Squish, Trace, Pinch
Your Way to Writing

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Is Your Child Ready?

• Learning new skills requires the child being “ready.”
  - attention
  - imitation
  - compliance

The child needs to be able to understand the ultimate goal of the activity

Why Teach Handwriting?

• Fluency
• Participation
• Attention
• Processing
• Note taking
• Avoid problems later
• Kinesthetic memory
Why Use HWT

- Teaches writing readiness
- Multisensory
- Developmentally appropriate
- Addresses cognitive skills
- Incorporates music
- Imitation and play based
- Systematic teaching
- Evidence based

Readiness Components

“The Pre-K program introduces school readiness activities for children of all ability levels.

Body awareness, good habits, grip, coloring, drawing, and beginning handwriting skills are all taught using music, movement, and multisensory manipulative.” - HWT

Foundational Language

- “stop”
- “start”
- “watch me”
- “your turn”
- “top”
- “point”
- “big”
- “little”
- “curve”
- “line”
- “jump”
- “slide”
- “down”
- “across”
- “around”
- “middle”
- “bottom”
- “trace”
What to Teach?

- Gross Motor Skills
  - Trunk Stability
  - Shoulder Stability
- Fine Motor Skills
  - Pincer Grasp
  - Hand Strength
  - Wrist Stability
- Sensory Development in the hands
- Letter Identification

Order of Instruction

**HWT**
- Pre-Strokes
- PRINTING (CAPITALS)
- PRINTING (lowercase)
- **Cursive** (lowercase)
- **Cursive** (Capitals)

**Developmental**
- Aim & Scribble
- Pre-strokes
  - Vertical
  - Horizontal
  - Curves
  - Diagonals
- Shapes
- Letters
- Numbers

Content provided by Sarah Mar M.O.T./OTR/L.
Spatial Awareness

- Spatial awareness, spatial perception, spatial memory, spatial output – Like a maze
  - Whole body
  - Arm
  - Hand
  - Fingers
  - Distal joints

Spatial Awareness

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Spatial Awareness

Posture – Be a Detective

- Best Posture for handwriting (with feet on ground or on phone books)
- Both elbows on table
- Use of “helping hand” to hold the paper
- Stabilization of paper
- Distance from eyes to paper (more than 5 inches)
- Tummy Time

Posture – Be a Detective

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Posture – Be a Detective

Get Your Hands Ready

- Intrinsics and arches – Strengthening exercises
  - Bear Caves
  - O’s
  - Stretch them wide
  - Ten Little Fingers
  - 5 Finger Play

Get Your Hands Ready

Get Your Hands Ready

Get Your Hands Ready

Get Your Hands Ready
“Finger Training”
- Spirals in the air / on the table / on paper
- Feed the baby bird
- Pull in - push away on paper
- Spider on a rod
- Pick up objects with chopsticks
- Finger aerobics
- Pick up small objects with fingers and collect them in the hand / throw them away one by one

Grip
- Two types of grips:
  - Standard (rests on middle finger)
  - Alternate (rests on ring finger)
- Consistency of grip
- Distance from finger to point (3/4 to 1 inch)
- Pressure
- Angle of pencil (45°)
- Position of wrist (slight extension)
- Position of thumb (forefinger-thumb opposed)

Wood Pieces
- big line, little line, big curve, little curve
- Use one on one or in small groups
- Stack, sort, trade
  - Polish wood pieces
- Wood pieces in a bag
- Position in space/body parts game
  - Directional movements
- Capitals with letter cards and mats

Content provided by Sarah Mai M.O.T./OTR/L.
**Mat Man**

- Teaches body awareness
- Develops counting skills
- Develops drawing skills
- Promotes social skills
- Series:
  - Mat Man Shapes
  - Mat Man Hats
- Capital letters & numbers 1 - 5

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**Make Coloring Purposeful**

- HWT aim and scribble pages p.1-2-3
- HWT color pages (facilitate different strokes) p.4-15
- Flip crayons or stubs (alternate lines, make patterns – not just rotate paper) p.24
- Accessorize and decorate – It’s about language
- Fireworks Activity – does your non-dominant hand float?
Pre-Writing

- Get off the paper and pencil – *build letters*
- Say “Hi Smiley”
- Roll – A – Dough
  - guided preparatory activity
  - Pinching, rolling, pulling, forming
- Air Writing
- Stamp and see

Teaching Print

- **Capital letters**
  - Same height
  - Start on the top
  - Easy to recognize and identify
  - Groups of letters:
    - Frog jump F, E, D, B, P, R, N, M
    - Starting corner H, W, L, U, Y, V, Z, K
    - Center starters C, A, O, I, Q, T, G, J, R
- Tips for Tracing
  - Connect the dots

Where Do You Start Your Letters?

Where do you start your letters? At the top!
Where do you start your letters? At the top!
If you want to start a letter, then you better, better, remember to start it at the top!

1. Is this the top, top, top?
   No, it’s the bottom!
   Is this the top, top, top?
   No, it’s the middle!
   Is this the top, top, top?
   No, it’s the top, top, top!

Where do you start your letters? At the top!
**Teaching Print**

- **Lower case letters**
  - Attention to size and position in space
  - Attention to “regular size”, “tall letters” and “diving letters”
  - Groups of letters:
    - Same as Capitals: c, o, s, v, w, x, z
    - Magic C: a, d, g
    - “tall letters”: t, l, f, k, h, b
    - “special letters” bumps, curves, dot: m, n, r, l, u, s, e
    - “diving letters”: p, j, y, q, g

**Wet, Dry, Try**

There’s an App for that!
- Teacher writes letter
- Child traces off letter with water
- Child dries off letter with tissue
- Child writes letter on own
Writing My Name

- Model letter by letter
- Use cash register tape
- Teach in capital letters first
- Positive emotional & social support

Content provided by Sarah Mai M.O.T./OTR/L

Teaching Cursive

- **Lower case**
  - All letters start on the line
  - All letters are linked
  - First write all the letters, than go back to dot and cross
  - Groups of letters:
    - "c family": c, e, m, o, g
    - "t family": t, u, j, y
    - "bump family": m, n
    - "loop family": l, h, k, f
    - "in and out family" (or little loop family): b, v, w
    - "tricky ones": r, s, x
    - "divers": q, z, p

Maria Cecília de Freitas Cardoso Buckley, Ph.D.
Teaching Cursive

- **Upper case**
  - Almost all start on the top
  - They are pretty “independent and snobbish” - most do not like to connect with the rest of the word and like to have fancy lines
  - Order of presentation
    - It really does not matter at this point
    - I like to start with the child’s name

Maria Cecilia de Freitas Cardoso Buckley, Ph.D
About Capitals

What are capitals? They're big in size. Why? There are so many connections. Capitals can stand alone or connect when it's easy to connect. They're also easier because we simplified them. Connecting makes it easier to form. We're so used to connecting letters, we're used to connecting capitals. Why? Compared to lowercase letters, capitals are easier used. Children can write pages and pages before wanting a capital. If we're used to connecting, we don't notice. What if the learner is told to substitute a connected capital when needed. We suggest some connected and some disconnected to show the difference.

Cursive Capitals

A C O U V W X Y Z

Take a look at our simplified capitals. These capitals look like their lowercase partners.

B H K M N R

These capitals are similar to printed capitals or printed lowercase letters. In cursive, they begin with an introductory stroke, "slightly down."

D E J B G L S J

The remaining capitals printed for B would not be recognizable from print, for D, we suggest giving the capital a pointed or slanted stroke.

To Connect or Not to Connect?

Capital Connection Rule

Connect when it's easy. It's easy to connect if the letter ends on the baseline or the right side, but if the capital ends high or on the wrong side, don't connect. Just begin the lowercase letter near the capital.

A C E G I K L M N 2 R U Y Z

Capitals ending on the baseline connect:

B D J H I O P S V W X

Below are a few exceptions:

Aunt Can Each Dean The We

Play a game. Write capitals on the board and see if your students can identify the capitals that connect and those that don't.

How Do We Teach It?
**Best Method vs. Best Practices**

- A systematic, progressive, multisensory approach that
  - Uses all senses
  - Uses verbalization
  - Uses verbal, visual and kinesthetic feedback
  - Uses mnemonics...little stories, rhythm, songs
  - 36 weeks, 2 activities per day 10-15 min per day.

*Make it fun and meaningful*

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**Best Practices**

- Explain
- Demonstrate
- Offer opportunity for:
  - observation and imitation (see and do)
  - tracing (with fingers, to get the gestalt for proper movement)
  - copying (always BELOW the sample)
  - writing (no visual cues, may use oral cues)
- Avoid mindless, boring repetition.

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**Best Practices**

- Give opportunity for self evaluation.
- Give opportunity for guided, supervised learning experience.
- Make handwriting useful (post cards, letters, lists, notes...)
- Handwriting is best taught in frequent (daily is best) specific brief periods of direct instruction and supervised practice.
Generalization and Repetition

- Letter name
- Letter keyword
- Letter sound
- Letter formation

Teach together!

a, apple, /a/

Teaching Strategies

- Direct Instruction
  - Explanation
  - Demonstration
  - Presentation of model
  - Imitation
- Guided Practice
  - Cues, prompts, approximation (with correct movement)
- Self-evaluation
- Attach to reading

Remediation Activities

- Memory
- Orientation
- Placement
- Size
- Start
- Sequence
- Control
- Spacing
Home/School Activities

- Jolly Phonics
- Whiteboards/chalkboards in circle time
- Journals
- Writing center
- Table toy tubs
- Mat Man in block area
- Rainbow writing
- Door writing (flashlights/laser pointers)
- Ball writing
- Shaving cream
- Glue tracing

Resources

Teaching Lefties

- Position paper completely on the left side of child’s midline.
- Angle paper to be parallel to the child’s forearm (about 45°).
- Teach child to position paper themselves.
- Affix tape on table to help establish correct positioning.
- Do not allow a “hooked grasp” nor holding the pencil between thumb and all four fingers along the shaft.
- Please understand it is difficult to visually monitor handwriting since the hand covers the writing.

Maria Cecília de Freitas Cardoso Buckley, Ph.D.
HWT Web Resources

- Webinars
- www.hwtears.com
- Frog Jump Gazette
  http://www.hwtears.com/newsletter/january2009
- Capital start e-newsletters
  http://www.hwtears.com/capitalstart/vol1?confirm
- How to videos/ U tube videos
  http://www.hwtears.com/videos
- A Click Away
  http://www.hwtears.com/click/resources

Apps for Fine Motor

- Slide and Spin ($.99)- develop fine motor skills
- Cut the Buttons- develop pincer grasp, visual scanning
- Dexteria ($3.99)- pincer grasp, kinesthetic awareness, visual scanning
- Balloon Darts Challenge Finger Target Practice Game- tracing, finger isolation, visual scanning
- Ready to Print ($9.99)- prewriting skills, visual scanning
- Musical Paint ($2.99)- great app with music as reinforcement, promotes finger isolation, writing name

Apps for Visual Motor

- Bugs and Bubbles- visual scanning, visual motor skills, dexterity (also works on colors, matching, response to auditory commands)
- Memblock- visual motor, visual scanning, visual memory
- Mouse Maze Free-visual motor, visual scanning (less advanced)
- Simple mazes- visual motor, visual scanning, various size mazes (for more advanced children)
- Rail Maze- not for iPad
- Maze Farm- visual scanning
Apps for Visual Motor

- Chalk Walk - visual scanning, visual motor skills, pincer grasp
- Kapu Forest ($1.99) - visual motor, matching, sorting
- Build It Up - visual perception
- Matrix Match 2 - visual perception skills (for more advanced children)
- Whizzy Kids - matching, visual perception, visual motor, visual scanning

Letter Formation Apps

- Crabby Writer - letter formation, pincer grasp, literacy, rhyming words, matching
- Letter School ($4.99) - letter recognition, sequential progression of difficulty, positive reinforcement, auditory cues, can set to HWT setting
- Wet Dry Try ($9.99) - handwriting without tears, auditory cues, more difficult

Questions?

To learn more about supporting people with Down syndrome:

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