



# Cultivating Child Development Series

## Prewriting skills

Learning to write is a complicated process. It is important for parents to understand the developmental level of their children and see if they have acquired the prerequisite skills for handwriting. Do not rush to teach if they are not ready.

### **What can I do if my child is reluctant to learn to write?**

Children may be reluctant to write because they do not have the foundation skills at their developmental level. For example, your child may be relatively young when compare to his peers, hence he cannot cope with the tasks. He may also be overwhelmed by the excessive or over-demanding handwriting work.

In order to enhance child's interest in learning to write, parents should have appropriate expectation on him according to his ability and developmental stage. Parents may teach him to do simple and manageable tasks first and move gradually to more complicated and challenging ones. Give him encouragement and praise so that he can learn in a more relaxing and enjoyable environment.

Before learning to write with proper pencil grip, parents should first promote child's postural control and fine motor skills. For example, accompanying him to climb frames in the parks or do stretching activities at home. Besides, letting him play playdough, assemble constructive toys or cut along straight line with safety scissors can also help to improve his fine motor skills.

If child has not yet acquired proper pencil grip, parents may promote his object manipulation with the first three fingers (thumb, index and middle fingers) by doing activities like gripping with tweezer, screwing bolts and nuts, etc.



## **Shall I correct my child if he prefers to use his left hand to hold the pencil?**

Hand preference is usually established at around age three to four. Most children will tend to use one hand more often than the other for object manipulation such as scooping with spoon, scribbling with crayon or playing with toys.

If your child prefers to use the left hand, it is not necessary for you to correct him. He should be allowed to use his preferred hand according to his natural development.

## **Teacher told me that my child shows poor handwriting with improper spacing and stroke sequencing, how can I help?**

If your child is weak in spacing, writing with uneven size and out of boundaries, parents can engage him in activities such as drawing on mazes, assembling puzzles, constructing blocks designs in order to improve his directionality and spatial concepts.

Parents should help their child to learn about the basic strokes formation. For example, from left to right in forming the horizontal stroke, from top to bottom for the vertical stroke. In addition, parents should teach him the basic concept of stroke sequence such as writing the horizontal stroke before the vertical stroke, forming the diagonal stroke to the left before the diagonal stroke to the right. Besides, you can help him verbalize the strokes sequences while writing the Chinese characters.

*\*If you find your child having persistent problem in prewriting skills, please consult occupational therapist for further advice.*



## References and further reading:

1. Pre-writing skills – skill starters for motor development  
Author: Marsha Dunn Klein  
Publisher: USA: Communication Skill Builder, Inc.
2. Handprints – Home programs for Hand Skills.  
Authors: Valerie Pieraccini, & Darla K. Vance  
Publisher: Arizona: Imaginart.



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