

National Schools' Handwriting Competition

Ten ideas for developing handwriting through making and modelling

Making and modelling is another way of strengthening and developing fine and gross motor skills. Get out the play dough, do some baking and build things and get the hammers out (with supervision of course), all great fun at the same time getting them ready for writing.

Activities (many of these activities involve both gross and fine motor skills)	Actions	Associated handwriting language (use opportunities to talk about 'language of the hands', e.g. palm, knuckles)	Try....
Hard materials:			
1. Using a tool-kit and pieces of wood	hammering sawing screwing	straight lines, up, down back and forth, backwards and forwards, away, towards turn, clockwise, anticlockwise, the other way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • capital letters • long ladders • zig-zags
2. Construction	Building, connecting, manipulating, lifting, lining up, levelling (Image8_bldg-blocks)	up, down, high, low, left, right, under	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patterns with straight lines
Pliable materials:			
3. Cooking	kneading rolling with rolling pin, hands or fingers (Image7_Rollingpin)	down, press away, towards, press, pressure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making letter-shaped biscuits. • Making biscuits/cakes and decorating them with tubes of icing or different shaped decorations. Decorate the biscuit shapes with different handwriting patterns.

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Activities (many of these activities involve both gross and fine motor skills)	Actions	Associated handwriting language (use opportunities to talk about 'language of the hands', e.g. palm, knuckles)	Try....
Pliable materials:			
3. Cooking contd.	Whisking using cutters	round and round, clockwise, anticlockwise, the other way space, fingers, spread out	
4. Play dough (soft)	kneading and moulding (Image3_play-dough)	press, pressure, away, towards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Making patterns and letters.
5. Plasticine (hard)	Plasticine will strengthen the muscles more effectively as it is harder and requires more force	round and round, clockwise, anticlockwise, the other way, space, fingers, spread out, carve, scratch, rub, scrape, make holes, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Making models (e.g. people, a park). Making a series of laminated mats that feature letter shapes and patterns. Encourage the children to overlay the patterns with their Plasticine or dough.
6. Clay (sticky and hard but may change form if water is added)	making sausages pressing flat or rolling out flat		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Push objects and tools into it to make patterns

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Activities	Actions	Associated handwriting language	Try....
Precision, control and pincer grip:			
7. Sewing	pincer hold if using a bodkin or similar	up, down, back again hold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using plastic coffee stirrers from fast food chains for threading. Making pom-poms by winding wool round and round two Polo-shaped pieces of card. When quite fat with wool, snip all the way round the edge. Tie tightly in between the two pieces of card before removing them.
8. Weaving	hand-eye co-ordination to control the up/down, push/pull repetition of sewing or threading	under, over, round and round	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children sew over their names with a bodkin needle and wool on a clean polystyrene tray. Weaving with long strips of paper and then sticking the weaving behind cut-outs of pattern or letter shapes on black sugar paper.
9. Threading	dexterity if alternating strips of paper or fabric for weaving (Unage9_beads)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Making short and long pasta necklaces: use straight, spiral or wheel pasta. Threading buttons on to strings. Making sequences or matching patterns to those given on cards.
10. Collage	pincer movement for picking up and sorting; pushing down, gluing	big, small, up, down, high, low, left, right, under	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Making different textures.