

How You Can Help Your Child To Be Ready For Pre-Writing

Get them involved with the housework! Chores such as sweeping, dusting, washing the car, wiping the table, are all great for those body awareness skills.

Washing the dishes uses bilateral coordination – holding the dish in one hand while scrubbing it with the other. They also use their gross motor skills, cross the midline, and it helps with motor planning.

Play with a ball. Throwing and catching helps with hand eye coordination, bilateral coordination, and gross motor skills.

Do some baking! Did you know that by holding a bowl in one hand and stirring with the other, your child is increasing upper body muscle strength, using their body awareness skills, crossing the midline, using bilateral coordination and establishing hand dominance? Great fun too!

Get them to help **peg up the washing!** Reaching up high increases their upper body strength and increases their hand and finger strength.

Let them **help with the shopping.** Try giving them a picture list of items you need to buy; this will help with visual recognition of objects. **Pushing the trolley** helps them know how much force to use on an object (proprioception); **carrying the basket** will increase upper muscle strength. **Putting shopping away** will help with coordination skills and crossing the midline. Let them help find the money from your purse. **Handling the coins** will help with object manipulation.

Let them **get themselves ready** for bed at night. By letting them clean their teeth, put their pyjamas on and brush their hair, you are letting them develop hand dominance and manipulate objects. It increases motor planning as the muscles move their joints and limbs automatically.

In Nursery School

At Brougham Street Nursery School we want to make sure that your child has the necessary skills to help prepare them for handwriting. We will work together on developing these building blocks for making your child become ready to write. Your child will be involved in ready to write skills sessions which will take place once a week over a course of 6 weeks. As educational professionals, we **know** and **understand** your child. We want to help them develop and **progress**. They will work on the skills which are suitable for their developmental stage. The course will use music, rhythm, song, play and sensory play.

At Home

Be brave and let them get messy! Let them explore different textures such as shaving foam. You never know what marks, shapes or patterns they might make.



Ready to Write

BROUGHAM STREET NURSERY SCHOOL
PARENT/CARER GUIDE

Getting Started

When a child starts nursery, there are a number of questions that parents may ask themselves, or nursery staff. Will my child be happy without me? What happens if he becomes upset? Will she eat her dinner? Does it matter if he is not toilet trained? Will she make friends? Will he learn to count? Will she learn to read? Will he learn to write?

All children develop at different stages. In all aspects of life, there are stages of development that we must go through. Take an obvious example of physical development. A baby learns to hold its head up, sit up, roll, crawl, balance, stand, toddle, walk, run. None of us would expect a child to be able to run before they can walk.

The same is true for handwriting. There is sometimes an expectation that a child should leave nursery school having learnt how to write. But there is a sequence of developmental stages which a child needs to progress through before they become ready for handwriting. Teaching children how to form letters properly before they are secure in these stages of development could make them become reluctant writers and experience feelings of failure. This is not what we want for any child!



What are the developmental stages in becoming ready to write?

Sensory Processing

The starting point. As children explore the world around them, they use all their senses to take in the information around them and build upon it. Body awareness (proprioception) is the ability to know where different parts of our body are without using our vision. Feedback from muscle and joint sensations helps us to know how we need to move our body to complete a task. It helps us with tasks such as climbing the stairs – we don't need to look where we are putting our feet. It is what tells us how much pressure to use to push and pull toys. A child needs to be secure in this stage of development before they can hold and grasp writing implements.



Gross Motor Skills

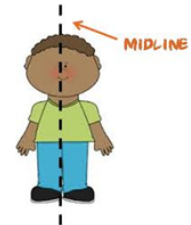
The next skill required for handwriting readiness is gross motor skills. The gross motor skills involved in handwriting are responsible for good posture for writing. Being able to control the muscles in the neck, shoulder and upper body is necessary for a child to maintain stability while they write, and in turn move the hands and fingers.

Specific Gross Motor Skills for Being Ready to Write

Crossing the midline. Imagine a line running from your child's nose to pelvis that divides the body into left and right sides. Skills such as putting shoes on involve moving part of the body from one side across the centre, the midline, to the other side. Such activities promote the coordination and communication of the left and right sides of the brain. This encourages bilateral coordination, the process of developing a dominant hand and development of fine-motor skills.

Eye-Hand Coordination is the ability to process information received from the eyes to control, guide and direct the hands to perform a task. We use this when we reach to pick an object up, catch a ball, open a door.

Motor Planning. This is like muscle memory. With repetition, the brain remembers how to complete a task, making the movement an automatic response. Eventually a child can form letters without having to think how to do so; the brain makes the letter pattern automatically. Action songs use muscle memory.



Fine Motor Skills

Fine motor skills begin to develop once these gross motor skills have a secure foundation. A child needs to develop strong muscles in the shoulders and upper arms first, to allow controlled hand movement for good pencil control. Hand and finger strength will affect the way in which your child will hold a writing implement. The stronger the hand muscles, the longer your child will be able to write before the muscles get tired. A child needs to be able to manipulate objects, pick objects up and move them around in their hand, ready for holding a pencil. Then they can establish a hand dominance, a preferred hand for carrying out tasks.