



Northumbria Healthcare
NHS Foundation Trust

Ready to write

Issued by children's occupational therapy

building a caring future

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www.northumbria.nhs.uk

Contact us

You can contact us Monday to Friday 8.30am – 5.00pm. Please choose the team according to where you live.

Northumberland

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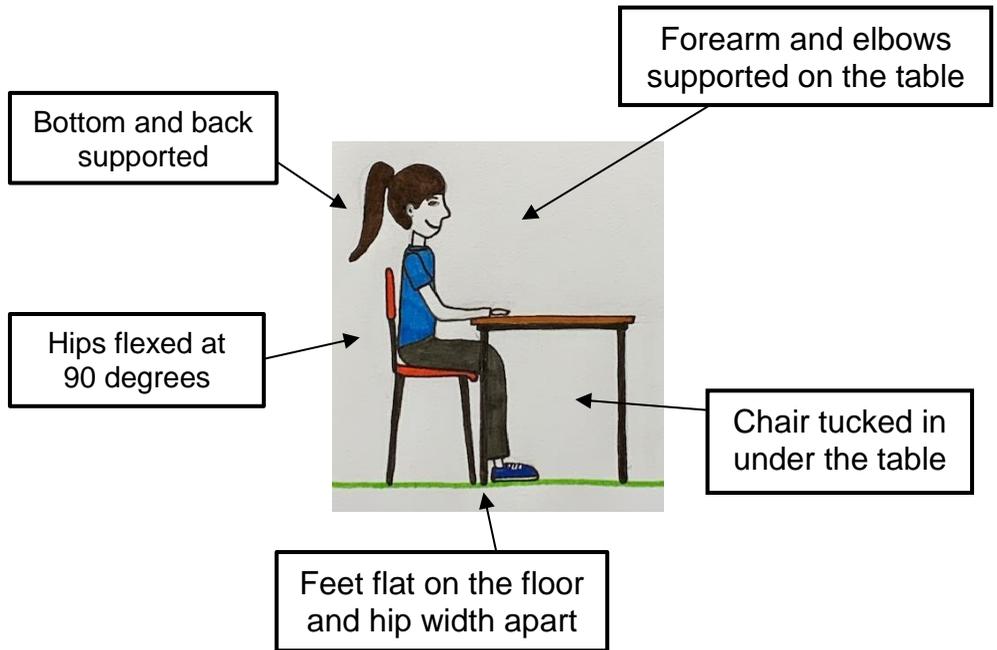
Alternatively, you can visit our website:

<https://www.northumbria.nhs.uk/our-services/childrens-services/childrens-occupational-therapy/>

The following activities and suggestions to help children to develop their handwriting skills.

Posture

Here is an example of a good posture, needed when writing at a desk:



Strategies to help a child maintain a good posture:

- If the chair has a deep seat, put a cushion behind the child's back to give him/her more support.
- Place a mirror on the wall beside the child so they can check their own posture.
- Tape a small picture of an upright sitting posture to the desk.
- Work out a simple physical reminder such as a slight stroke down the back or a tap on the shoulder when posture is poor.
- Try an angled work surface using a lever arch file or an angled writing board.
- A smooth work surface (such as a whiteboard) will provide less resistance to movement.
- Place something in the palm of child's hand to hold with little/ring finger. This encourages more isolated movements of the fingers when writing.

Paper position

- The paper should be positioned on the same side of the body as the writing hand, slightly tilted towards the body at the child's preferred angle.
- The child should stabilise the paper with their non-writing hand.
- The optimum position is when a child's forearm is supported. The child should be encouraged therefore to move the paper up rather than their arm down.
- Tape paper at an appropriate angle on the desk or place a line of tape as a guide for the piece of paper.
- Encourage frequent checking of paper position and body alignment.



Pencil grasp

- Ensure a comfortable grip that allows control - different methods may work best for your child although the following guidance provides a good position.
- Pencil balanced against hand.
- The wrist is slightly extended (bent upwards).
- The tip of thumb and index finger are on the pencil with the index finger slightly flexed (bent).
- The side of the middle finger has the pencil resting on it at the level of the fingernail.
- A thick matt finish is easier than a thin shiny barrel surface.
- Pencil grips can also reduce the finger/pencil pressure by changing the relative tension of the fingers and thumb involved.



Pre-writing Skills

- Pre-writing requires a child's ability to write with one hand and stabilize him / herself with the other. Pre-writing can be a multi-sensory experience enabling a child to acquire balance & co-ordination, shoulder/arm stability, grasp and pen control. The fine motor activities provided all help to develop the pre-requisite skills needed for writing.
- Before being able to form letters and write effectively research has suggested that children need to be able to form pre-writing shapes. The following activity ideas will help children to develop their pre-writing skills in lots of different ways. The following shapes are those that children should develop prior to learning to write.



Multi-sensory approach

Activities that stimulate children through, vision, touch, smell, hearing, joint & muscle feedback are an excellent way of re-enforcing prewriting skills. Activity ideas are as follows:

- Write on different textures e.g. aluminium foil, cardboard, wax paper, paper bag, regular paper, colouring books etc.
- Use chalk, markers, crayons, pencils, pens and paints using different colours.
- Combine paper choice and writing mediums i.e. Sandpaper and chalk, magic colouring books that use water to bring the colour alive, draw on pavements and walls using a paintbrush and water, draw in sand and mud using a stick or finger.
- Draw around sandpaper or wooden stencils.
- Draw using finger paints, scented lotions, pudding gelatine, oatmeal, whipped cream, cornflour and water, chocolate spread, shaving foam, sand and any other texture you can think of.
- Try changing the temperature of materials.
- Try using scented markers.
- Add bubble bath, scented oil or food flavourings (vanilla, orange essence etc.) to finger-paint.
- Use a musical electric toothbrush to paint, attach bells to the end of paintbrush or colour and draw to the rhythm of some music playing.

Positioning

Try practicing pre-writing shapes, colouring etc in a variety of positions which will help develop your child's core and shoulder stability (standing at a wall, kneeling at a wall, four-point kneeling, laying on tummy etc).



Alternative Formats

If you would like a copy of this information in large print, another language, audio tape or other format please call the Contact Centre on 03 44 811 8118.

Other sources of information

NHS 111

NHS Choices

www.nhs.uk/pages/homepage.aspx

NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence)

www.nice.org.uk

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Freephone: 0800 032 0202

Text: 07815 500015

Email: northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk

Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

General Enquiries 03 44 811 8111

www.northumbria.nhs.uk

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