

Suggestions for Children who are Beginning to Print

Children require exposure to a variety of materials and activities before printing letters is meaningful. All fine motor and visual motor activities will serve to enhance printing skills when a child reaches that level.

Pre-printing activities can be done at a table, lying on the floor, standing at an easel, etc.

Coloring can assist with fine motor skills. To help a child color within boundaries, sticky wikki can be used to give a tactile boundary, white glue or hot glue gun can also be applied to the boundary to provide this feedback. As a child improves with their coloring, an outline of the line may be what is necessary. The child can pick the color, and the adult can outline the shape. As the child improves, they can outline the shape and color it in.

Tracing is an important aspect. Have the child write in the air with his/her finger to get the feel of the shape or letter first (you can also use a flashlight or a paper towel roll as a wand for drawing in the air). Have the child trace things with his/her finger first, then use a pencil. Start with shapes first, then move to the letters of the child's name. Try rainbow writing – the child traces a shape or letter, then retraces with another color (usually tracing with three different colors works well, using chalk and a chalkboard also works well).

Mazes and dot to dots help children develop stop and start control of the pencil and are helpful with developing pre-print skills. In early stages of dot to dots green and red dots can be connected and provide concrete start and stop points. Start with wide straight mazes, as skill improves, progress to narrow, curvy mazes.

Child can draw lines over a picture of an animal they have colored to make a cage. Lines can be vertical, horizontal or diagonal. It is helpful to draw the cage boundary around the animal. Green lines can be used as the starting point (bottom).

Positional concepts are important. Reinforcing a child's understanding of top, bottom, left, right, middle are directional concepts they will need to understand where to put things on the page. You can assist a child to learn these things by asking them to put things in different spots (name or shape or part of a picture).

Using other mediums such as salt or sand, finger paint or shaving cream can provide a great sensory learning experience and can be motivating to put things in different spots (name or shape or part of a picture).

If you have any questions, please contact your Occupational Therapist.

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Letter pieces can be used to assist the child with understanding the component parts of the letter (for an E you need one long line and three little lines) and the orientation of the parts (the long line goes on the left side and the little lines go across).

Chalkboard activities (or other vertical surfaces) are helpful in developing stability in the wrist.

Create “roads” in the form of basic shapes and lines and have the child “drive a marker or small toy on the “road”.