



# Preschool Handwriting Tips

## Introduction

Learning to write is such a delightful developmental milestone!

Toddler scribbles turn into purposeful preschool squiggles as pre-writers use their lines and shapes for intentional purposes such as writing their name or a letter to Mom.

New writers benefit from strengthening hand muscles through fine motor activities. We suggest creating a writing kit filled with resources you likely already have at home to encourage your child to spend time developing fine motor skills each day in a playful way.

Creating a writing kit is not necessary, but will help make handwriting practice a special activity and turn school “work” into play.

Below are instructions and rationale for items you may wish to include in your handwriting kit. Choose 3 or 4 possibilities and mix in new items throughout the week to keep your child’s interest.



# How to Create a Preschool Writing Kit

## Supplies and Rationale

- Container such as a Plastic Lidded Box
  - To hold the items
- Small Writing Instruments
  - Short Pencils (Golf Scorecard/Library Sized if Possible)
  - Short Colored Pencils
  - Short Crayons (Crayons Broken in Half are a Great Size!)
    - The idea behind using small writing tools is the smaller the space the more likely your child will be to hold the pencil in a proper grip.
    - Skinny writing instruments are best! No need for “fat” pencils or crayons.
- Mini Chalkboard, Chalk and Chalk Eraser
  - Make your own! Purchase a dollar store wooden clipboard and paint it with chalkboard paint or chalkboard spray paint! Easy peasy and your child will love it!
- Twist Ties
  - Let your child play and explore with twist ties. As they do, they will build and improve their fine motor muscles used for writing.
  - Keep your produce bag twist ties or use the ties found on bread bags.
  - Have your child twist to link them together. Use them to twist two pencils together. Find various activities and ways to play and explore with them.
- Lacing Strings and Lacing Cards/Lacing Beads
  - Your child will improve hand-eye coordination as they lace strings around cards or through beads.
  - Make your own lacing card, or use the ones provided in various lesson printables
- Small Colorful Plastic Beads and Tweezers
  - This is a great activity to strengthen the fingers used to hold writing instruments.
  - Have your child use the tweezers to pick up the beads and sort them by color.
- Small Clothing Items to Practice Buttoning or Zipping
  - Using zippers or buttons from clothing is a great way to improve finger dexterity.
- Crepe Paper Squares
  - Cut an inexpensive roll of crepe paper into squares and invite your child to crumple and roll the squares into ball shapes to improve finger dexterity.
- Sponge
  - Your child will strengthen hand muscles by simply soaking a sponge in water then wringing the water out, repeat.
- Stress Ball
  - Fill a latex balloon with dry rice, beans, or flour for your child to squeeze and strengthen hand muscles.

- Play Clay Kid's Dough and a Rolling Pin
  - Playing with the dough will strengthen finger muscles.
  - Click [here](#) for kid's dough recipe
- Child Safe Scissors
  - Save child friendly junk mail magazines for your child to cut apart.
- Masking Tape or Painter's Tape
  - Your child will strengthen finger muscles as they learn to pull off the tape from the roll and play with it.

## Pencil Grip

Between the ages of 3 and 4 is a terrific time to teach your child a proper pencil grip. The longer a child writes with an incorrect grip, the more that habit is formed. Training your child to hold a pencil properly in an encouraging and playful way is a helpful gift for your child, and your child's future kindergarten teacher!

### Tripod Grip

The most common proper pencil grip is the tripod pencil grasp. To form the tripod grasp, the thumb and pointer pinch the pencil forming a circular shape and then the pencil rests on the middle finger. The ring and pinky fingers are tucked in toward the palm.



### Quadrupod Grip

The quadrupod grasp is another approved grasp similar to the tripod except it uses 4 fingers to control the pencil. The ring finger is incorporated with the writing fingers. If this grasp provides the support your child needs, simply adjust the pencil grasp strengthening suggestions to fit the quadrupod grasp.

## Pencil Grip Activity Aids

### Stop and Go Fingers

- Stop and Go: Fingerprint
  - When introducing a preschooler to a proper pencil grip, it may be helpful to place fingerprint on each individual fingertip of your child's writing dominant hand. Use the color green to place on the thumb, pointer finger, and middle finger. Use the color red to place on the ring and pinky fingertips. Have your child paint with just one finger at a time taking notice of how each finger has its own movements. Play a game of "Stop and Go." When you say "Go," your child can fingerprint with any of her green painted fingertips (the thumb, pointer finger, and middle finger). When you say "Red Light!" your child can fingerprint with any of her red painted fingertips (the ring finger and pinky).
- Stop and Go: Pencil Ride
  - Use a green marker to draw a small green circle on your child's thumb, pointer finger, and middle finger. Explain to your child these are her "go" fingers. These "go" fingers get to go for a ride on a pencil. Use a red marker to draw a small red circle on your child's ring finger and pinky. Explain to your child these are her "stop" fingers. Her "stop" fingers get tucked into her palm and don't get to ride the pencil.
    - As you make the green dot on the middle finger, place the dot on the side pad of the middle finger where the pencil will rest rather than the middle fingertip.
    - Use a green marker to draw a green ring around the part of the pencil where you want your child to hold the pencil with her green "go" fingers.



### The Handwriting Sock

- Materials:
  - 1 Sock
    - Check the laundry room for a child sized sock missing its match!
  - Scissors
- Directions:
  - Cut 2 small holes in the sock. The first small hole will be on the left top side of the sock. Cut the second hole slightly over to the right of the first hole.

- Have your child place his thumb through the first hole and pointer finger through the second hole. The remaining middle finger, ring finger, and pinky take a nap curled up together inside the sock.
- Give your child a pencil to hold between the thumb and pointer finger sticking through the sock holes. Ask your child to rest his hand flat on the paper surface so the three fingers curled up inside can rest as he writes.



## Handwriting Exercises

### Crab Crawl

- Place both hands with palm and fingers flat on a table surface. Make hands “crawl” across the table like crabs.

### Spider Push Ups

- Place both hands flat together with palms and fingers touching. Then push hands apart at the palm, keeping fingertips touching.

### Helicopter

- Holding the middle of a pencil with the 3 correct grasping fingers (pointer, middle and thumb), attempt to twirl the pencil around like blades of a helicopter by switching the fingers one at a time from one side of the pencil to the other.

### Caterpillar

- Have your child hold a pencil toward the pointed end. Using her thumb and pointer finger, have her push the pencil forwards and slide it along the middle resting finger until her fingers reach the end of the pencil, like a caterpillar crawling along the pencil. Then pull the pencil back, sliding your fingers along, until she reaches the pointed end of the pencil again.

### Woodpecker

- Have your child hold a pencil toward the pointed end using the three finger tripod grasp. Have your child place her free hand vertically flat in front of the pencil tip. Use the three tripod grasp fingers to push the pencil forward and then pull it back like a woodpecker

pecking at a tree. Make sure your child keeps her hands still and only moves the pencil forward and backward using her finger muscles.

#### Freeze Dance Pencil Grasp

- Place a pencil on the ground in the center of an open spaced floor. Turn on music for your child to dance to. Stop the music intermittently. Each time the music stops, your child races to pick up the pencil using the tripod grasp. Your child shows you the tripod grasp and you help adjust his fingers as needed for proper grip, then your child places the pencil back down on the floor to dance again to music.