the automatic and legible production of letters and words.

## Materials You Will Need

- Letter formation models
- Blank 8.5" x 11" paper or large paper taped to the wall
- A yellow highlighter
- Crayons

## Directions

**Note:** The completion of visual skill activities on a vertical surface enhances the development of motor memory for letter formation plans as it encourages large arm movements and positions the eyes looking straight ahead for optimal performance. If you decide to utilize this strategy, be sure that the activity surface is positioned just slightly higher than your child's shoulder height to achieve the visual goals.

Explain the activity to your child as it is presented below:

1. Select two letter formations that will be the focus of your child's work. Present the letter models for those formations as visual reminders for your child
2. Create a Tic-Tac-Toe Grid on a blank piece of paper using a yellow highlighter to draw thin lines. The paper can be placed on either a vertical or horizontal surface.
3. Have your child trace over the grid carefully with a dark colored crayon making the yellow line "disappear." (Eye-Hand Coordination Skills)
4. Next, have each of you select one of the focus letter formations to use in the game. When your child indicates where he or she would like to place the first letter, write it with yellow highlighter and have him or her trace it with a crayon to make the yellow disappear. Have your child recite the directional concepts, lines, and shapes included the letter formation as it is being traced. (Auditory and Tactile Input, Visual Memory Skills)
5. Have your child trace over the letter formations you place on the grid, as well, following the same procedure as above.
6. To add variety and enhance your child's development for the tricky letters, have him or her produce the letters independently by providing the highlighting while you trace over it with crayon. (Visual motor skills)
7. Transfer this activity to a tic-tac-toe game that does not provide highlighted cues.

## Tips to enhance your child's learning experiences:

Place the tic-tac-toe grid on a piece of paper placed over a fine grade of sand paper to enhance the development of motor memory skills for letter formations. (Tactile Learning Style)

## Warm-Up Activities:

- Therapeutic Putty or play dough activities for letter formations \*
- Pencil Control worksheets
- Mazes
- Word Search Activities

- Puzzles
- Construction Games with directions and picture models

**Skills Addressed (A) / Skills Enhanced (E)**

A Visual Attention

A Visual Motor Skills: Eye-Hand Coordination

A Fine Motor: Pencil Control

\*Handouts for this activity can be obtained from your child's Occupational Therapist.

# The What's Missing Game

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Visual memory skills are those that allow us to process, store, and retrieve information on command. They provide the foundation for the storage and automatic retrieval of letter and word formations that results in the production of legible handwritten work in a timely manner.

Visualization skills are those that allow us to form a mental picture of something with having a visual model. They are a key component in the development of visual memory as they encourage the writer to "see" the letter or word in his or her "mind's eye" during the learning and reproduction of its formation.

This activity encourages the development of visual attention, visualization, and visual memory skills for the automatic production of letter formations.

## Materials You Will Need

- 5-10 small, familiar objects (See examples in Step No. 1.)
- Age-appropriate handwriting paper
- Pencils with erasers

## Directions

Explain the activity to your child as it is presented below:

1. Depending upon your child's grade level and needs, place 5-10 small, familiar objects on the table. For example, an eraser, a pencil, a paper clip, a rubber band, a ruler, a coin, a small notebook, a highlighter, letter tile, and a marble.
2. Have your child pick each item up, name it, and write its name on a piece of age-appropriate handwriting paper. (Visual scanning and visual memory skills and visual and tactile input.)
3. Have your child read the names aloud again as he or she re-handles the items to further inspect them. This step provides your child with an additional opportunity to collect and store information that will enhance visual memory skills. (Visual and tactile input)
4. Remove your child's paper from view and have him or her turn away from the items. Remove one of the items and have your child turn back to discover which one is missing. To increase the challenge, switch the arrangement of the remaining objects on the table before having your child turn around. (Visualization and Visual Memory Skills)
5. If your child is having difficulty discovering the missing item, provide him or her with clues to achieve success. For example, "It is red." or "It is something you use on the playground."
6. If your child did not benefit from clues to discover the missing item, complete the activity again using a fewer number of objects. Your child can cross off the items on his or her paper that have been removed from the game and re-read aloud those that remain. Allow your child to manipulate and inspect them again to enhance visual memory skills with visual and tactile input. Complete the activity as described above.

## Tips to enhance your child's learning experiences:

Have your child describe ways in which he or she has used the item or places where it is found. (Auditory Learning Style)

## Warm-Up Activities:

- Can You Spot It Book\*
- Hidden Picture Activities
- Visual Scanning Worksheets
- Copy Cat Drawings\*

**Skills Addressed (A) / Skills Enhanced (E)**

A Visual Attention

A Visualization

A Visual Memory

\*Handouts for these activities can be obtained from your child's Occupational Therapist

# The Hidden Picture Game

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Visual closure and visual discrimination skills are those that allow students to recognize letters, numbers, or words automatically as their eyes scan over text in a book or a workbook page. These skills provide the information for determining the differences between letter formations, such as the manuscript letters "E" and "F," and the cursive letters "F" and "T."

Visual closure skills are those that allow us to visualize a whole object, such as a letter formation, when we are provided with incomplete information. This occurs when we are reading or writing, as we scan across the page, focusing on words versus individual letter formations.

Visual discrimination skills allow us to distinguish between the differences and similarities of letter formations, such as the manuscript letters "E" and "F."

This activity encourages the development of visual closure and visual discrimination skills for automatic letter recognition.

## Materials You Will Need

- Pictures of age-appropriate familiar objects or scenes
- Letter models for the formations that are the focus of your child's work
- Age-appropriate handwriting paper
- Pencils with erasers

## Directions

**Note:** The completion of visual skill activities on a vertical surface positions the eyes looking straight ahead for optimal performance. This position enhances the development of motor memory for letter formations. If you decide to utilize this strategy, be sure that the activity surface is positioned just slightly higher than your child's shoulder height to achieve this visual goal.

Explain the activity to your child as it is presented below:

1. Begin this activity with pictures of familiar objects that are age-appropriate, such as toys, animals, or articles of clothing for a younger child and sports, landscapes, and furniture for an older child.
2. Do not reveal the entire picture to your child before beginning the game. Present it instead with a portion of the picture covered, leaving just enough visual information to provide your child with a hint of what it depicts.
3. Have your child think about the visual cues for discovering the hidden picture. For example: A partial picture of a bear might reveal big paws. Or a partial picture of a table might reveal two legs. Discuss the ways that we can recognize an object without seeing all of its parts. Repeat this activity 3-4 times as a warm up for the next step.
4. Next, select letter formation models for those letters that are the focus of your child's work. Present them to your child with a portion of the letter covered, leaving just enough visual information to provide a hint of which letter formation it depicts.
5. Ask your child to think about the visual cues to discover the hidden letter, providing verbal cues as guides, if needed. For example: "Can you name the strokes or shapes that you can see?" "What letters can you remember that have those strokes and shapes in them?" "Which letters have these strokes and shapes placed in the position that is shown in the picture?" (Auditory Learning Style)
6. To provide additional visual and tactile input, have your child write the letters he or she discovers on age-appropriate handwriting paper to assist in remembering the strokes and shapes they contain.



### **Tips to enhance your child's learning experiences:**

Have your child write the names of the objects or letter formations he or she discovers on a piece of handwriting paper placed over a piece of fine sand paper. (Tactile Learning Style)

### **Warm-Up Activities:**

- Can You Spot It Book\*
- Hidden Picture Activities
- Visual Scanning Worksheets
- Copy Cat Drawings\*
- Construction games that include directions and a picture model

### **Skills Addressed (A) / Skills Enhanced (E)**

A Visual Closure  
A Visual Discrimination  
E Visual Attention  
E Visual Memory  
E Letter Formations  
E Pencil Control Skills

\*Handouts for these activities can be obtained from your child's Occupational Therapist

# The Dot Grid Challenge

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

The development of the correct motor plans for letter formations relies on the efficiency of our visual attention and visual motor (eye-hand coordination) skills. These skills assist the student in the automatic production of letter formations as well as the development of good pencil control skills.

Pencil control skills are key elements in the development of a fluid and legible handwriting style. Each time your child uses a drawing or writing utensil (crayon or pencil), be sure that he or she is using a functional grasp that allows for efficient control of the tool during the activity.

This activity encourages the development of visual attention, visual motor, and pencil control skills for the automatic production of letter formations.

## Materials You Will Need

- Dot paper with box sizes that you want to use in the session
- Tissue or tracing paper
- Pencils with erasers
- Colored pencils

## Directions

**Note:** The completion of visual skill activities on a vertical surface positions the eyes looking straight ahead for optimal performance. This position enhances the development of motor memory for letter formations. If you decide to utilize this strategy, be sure that the activity surface is positioned just slightly higher than your child's shoulder height to achieve this visual goal.

Explain the activity to your child as it is presented below:

1. Begin this activity with picture drawing tasks. Select dot grid paper that provides the box sizes that you want to use with your child. (You can consult with your child's Occupational Therapist to determine the best fit to meet your child's needs and skill level.)
2. Draw a simple or complex shape, depending upon your child's grade level and needs, using the dots as guide.
3. Place tracing or tissue or tracing paper over your drawing and have your child trace your model using a pencil. (Visual Input and visual attention, visual motor and pencil control skills)
4. Next, have your child reproduce your drawing using the dot grids below it. (visual attention, visual motor, and pencil control skills)
5. Then as a visual check of this work, have your child place the tissue or tracing paper reproduction over his or her copy to see if the drawings match. (Visual input)
6. Using a colored pencil, have your child make any corrections to his or her reproduction. (Visual attention, visual motor, and pencil control skills)
7. Next, select a letter formation that is the focus of your child's work. Draw the letter formation on the dot grid paper using the dots as guides. Repeat the procedures above.
8. Finally, write the letter formation on a piece of age-appropriate handwriting paper. Have your child repeat the procedures above.

## Tips to enhance your child's learning experiences:

Have your child perform the activity on a dot grid paper placed over a piece of fine sand paper. (Tactile Learning Style)

### Warm-Up Activities:

- The Cotton Ball Game\*
- Blowing Bubbles\*
- Can You Spot It Book\*
- Hidden Picture Activities\*
- Visual Scanning Worksheets
- Copy Cat Drawings\*
- Construction games that include directions and a picture model
- Games that include strategies

### Skills Addressed (A) / Skills Enhanced (E)

- A Visual Attention
- A Visual Motor: Eye-Hand Coordination
- A Pencil Control Skills
- E Visual Closure
- E Visual Discrimination
- E Visual Memory
- E Letter Formations

## Cursive Warm-Ups (Grades 2-6+)

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Pencil control skills are key components in the development of a smooth and legible handwriting style. They are developed through efficient visual attention, eye-hand coordination, and finger strength and dexterity skills.

The transition from manuscript to cursive places different demands upon a student's pencil control skills as it asks the writer to connect letters, sometimes at different points depending upon the preceding or succeeding letter in the word, as well as to maintain placement of the writing utensil on the paper while he or she completes more than one stroke at a time.

This activity encourages the development of visual attention, visual motor, and fine motor strength and dexterity for pencil control skills used in cursive handwriting activities.

### Materials You Will Need

- Blank 8.5" x 11" paper or large paper taped to the wall (or a chalk board if one is available to you)
- Pencils with erasers
- Colored pencils
- Chalk, if needed
- Age-appropriate handwriting paper
- Pencil Control Worksheets (pre-printed or ones that you create on large paper)

### Directions

**Note:** The completion of visual skill activities on a vertical surface positions the eyes looking straight ahead for optimal performance. This position enhances the development of motor memory for letter formations. If you decide to utilize this strategy, be sure that the activity surface is positioned just slightly higher than your child's shoulder height to achieve this visual goal.

#### 1. The Doodle-It-Right Game:

Explain the activity to your child as it is presented below:

- a. Draw a large doodle shape that includes connected shapes, such as a long curved line with a loop on the end, on a large piece of paper taped to the wall or on a chalk board. Be sure the drawing surface is positioned slightly higher than your child's shoulder height.
- b. Have your child trace it two or three times, perhaps with colored pencils or chalk to highlight his or her pencil control skills.
- c. Next, produce an additional 3-4 small doodle shapes in the corner of the paper or board. Have your child reproduce these doodle shapes in any size, combining them with the original doodle shape to create a picture. Instruct your child to be sure that each of the doodle shapes connects with at least one other shape and that no shapes are left out in a space on their own.
- d. Have your child trace his or her work using one continuous movement from start to finish to simulate the production of cursive strokes.
- e. Next, on a clean paper or board, write a large representation of the cursive connection that is the focus of your child's handwriting work, such as "bo," "ch," or "ka."
- f. Have your child trace your work with colored pencils or chalk to highlight his or her pencil control skills.
- g. Next, have your child produce large versions of the letter connections using the appropriate strokes.
- h. Transfer this activity to an age-appropriate piece of handwriting paper using the process above but limiting the doodle sizing to that of the line configurations on the paper.

## 2. Pencil Control Mania:

Explain the activity to your child as it is presented below:

- a. Simple pencil control worksheets that present continuous zig-zag, sloping, and curved lines encourage the development of pencil control skills that guide the hand in cursive handwriting, focusing particularly on the need for the writing utensil to maintain contact with the paper for the formation of words.
- b. Have your child trace lines like those described above with colored pencils to highlight his or her pencil control skills. (You can create these patterns on a piece of age-appropriate handwriting paper.)
- c. To enhance the development of visual attention skills and motor movement patterns, provide larger versions of the lines presented on the worksheets. Present these on a large piece of paper taped to a wall or a vertical surface or on a chalk board. Be sure that the activity is positioned just slightly higher than your child's shoulder height.
- d. Next, draw enhanced versions of cursive joining strokes on a large piece of paper taped to the wall or a chalk board. Have your child trace and then copy the strokes using large arm movements.
- e. Ask your child to continue with this activity, making each successive copy smaller than the last, resulting in the last one being the size of the line configuration on the handwriting paper he or she uses in class. You might want to draw or tape a copy of that configuration at the bottom of the paper or the chalk board.

**Note:** These activities also work well with the Q-tip Challenge\* or with chalk on construction paper.

### Tips to enhance your child's learning experiences:

Have your child perform the activity on a piece of unlined or handwriting paper placed over a piece of fine sand paper. (Tactile Learning Style)

### Warm-Up Activities:

- The Cotton Ball Game\*
- Blowing Bubbles\*
- Copy Cat Drawings\*
- Construction games that include directions and a picture model
- Mazes
- Word Search Activities

### Skills Addressed (A) / Skills Enhanced (E)

A Visual Attention  
A Visual Motor: Eye-Hand Coordination  
A Pencil Control Skills  
E Visual Closure  
E Visualization  
E Letter Formations

\*Handouts for these activities can be obtained from your child's Occupational Therapist

## The Problem with Pencil Pressure

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Pencil pressure is the product of proprioceptive and tactile input that is processed by the brain and guides the hand in writing. Pressure that is “too little” or “too much” can result from inefficient sensory input as well as insufficient arm, wrist, hand, and finger strength. Pencil control difficulties, in general, can result from inadequate strength in muscle groups, an insufficient processing of tactile input, as well as inefficient visual skills.

Students who struggle with producing appropriate pencil pressure may complain of pain or fatigue in the fingers, wrist, arm, and/or shoulders. Whether the student's pencil pressure is too tight or too loose, this may be the result of having to tighten the muscles in those areas in order to maintain control of the pencil.

**Note:** Children who demonstrate inefficient pencil control skills resulting from insufficient physical strength would benefit from activities suggested in “Pencil Control Tips and Tricks.” For those students who demonstrate inefficient pencil control skills resulting from inefficient visual skills, select activities from the “Vision Skill Warm-Ups.”

**This activity encourages the development of sensory skills that affect pencil pressure.**

### Materials You Will Need

Select from the following materials depending upon your child's needs, the activity you select below, and your resources:

- Blank 8.5" x 11" paper
- Large blank paper taped to the wall (or a chalkboard if one is available to you)
- Age-appropriate handwriting paper
- Copy-cat drawings\*
- Pencils with erasers
- Chalk
- Crayons
- Chalkboard or construction paper
- Fine or moderately coarse sand paper
- Light-colored thin tissue paper

### Directions

**Note:** The completion of visual skill activities on a vertical surface positions the eyes looking straight ahead for optimal performance. This position enhances the development of motor memory for letter formations. If you decide to utilize this strategy, be sure that the activity surface is positioned just slightly higher than your child's shoulder height to achieve this visual goal.

#### **For Too Much Pressure**

Explain the activity to your child as it is presented below:

1. The Secret Message Game:
  - a. Discuss the “feeling” of pencil pressure, describing it as pushing too hard on the pencil, making dark marks, or touching the pencil too lightly on the paper, making the marks too light. Demonstrate each description and emphasize what the “too tight” and “too loose” grips that are commonly used with each pressure look like. For example, a “too tight” grip might show white knuckles or a “too loose” grip might result in dropping the pencil. (Visual and auditory input)

**To add sensory feedback:**

- 1) To demonstrate “too much” or “too little” pencil pressure, have your child push the index finger on his or her preferred writing hand into a small ball of therapeutic putty or play dough with instructions to either push the finger through to the table (to demonstrate too much pressure) or to push the finger into the putty making just a very small dent (to demonstrate too little pressure). Finally, have your child push his or her finger into the putty ball to form a dent that goes about half-way into the putty (to demonstrate a “just right” pencil pressure). (Visual, auditory, and tactile input)
  - 2) To demonstrate a “too tight” or “too loose” pencil grip, have your child form palm-sized balls with the putty. Have your child hold one in the palm of his or her preferred writing hand, turning the hand palm side down. Have your child hold on to the putty, squeezing it to prevent it from dropping out of the hand and using enough pressure to form marks in it with his or her fingertips (to demonstrate a grip that is “too tight”). Then have your child perform the same activity using very little pressure to keep it in the palm, allowing it to fall out of his or her hand (to demonstrate a grip that is “too loose”). Finally, have your child complete the activity using “just the right amount” of pressure on the putty to keep it in the palm and maintain its shape without producing any dents (to demonstrate an appropriate pencil grip). (Tactile input)
- b. Ask your child to describe which pencil pressure and grip your child feels he or she uses. Have your child demonstrate them to you as he or she labels them as one of the types above. If your child is unable to perceive which one he or she is using, provide clues to direct his or her observations. For example: “Are your fingers touching the pencil lightly or tightly? Is your pencil touching the paper lightly or is it pushing into it? Are your pencil marks light or dark?” Provide some hand-over-hand assistance to demonstrate his or her type of pencil grip and pressure. **Note:** If your child is also experiencing pencil grip difficulties that result from insufficient finger and hand strength, you might want to use the Pencil Control Tips and Tricks, \* the Fine Motor Book Camp\*, and the Make Me Strong, Max\* activities as warm-ups to this and any handwriting work. (Auditory input)
  - c. You might want to demonstrate pencil and grip pressure using chalk on a chalkboard or on a piece of construction paper to add tactile input. (Tactile input)
  - d. Discuss the Secret Message Game (as it is described below) with your child and how it will help him or her to better understand the differences between “too much” and “too little” pencil pressure.”
  - e. Provide your child with a blank piece of paper, or a large piece of paper taped to the wall, and a pencil with an eraser.
  - f. Ask your child to send you a short Secret Message by writing it on the paper as lightly as he or she can and then erasing it completely. Be sure to tell your child that the message is “so secret” that it needs to be erased completely so that you cannot discover it when you take a look! Turn your back or cover your eyes while your child writes and erases the message. (Tactile input)
  - g. After your child has completed this activity, search the paper to see if you can find any remaining marks or grooves that can help you to discover the secret message. If you can see some indentations, use a pencil to lightly shade them to “discover the secret message.”
  - h. Ask your child to identify and discuss the reasons why you were able to uncover the message and have him or her try the activity again with another message. (Auditory input)
  - i. Transfer this activity to age-appropriate handwriting paper by having your child write a Secret Message there and following the same procedures above.

## 2. Tissue Paper Challenge:

Explain the activity to your child as it is presented below:

- a. Discuss the “feeling” of pencil pressure describing it as pushing too hard on the pencil, making dark marks, or touching the pencil too lightly on the paper, making the marks too light. Demonstrate each description and emphasize the “too tight” and “too loose” grips that are commonly used with each

pressure. For example, a “too tight” grip might show white knuckles or a “too loose” grip might result in dropping the pencil. (Visual and auditory input)

**To add sensory feedback:**

- 1) To demonstrate “too much” or “too little” pencil pressure, have your child push the index finger on his or her preferred writing hand into a small ball of therapeutic putty or play dough with instructions to either push the finger through to the table (to demonstrate too much pressure) or to push the finger into the putty making just a very small dent (to demonstrate too little pressure). Finally, have your child push his or her finger into the putty ball to form a dent that goes about half-way into the putty (to demonstrate a “just right” pencil pressure). (Visual, auditory, and tactile input)
  - 2) To demonstrate a “too tight” or “too loose” pencil grip, have your child form palm-sized balls with the putty. Have your child hold one in the palm of his or her preferred writing hand, turning the hand palm side down. Have your child hold on to the putty, squeezing it to prevent it from dropping out of the hand and using enough pressure to form marks in it with his or her fingertips (to demonstrate a grip that is “too tight”). Then have your child perform the same activity using very little pressure to keep it in the palm, allowing it to fall out of his or her hand (to demonstrate a grip that is “too loose”). Finally, have your child complete the activity using “just the right amount” of pressure on the putty to keep it in the palm and maintain its shape without producing any dents (to demonstrate an appropriate pencil grip). (Tactile input)
- b. Ask your child to describe which pencil pressure and grip your child feels he or she uses. Have your child demonstrate them to you as he or she labels them as one of the types above. If your child is unable to perceive which one he or she is using, provide clues to direct his or her observations. For example: “Are your fingers touching the pencil lightly or tightly? Is your pencil touching the paper lightly or is it pushing into it? Are your pencil marks light or dark?” Provide some hand-over-hand assistance to demonstrate his or her type of pencil grip and pressure. **Note:** If your child is also experiencing pencil grip difficulties that result from insufficient finger and hand strength, you might want to use the Pencil Control Tips and Tricks, \* the Fine Motor Book Camp\*, and the Make Me Strong, Max\* activities as warm-ups to this and any handwriting work. (Auditory input)
  - c. You might want to demonstrate using pencil and grip pressures using chalk on a chalkboard or on a piece of construction paper to add tactile input. (Auditory input)
  - d. Discuss the Tissue Paper Challenge (as it is described below) and how it will help your child to better understand the differences between “too much” and “too little” pressure.”
  - e. Present your child with 2-3 Copy Cat Drawings \* and have him or her select one to trace.
  - f. Place a piece of lightly colored thin tissue paper (versus tracing paper) over the drawing and have your child trace the drawing with a pencil. Remind your child that this activity is designed to help him or her to use less pressure on the pencil. Therefore, if he or she presses too hard, the tissue paper will tear. (Tactile input)
  - g. **Note:** Allow your child to begin the task without instructions about how much pressure to use. This will allow you to observe his or her initial pencil pressure and the strategies your child uses to prevent the paper from tearing. This information will help guide your further assistance.
  - h. As your child progresses with the activity, provide clues for attending to pencil pressure. For example, “I see that you are tearing the paper when you draw your lines straight down. Perhaps those are the strokes where you put too much pressure on your pencil.” Or “I see that you are stopping and starting with your circle strokes and tearing the paper. Let’s practice some circles with light pencil pressure on a piece of paper on the wall or the chalk board to help you use less pressure to complete your circles.” Discuss the feeling your child has in his or her hands and fingers when the pressure tears the paper. (Auditory input)
  - i. Transfer this activity to age-appropriate handwriting paper where you have written letter formation or word models. Place the tissue paper over the models and have your child trace over them.



- j. Finally, discuss the activities you've completed with your child to help him or her to discover and understand the tactile input that is experienced when too much pressure is used. (Auditory input)

### **For Too Little Pressure**

#### 1. Crayon Rubbings:

Explain the activity to your child as it is presented below:

- a. Discuss the "feeling" of pencil pressure describing it as pushing too hard on the pencil, making dark marks, or touching the pencil too lightly on the paper, making the marks too light. Demonstrate each description and emphasize the "too tight" and "too loose" grips that are commonly used with each pressure. (Visual and auditory input)

#### **To add sensory feedback:**

- 1) To demonstrate "too much" or "too little" pencil pressure, have your child push the index finger on his or her preferred writing hand into a small ball of therapeutic putty or play dough with instructions to either push the finger through to the table (to demonstrate too much pressure) or to push the finger into the putty making just a very small dent (to demonstrate too little pressure). Finally, have your child push his or her finger into the putty ball to form a dent that goes about half-way into the putty (to demonstrate a "just right" pencil pressure). (Visual, auditory, and tactile input)
  - 2) To demonstrate a "too tight" or "too loose" pencil grip, have your child form palm-sized balls with the putty. Have your child hold one in the palm of his or her preferred writing hand, turning the hand palm side down. Have your child hold on to the putty, squeezing it to prevent it from dropping out of the hand and using enough pressure to form marks in it with his or her fingertips (to demonstrate a grip that is "too tight"). Then have your child perform the same activity using very little pressure to keep it in the palm, allowing it to fall out of his or her hand (to demonstrate a grip that is "too loose"). Finally, have your child complete the activity using "just the right amount" of pressure on the putty to keep it in the palm and maintain its shape without producing any dents (to demonstrate an appropriate pencil grip). (Tactile input)
- b. Ask your child to describe which pencil pressure and grip he or she uses. Have your child demonstrate them to you as he or she labels them as one of the types above. If your child is unable to perceive which one that he or she is using, provide clues to direct his or her observations. For example: "Are your fingers touching the pencil lightly or tightly? Is your pencil touching the paper lightly or is it pushing into it? Are your pencil marks light or dark?" Provide some hand-over-hand assistance to demonstrate his type of pencil and grip pressure. (Auditory and tactile input) **Note:** If your child is also experiencing finger and hand strength difficulties, you might want to use the Pencil Control Tips and Tricks, \* Fine Motor Book Camp,\* and the Make Me Strong, Max\* activities as warm-ups to his work.
  - c. You might want to demonstrate pencil and grip pressure using chalk on a chalkboard or on a piece of construction paper to add tactile input. (Tactile input)
  - d. Discuss the Crayon Rubbings activity (as it is described below) and how it will help your child to better understand the differences between "too much" and "too little" pressure. (Auditory input)
  - e. Present your child with a small piece of paper, perhaps half of the 8.5" x 11", and crayons. Explain that you would like him or her to use the crayons to cover the entire paper, mixing the colors as he or she pleases. (Tactile input)
  - f. Present your child with 2-3 Copy Cat Drawings \* and have him or her select one. Explain that the goal is to copy the drawing by using the pencil to produce the picture in the crayon rubbings.
  - g. **Note:** Allow your child to begin the task without instructions about how much pressure to use to produce marks in the crayon rubbings. This will allow you to observe his or her initial pencil pressure

and the strategies your child uses to make recognizable marks. This information will help guide your further assistance. (Tactile input)

- h. If your child is struggling to produce marks that can be seen and recognized, provide clues that can help him or her to use a revised strategy. For example: "I'm having some trouble seeing your picture. How do you think you can make it so that your marks show up better?" "I wonder if you push just a little harder on the pencil, I will be able to see your picture better. What do you think?" (Auditory input)
- i. If your child continues to struggle with placing an adequate amount of pressure on the pencil to produce a recognizable mark, provide some hand-over-hand assistance as a guide. Ask your child how his or her hand feels differently when you help to push the pencil into the crayon rubbings. (Tactile input)
- j. Transfer this discussion of pencil pressure to an activity on age-appropriate handwriting paper and how your child's pencil pressure "feels" on that surface.

## 2. The Sandpaper Challenge:

Explain the activity to your child as it is presented below:

- a. Discuss the "feeling" of pencil pressure describing it as pushing too hard on the pencil, making dark marks, or touching the pencil too lightly on the paper, making the marks too light. Demonstrate each description and emphasize the "too tight" and "too loose" grips that are commonly used with each pressure. (Visual and auditory input)

### **To add sensory feedback:**

- 1) To demonstrate "too much" or "too little" pencil pressure, have your child push the index finger on his or her preferred writing hand into a small ball of therapeutic putty or play dough with instructions to either push the finger through to the table (to demonstrate too much pressure) or to push the finger into the putty making just a very small dent (to demonstrate too little pressure). Finally, have your child push his or her finger into the putty ball to form a dent that goes about half-way into the putty (to demonstrate a "just right" pencil pressure). (Visual, auditory, and tactile input)
  - 2) To demonstrate a "too tight" or "too loose" pencil grip, have your child form palm-sized balls with the putty. Have your child hold one in the palm of his or her preferred writing hand, turning the hand palm side down. Have your child hold on to the putty, squeezing it to prevent it from dropping out of the hand and using enough pressure to form marks in it with his or her fingertips (to demonstrate a grip that is "too tight"). Then have your child perform the same activity using very little pressure to keep it in the palm, allowing it to fall out of his or her hand (to demonstrate a grip that is "too loose"). Finally, have your child complete the activity using "just the right amount" of pressure on the putty to keep it in the palm and maintain its shape without producing any dents (to demonstrate an appropriate pencil grip). (Tactile input)
- b. Ask your child to describe which pencil pressure or grip your child feels he or she uses. Have your child demonstrate them to you as he or she labels them as one of the types above. If your child is unable to perceive which one that he or she is using, provide clues to direct his or her observations. For example: "Are your fingers touching the pencil lightly or tightly? Is your pencil touching the paper lightly or is it pushing into it? Are your pencil marks light or dark?" Provide some hand-over-hand assistance to demonstrate his type of pencil grip and pressure. (Auditory and Tactile Input) **Note:** If your child is also experiencing finger and hand strength difficulties, you might want to use the Pencil Control Tips and Tricks, \* Fine Motor Book Camp\* and the Make Me Strong, Max\* activities as warm-ups to this session.
  - c. You might want to demonstrate using chalk on a chalkboard or on a piece of construction paper to add tactile input. (Tactile input)
  - d. Discuss The Sandpaper Challenge activity (as it is described below) and how it will help your child to better understand the differences between "too much" and "too little" pressure.

- k. Present your child with 2-3 Copy Cat Drawings\* and have him or her select one to trace. Provide your child with a blank piece of blank of 8.5" x 11" paper and position it over a piece of fine or moderately coarse sandpaper of the same size. (Select the type of sandpaper based upon the amount of pressure that your child places on the pencil. For example, you might select a finer grade of sandpaper if the pressure just a "bit too much pressure" and a moderately course sandpaper if it is much too much pressure." You can consult with your child's Occupational Therapist to determine the best fit.) (Tactile input)
- l. **Note:** Allow your child to begin the task without instructions about how much pressure to use to prevent the tissue paper from tearing. This will allow you to observe his or her initial pencil pressure and the strategies your child uses to prevent the paper from tearing. This information will help guide your further assistance.
- m. If your child is struggling to produce marks without tearing the tissue paper, provide clues that can help him or her to use a revised strategy. For example: "I'm see you are having some trouble with tearing the paper, I wonder if you push just a little lighter on the pencil, it will make it easier to draw without tearing it. What do you think?" OR "What do you think is causing the paper to tear? How can we fix that?" (Auditory input)
- n. If your child continues to struggle with placing an adequate amount of pressure on the pencil to produce the drawing without tearing the paper, provide some hand-over-hand assistance as a guide. Ask your child how his or her hand feels differently when you help to guide the pencil to draw the picture without tearing the paper. (Tactile input)
- o. Transfer this discussion of pencil pressure and how it "feels" to a letter formation or writing activity on age-appropriate handwriting paper.
- p. **Adaptations:**
  - 1) Transfer this activity to paper over sandpaper taped or tacked to a wall or on an easel. (Visual Attention and Postural Skills, Arm and Shoulder Strength) (Be sure that the activity surface is positioned just slightly higher than your child's shoulder height to achieve the visual goals.)
  - 2) Have your child trace the Copy Cat Drawing that is placed over the paper and sandpaper combination lightly with his or her finger before tracing it with a pencil. If your child does not feel comfortable tracing a finger over the paper/sandpaper, a similar tactile experience can be obtained by tracing with a finger over a chalk model on the board or a model drawn on a piece of construction paper. (Visual Memory Skills; Visual and Tactile Learning Styles)
  - 3) As your child progresses with the Sandpaper Tracing Challenge, substitute the sandpaper with a piece of tracing paper placed over the Copy Cat Drawing to gradually progress toward the completion of handwritten work using appropriate pencil pressure without an adaptation.

### Tips to enhance your child's learning experiences:

Have your child perform the activities on the floor on hands and knees on in the prone position (on his or her tummy). (Tactile Learning Style)

### Warm-Up Activities:

- Fine Motor Boot Camp\*
- Make Me Strong, Max\*

### Skills Addressed (A) / Skills Enhanced (E)

- A Pencil Control Skills
- E Visual Attention
- E Visual Motor: Eye-Hand Coordination

\*Handouts for these activities can be obtained from your child's Occupational Therapist.

## Pencil Control Strengthening Tips and Tricks

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Pencil control skills are defined as the ability to maintain a comfortable grasp on the pencil while guiding it with precision through handwriting tasks. These skills depend upon strong muscles that range from the back, shoulder, and arm muscles to those in the wrist, hand, and fingers. Pencil control difficulties can result from inadequate strength in muscle groups, an insufficient processing of tactile input, as well as inefficient visual skills.

Students who struggle with pencil grip may complain of pain or fatigue in the fingers, wrist, arm, and/or shoulders. Whether the student's pencil grip is too tight or too loose, this may be the result of having to tighten the muscles in those areas in order to maintain control of the pencil.

Note: Children who demonstrate inefficient pencil control skills resulting from insufficient processing of tactile input would benefit from activities suggested in "The Problem with Pencil Pressure." For those students who demonstrate inefficient pencil control skills resulting from inefficient visual skills, select activities from the "Vision Skill Warm-Ups."

These activities enhance physical strength for pencil control skills.

### Activities and Directions

#### The Posture Stretch:

**Muscle Groups Addressed:** core body muscles in the back

**Enhances Awareness for:** correct posture with a straight back and appropriate head and eye positions; occurrence of fatigued back muscles

**Repetitions:** Complete the repetitions recommended by your child's Occupational Therapist

For all ages:

1. Discuss the need for good posture to help your child sit or stand up straight and prevent him or her from getting tired during class work and gross motor activities. Remind your child that correct posture also keeps the head and eyes ready for handwriting and sports by keeping them in the right place for seeing the work and participating in activities.
2. Demonstrate and explain the Posture Stretch:
  - a. Begin by standing or sitting tall with relaxed shoulders (positioned away from the ears).
  - b. Stretch your arms up toward the ceiling beside your ears. Be sure to maintain a straight back, alerting your child to do this, as well.
  - c. Stretch your arms back down to reach toward your toes. Be sure bending your knees just slightly to provide a gentle stretch in your lower back. Alert your child to do this, as well.
  - d. For those who are seated, encourage them to feel the stretch in their lower back as they bend toward their toes.
3. Have your child participate in the activity with you to demonstrate his or her understanding of the steps.
4. Discuss the need to perform this exercise with gentle, slow movements to avoid back injury or pain.
5. Complete an appropriate set of repetitions, depending upon your child's strengths and needs, or the amount that has been recommended for Occupational Therapy "homework."
6. Suggest that your child use this Posture Stretch whenever he or she feels that his or her posture is getting "sloppy" or when he or she feels tired during handwriting activities, as well as gross motor games.

## The I Don't Know Game (Shoulder Shrugs):

**Muscle Groups Addressed:** shoulders and neck

**Enhances Awareness for:** correct posture with neutral shoulder position and appropriate head and eye positions; the occurrence of fatigued shoulder muscles

**Repetitions:** Complete the repetitions recommended by your child's Occupational Therapist

For younger children:

1. Demonstrate and discuss the movements of the shoulder:
  - a. Begin by standing or sitting tall with a straight back and relaxed shoulders (positioned in a neutral position).
  - b. Demonstrate the "I don't know Position" by bringing your shoulders up toward your ears for a shrug (scapular elevation). Make note that this is different than the
  - c. "Turtle Pose" where the shoulders stay in place and the head ducks down between them.
  - d. Demonstrate and explain that the "best shoulder position" for working at a desk is in the "middle" of these two positions (neutral position).
  - e. Demonstrate the "Sad Position" where the shoulders droop forward (scapular protraction). Explain that if you give yourself a "bear hug," you will bring your shoulders forward into the Sad Position. Make note that this is different than when you push your shoulders back to "pinch them together, creating the "Soldier Position."
  - f. Demonstrate and explain again that the "best shoulder position" for working at a desk is in the "middle" of these two positions (neutral position).
  - g. Have your child participate in the poses with you to demonstrate his or her understanding of the shoulder positions. Have your child name the relaxed shoulder position, Turtle Pose, Sad Position, Soldier Position, and best shoulder position along with you.
2. Demonstrate and explain the "I Don't Know Game" (as it is described below):
  - a. Stand or sit tall with the "best shoulder position."
  - b. Take turns asking silly questions and answering with an "I don't know" shrug. Be sure that your child is standing or sitting with correct posture, with a straight back and relaxed shoulders. As your child shrugs, remind him or her to bring the shoulders up and to avoid the "Turtle Pose" – ducking the head down in between the shoulders. It is important to note if your child is maintaining his or her head and eyes in a forward-looking position. If your child has difficulty with this postural aspect, you might want to discuss this with the Occupational Therapist.
3. Discuss the purpose of the shoulder shrugs for both shoulder strengthening and for relaxing the shoulders when he or she is working on class or homework. Emphasize that strong shoulder muscles will help your child to keep the shoulders back, back straight, and head and eyes in a good position for learning.
4. Discuss the need to perform this exercise with gentle, slow movements to allow the shoulders muscles to get strong.
5. Complete an appropriate set of repetitions, depending upon your child's strengths and needs, or the amount that has been recommended as Occupational Therapy "homework."
6. Suggest that your child use these shrugs whenever he or she feels that his or her shoulders are getting tired during handwriting activities, as well as gross motor games.

For older children:

1. Discuss the purpose of the shoulder shrug activity for both shoulder strengthening to assist in pencil control and pencil grip, as well as for those times when his or her shoulders feel "tight" or tired during class or homework.
2. Demonstrate and discuss the movements of the shoulder:

- a. Begin by standing or sitting tall with a straight back and relaxed shoulders (positioned in a neutral position).
  - b. Demonstrate the “I don’t know Position” by bringing your shoulders up toward your ears for a shrug (scapular elevation). Make note that this is different than the
  - c. “Turtle Pose” where the shoulders stay in place and the head ducks down between them.
  - d. Demonstrate and explain that the “best shoulder position” for working at a desk is in the “middle” of these two positions (neutral position).
  - e. Demonstrate the “Sad Position” where the shoulders droop forward (scapular protraction). Explain that if you give yourself a “bear hug,” you will bring your shoulders forward into the Sad Position. Make note that this is different when you push your shoulders back to “pinch them together, creating the “Soldier Position.”
  - f. Demonstrate and explain again that the “best shoulder position” for working at a desk is in the “middle” of these two positions (neutral position).
  - g. Have your child participate in the poses with you to demonstrate his understanding of the shoulder positions. Have your child name the relaxed shoulder position, Turtle Pose, Sad Position, Soldier Position, and best shoulder position along with you.
3. Demonstrate and explain the shoulder shrug (as it is described below):
    - a. Begin by standing or sitting tall with a straight back and neutral shoulders.
    - b. Bring the shoulders up toward the ears.
    - c. Be sure that your child is standing or sitting with correct posture, with a straight back and relaxed shoulders. As he or she shrugs, remind him to bring the shoulders up and to avoid the “Turtle Pose” (ducking the head down in between the shoulders). It is important to note if your child is maintaining his or her head and eyes in a forward-looking position. If your child has difficulty with this postural aspect, you might want to discuss this with the Occupational Therapist.
  4. Discuss the need to perform this exercise with gentle, slow movements to allow the shoulders muscles to get strong.
  5. Complete an appropriate set of repetitions, depending upon your child’s strengths and needs, or the amount that has been recommended as Occupational Therapy “homework.”
  6. Suggest that your child use these shrugs whenever he or she feels that his or her shoulders are getting tired during handwriting activities, as well as gross motor games.

### **The Full and Empty Game (Shoulder Movement Exercise):**

**Muscle Groups Addressed:** shoulder and arm

**Enhances Awareness for:** occurrence of fatigued shoulder muscles

**Repetitions:** Complete the repetitions recommended by your child’s Occupational Therapist

#### **For all children:**

1. Discuss the purpose of the Empty and Full Game for helping your child strengthen his or her shoulders to make it easier to move a pencil smoothly across the paper during writing assignments, as well as for those times when his or her shoulders feel “tight” or tired during class or homework.
2. Demonstrate and explain the Full and Empty Game (as it is described below):
  - a. Begin by standing or sitting tall with a straight back and relaxed shoulders (positioned away from the ears).
  - b. Stretch your arms out comfortably in front of you at waist level with your palms facing upward in the “full” position.
  - c. Slowly turn your arms so that your palms face downward into the “empty” position.
3. Have your child participate in the activity with you to demonstrate his or her understanding of the steps.
4. Discuss the need to perform this exercise with gentle, slow movements to allow the shoulders muscles to get strong and flexible for easy movement when during writing assignments.
5. Complete an appropriate set of repetitions, depending upon your child’s strengths and needs, or the amount that has been recommended as Occupational Therapy “homework.”

6. Suggest that your child use this activity whenever he or she feels that his or her shoulders get tired during handwriting activities, as well as gross motor games.

### Criss-Crosses:

**Muscles Groups Addressed:** core back muscles, shoulders, arms

**Enhances Awareness for:** correct posture, shoulder and arm strength, occurrence of shoulder and arm fatigue

**Repetitions:** Complete the repetitions recommended by your child's Occupational Therapist

#### For all children:

1. Discuss the purpose of the Criss-Cross exercise for helping your child to strengthen his or her shoulders to assist in keeping a straight back for correct posture and for moving the arm smoothly across the paper during writing assignments. Explain that it is also a good way to relax the shoulders when they feel "tight" or "tired."
2. Demonstrate and explain the two parts of the Criss-Cross Exercise (as they are described below):
  - a. Part 1: Begin by standing or sitting tall with a straight back and relaxed shoulders (positioned in a neutral position).
  - b. Stretch your arms up to the ceiling with your hands open and palms facing forward.
  - c. Move them back and forth slowly and gently, crossing over one another at midline, in what appears to be a "windshield washer" movement.
  - d. Part 2: Lower your outstretched arms to waist level with your hands open and palms facing downward.
  - e. Repeat the criss-cross movement, crossing one arm back and forth over the other.
3. Have your child participate in the activity with you to demonstrate his or her understanding of the steps. For the younger children, add a rhythmic song, such as "Row, Row Your Boat," for auditory input to guide their sequencing and speed of the movements.
4. Discuss the need to perform this exercise with gentle, slow movements to allow the shoulders muscles to get strong and flexible for easy movement during writing assignments.
5. Complete an appropriate set of repetitions, depending upon your child's strengths and needs, or the amount that has been recommended as Occupational Therapy "homework."
6. Suggest that your child use this activity whenever he or she feels that his or her shoulders get tired during handwriting activities, as well as gross motor games.

### Press and Release Exercises:

**Muscle Groups Addressed:** shoulders and arms for stability; hands, fingers, and thumbs for pencil control skills

**Enhances Awareness for:** hand, finger, and thumb strength for pencil grip and pressure, occurrence of hand, finger, and thumb fatigue and/or pain

**Repetitions:** Complete the repetitions recommended by your child's Occupational Therapist

#### For all children:

1. Discuss the purpose of the Press and Release exercises for helping your child to strengthen the shoulders and arms to assist in stabilizing the hand, fingers, and thumb for holding a pencil without pain or fatigue during writing assignments. Explain that it is also a good way to relax the shoulders, arms, hands, and fingers when he or she has been working on handwriting activities.
2. Demonstrate and explain the Press and Release exercise (as it is described below):

- a. Begin by sitting or standing tall, with a straight back, relaxed shoulders (in a neutral position), and body, head, and eyes facing in a forward direction.
- b. Place the palms of your hands together at chest level.
- c. Push them together with mild resistance for about 2 seconds and then release.
3. Have your child participate in the activity with you to demonstrate his or her understanding of the steps. Demonstrate “mild resistance” with hand-over-hand assistance over the backs of your child’s hands, pushing them together, and discussing “too much” and “too little” pressure.
4. Discuss the need to perform this exercise with gentle, slow movements to allow the shoulders muscles to get strong and flexible and to stretch the hands and fingers for easy movement during writing assignments.
5. Complete an appropriate set of repetitions, depending upon your child’s strengths and needs, or the amount that has been recommended as Occupational Therapy “homework.”
6. Suggest that your child use this activity whenever he or she feels that his or her shoulders, fingers, or hands are getting tired during handwriting activities, as well as gross motor games.

### **Let Your Fingers Do the Work:**

**Muscle Groups Addressed:** hands, fingers, and thumbs for finger dexterity and in-hand manipulation skills

**Enhances Awareness for:** hand, finger, and thumb strength for pencil grip and pressure, occurrence of hand, finger, and thumb fatigue and/or pain

**Repetitions:** Complete the repetitions recommended by your child’s Occupational Therapist

#### For all children:

1. Discuss the purpose of the Let Your Fingers Do the Work exercises for helping your child to strengthen his or her hand, fingers, and thumb to assist with holding a pencil without pain or fatigue during writing assignments. Explain that it is also a good way to relax the hands and fingers when he or she has been working on handwriting activities.
2. Demonstrate and explain the three parts of the Let Your Fingers Do the Work exercise (as they are described below):
  - a. Part 1 - Finger Dexterity: Begin by sitting with correct posture at a table or desk.
  - b. Rest your arms on the table in front of you, with your elbows bent close to the edge of the table or desk, your hands open, and your palms facing upward. You can also place your arms in an outstretched position, whichever is more comfortable for you and your child.
  - c. Beginning with one hand, bring your thumb into opposition, touching each finger with it using slow and gentle movements.
  - d. Switch to the other hand and complete the same movements.
  - e. Part 2 – Finger Flexors: Begin by sitting at a table or desk with correct posture, with your arms resting on the table in the same position as above.
  - f. Flex and extend your fingers to open and close your hand using slow and gentle movements. To add tactile input to this activity, place a palm-sized piece of therapeutic putty or play dough in your palm and squeeze it as you flex. Roll the putty back into a ball as it flattens out during the exercise.
  - g. Part 3 – In-hand Manipulation: Begin by sitting at a table or desk with correct posture, with your arms resting on the table in the same position as above.
  - h. Place a cotton ball or small eraser in the palm of your hand and move it around with slow movements using only the fingers of that hand, keeping it from falling out of your palm.
3. Have your child participate in the activities with you to demonstrate his or her understanding of the steps.
4. Discuss the need to perform these exercises with gentle, slow movements to allow the finger and thumb muscles to get strong and flexible for easy movement during writing assignments.
5. Complete an appropriate set of repetitions, depending upon your child’s strengths and needs, or the amount that has been recommended as Occupational Therapy “homework.”



6. Suggest that your child use these activities whenever he or she feels that his or her fingers or hand is getting tired during handwriting activities.

#### **Warm-Up Activities:**

- Fine Motor Boot Camp\*
- Make Me Strong, Max\*
- Therapeutic Putty Exercises\*

#### **Skills Addressed (A) / Skills Enhanced (E)**

A Fine Motor Control: Pencil Control Skills (physical strengthening)

E Gross Motor Skills

E Visual Motor: Eye-Hand Coordination

\*Handouts for these activities can be obtained from your child's Occupational Therapist.

## Vision Skill Warm-Ups

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Pencil control skills are defined as those that give us the ability to maintain a comfortable grasp on the pencil while guiding it with precision through handwriting tasks. These skills depend on the efficiency of the eye to guide the hand as it produces a handwritten product. Pencil control skills are developed through a team effort where the fine and gross motor muscle groups provide tactile and visual input, as well as muscle strength.

Postural efficiency, then, is considered to be a foundational support for pencil control skills and the production of fluid, legible handwritten work. In that role, the postural muscles depend upon visual efficiency to guide the body in correct positioning, while the visual skills rely on the body to provide support for appropriate head and vision positioning.

Note: Children who demonstrate inefficient pencil control skills resulting from insufficient processing of tactile input would benefit from activities suggested in "The Problem with Pencil Pressure." Children who demonstrate inefficient pencil control skills resulting from insufficient physical strength would benefit from activities suggested in the "Pencil Control Tips and Tricks."

These activities enhance visual and postural efficiency for pencil control skills.

### Activities and Directions

Vision skills include those that are used for both distance and close work. Therefore, the Vision Skill Warm-Up Activities include both Gross Motor Movement Activities and Fine-Motor Movement Activities to assist in your selection to meet your child's needs. The instructions are provided in a "child-friendly" format.

Note: The completion of visual skill activities on a vertical surface positions the eyes looking straight ahead for optimal performance. This position enhances the development of motor memory for letter formations. If you decide to utilize this strategy, be sure that the activity surface is positioned just slightly higher than your child's shoulder height to achieve this visual goal.

#### 1. Breathing Warm-Ups:

**Vision Skills Addressed:** attention

**Enhances Awareness for:** relaxing the eyes during distance and close work

**Repetitions:** Complete the repetitions recommended by your child's Occupational Therapist

- a. Discuss the purpose of the Breathing Warm-Ups for helping your child to relax the eyes when he or she is completing activities that require attention skills, such as playing sports or classroom desk work like handwriting. Explain that these activities can cause our eyes to become "tired" and for us to lose our concentration. Deep breathing helps to relax the eyes and allows us to focus our attention on the activity.
- b. Demonstrate and explain the Deep Breathing Warm-Ups as follows:
  - 1) Let's begin by standing or sitting tall (for those children in wheelchairs or who have insufficient balance for standing during this activity) with a straight back, relaxing our shoulders (positioned in a neutral position), and keeping our head and eyes facing toward the front. Explain that good breathing techniques require correct posture in order for them to give us energy and increase our attention skills.
  - 2) Now, let's breathe in slowly through our nose, holding our breath there for about 1-2 seconds. Demonstrate this using a slightly exaggerated breathing technique.

- 3) Now, we'll let our breath out slowly through our mouth, opening our mouth just a little to let the air out. Explain that it should take about 4 seconds to complete the exhale.
  - 4) Point out the times for inhale and exhale and have your child count them for you as you demonstrate the breathing technique again.  
Note: Younger children should wait about 2-3 seconds before inhaling again, while teenagers should wait about 5-7 seconds.
- c. Have your child participate in the breathing exercise with you to demonstrate his or her understanding of the steps, while you count out the seconds as a guide.
  - d. Discuss the need to perform this exercise with gentle, slow movements to allow the body to take in and let out the air.
  - e. If your child has difficulty maintaining a slow, gently breathing technique, ask him or her to first visualize a person walking in "slow motion." You may try demonstrating this action to help your child visualize it. As your child "sees" or watches the feet move along slowly, have him or her breathe in and out along with those slow movements.
  - f. Complete the repetitions recommended by the Occupational Therapist for "homework."
  - g. Suggest that your child use this activity whenever he or she feels that his or her eyes are getting tired or that he or she is unable to focus on a task.

## 2. Yoga Warm-Ups:

**Vision Skills Addressed:** attention, binocular skills

**Enhances Awareness for:** appropriate head and eye placement, correct posture

**Repetitions:** Complete the repetitions recommended by your child's Occupational Therapist

- a. Breathing Warm-Ups: Before completing the Yoga Warm-Up Exercises, it is important to introduce or review the correct breathing technique for increasing energy and attention skills. The directions for the Breathing Warm-Ups are included above.
- b. Discuss the purpose of the Yoga Warm-Ups for helping your child relax his or her eyes during activities that require attention skills, such as playing sports or classroom desk work like handwriting. Explain that these activities can cause our eyes to become "tired" and for us to lose our concentration. Yoga exercises help to relax the eyes and allow us to focus our attention on the activity.
- c. Select one or more of the following yoga poses. They are introduced in beginning to advanced order. The instructions are "child friendly!"
  - 1) Mountain Pose:
    - a) Let's begin by taking a deep breath and letting it out, then standing or sitting tall (for those children in wheelchairs or who have insufficient balance for standing during this activity) with our feet together, a straight back, and our shoulders relaxed (positioned in a neutral position).
    - b) If you are standing:
      - Let's spread our feet out just a little bit to help us keep our balance (about 1-2").
      - Now, let's place our arms along our sides and keep our head and eyes facing forward. Explain that yoga activities require correct posture in order for them to give us energy and increase our attention skills.
      - Next, let's breathe in as we did in the breathing exercise while we raise our hands over our heads, keeping our arms straight.
      - Let's make sure that our hands are open and our palms are facing each other.
      - Now, let's hold that position for about 1-2 seconds, then bring our arms back down to our sides as we let our breath out slowly for about 4 seconds. Remind your child that this is the same breathing exercise as above.
    - c) If you are sitting:

- Now, let's place our arms along our sides and keep our head and eyes facing forward. Explain that yoga activities require correct posture in order for them to give us energy and increase our attention skills.
  - Next, let's breathe in as we did in the breathing exercise while we raise our hands over our heads, keeping our arms straight.
  - Let's make sure that our hands are open and our palms are facing each other.
  - Now, let's hold that position for about 1-2 seconds, then bring our arms back down to our sides as we let our breath out slowly for about 4 seconds. Remind your child that this is the same breathing exercise as above.
- d) Complete the repetitions recommended by the Occupational Therapist for "homework."

2) The Warrior:

- a) Let's begin by taking a deep breath and letting it out, then standing or sitting tall (for those children in wheelchairs or who have insufficient balance for standing during this activity) with our feet together, a straight back, and our shoulders relaxed (in a neutral position). Explain that yoga activities require correct posture in order for them to give us energy and increase our attention skills.
- b) If you are standing:
- Let's place our legs about 3-4' apart.
  - Now, let's place our hands on our hips for balance.
  - First, we will turn our right foot out at a 90-degree angle.
  - Then, we'll turn our left foot inward just a little bit.
  - Make sure we are keeping our shoulders relaxed.
  - Now, we'll raise our arms out to our sides at waist level, making sure our hands are open and our palms are facing downward.
  - Here comes the tricky part! Let's bend our right knee like we are going to do a squat, (at 90-degree angle).
  - We must be sure to keep our knee placed over our right ankle to keep us in balance.
  - Now, slowly, let's turn our heads and eyes so we can look over our right hand toward the wall. Remind your child to breathe in and out like you did during the Breathing Exercises while getting his or her balance.
  - (After 2-3 seconds) Now, let's straighten our knee and move our feet back together so that we can stand tall again and look forward. Now take a deep breath and let it out.
  - Next, let's try that on the left side.
  - Complete the repetitions recommended by the Occupational Therapist for "homework."
- c) If you are sitting:
- Let's begin by taking a deep breath and letting it out, then resting our feet flat.
  - Now, let's make sure we are keeping our shoulders relaxed.
  - Next, we'll place our hands on our hips.
  - Then, we'll raise our arms out to our sides at waist level making sure our hands are open and our palms are facing downward.
  - Now, slowly, let's turn our heads and eyes so we can look over our right hand toward the wall.
  - (After 2-3 seconds) Now it's time to turn bring our hands back to our sides and turn our heads to look forward and sit tall again. Then take a deep breath and let it out. Remind your child to breathe in and out like you did during the Breathing Exercises.
  - Now, let's try that on the left side.

- Complete the repetitions recommended by the Occupational Therapist for “homework.”

3) Tree Pose:

- Let’s begin by taking a deep breath and letting it out, then standing tall with our feet together, a straight back, and our shoulders relaxed in a neutral position, and our hands resting on our hips. For children who demonstrate insufficient balance for this activity, provide a wall beside or behind them for support.
- Next, let’s keep our legs straight and move our feet just a few inches apart.
- Now, let’s move our bodies just a little so that we are putting our weight on our left foot. Be sure that your child keeps his or her hips facing forward.
- Now, let’s keep our heads facing forward. Find something on the wall in front of you to focus your eyes on. We are going to use that later to keep our balance!
- Now, here’s the tricky part! Bend you right leg and put your right foot on the side of your left knee. You can demonstrate that the foot should be placed with the sole positioned just at the inside of the knee. (Older children may be able to position it inside their thighs.) You may need to position your child’s foot on the knee to initiate the pose.
- Let’s keep it there for a second or two while we get our balance. Remind your child to breath in and out like you did during the Breathing Exercises while he is getting his or her balance. Let’s focus on that point on the wall that we found before. Don’t move. Just look at it closely and don’t think about anything but that dot or object.
- Next, let’s take our hands off of our hips and bring them together in front of us with our palms touching.
- (After 2-3 seconds), now we can put our hands back on our hips and bring our foot back down to the floor. Then take a deep breath and let it out.
- Now, let’s try that on the other side!
- Complete the repetitions recommended by the Occupational Therapist for “homework.”

4) The Airplane Pose:

- Let’s begin by taking a deep breath and letting it out, then standing or sitting tall (for those children in wheelchairs or who have insufficient balance for standing during this activity) with our feet together, a straight back, and our shoulders relaxed (in a neutral position).
- If you are standing:
  - Now, let’s keep our heads facing forward. Find something on the wall in front of you to focus your eyes on. We are going to use that later to keep our balance!
  - Next, let’s keep our legs straight and move our feet just a few inches apart.
  - Now, let’s raise our arms up to place our hands by our waist and then stretch them out to our sides to help us keep our balance.
  - Depending upon your child’s balance skills,
    - have him or her stretch the right leg behind, lifting it just so the heel comes off the floor and the toes remain touching the floor. Be sure that your child keeps his or her eyes on the dot or object on the wall for balance.
    - or, have him or her extend the right leg behind and lifting it so that the foot is raised a few inches from the floor. Be sure that your child keeps his or her eyes on the dot or object on the wall for balance.
  - Slowly, let’s lean our body forward just a little bit. We can use our arms to help us balance. For children who demonstrate insufficient balance for this activity, provide a wall beside them for support.
  - Let’s make sure we focus on that point on the wall that we found before. Don’t move. Just look at it closely and don’t think about anything but that dot or object!

- (After 2-3 seconds) Now, let's bring our feet together and lower our hands down slowly. Take a deep breath and let it out.
  - After a little rest, let's try that again by lifting our left leg!
  - Complete the repetitions recommended by the Occupational Therapist for "homework."
- c) If you are sitting,
- Let's begin by taking a deep breath and letting it out, then resting our feet flat.
  - Now, let's make sure we are keeping our shoulders relaxed.
  - Let's keep our heads facing forward and find something on the wall in front of us to focus our eyes on.
  - Let's raise our arms up to place our hands by our waist and then stretch them out to our sides. Keep your eyes on the dot or object on the wall.
  - Slowly, let's lean our body forward just a little bit. We can use our arms to help us keep our balance. Keep your eyes on that dot or object!
  - Let's take another deep breath and let it out.
  - Now, let's slowly lean back and put our hands by our sides.
  - Complete the repetitions recommended by the Occupational Therapist for "homework."

### 3. Other Movement Warm-Ups:

#### a. Ball or Balloon Toss:

**Vision Skills Addressed:** attention

**Enhances Awareness for:** using the eyes to guide the body and the hands

#### **Materials you will need:**

- Soft balls in various sizes
- Balloons
- Lots of Space!

Ball and balloon toss activities provide children with the opportunity to "look before they leap" and enhance their attention skills with gross motor movement patterns and distance work. It is important to instruct them to use their eyes to look at the ball as it is being thrown or rolled toward them rather than looking at you as you toss it, and then to put their hands out to catch it. During the balloon toss, it is important to remind them that they must look up at it before they wave their arms to push it back toward you and to direct their arm movements to move the balloon in your direction.

#### **Warm-Up Activities:**

- The Cotton Ball Game\* and Blowing Bubbles\* assist in bringing the eyes outward for distance work
- The "Straws for Attention Game"\* assists in bringing the eyes inward and enhancing attention skills

#### b. The Alphabet in Space Game:

**Vision Skills Addressed:** attention for scanning, position in space, spatial relationships, figure-ground discrimination letter naming and matching

**Enhances Awareness for:** using smooth movements of the eyes to locate objects or edit work

**Materials you will need:**

- Upper- and lower case alphabet flash cards
- Lots of space!

**Directions:**

1. Clear a bit of space in your living room or the hallway to allow for lots of movement.
2. Mix up the upper- and lower-case alphabet flash card and toss them into the air.
3. After they fall to the floor, have your child select one and find its partner among the others on the floor.
4. Remind your child that it is better to take a moment to look around, using the eyes to help, rather than sifting through the letter models without paying attention to which ones he or she is picking out.

4. Fine Motor Activities:

Fine motor activities provide children with the opportunity to use their vision to guide their hands with close work. It is important to instruct them to keep their eyes on their work and to pay attention to how their hands are moving to complete the task. Fine motor activities enhance pencil control skills by drawing children's attention to the movement of their hands across the work surface as they compare their product with the model and in the ways in which they can amend their work to match the model.

Note: The completion of visual skill activities on a vertical surface enhances the development of motor memory for letter formation plans as it encourages large arm movements and positions the eyes looking straight ahead for optimal performance. If you decide to utilize this strategy, be sure that the activity surface is positioned just slightly higher than your child's shoulder height to achieve the visual goals.

a. Rainbow Color-Ups

**Vision Skills Addressed:** attention, visual-motor, and fine-motor skills for pencil control

**Enhances Awareness for:** using the eyes to guide the pencil or edit work

**Materials you will need:**

- Pencil control worksheets
- Age-appropriate handwriting paper or blank paper
- Pencils
- Colored Pencils
- Tissue and/or Tracing paper

**Directions:**

1. Provide your child with pencil control worksheets or handwritten models that include the strokes and shapes that are the focus of your therapy sessions. For example, top-down, horizontal, slanted, zig-zag, or wavy lines or circles.
2. Have your child complete the pencil control activity using one or more of the following strategies:

- a. Have your child place a piece of tissue or tracing paper over the worksheet and trace the shapes or strokes with colored pencils, layering the tracing with different colors each time. Challenge your child to cover the last color with the next to hide it.
  - b. Using the same tissue paper strategy as above, have your child complete the activity by tracing the shapes or strokes using a colored pencil. Then place a clean sheet of tissue or tracing paper over the worksheet and have your child trace it again with a pencil. Then have your child layer the copies with the pencil tracing on top to compare and edit his or her work. Finally, keeping the two copies layered, have your child correct any discrepancies detected on the pencil copy using a colored pencil.
3. These strategies can be completed on paper taped to the wall to enhance visual attention skills.

b. Drawing with Rulers:

**Vision Skills Addressed:** attention, visual-motor, and fine-motor skills for pencil control

**Enhances Awareness for:** using the eyes to guide the pencil or edit work

**Materials you will need:**

- Blank pieces of paper
- Large piece of paper taped to the wall
- Pencils
- Rulers
- Graph paper

**Directions:**

1. Provide your child with a blank piece of paper, a ruler, and a pencil.
2. Demonstrate the use of the ruler to create art that includes angles and lines.
3. Have your child create patterns using the ruler.
4. You can offer your child graph paper at first to help guide the use of the ruler in making straight lines.
5. Your child can also produce creations on a large piece of paper taped to the wall to build upper body coordination as well as enhance visual attention skills.

**Warm-Up Activities:**

- Fine Motor Boot Camp\*
- Gross Motor Boot Camp\*
- Make Me Strong, Max\*
- Therapeutic Putty Exercises\*

**Skills Addressed (A) / Skills Enhanced (E)**

- A Gross Motor Control: Postural Efficiency
- A Fine Motor Control: Shoulder, Arm, Hand, Wrist, and Finger Strengthening
- A Visual Attention
- E Visual Motor: Eye-Hand Coordination

\*Handouts for these activities can be obtained from your child's Occupational Therapist.



# Pencil Grip Tips and Tricks

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

A functional pencil grip is defined as one that allows the writer to manipulate a writing tool using fluid movements to produce legible handwritten work with ease and comfort in a timely manner. Ineffective pencil grips can result from inadequate strength in muscle groups, an insufficient processing of tactile input, as well as inefficient visual skills.

A functional pencil grip is facilitated and supported with appropriate paper positioning. Simple, easy to implement guides can be introduced easily into the classroom and at home to assist children in maintaining an efficient pencil grip.

**Note:** Children who demonstrate inefficient pencil control skills resulting from inadequate strength in muscle groups would benefit from activities suggested in "Pencil Control Strengthening Tips and Tricks," while those that are a result of insufficient processing of tactile input would benefit from activities suggested in "The Problem with Pencil Pressure." Students who demonstrate inefficient pencil control skills resulting from inefficient visual skills, would benefit from activities from "Vision Skill Warm-Ups."

These activities enhance wrist, hand, and finger stabilization and afford comfort for the writer in daily handwriting tasks.

## Materials You Will Need

- Cotton balls
- A 2-3" ringed binder
- Pencils
- Card stock

## Activities and Directions

**It is important to note** that pencil grip adaptations, such as rubber bands that are attached to the writer's wrist, should be used as temporary tools that facilitate a student's continued success with his or her educational tasks while the student is working on physical, sensory, or visual skill for efficient pencil grip and control. Those adaptations are not included here, as the following strategies are recommended for routine use to increase handwriting efficiency.

A \* beside an activity name indicates that the tip or trick is especially beneficial to **left-handed writers**.

**Note:** The completion of visual skill activities on a vertical surface positions the eyes looking straight ahead for optimal performance. This position enhances the development of motor memory for letter formations. If you decide to utilize this strategy, be sure that the activity surface is positioned just slightly higher than your child's shoulder height to achieve this visual goal.

### 1. The Cotton Ball Trick:

This strategy is recommended primarily to enhance your child's awareness of finger placement during handwriting tasks. It is unobtrusive and could be included in his or her home and classroom work. However, it is provided here as a strategy to guide your child toward independence with finger placement.

- a. Have your child place a cotton ball in the palm of his or her hand before picking up a pencil.
- b. During the writing task, instruct your child to keep the cotton ball from falling out of the palm by holding it there with the ring and little fingers.

### 2. \*A Vertical Surface:

- a. Position a 2-3" ringed binder horizontally on the desk at your child's midline with the binder side at the top.
- b. Slant the binder surface to the right or left appropriately to address your child's preferred writing hand, following the guidelines for Paper Positioning below.
- c. Then, have your child place his or her paper there for completion of handwriting activities.
- d. This adaptation allows the wrist to rest in a natural, slightly extended position and to use gravity to facilitate the production of fluid handwriting movements.
- e. This adaptation works well for **Left-Handed Writers** to encourage an efficient and comfortable wrist position for writing.

### 3. \*Pull Rather Than Push for Letter Formations:

Left-handed writers find it easier to pull their strokes from the right to the left rather than push their pencils across the paper from left to right to form letters such as "E, F, H, T, and t." While this style of penmanship may be unconventional, it is an acceptable practice for left-handers as it allows the writer to move his or her arm, hand, and pencil more fluidly across the paper with greater speed.

### 4. Paper Positioning Guidelines and Guide

Handwriting mastery requires a paper position that facilitates smooth wrist, elbow, and shoulder movements to guide the hand across the page. A slanted paper position allows the writer to use the hand, arm, and shoulder on the preferred side efficiently, while stabilizing the paper with his or her non-writing hand.

- a. The following paper placement guidelines are offered as my recommendation for writers using both manuscript and cursive writing styles.
  - 1) For all writers: The paper should be positioned at your child's midline with the bottom angle placed about 1" from the lower edge of the desk.
  - 2) \*For left-handed writers: The paper should be slanted to the right at about a 30-45-degree angle. This allows the writer to "push-rather-than-pull" the pencil across the page and to see where he or she is writing. This also helps the writer avoid smudging his or her work as the arm moves smoothly across the page. Your child's non-writing hand (or helper hand) should be placed at the top right corner and away from the writing and viewing surface to stabilize the paper.
  - 3) For right-handed writers: The paper should be slanted at about a 20-35-degree angle to the left. Your child's non-writing hand (or helper hand) should be placed at the top left corner and away from the writing and viewing surface to stabilize the paper.

Children typically discover their most comfortable paper slant as they begin to master their handwriting skills.

#### b. A Handy Paper Placement Guide

- 1) Cut a piece of cardstock the length and width of a ruler to use as a paper guide.
- 2) Place the guide on your child's desk above his or her binder and paper to serve as a guide for paper placement and appropriate slant.
- 3) Tape it in place for handwriting activities.
- 4) This tool can be introduced to the classroom and taped to your child's desk during handwriting tasks.

### 5. The "Drop It and Pick It Up" Game and Pencil Grip Guidelines

It is more important for a writer's pencil grip to be "functional" rather than to adhere to any specific developmental guidelines. Although the dynamic tripod grasp is considered to be the optimal grasping pattern for handwriting, most efficient writers develop their own functional pencil grip. The rule of thumb should be: If

a pencil grasp does not affect a student's handwriting by making it illegible, by slowing the speed, or by causing him or her pain, then it is considered to be a functional pencil grasp.

- a. Pencil Grip Guidelines: There are some simple rules that should be followed with any style of pencil grip.
  - 1) Your child's hand should rest on the paper using the ring and little finger for support.
  - 2) The thumb and index and long fingers should rest on the shaft using a comfortable pressure that does not cause hand or finger fatigue.

For Left-Handed Writers: The pencil should be held with their fingertips placed about 1-1 ½" from the tip with the pencil top pointed toward the left elbow. This allows the writers to see what they are writing and to avoid smudging their work.

For Right-Handed Writers: The pencil should be held with their fingertips placed closer to the pencil tip, approximately 1" from the tip with the pencil top pointed toward the right shoulder. If writers experience pain or fatigue with their fingers placed at this point on the shaft, they should also use a higher finger placement position.
  - 3) Some young writers find success with the use of pencils that have a shorter barrel, approximately 3.5", to allow them learn to manage their fingers as they manipulate the pencil during initial handwriting instruction.
  - 4) Some writers, especially as they begin to master their handwriting style, benefit from wider pencil or pen shafts that allow them to grasp the tool without using as much finger and thumb pressure to stabilize it during writing tasks. At times, a simple pencil grip will suffice to provide this support. **It is important to note** that if you feel your child is experiencing difficulty with managing his or her pencil as a result of insufficient finger and hand strength, consult with your child's Occupational Therapist about your concerns.
  
- b. The "Drop It and Pick It Up" Game:
  - 1) First, demonstrate the appropriate finger placement for pencil use. The "My Hand Has Two Sides" activity can help young children to understand the "worker" and "helper" roles for each side of the hand during handwriting activities. (This handout can be obtained from your child's Occupational Therapist.)
  - 2) Then, describe how the thumb, index, and long fingers act as the "worker group" – the ones that guide the pencil movements, while the ring and little fingers are labeled the "helper group" – the ones that keep the hand steady on the paper and let it glide along as the person writes.
  - 3) Then have your child place a pencil on the desk at his or her midline with the barrel horizontal and the tip pointed toward your child's preferred writing hand. (A right-handed writer would place the tip pointing to the right, while the left-handed writer would position it toward the left.)
  - 4) Next, have your child position his or her thumb and index fingers on the pencil shaft approximately 1 – 1 ½" from the tip. The other fingers should be tucked inside the palm. The Cotton Ball Trick can help with this part. (This handout can be obtained from your child's Occupational Therapist.)
  - 5) For the initial trials of this trick, allow your child to use his or her non-writing hand in the following step.
  - 6) Have your child pick up the pencil using the thumb and index fingers on his or her writing hand. Then have your child move the eraser end of the pencil with the non-writing hand, flipping the pencil over to rest it in the web space of the writing hand, then shifting the long finger under the pencil shaft. Ask your child to note that the pencil will rest on the long finger so that it can help to keep the pencil steady while writing.
  - 7) After your child has become familiar with this strategy, have him or her keep the "helper hand" on the table while following the directions in the next step.
  - 8) Have your child place the pencil back on the table as described in Step 3 and position his or her fingers on the shaft as in Step 4. It will be important to demonstrate the following steps prior to having your child perform them.

- 9) Have your child pick up the pencil using the thumb and index fingers on his or her writing hand. Then have your child move his or her long finger into position for writing by shifting it out of the palm and using it to push the pencil barrel away and tilting the eraser end into the web space of the hand.
- 10) As your child picks the pencil off the table with the thumb and index fingers, you may need to help guide the long finger to turn the pencil over. The Cotton Ball Trick may assist your child in keeping the ring and little fingers in the palm for this task.
- 11) As your child progresses with this skill, be sure to remove the cotton ball from the palm to gain proficiency.
- 12) Finally, have your child drop the pencil anywhere on the desk and pick it up using the strategy outlined above.

#### **Warm-Up Activities:**

- Fine Motor Boot Camp\*
- Make Me Strong, Max\*
- Therapeutic Putty Exercises\*

#### **Skills Addressed (A) / Skills Enhanced (E)**

- A Pencil Control Skills
- E Visual Attention
- E Visual Motor: Eye-Hand Coordination

\*Handouts for these activities can be obtained from your child's Occupational Therapist.

## Fine Motor Boot Camp

Fine motor skills for handwriting activities involve the small muscles of the hands and allow the writer to manage a tool for writing and erasing during handwriting tasks. Fine motor skill development relies heavily on the development of gross motor muscle groups, as well, to provide support and stability to the hand and fingers for the production of legible and fluid handwritten work. Fine motor difficulties, therefore, can be the result of gross and/or fine motor skill needs.

Note: Children who demonstrate fine motor skill difficulties resulting from inefficient gross motor skill development would benefit from the Posture Perfect – Gross Motor Boot Camp activities.

These activities encourage the development of fine motor skills for handwriting legibility and fluency.

### Activities and Directions

Fine motor skills include those that involve the shoulder, arm, wrist, hands, fingers, and thumb. The Fine Motor Boot Camp Activities are presented in developmental order beginning with the larger muscle groups and progressing to the smaller groups to assist in your selection to meet your child's needs. The instructions are provided in a child-friendly format.

All Grade Levels:

#### Breathing Warm-Ups:

**Vision Skills Addressed:** attention

**Enhances Awareness for:** relaxing the eyes during distance and close work

**Repetitions:** Complete the repetitions recommended by your child's Occupational Therapist

1. Discuss the purpose of the Breathing Warm-Ups for helping your child to relax his or her eyes while completing activities that require attention skills, such as playing sports or classroom desk work like handwriting. Explain that these activities can cause our eyes to become "tired" and for us to lose our concentration. Deep breathing helps to relax the eyes and allows us to focus our attention on the activity.
2. Demonstrate and explain the Deep Breathing Warm-Ups:
  - a. Let's begin by standing or sitting tall with a straight back, relaxing our shoulders (positioned in a neutral position), and keeping our head and eyes facing toward the front. Explain that good breathing techniques require correct posture in order for them to give us energy and increase our attention skills.
  - b. Now, let's breathe in slowly through our nose, holding our breath there for about 1-2 seconds. Demonstrate this using a slightly exaggerated breathing technique.
  - c. Now, we'll let our breath out slowly through our mouth, opening our mouth just a little to let the air out. Explain that it should take about 4 seconds to complete the exhale.
  - d. Point out the times for inhale and exhale and have your child count them for you as you demonstrate the breathing technique again.  
Note: Younger children should wait about 2-3 seconds before inhaling again, while teenagers should wait about 5-7 seconds.
3. Have your child participate in the breathing exercise with you to demonstrate an understanding of the steps, while you count out the seconds as a guide.
4. Discuss the need to perform this exercise with gentle, slow movements to allow the body to take in and let out the air.
5. If your child has difficulty maintaining a slow, gently breathing technique, ask him or her to first visualize a person walking in "slow motion." (You may try demonstrating this action to help him visualize it.) As your

child “sees” or watches the feet move slowly along, have him or her breathe in and out with those slow movements.

6. Complete the repetitions recommended by the Occupational Therapist for “homework.”
7. Suggest that your child use this activity whenever he or she feels that his or her eyes are getting tired or that he or she is unable to focus on a task.

### **The I Don’t Know Game (Shoulder Shrugs):**

**Muscle Groups Addressed:** shoulders and neck

**Enhances Awareness for:** correct posture with neutral shoulder position and appropriate head and eye positions; the occurrence of fatigued shoulder muscles

**Repetitions:** Complete the repetitions recommended by your child’s Occupational Therapist

For younger children:

1. Demonstrate and discuss the movements of the shoulder:
  - a. Begin by standing or sitting tall with a straight back and relaxed shoulders (positioned in a neutral position).
  - b. Demonstrate the “I don’t know Position” by bringing your shoulders up toward your ears for a shrug (scapular elevation). Make note that this is different than the
  - c. “Turtle Pose” where the shoulders stay in place and the head ducks down between them.
  - d. Demonstrate and explain that the “best shoulder position” for working at a desk is in the “middle” of these two positions (neutral position).
  - e. Demonstrate the “Sad Position” where the shoulders droop forward (scapular protraction). Explain that if you give yourself a “bear hug,” you will bring your shoulders forward into the Sad Position. Make note that this is different than when you push your shoulders back to “pinch them together, creating the “Soldier Position.”
  - f. Demonstrate and explain again that the “best shoulder position” for working at a desk is in the “middle” of these two positions (neutral position).
  - g. Have your child participate in the poses with you to demonstrate an understanding of the shoulder positions. Have your child name the relaxed shoulder position, Turtle Pose, Sad Position, Soldier Position, and best shoulder position along with you.
2. Demonstrate and explain the “I Don’t Know Game (as it is described below):”
  - a. Stand or sit with the “best shoulder position.”
  - b. Take turns asking silly questions and answering with an “I don’t know” shrug. Be sure that your child is standing or sitting with correct posture, with a straight back and relaxed shoulders. As your child shrugs, remind him or her to bring the shoulders up and to avoid the “Turtle Pose” – ducking the head down in between the shoulders. It is important to note if your child is maintaining his or her head and eyes in a forward-looking position. If your child has difficulty with this postural aspect, you might want to discuss this with the Occupational Therapist.
3. Discuss the purpose of the shoulder shrugs for both shoulder strengthening and for relaxing the shoulders when working on class or homework. Emphasize that strong shoulder muscles will help to keep the shoulders back, the back straight, and the head and eyes in a good position for learning.
4. Discuss the need to perform this exercise with gentle, slow movements to allow the shoulders muscles to get strong.
5. Complete an appropriate set of repetitions, depending upon your child’s strengths and needs, or the amount that has been recommended as Occupational Therapy “homework.”
6. Suggest that your child use these shrugs whenever he or she feels that his or her shoulders are getting tired during handwriting activities, as well as gross motor games.

### For older children:

1. Discuss the purpose of the shoulder shrug activity for both shoulder strengthening to assist in pencil control and pencil grip, as well as for those times when his or her shoulders feel “tight” or tired during class or homework.
2. Demonstrate and discuss the movements of the shoulder:
  - a. Begin by standing or sitting tall with a straight back and relaxed shoulders (positioned in a neutral position).
  - b. Demonstrate the “I don’t know Position” by bringing your shoulders up toward your ears for a shrug (scapular elevation). Make note that this is different than the
  - c. “Turtle Pose” where the shoulders stay in place and the head ducks down between them.
  - d. Demonstrate and explain that the “best shoulder position” for working at a desk is in the “middle” of these two positions (neutral position).
  - e. Demonstrate the “Sad Position” where the shoulders droop forward (scapular protraction). Explain that if you give yourself a “bear hug,” you will bring your shoulders forward into the Sad Position. Make note that this is different when you push your shoulders back to “pinch them together, creating the “Soldier Position.”
  - f. Demonstrate and explain again that the “best shoulder position” for working at a desk is in the “middle” of these two positions (neutral position).
  - g. Have your child participate in the poses with you to demonstrate an understanding of the shoulder positions by naming the relaxed shoulder position, Turtle Pose, Sad Position, Soldier Position, and best shoulder position along with you.
3. Demonstrate and explain the shoulder shrug (as it is described below):
  - a. Begin by standing or sitting tall with a straight back and neutral shoulders.
  - b. Bring the shoulders up toward the ears.
  - c. Be sure that your child is standing or sitting with correct posture, with a straight back and relaxed shoulders. As your child shrugs, remind him or her to bring the shoulders up and to avoid the “Turtle Pose” – ducking the head down in between the shoulders. It is important to note if your child is maintaining his or her head and eyes in a forward-looking position. If your child has difficulty with this postural aspect, you might want to discuss this with the Occupational Therapist.
4. Discuss the need to perform this exercise with gentle, slow movements to allow the shoulders muscles to get strong.
5. Complete an appropriate set of repetitions, depending upon your child’s strengths and needs, or the amount that has been recommended as Occupational Therapy “homework.”
6. Suggest that your child use these shrugs whenever he or she feels that his or her shoulders are getting tired during handwriting activities, as well as gross motor games.

### **The Full and Empty Game (Shoulder Movement Exercise):**

**Muscle Groups Addressed:** shoulder and arm

**Enhances Awareness for:** occurrence of fatigued shoulder muscles

**Repetitions:** Complete the repetitions recommended by your child’s Occupational Therapist

### For all children:

1. Discuss the purpose of the Empty and Full Game for helping your child strengthen his or her shoulders for moving the pencil smoothly across the paper during writing assignments, as well as for those times when his or her shoulders feel “tight” or tired during class or homework.
2. Demonstrate and explain the Full and Empty Game (as it is described below):
  - a. Begin by standing or sitting with a straight back and relaxed shoulders (positioned away from the ears).

- b. Stretch your arms out comfortably in front of you at waist level with your palms facing upward in the “full” position.
  - c. Slowly turn your arms so that your palms face downward into the “empty” position.
3. Have your child participate in the activity with you to demonstrate an understanding of the steps.
4. Discuss the need to perform this exercise with gentle, slow movements to allow the shoulders muscles to get strong and flexible for easy movement during writing activities.
5. Complete an appropriate set of repetitions, depending upon your child’s strengths and needs, or the amount that has been recommended as Occupational Therapy “homework.”
6. Suggest that your child use this activity whenever he or she feels that his or her shoulders are getting tired during handwriting activities, as well as gross motor games.

**Press and Release Exercises:**

**Muscle Groups Addressed:** shoulders and arms for stability; hands, fingers, and thumbs for pencil control skills

**Enhances Awareness for:** hand, finger, and thumb strength for pencil grip and pressure, occurrence of hand, finger, and thumb fatigue and/or pain

**Repetitions:** Complete the repetitions recommended by your child’s Occupational Therapist

**For all children:**

1. Discuss the purpose of the Press and Release exercises for helping your child strengthen the shoulders and arms and to stabilize his or her hand, fingers, and thumb for holding a pencil without pain or fatigue during writing assignments. Explain that it is also a good way to relax the shoulders, arms, hands, and fingers while working on handwriting activities.
2. Demonstrate and explain the Press and Release exercise (as it is described below):
  - a. Begin by sitting or standing tall, with a straight back, relaxed shoulders (in a neutral position), and body, head, and eyes facing in a forward direction.
  - b. Place the palms of your hands together at chest level.
  - c. Push them together with mild resistance for about 2 seconds and then release.
3. Have your child participate in the activity with you to demonstrate an understanding of the steps. Demonstrate “mild resistance” with hand-over-hand assistance over the backs of his or her hands, pushing them together, and discussing “too much” and “too little” pressure.
4. Discuss the need to perform this exercise with gentle, slow movements to allow the shoulders muscles to get strong and flexible and to stretch the hands and fingers for easy movement during writing activities.
5. Complete an appropriate set of repetitions, depending upon your child’s strengths and needs, or the amount that has been recommended as Occupational Therapy “homework.”
6. Suggest that your child use this activity whenever he or she feels that his or her shoulders, fingers, or hands are getting tired during handwriting activities, as well as gross motor games.

**Let Your Fingers Do the Work:**

**Muscle Groups Addressed:** hands, fingers, and thumbs for finger dexterity and in-hand manipulation skills

**Enhances Awareness for:** hand, finger, and thumb strength for pencil grip and pressure, occurrence of hand, finger, and thumb fatigue and/or pain

**Repetitions:** Complete the repetitions recommended by your child’s Occupational Therapist

**For all children:**



1. Discuss the purpose of the Let Your Fingers Do the Work exercises for helping your child strengthen the hand, fingers, and thumb for holding a pencil without pain or fatigue during writing assignments. Explain that it is also a good way to relax the hands and fingers during handwriting activities.
2. Demonstrate and explain the three parts of the Let Your Fingers Do the Work exercise (as they are described below):
  - a. Part 1 - Finger Dexterity: Begin by sitting with correct posture at a table or desk.
  - b. Rest your arms on the table in front of you, with your elbows bent close to the edge of the table or desk, your hands open, and your palms facing upward. You can also place your arms in an outstretched position, whichever is more comfortable for you and your child.
  - c. Beginning with one hand, bring your thumb into opposition, touching each finger with it using slow and gentle movements.
  - d. Switch to the other hand and complete the same movements.
  - e. Part 2 – Finger Flexors: Begin by sitting at a table or desk with correct posture, with your arms resting on the table in the same position as above.
  - f. Flex and extend your fingers to open and close your hand using slow and gentle movements. To add tactile input to this activity, place a palm-sized piece of therapeutic putty or play dough in your palm and squeeze it as you flex. Roll the putty back into a ball as it flattens out during the exercise.
  - g. Part 3 – In-hand Manipulation: Begin by sitting at a table or desk with correct posture, with your arms resting on the table in the same position as above.
  - h. Place a cotton ball or small eraser in the palm of your hand, one at a time, and move it around using only the fingers of that hand with slow movements, keeping it from falling out of your palm.
3. Have your child participate in the activities with you to demonstrate an understanding of the steps.
4. Discuss the need to perform these exercises with gentle, slow movements to allow the finger and thumb muscles to get strong and flexible for easy movement during writing activities.
5. Complete an appropriate set of repetitions, depending upon your child's strengths and needs, or the amount that has been recommended as Occupational Therapy "homework."
6. Suggest that your child use these activities whenever he or she feels that his or her fingers and hand are getting tired during handwriting activities.

### One-Handed Tricks:

**Muscle Groups Addressed:** hands, fingers, and thumbs for finger dexterity and in-hand manipulation skills

**Enhances Awareness for:** hand, finger, and thumb strength for pencil grip and pressure, occurrence of hand, finger, and thumb fatigue and/or pain

**Repetitions:** Complete the repetitions recommended by your child's Occupational Therapist

### For all children:

1. Discuss the purpose of the One-Handed Tricks exercises for helping your child strengthen the hand, fingers, and thumb for holding a pencil without pain or fatigue during writing assignments. Explain that it is also a good way to relax the hands and fingers when he or she has been working on handwriting activities.
2. Demonstrate and explain the three parts of the One-Handed Tricks exercise:
 

Part 1 - Finger Dexterity:

  - a. Let's begin by sitting with correct posture at a table or desk. Now let's take a deep breath in and let it out slowly.
  - b. Rest your arms on the table in front of you, with your elbows bent close to the edge of the table or desk, your hands open, and your palms facing upward. You can also place your arms in an outstretched position, whichever is more comfortable for you.
  - c. Let's begin with the right hand. Bring your thumb in to touch each finger using slow and gentle movements. (Opposition)
  - d. Now, let's switch to the other hand and complete the same movements.

### Part 2 – Finger Flexors:

- a. Let's keep our arms and hand resting on the desk (as positioned above).
- b. Now, with both hands, flex and extend your fingers to open and close your hand using slow and gentle movements. To add tactile input to this activity, place a palm-sized piece of therapeutic putty or play dough in your palm and squeeze it as you flex. Roll the putty back into a ball as it flattens out during the exercise.

### Part 3 – In-hand Manipulation:

- a. Let's keep our arms and hands in the same position (as above).
  - b. And let's place a cotton ball or small eraser in the palm of your right hand.
  - c. Now move it around using only the fingers of that hand with slow movements, keeping it from falling out of your palm.
3. Have your child participate in the activities with you to demonstrate an understanding of the steps.
  4. Discuss the need to perform these exercises with gentle, slow movements to allow the finger and thumb muscles to get strong and flexible for easy movement during writing activities.
  5. Complete an appropriate set of repetitions, depending upon your child's strengths and needs, or the amount that has been recommended as Occupational Therapy "homework."
  6. Suggest that your child use these activities whenever he or she feels that his or her fingers and hand are getting tired during handwriting activities.

## **Back-to-the-Basics Fine Motor Activities**

Play, discovery, and creative activities are excellent warm-up and session tasks that will develop pride and self-esteem as well as the focus skill. The following activities are offered as suggestions for fine motor skill builders to assist you in meeting your child's needs.

### For younger children: Grades K-2

1. Therapeutic putty, play dough, or clay activities
2. Coloring by number
3. Puzzles
4. Lacing boards
5. Stringing beads
6. Construction games with appropriately sized pieces to enhance the student's skills
7. Craft activities, such as construction paper placemats or
8. Collages
9. Activities that include tweezers, tongs, clothespins, or a one-hole punch
10. Scissor activities such as crafts or cutting along highlighted lines
11. Tracing activities
12. Dot grid activities
13. Copy Cat Drawings\*

### For the older children: Grades 3-6

1. Therapeutic putty or clay activities
2. The Drawing with Rulers Game (see Vision Skill Warmups)
3. Construction games with appropriately sized pieces to enhance your child's skills
4. Puzzles
5. Strategy games that utilize small cards or pieces
6. Graph and dot grid activities
7. Copy Cat Drawings\* or Sketchbook activities
8. Sewing or cross stitch activities

### Warm-Up Activities:

- Fine Motor Boot Camp\*
- Make Me Strong, Max\*
- Therapeutic Putty Exercises\*

### Skills Addressed (A) / Skills Enhanced (E)

- A Pencil Control Skills
- A Fine Motor Skills – physical strengthening
- E Visual Motor: Eye-Hand Coordination

\*Handouts for these activities can be obtained from your child's Occupational Therapist.

# Posture Perfect Gross Motor Boot Camp

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Postural efficiency forms the foundation for pencil control skills and the production of fluid and legible handwritten work. Strong core muscles help students to keep an upright posture that facilitates the smooth movements of the arm and hand during handwriting activities. Postural skills rely upon visual efficiency, as well, for the development of correct body positioning that in turn provides support for appropriate head and eye positioning for vision skills.

Note: Children who demonstrate postural efficiency difficulties resulting from inefficient vision skill development would benefit from the Vision Skill Warm Up activities.

These activities enhance postural efficiency skills for the development of pencil control skills.

## Activities and Directions

Postural skills include those that provide strength and endurance for correct standing and sitting posture during both gross and fine motor work. The Posture Perfect Activities are presented from beginning to more advanced to assist in your selection to meet your child's needs. The instructions are provided in a "child-friendly" format.

All Grade Levels:

### Breathing Warm-Ups:

**Postural Skills Addressed:** Back, shoulder, head, and eye placement

**Enhances Awareness for:** position of back, shoulder, neck, head, and eyes during distance and close work

**Repetitions:** Complete the repetitions recommended by your child's Occupational Therapist

1. Discuss the purpose of the Breathing Warm-Ups for helping your child to relax his or her eyes when completing activities that require attention skills, such as playing sports or classroom desk work like handwriting. Explain that these activities can cause our eyes to become "tired" and for us to lose our concentration. Deep breathing helps to relax the eyes and allows us to focus our attention on the activity.
2. Demonstrate and explain the Deep Breathing Warm-Ups:
  - a. Let's begin by standing or sitting tall with a straight back, relaxing our shoulders (positioned in a neutral position), and keeping our head and eyes facing toward the front. Explain that good breathing techniques require correct posture in order for them to give us energy and increase our attention skills.
  - b. Now, let's breathe in slowly through our nose, holding our breath there for about 1-2 seconds. Demonstrate this using a slightly exaggerated breathing technique.
  - c. Now, we'll let our breath out slowly through our mouth, opening our mouth just a little to let the air out. Explain that it should take about 4 seconds to complete the exhale.
  - d. Point out the times for inhale and exhale and have your child count them for you as you demonstrate the breathing technique again.  
Note: Younger children should wait about 2-3 seconds before inhaling again, while teenagers should wait about 5-7 seconds.
3. Have your child participate in the breathing exercise with you to demonstrate an understanding of the steps, while you count out the seconds as a guide.
4. Discuss the need to perform this exercise with gentle, slow movements to allow the body to take in and let out the air.
5. If your child has difficulty maintaining a slow, gently breathing technique, ask him or her to first visualize a person walking in "slow motion." (You may try demonstrating this action to help him visualize it.) As your child "sees" or watches the feet move slowly along, have him or her breathe in and out with those slow movements.

6. Complete the repetitions recommended by the Occupational Therapist for “homework.”
7. Suggest that your child use this activity whenever he or she feels that his or her eyes are getting tired or that he or she is unable to focus on a task.

### Yoga Warm-Ups:

**Postural Skills Addressed:** Back, legs, shoulders, neck, head, and eye placement

**Enhances Awareness for:** appropriate body and eye placement to maintain correct posture

**Repetitions:** Begin with 1-2 poses, increasing to 3-4 if appropriate.

1. Breathing Warm-Ups: Before completing the Yoga Warm-Up Exercises, it is important to introduce or review the correct breathing technique for increasing energy and attention skills. The directions for the Breathing Warm-Ups are included above.
2. Discuss the purpose of the Yoga Warm-Ups for helping your child to relax his or her eyes when completing activities that require attention skills, such as playing sports or classroom desk work like handwriting. Explain that these activities can cause our eyes to become “tired” and for us to lose our concentration. Yoga exercises help to relax the eyes and allows us to focus our attention on the activity.
3. Select one or more of the following beginner yoga poses. The instructions are “child friendly!”
  - a. Mountain Pose:
    - 1) Let’s begin by taking a deep breath and letting it out, then standing or sitting tall (for those children in wheelchairs or who have insufficient balance for standing during this activity) with our feet together, a straight back, and our shoulders relaxed (positioned in a neutral position).
    - 2) If you are standing:
      - Let’s spread our feet out just a little bit to help us to keep our balance (about 1-2”).
      - Now, let’s place our arms along our sides and keep our head and eyes facing forward. Explain that yoga activities require correct posture in order for them to give us energy and attention skills.
      - Next, let’s breathe in as we did in the breathing exercise while we raise our hands overhead keeping our arms straight.
      - Let’s make sure that our hands are open and our palms are facing each other.
      - Now, let’s hold that position for about 1-2 seconds, then bring our arms back down to our sides as we let our breath out slowly for about 4 seconds. Remind your child that this is the same breathing exercise as above.
    - 3) If you are sitting:
      - Now, let’s place our arms along our sides and keep our head and eyes facing forward. Explain that yoga activities require correct posture in order for them to give us energy and increase our attention skills.
      - Next, let’s breathe in as we did in the breathing exercise while we raise our hands overhead keeping our arms straight.
      - Let’s make sure that our hands are open and our palms are facing each other.
      - Now, let’s hold that position for about 1-2 seconds, then bring our arms back down to our sides as we let our breath out slowly for about 4 seconds. Remind your child that this is the same breathing exercise as above.
    - 4) Complete the repetitions recommended by the Occupational Therapist for “homework.”
  - b. The Warrior:
    - 1) Let’s begin by taking a deep breath and letting it out, then standing or sitting tall (for those children in wheelchairs or who have insufficient balance for standing during this activity) with our feet together, a straight back, and our shoulders relaxed (in a neutral position). Explain that yoga activities require correct posture in order for them to give us energy and increase our attention skills.
    - 2) If you are standing:

- Let's place our legs about 3-4' apart.
  - Now, let's place our hands on our hips for balance.
  - First, we will turn our right foot out at a 90-degree angle.
  - Then, we'll shift our left foot inward just a little bit.
  - Make sure we are keeping our shoulders relaxed.
  - Now, we'll raise our arms out to our sides at waist level making sure our hands are open and our palms are facing downward.
  - Here comes the tricky part! Let's bend our right knee like we are going to do a squat, (at 90-degree angle).
  - We must be sure to keep our knee placed over our right ankle to keep us in balance.
  - Now, slowly, let's turn our heads and eyes so we can look over our right hand toward the wall. Remind your child to breathe in and out like you did during the Breathing Exercises while he or she is maintaining balance.
  - (After 2-3 seconds) Now, let's straighten our knee and move our feet back together so that we can stand tall again and look forward. Now take a deep breath and let it out.
  - Next, let's try that on the left side.
  - Complete the repetitions recommended by the Occupational Therapist for "homework."
- 3) If you are sitting,
- Let's begin by taking a deep breath and letting it out, then resting our feet flat.
  - Now, let's make sure we are keeping our shoulders relaxed.
  - Next, we'll place our hands on our hips.
  - Then, we'll raise our arms out to our sides at waist level making sure our hands are open and our palms are facing downward.
  - Now, slowly, let's turn our heads and eyes so we can look over our right hand toward the wall.
  - (After 2-3 seconds) Now it's time to turn bring our hands back to our sides and turn our heads to look forward and sit tall again. Then take a deep breath and let it out. Remind your child to breathe in and out like you did during the Breathing Exercises.
  - Now, let's try that on the left side.
  - Complete the repetitions recommended by the Occupational Therapist for "homework."

c. Tree Pose:

- 1) Let's begin by taking a deep breath and letting it out, then standing tall with our feet together, a straight back, and our shoulders relaxed in a neutral position, and our hands resting on our hips. For children who demonstrate insufficient balance for this activity, provide a wall beside or behind them or support.
- 2) Next, let's keep our legs straight and move our feet just a few inches apart.
- 3) Now, let's move our bodies just a little so that we are putting our weight on our left foot. Be sure that your child keeps his hips facing forward.
- 4) Now, let's keep our heads facing forward. Find something on the wall in front of you to focus your eyes on. We are going to use that later to keep our balance!
- 5) Now, here's the tricky part! Bend you right leg and put your right foot on the side of your left knee. You can demonstrate that the foot should be placed with the sole positioned just at the inside of the knee. (Older children may be able to position it inside their thighs.) Initially, you may need to help your child position the foot appropriately.
- 6) Let's keep it there for a second or two while we get our balance. Remind your child to breathe in and out like you did during the Breathing Exercises while he or she is maintaining balance. Let's focus on that point on the wall that we found before. Don't move. Just look at it closely and don't think about anything but that dot or object.
- 7) Next, let's take our hands off of our hips and bring them together in front of us with our palms touching.
- 8) (After 2-3 seconds), now we can put our hands back on our hips and bring our foot back down to the floor. Then take a deep breath and let it out.

- 9) Now, let's try that on the other side!
  - 10) Complete the repetitions recommended by the Occupational Therapist for "homework."
- d. The Airplane Pose:
- 1) Let's begin by taking a deep breath and letting it out, then standing or sitting tall or sitting tall (for those children in wheelchairs or who have insufficient balance for standing during this activity) with our feet together, a straight back, and our shoulders relaxed (in a neutral position).
  - 2) If you are standing:
    - Now, let's keep our heads facing forward. Find something on the wall in front of you to focus your eyes on. We are going to use that later to keep our balance!
    - Next, let's keep our legs straight and move our feet just a few inches apart.
    - Now, let's raise our arms up to place our hands by our waist and then stretch them out to our sides to help us keep our balance.
    - Depending upon your child's balance skills,
      - have him or her stretch the right leg behind, lifting it just so the heel comes off the floor and the toes remain touching the floor. Be sure that your child keeps his eyes on the dot or object on the wall for balance.
      - or, have him or her extend the right leg behind and lift it so that the foot is raised a few inches from the floor. Be sure that your child keeps his or her eyes on the dot or object on the wall for balance.
    - Slowly, let's lean our body forward just a little bit. We can use our arms to help us balance.
    - Let's make sure we focus on that point on the wall that we found before. Don't move. Just look at it closely and don't think about anything but that dot or object!
    - (After 2-3 seconds) Now, let's bring our feet together and lower our hands down slowly. Take a deep breath and let it out.
    - After a little rest, let's try that again by lifting our left leg!
    - Complete the repetitions recommended by the Occupational Therapist for "homework."
  - 3) If you are sitting:
    - Let's begin by taking a deep breath and letting it out, then resting our feet flat.
    - Now, let's make sure we are keeping our shoulders relaxed.
    - Let's keep our heads facing forward and find something on the wall in front of us to focus our eyes on.
    - Let's raise our arms up to place our hands by our waist and then stretch them out to your sides. Keep your eyes on the dot or object on the wall.
    - Slowly, let's lean our body forward just a little bit. We can use our arms to help us balance. Keep your eyes on that dot or object!
    - Let's take another deep breath and let it out.
    - Now, let's slowly lean back and put our hands by our sides.
    - Complete the repetitions recommended by the Occupational Therapist for "homework."

### **Cross-Over Challenges:**

**Postural Skills Addressed:** back, legs, shoulders, neck, head, and eye placement

**Enhances Awareness for:** balance to maintain correct posture

**Repetitions:** Complete the repetitions recommended by your child's Occupational Therapist

1. Discuss the purpose of the Cross-Over Challenges to help your child to build leg and back strength, as well as balance, for correct posture for standing and seated activities.

2. Let's begin by taking a deep breath and letting it out, then standing or sitting tall (for those children in wheelchairs or who have insufficient balance for standing during this activity) with our feet together, a straight back, and our shoulders relaxed in a neutral position.
3. Now, let's rest our hands on our hips. For children who demonstrate insufficient balance for this activity, provide a wall beside or behind them for support or have them keep their arms outstretched to their sides at waist height.

For all children:

- a. I'm going to stand in front of you with my back to you so that you can follow my movements.
  - b. First, let's spread our feet out just a little bit to keep our balance. (about 1-2") We are going to perform this exercise slowly at first so that we can learn to do it correctly.
  - c. Then, let's raise our left leg and touch that knee with our right hand. Let's raise our leg high enough so that we don't have to bend over to touch it but not so high that we fall over!
  - d. Now, let's put that the left foot back down and raise our right leg, touching that knee with our left hand. Turn around and have your child demonstrate an understanding of the movements by performing the task while you both call out the steps. Remind your child to perform the activity slowly to be sure he or she is doing it correctly.
4. Now, let's see if we can do the Cross-Over Challenges together as I stand next to you.
  5. If your child finds it difficult to:
    - a. follow your movements while you are beside him or her, return to your previous position in front and continue practicing the movements from there.
    - b. coordinate the movements independently, have him or her perform the activity in a seated position with you sitting across from him or her. Have your child perform the leg movements independently while you provide hand-over-hand assistance to guide the arm movements.
    - c. maintain his or her balance during the activity, perform the Challenges in a seated position. Progress toward standing or sitting in a side-by-side position as your child develops his or her balance, midline crossing, and eye-hand coordination skills.
  6. As your child's skills progress with this activity, move to standing in front of your child and perform the challenges facing him or her. This will enhance your child's visual spatial relationship skills.
  7. Complete the repetitions recommended by the Occupational Therapist for "homework."

**Chair and Wall Push-Ups:**

Discuss the purpose of the Chair and Wall Push-Up exercises to help your child to build shoulder, arm, and back muscles for correct posture for standing and seated activities.

1. Chair Push-Ups:

Note: Children who are seated in a wheelchair can perform this exercise with some initial assistance for balance. Please consult with your child's Occupational Therapist regarding your child's strengths and needs before beginning this exercise.

- a. Let's begin by taking a deep breath and letting it out, then sitting tall with our feet together, a straight back, our shoulders relaxed in a neutral position, and our hands resting on our legs.
- b. Now, let's scoot out toward the edge of our chair just a little bit and place our hands on the chair seat right next to our legs.
- c. Let's lift our feet up just a little bit and use our hands to push our bottoms off the chair. Let's be sure to do this slowly and gently so that we will build muscles and not hurt ourselves.
- d. (After 2-3 seconds) Let's sit back down and rest for a minute.
- e. If your child finds it difficult to perform this activity with his or her feet off the floor, allow him or her to keep them there until enough strength has been built in the shoulders and arms to perform the push up with them raised. If your child's chair has armrests, he or she can also place his or her hands there for additional support.



- f. Complete the repetitions recommended by the Occupational Therapist for “homework.”
- g. Let your child know that this is a good exercise to do when he or she is waiting for class to start or for the next assignment to begin.

## 2. Wall Push-Ups:

### If you are standing:

Position your child in front of a wall that has enough open space to place his or her hands a shoulder-width apart.

- a. Let’s begin by taking a deep breath and letting it out, then standing tall with our feet together, a straight back, and our shoulders relaxed in a neutral position, and our hands resting on our legs.
- b. Now, let’s spread our feet out just a little bit (about 1-2”) to keep our balance and stand about 3’ from the wall and stretch our arms out to place our hand flat on it.
- c. Let’s lean towards the wall and rest our weight on our arms, keeping them outstretched. Let’s be sure that our backs are straight and our heads and eyes are facing the wall. Explain that this activity requires correct posture in order for it to help us build strength.
- d. Now, let’s use our arms to push our body back gently into a standing position. Let’s be sure that we do this exercise slowly and gently so that we build muscles and do not hurt ourselves.
- e. Remind your child to breathe in and out like you did during the Breathing Exercises while he or she is maintaining balance.
- f. Complete the repetitions recommended by the Occupational Therapist for “homework.”

### If you are sitting (for those children who are in wheelchairs or demonstrate insufficient balance for this activity):

Note: Children who are seated in a wheelchair can perform this exercise with some initial assistance for balance.

- a. Let’s begin by taking a deep breath and letting it out, then sitting tall with our feet together, a straight back, and our shoulders relaxed in a neutral position, and our hands resting on our legs.
- b. Now, let’s spread our feet apart just a little bit (about 1-2”) to keep our balance and let’s sit about 3’ from the wall and stretch our arms out to place our hand flat on it.
- c. Let’s lean towards the wall and rest our weight on our arms, keeping them outstretched. Let’s be sure that our backs are straight and our heads and eyes are facing the wall. Explain that this activity requires correct posture in order for it to help us build strength.
- d. Now, let’s use our arms push our body back gently into a sitting tall position. Let’s be sure that we do this exercise slowly and gently so that we build muscles and do not hurt ourselves.
- e. Remind your child to breathe in and out like you did during the Breathing Exercises while he or she is maintaining balance.
- f. Complete the repetitions recommended by the Occupational Therapist for “homework.”

## Marching in Place:

Discuss the purpose of the Marching in Place exercise to help your child build correct posture by standing or sitting tall with a straight back and his or her head and eyes looking in a forward direction.

1. Let’s begin by taking a deep breath and letting it out, then standing or sitting tall (for those children in wheelchairs or who have insufficient balance for standing during this activity) with our feet together, a straight back, and our shoulders relaxed in a neutral position, and our hands resting on our legs.
2. We are going to be lifting our legs up and down one at a time, just like we are marching in a parade. If your child needs some assistance with balance, have him or her stand close to a wall or door to provide support if needed.
3. Let’s keep our hands down to our sides and lift up our right leg, then put it back down, and lift our left leg, like this. At first let’s go slowly so that we can keep our balance. If your child experiences just a bit of imbalance, have him or her stretch arms out to the side at waist level for additional support.

4. Let's be sure to keep our backs straight and our head and eyes looking forward. Let's find an object on the wall to look at to be sure that we are standing or sitting tall.
5. Now, let's speed it up just a little bit to get us marching a little faster.
6. If you are standing: Let's see if we can march around the room and still keep our correct posture.
7. Complete the repetitions recommended by the Occupational Therapist for "homework."

Remind your child that he or she should remember correct posture and check to see if he or she is "marching tall" when standing or sitting in line or going to the bus stop!

#### **Skills Addressed (A) / Skills Enhanced (E)**

A Gross Motor Skills – Postural Efficiency

# Speed for Fluency Activities

Speed for Fluency Activities  
All Grade Levels

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Handwriting mastery is defined by the writer's ability to produce legible letter and word formations to convey knowledge and thoughts in a timely manner. The ability to write with speed allows students to transfer the information that has been stored in their short-term memory to the paper quickly in order to remember and complete their thoughts. The requirement for speed, combined with that of legibility, places a demand upon struggling students to concentrate on one or the other, at times making handwriting practice counterproductive.

When students' primary goal is to enhance their writing speed, or for students who focus too heavily upon "letter perfection," it is important to provide opportunities to practice fluency without attention paid to letter formation accuracy.

These activities encourage the development of fluency for handwriting mastery.

## Activities and Directions

### 1. The Race for 10<sup>th</sup> Place

Materials you will need:

Age-appropriate handwriting paper  
A pencil  
A large piece of paper taped to the wall or a chalk board  
A timer

Directions:

Explain the activity to your child as it is presented below:

1. Provide your child with a piece of age-appropriate handwriting paper and a pencil.

The Rules:

- a) Explain that the game is called "The Race for 10<sup>th</sup> Place" because the goal is to copy 10 words very fast. The focus is on speed and not perfect letter formations.

- b) Tell your child that his or her best handwriting should be used BUT there are no erasures allowed until it's time to edit!
  - c) Let your child know that he or she does not have to worry about correcting letter formation during the game because the editing to correct that will be at the end (because letter formation is important!).
  - d) Also, let your child know that he or she will not have to worry about correcting spelling during the game. That can be done at the end as well.
  - e) Tell your child that you will be timing the games to see if his or her "personal best" can be beaten.
2. Write 10 sight or spelling words on the board or a piece of paper taped to the wall, placing them in two equal columns side by side.
  3. Ask your child to draw a line down the middle of the handwriting paper so that he or she can write the words in two columns.
  4. Have your child read the words aloud before beginning the game. (Auditory Input) If he or she would like to spell them, as well, provide the opportunity to do that.
  5. When your child is ready, start the timer and have him or her complete the copying task.
  6. When your child is finished, write the time on top of the paper or in a notebook and allow him or her to perform the editing portion of the game.
  7. Complete the game 2-3 times to provide opportunities to compare and discuss your child's times.
  8. It would be fun to have your child record the session times in a notebook to document his or her achievements during "Race for 10<sup>th</sup> Place" homework.

## 2. The Fun Facts Game

Materials you will need:

Age-appropriate handwriting paper  
A pencil  
A timer

Directions:

Explain the activity to your child as it is presented below:

### The Rules:

- a) Explain that the game is designed to focus on speed and not perfect letter formations.
- b) Tell your child that his or her best handwriting should be used BUT there are no erasures allowed until it's time to edit!
- c) Let your child know that he or she does not have to worry about correcting letter formation during the game because the editing to correct that will be at the end (because letter formation is important!).
- d) Let your child know that he or she will not have to worry about correcting spelling during the game. That can be done at the end as well.

e) Tell your child that that you will be timing the games to see if his or her “personal best” can be beaten.

1. Provide your child with age-appropriate handwriting paper and a pencil.
2. Write a noun on the board or a piece of paper and indicate that there will be 3 minutes to write all that he or she knows about it. (Shorten or lengthen the time limit to meet your child’s needs)
3. When your child is ready, start the timer and have him or her complete the handwriting task.
4. When your child is finished, write time on the top of the paper or in a notebook and allow him or her to perform the editing portion of the game.
5. Complete the game another time to provide an opportunity to compare and discuss your child’s times.
6. It would be fun to have your child record the session times in a notebook to document his or her achievements during the “Fun Facts Game” homework.

### 3. The Thinking Cap Challenge

Materials you will need:

Age-appropriate handwriting paper  
A pencil  
A timer

Directions:

Explain the activity to your child as it is presented below:

#### The Rules:

- a) Explain that the game is designed to focus on speed and not perfect letter formations.
  - b) Tell your child that his or her best handwriting should be used BUT there are no erasures allowed until it’s time to edit!
  - c) Let your child know that he or she does not have to worry about correcting letter formation during the game because the editing to correct that will be at the end (because letter formation is important!).
  - d) Let your child know that he or she will not have to worry about correcting spelling during the game. That can be done at the end as well.
  - e) Tell your child that that you will be timing the games to see if his or her “personal best” can be beaten.
1. Provide your child with age-appropriate handwriting paper and a pencil.
  2. Select a topic, such as birthdays, an umbrella, or a paper clip. Tell your child there will be 5-10 minutes (depending upon your child’s age and skill level) to write 5-10 ways (the number depending upon your child’s age and skill level) that he or she could engage in the activity or use the object.

3. When your child is ready, start the timer and have him or her complete the handwriting task.
4. When your child is finished, write the time on top of the paper and allow him or her to perform the editing portion of the game.
5. Complete the game another time to provide an opportunity to compare and discuss your child's times.
6. It would be fun to have your child record the session times in a notebook to document his or her achievements during the "Thinking Cap Challenge" homework.

Additional Strategies:

- a) If your child begins to edit the letter formations or spelling during the games, provide him or her with 1-2 cues to continue with the task. If your child does not decrease the editing during the game, allow the game to finish at his or her own pace. At the end, record your child's time and take a moment to discuss the reason for the game again, as well as your child's feelings about completing the editing at the end of the game. Encourage him or her to wait until the end, providing examples of when adults edit at that time as well (e.g., writing stories). Have your child play the game again, using one column of 5 words for the Race for 10<sup>th</sup> Place or adjust the allotted time for the Fun Facts Game and the Thinking Cap Challenge.
- b) If your child continues to attend closely to letter formations and not to speed during the Race for 10<sup>th</sup> Place Game, provide him or her with 2 columns of letter formations that are easy for your child to produce. Complete the game with those letters to lessen anxiety about perfect letter formations.
- c) If your child finds it difficult to complete this game with letters or words, provide him or her with two columns of shapes initially, then connecting two shapes together to make a letter (e.g., a circle and a line to make a manuscript d or 2 slanted lines to form a V), and finally including letter formations among the shapes and shape combinations.
- d) Have your child copy the words from a paper on the desk to lessen the need for adjusting his or her head and eye positions between distance and near eye movements. (If you suspect that your child's anxiety is due to an inability to focus between near and far distances efficiently, it would be wise to discuss this with your child's pediatrician and ask about a referral for a vision assessment conducted by a developmental optometrist.)
- e) If your child finds it difficult to complete the Fun Facts Game without editing his or her work, switch to the Race for 10<sup>th</sup> Place Game and use the additional strategies that address this behavior.

4. One Minute Write It

Materials you will need:

Age-appropriate handwriting paper  
A pencil

## A timer

### Directions:

Explain the activity to your child as it is presented below:

- a. At the end of a homework session or a movie or TV show, provide your child with a piece of age-appropriate handwriting paper and a pencil.
- b. Explain that there will be one minute to write down everything that he or she had learned in the session or show. No erasures are allowed. Tell your child that this is an opportunity to simply use handwriting to jot down some thoughts.
- c. Explain that this activity is a good way to practice handwriting in everyday life.

### Tips to enhance your child's learning experiences:

1. Have your child write the 10 words on the paper or board without attention paid to speed before copying them during the game. (Tactile Input, Visual Motor Skills)
2. As your child's skills progress, dictate the words, allowing an age-appropriate time for completing one before dictating the next. This will be a challenging activity and should be offered to children who have the skills to accept the challenge without anxiety. (Auditory Input, Visual memory skills)

### Warm-Up Activities:

Copy Cat Drawings\*  
Construction Activities with instructions and a visual model  
Tangrams  
Card games that include speed  
The Cotton Ball Game or Blowing Bubbles\*

### Skills That Will Be Helped:

Addressed (A) /Enhanced (E)

A Visual Attention  
A Visual Memory  
A Visual Motor: Eye-Hand Coordination  
A Pencil Control Skills  
E Letter Formations

\*Handouts for these activities can be obtained from your child's Occupational Therapist

## Body Awareness – Getting to Know You

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Body awareness is the image we have of ourselves that lets us know where each of our body parts is positioned without our having to see it to believe it. It is a body map or internal compass that we begin to develop as infants and continue to draw as we move into the school-age years.

Movement provides the opportunity for children to learn about their bodies as they watch their arms and legs move, roll their trunks, and move their heads. Movement activities provide sensory input that forms a perception of the body and helps children become aware of where they are in space and how this position relates to other things in the environment.

This list is offered as suggestions for including movement activities into your child's play time for the enhancement of body awareness skills.

### Activities Suggestions

Be sure to use directional concepts, such as "up and down," and "right and left," as well as naming the body parts when your child is participating in these activities.

1. Indoor or outdoor obstacles courses
2. Climbing through tunnels
3. Musical chairs or "Freeze"
4. Simon Says
5. The Hokey Pokey
6. Rolling toward a target
7. Tug of war
8. Relay races
9. Hopping, Skipping, Jumping games
10. Bear Hugs – swinging his arms wide and hugging himself
11. Rhythmic Songs and Games, such as Row, Row Your Boat or Itsy, or Bitsy Spider
12. Yoga for Children
13. Posture Perfect – Gross Motor Boot Camp\*
14. Fine Motor Boot Camp\*

\*Handouts for these activities can be obtained from your child's Occupational Therapist.



## Seating and Desk Heights/Paper Positioning

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

The standard guidelines for sitting posture have been set at the 90-90-90 degree rule. This places the elbows, hips, knees, and ankles in 90-degree angles, positioning the top of the trunk in a straight position. Research has shown, however, that this may not, in fact, be the ideal position for learning. It is felt by researchers in the ergonomics and back care industry that this position enhances alertness for a short time and is only efficient if the head and eyes need only to face forward. During classroom tasks, like handwriting, a student is required to move the head up and down and to lean forward slightly in the chair to write or read. In this light, this information is provided as a general guideline for reinforcing postural efficiency during seated handwriting tasks. It is not meant to be used as a precision measurement for body angles or head positioning.

**It is important to note** that postures that include slouching, resting the head on the arm or desk, or sitting with the head and eyes or body facing away from midline may indicate an underlying visual skill need. Children who demonstrate these postures would benefit from observations noted on the Vision Skills Red Flags Checklist\* to determine the need for a visual skill assessment by a developmental optometrist.

### Guidelines

- The desk and chair height should allow children to rest their arms comfortably on the desk top, with the surface positioned 2" above their bent elbows. Seat cushions can be used to compensate for a chair that is too low or a desk surface that is too high. A book or small stool can be placed under the child's feet to encourage a 90-degree angle at the ankle and to provide postural stability and efficient placement of the head and eyes.
- A slanted surface, perhaps a 1-2" ringed binder, will provide wrist stability, placing it in the position of slight extension to facilitate movement of the pencil and increased control of the fingers. This strategy works well for both left- and right-handed writers.
- Paper positioning, for all writers, should have the paper placed at the child's midline with the bottom angle approximately 1" from the lower edge of the desk. For left-handed writers, the paper should be slanted to the right at about a 30-45-degree angle, with the paper slanted at a 20-35-degree angle to the left for right-handed writers. The non-dominant hand should be placed on the side closest to the child's body to stabilize the paper and facilitate fluid movement. Children generally find their most comfortable paper slant and should be allowed to follow their instincts if they do not interfere with handwriting mastery.

\*Handouts for these activities can be obtained from your child's Occupational Therapist

## Handwriting: From Practice to Functional

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

A functional handwriting style is defined as one that allows the writer to use his or her skills in a myriad of communication mediums in order to convey thoughts or a message in a legible and fluent manner. The end product of handwriting mastery is a functional handwriting style.

This list is offered as suggestions for including functional communication activities into your child's handwriting practice for the transfer of handwriting mastery skills and to assist in your selection to meet your child's needs.

### Activities and Directions

#### Play Detective:

##### Materials you will need:

- Age-appropriate handwriting paper
- Pencils

##### Directions:

Explain the activity to your child as it is presented below:

1. Provide your child with a piece of age-appropriate handwriting paper and a pencil.
2. Ask your child to look around the room and locate an object without telling you what it is.
3. Then, ask your child to write down 3 things that describe it in his or her very best handwriting. Remind your child that the writing needs to be legible so that you are able to read it and discover the secret object.
4. After your child has completed the descriptions, read them so that you can attempt to discover the object in the room.
5. If you have difficulty reading your child's work, discuss the reasons why and have him or her edit the handwriting to make it readable.
6. Discuss times when a person would write down a message for someone to read and why it is important that they be able to understand it. For example, a telephone message, a grocery list, or a note telling mom where he or she was going after school.

#### Free Thought Journals:

##### Materials you will need:

- A journal that includes age-appropriate handwriting lines
- Pencils
- A blank piece of handwriting paper, paper taped to the wall, or a chalkboard
- Writing Prompts

##### Directions:

Explain the activity to your child as it is presented below:

1. Provide your child with a pencil and a free-writing journal that includes age-appropriate handwriting lines.

2. Explain that you'd like your child to write a story or thoughts in the journal in his or her best handwriting.
3. Provide a writing prompt if your child needs one to start this activity.
4. Provide 3-5 minutes for your child to complete the writing activity.
5. If your child appears to have trouble translating his or her thoughts to writing, ask if you could help by writing them down on another paper as he or she dictates them to you. Explain that he or she can copy them into the journal. If your child agrees to this strategy, have him or her tell you the story or thoughts and write them on a space from which they can be easily copied.
6. When your child is finished, have him or her edit the work for legibility and spacing.
7. Discuss times when a person would write a story or his or her thoughts to share with others. For example, a book report, a letter to a friend, or a newspaper article.

#### Additional Strategies:

1. For the younger children, have them draw a picture as part of their story or to facilitate the story writing process.
2. For the older children, allow them to write a story outline that will guide their story writing process. They may want to draw a picture to help them organize their thoughts, as well.

### **Creating and using the Writing Prompts Jar**

#### Materials you will need:

- A jar
- Craft Sticks or 3" x 6" pieces of paper
- A list of age-appropriate writing prompts
- Pencils

#### Creating the Writing Prompts Jar:

It's always fun to have your child help to create handwriting practice tools! Gather together a list of age-appropriate writing prompts (you may need 2 or 3 sets) and have your child help create his or her very own Writing Prompts Jar.

#### Directions:

1. Discuss the use of writing prompts in creative and independent writing assignments, as well as the skills that they help to develop for functional handwriting tasks. For example, creative writing helps us to put our thoughts and feelings on paper to share with others in letters or stories.
2. Provide your child with the craft sticks or pieces of paper and the list of age-appropriate writing prompts.
3. Have him or her write one prompt on each stick or piece of paper. Remind your child that his or her handwriting must be legible in order for him or her to be able to read and use the Writing Prompts Jar in handwriting practice.

#### Using the Writing Prompts Jar:

1. Independent writing activities provide children with opportunities to practice handwriting skills, as well as to record their thoughts and ideas.
2. When you are ready to use the Writing Prompts Jar, have your child select a writing prompt from the jar and make a handwritten entry in a journal using the prompt to create a story or to describe his or her feelings about the prompt. If your child has additional ideas or feelings about another topic that he or she would like to record, provide opportunities to do that to enhance the functional aspect of the handwriting task.

3. Allow your child to keep the journal private if he or she wants, as this activity is designed to facilitate the transfer of handwriting mastery to a functional task.
4. If your child decides to share the journal with you, use your judgment regarding the value of adding editing to the task. For example, if the handwriting is legible but not perfect, then the goal of the task was met. If it is unreadable, however, then the functional goal has not been achieved. Thus, it would be important to discuss the importance of legibility and the ways that your child could improve his or her handwriting style to enhance the readability of the work.

### Filling Out Forms

Although technology has turned communication into a “touch or tap” process, children will continue to find it necessary to jot down a handwritten note, fill out a form, or address an envelope as they progress through their lives. The following suggestions are designed to address the transfer of handwriting mastery to these functional tasks and are offered to assist you in selecting functional tasks that will fit your child’s needs.

1. Homework assignment books – If your child does not have an assignment book or preprinted page for this task, design one that provides opportunities to adjust his or her handwriting to fit into smaller spaces. This can be copied each week and used as a tool to continue to achieve handwriting goals.
2. Recipe Cards: Have your child write or copy a favorite recipe on the card, editing his or her work to see if the recipe is accurate and would produce the food correctly!
3. Message Slips: Ask your child to write a “telephone message” to you. Read it back aloud to help your child determine if his or her handwriting is legible and allows you to read and understand the message.
4. Applications for a summer job or summer camp: Pick up duplicate copies of applications that your child can use to practice on during handwriting practice. If your child and you are considering his or her attendance at a camp or having a summer job, make copies of the applications that your child can practice on before completing a final copy.
5. Letters to a friend or relative on cards that limit the writing space: Have your child write Thank You cards after the holidays or Welcome Cards to new students in his or her best handwriting.
6. Questionnaires: Have your child fill out a questionnaire that you’ve created to discover his or her “likes” and “dislikes” for next summer’s vacation!
7. Post Cards: Have your child write post cards to residents in a long-term care facility or to soldiers in a nearby base.
8. Message on Sticky Notes: Have your child write a positive message to his or her teachers or siblings and stick it on their desk or the refrigerator.
9. Grocery Lists: Have your child write the grocery list for a favorite recipe or for a favorite meal.
10. Order Forms: Have your child select items to “order” from a catalog, writing his or her choices on the order blank in his or her best handwriting.
11. Gather forms from within the community: Guide your child about filling them out by adjusting his or her handwriting to fit into the spaces.

The activities included in The Highlighter Challenge – an advanced strategy for Spacing Between Words in a Sentence\* will assist you in guiding your child toward the transfer of handwriting skills to these functional forms.

### The “Let’s Follow Directions” Game

Legibility and speed facilitates the writer’s ability to convey a message without losing his or her train of thought in the process. However, functional handwriting also demands that the writer convey the correct message. This activity offers children the opportunity to discover if they are using their handwriting skills to adequately convey a message.

1. Ask your child to write the directions for a simple task, such as “putting on a coat,” getting in the car,” tying a shoe,” or “making a peanut butter and jelly sandwich.”

2. Then have him or her share the directions with you. Complete the task using the directions provided to determine if they are clear and correct.
3. It's a fun way to help your child get the message that the message must be clear!

### **Have Your Child Join a Handwriting Club!**

Handwriting Clubs take handwriting from practice to functional by providing opportunities for students to share their work with others and to understand the importance of legibility in communicating their thoughts and knowledge. Canvas your school and community resources to see if the opportunity exists for your child to learn to master handwriting skills with other children his or her age. Check with your child's Occupational Therapist to determine if he or she has one started already!

#### **Skills Enhanced:**

Visual memory  
Transfer of information through written communication

\*The handout for "The Highlighter Challenge – an advanced strategy For Spacing Between Words in a Sentence" can be obtained from your child's Occupational Therapist.

# The Number 10 Game

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

The development of the correct motor plans for letter formations relies on the efficiency of our visual attention and visual motor (eye-hand coordination) skills. These skills assist the student in the automatic production of letter formations as well as the development of good pencil control skills.

Automatic letter recognition (Automaticity) lays the foundation for fluent and timely handwriting and reading skills. This skill allows children to perceive letter and words formations as a whole versus their parts and to understand their presentation in print without having to analyze each one to read or write. The development of automaticity depends upon efficient visual attention, visual memory, and figure-ground discrimination skill development.

This activity encourages the development of visual attention, visual memory, visual motor, and figure-ground discrimination for handwriting fluency.

## Materials You Will Need

- 2 decks of cards – You will use only the number cards from the deck.

## Directions

Explain the activity to your child as it is presented below:

1. Provide your child with a deck of cards. Ask him or her to sort through the deck and select the number cards and place the rest of the deck to the side. Demonstrate each of the following steps as you instruct your child on the game procedures using the additional deck of cards.
2. Have your child shuffle the cards to mix them up, with some assistance from you if necessary, and place them face down in front of him or her or off to the left or right side.
3. Instruct your child to turn 4 cards over and place them in a horizontal row in front of him or her, with another row of 4 cards below it. For younger children, this may be an appropriate number of cards (8) for beginning the game. Older students can add 1-2 more rows of cards, equaling 12-16 cards in 3-4 rows.
4. Remind your child that this is called The Number 10 Game because the object is to gather cards together that add up to the number 10. Demonstrate this by using your deck of cards. For example:  $7+3=10$ ;  $4+4+2=10$ ;  $6+2+2=10$ .
5. When a combination is discovered, remove those cards from the table and stack them in a pile. They will be counted when the game is finished to determine how many combinations each player has found. This is also a way for you to check for accuracy.
6. Continue to collect combinations until there are none left among the available cards.
7. At this point, replace the cards that have been removed with cards from the deck and continue with the game.
8. In the end, the winner will be the person who has the least amount of cards left on the table or who has the most combinations, that's up to you.
9. Begin the game slowly, allowing your child to become familiar with the task. Observe his or her scanning strategies (e.g., left to right or top to bottom or disorganized). If you notice that your child is missing a good number of combinations, take a moment to ask if he or she would like to scan each row from left to right first, just like during reading, to help to discover the combinations easier and faster. Allow your child to use his or her finger to lead the eyes in the scanning process.
10. When the game is completed, count the number of combinations for each person, checking for addition accuracy.
11. As your child's skills progress, turn the game into a contest for speed to determine which one of you will be able to find all of the combinations in their deck first to enhance the development of automaticity skills.

### Tips to enhance your child's learning experiences:

1. Use a small deck of cards to add fine-motor skill development to the game.
2. Have your child add the numbers aloud as he or she is collecting them into a pile to enhance visual memory skill development. (Auditory Learning Style)

### Warm-Up Activities:

- Ball or balloon toss
- Tether ball
- Copy Cat Drawings\*
- The Cotton Ball Game or Blowing Bubbles\*
- Can You Spot It Book\*
- The Memory Game\*
- Match the Hidden Pictures\*

### Skills Addressed (A) / Skills Enhanced (E)

- A Visual Attention
- A Visual Memory
- A Figure-Ground Discrimination
- E Fine Motor: Dexterity
- E Fine Motor: Eye-Hand Coordination
- E Visual Spatial Relationships

\*Handouts for these activities can be obtained from your child's Occupational Therapist

# One-Handed Tricks

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Fine motor skills for handwriting activities involve the small muscles of the hands and their efficiency allows the writer to manage a tool for writing and erasing during handwriting activities. Pencil control skills require efficient finger and thumb strength, as well as in-hand manipulation skills, to allow the writer to manipulate a writing tool using fluid movements and to produce legible handwritten work with ease and comfort in a timely manner.

The development of the correct motor plans for letter formations relies on the efficiency of our fine motor skills. These skills assist the student in the automatic production of letter formations as well as the development of good pencil control skills.

This activity encourages the development of fine motor skills for handwriting mastery.

## Materials You Will Need

- Therapeutic putty or play dough
- Cotton balls or small erasers

## Activities and Directions

**Muscle Groups Addressed:** hands, fingers, and thumbs for finger dexterity and in-hand manipulation skills

**Enhances Awareness for:** hand, finger, and thumb strength for pencil grip and pressure, occurrence of hand, finger, and thumb fatigue and/or pain

**Repetitions:** Complete the repetitions recommended by the Occupational Therapist for "homework."

1. Discuss the purpose of the One-Handed Tricks exercises for helping your child to strengthen his or her hand, fingers, and thumb for holding a pencil without pain or fatigue during handwriting activities. Explain that it is also a good way to relax the hands and fingers when working on handwriting activities.
2. Demonstrate and explain the three parts of the One-Handed Tricks exercise:

### Part 1 - Finger Dexterity:

- a. Let's begin by sitting with correct posture at a table or desk. Now let's take a deep breath in and let it out slowly.
- b. Rest your arms on the table in front of you, with your elbows bent close to the edge of the table or desk, your hands open, and your palms facing upward. You can also place your arms in an outstretched position, whichever is more comfortable for you.
- c. Let's begin with the right hand. Bring your thumb in to touch each finger using slow and gentle movements. (Opposition)
- d. Now, let's switch to the other hand and complete the same movements.

### Part 2 – Finger Flexors:

- a. Let's keep our arms and hand resting on the desk (as positioned above).
- b. Now, with both hands, flex and extend your fingers to open and close your hand using slow and gentle movements. To add tactile input to this activity, place a palm-sized piece of therapeutic putty or play dough in your palm and squeeze it as you flex. Roll the putty back into a ball as it flattens out during the exercise.

### Part 3 – In-hand Manipulation:

- a. Let's keep our arms and hands in the same position (as above).



- b. And let's place a cotton ball or small eraser in the palm of your right hand.
  - c. Now move it around using only the fingers of that hand with slow movements and keeping it from falling out of your palm.
  - d. Discuss the need to perform these exercises with gentle, slow movements to allow the finger and thumb muscles to get strong and flexible for easy movement during writing tasks.
3. Complete the repetitions recommended by the Occupational Therapist for "homework."
  4. Suggest that your child use these activities whenever he or she feels that his or her fingers and hand are getting tired during handwriting activities.

**Warm-Up Activities: \***

- Fine Motor Boot Camp Exercises
- Therapeutic Putty Exercises
- Make Me Strong, Max Game

**Skills Addressed (A) / Skills Enhanced (E)**

- A Fine Motor: Strength and Dexterity
- E Fine Motor: Eye-Hand Coordination
- E Pencil Control

\*Handouts for these activities can be obtained from your child's Occupational Therapist