
GETTING READY FOR KINDERGARTEN: MOTOR READINESS

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What is Kindergarten Readiness?

- ❖ Readiness is more than writing letters and numbers
- ❖ Children need foundational skills to:
 - Participate in classroom activities
 - Develop independence
 - Build confidence
- ❖ Motor Foundational Skills Include:
 - Fine Motor
 - Visual Motor
 - Gross Motor
 - Daily Living Skills

Preschool Motor Development

- ❖ Child develops and refines earlier skills and strength needed for higher-level skills
- ❖ Activities: all things movement!!!
 - Outside play
 - Running, jumping, climbing
 - Swimming
 - Animal walks
 - Playscapes
 - Ride-on toys (wear a helmet)
 - Balance games
 - Ball games: throw/catch, kick, t-ball, "golf"
 - Make an obstacle course
 - Help with gardening/yardwork
 - Help with chores: take out trash, carry/fold laundry, sweep, etc.
 - Imitation of movement, "Simon Says"
- ❖ Using language when child is playing/moving helps to teach them concepts, such as body parts and directionality (top/bottom, over/under, around, up/down, left/right, etc.).

Gross Motor Skills

What it is: Big body movements using arms, legs, and core.

Why it matters:

- ❖ Sitting upright at a desk
- ❖ Participating in gym and recess
- ❖ Overall coordination and endurance



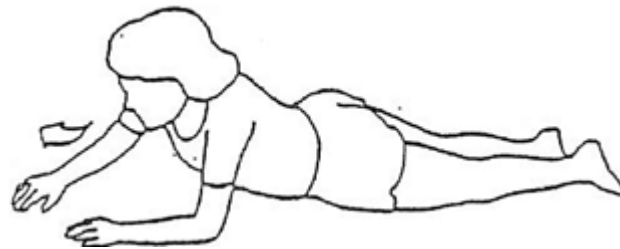
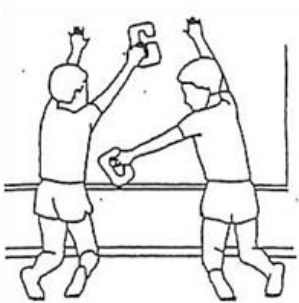
Examples of Activities to Promote Gross Motor Development:

- ❖ Playground time
- ❖ Obstacle courses
- ❖ Hopscotch
- ❖ Dancing or movement games

Strong core = better sitting, attention, and handwriting

Positions

- ❖ Encouraging a variety of positions will help to build the trunk and arm strength needed to provide stability for body alignment during fine motor tasks. These positions will help to develop midline crossing and help to stabilize the body to develop isolated arm and finger movements needed in preparation for writing. They will also help to develop appropriate weight shifting needed for balance.
- ❖ Even though the child spends much of their day upright and moving, floor play is still important! A few examples:



Avoid “W-Sitting” position during floor time



Fine Motor Skills

What it is: Small muscle movements using hands and fingers

Why it matters:

- ❖ Writing and drawing
- ❖ Using scissors
- ❖ Managing school tools (glue, crayons)

Kindergarten Expectations:

- ❖ Holds a crayon/pencil with some control
- ❖ Cuts along simple lines (beginning of year)
- ❖ Manipulates small objects (beads, buttons)

Examples of Activities to Promote Fine Motor Development:

- ❖ Playdough (rolling, pinching)
- ❖ Stringing beads
- ❖ Using tongs/tweezers
- ❖ Coloring and drawing



Strength comes before
control: focus on play-based
strengthening first



Development of Grasp and Fine Motor Skills

- ❖ 18-24 months: Picks up crayon and scribbles, removes lid from bottle, snips with scissors, strings beads (2 or 3), turns one page at a time, improved use of spoon for feeding
- ❖ 36-48 months: Cuts with scissors, 3 shapes in form board, hand preference for dominant hand, can help with dressing (emerging for fasteners/buttons), assist to orient the clothes (front/back & right/left), emerging tripod grasp with movement coming from arm and wrist to color
- ❖ 5-6 years: Draws recognizable person (5 parts), connect dots, builds block pyramid, draws a person (6-9 parts), dresses independently (emerging for shoe tying)

Pre-Writing Grasp Patterns

- ❖ Fine Motor Skills involve how you hold things.
- ❖ For example: reaching; grasping; manipulating objects; and leading to skilled use of crayons/pencils/markers and scissors, as well as the skilled manipulation of clothing fasteners.
- ❖ If children are practicing their letters, encourage them to start at the top. Use a variety of method to teach them letters (sand, chalkboard, paper). Coloring is a great skill to support writing



Gross Grasp Pattern
1-2 years old



Digital Pronate Grasp
2-3 years old



Tripod Grasp
3-4 years old



Skilled Tripod
Grasp
5+ years old

Visual Motor Skills

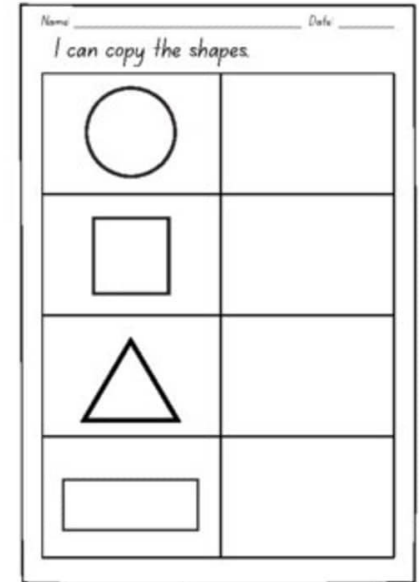
What it is: How the eyes and hands work together.

Why it matters:

- ❖ Writing letters and numbers
- ❖ Spacing and staying on the line

Kindergarten Expectations:

- ❖ Copies simple shapes (circle, square, cross)
- ❖ Completes basic mazes or tracing
- ❖ Begins to form letters (beginning of year)
- ❖ Can form all uppercase and lowercase letters (end of year)

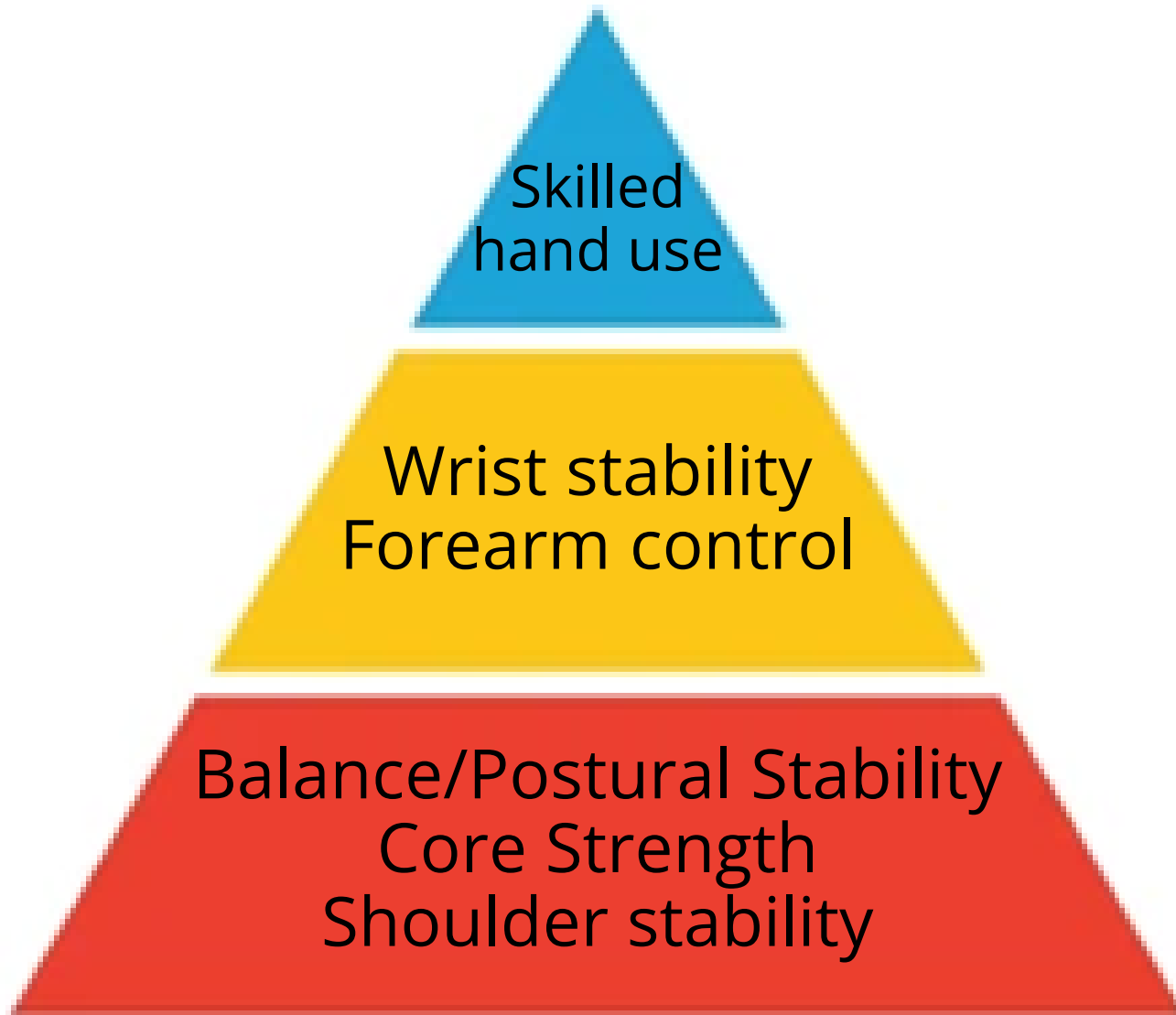


Examples of Activities to Promote Visual Motor Development:

- ❖ Tracing lines and shapes
- ❖ Simple mazes
- ❖ Copying block designs
- ❖ Puzzles



Pre-requisites for Handwriting Success



Handwriting

- ❖ If children are practicing their letters, encourage them to start at the top. Use a variety of methods to teach them letters (sand, chalkboard, shaving cream, paper). Modeling for your child is helpful toward developing good writing habits. Tracing is helpful for learning the way their hands have to move.
- ❖ Coloring is a great skill to support writing. Using broken crayons helps develop a better grasp (pincer grasp).
- ❖ Coloring on a vertical (upright) surface is helpful for the development of efficient grasp patterns.
- ❖ Play games where the child has to isolate the fingers from the rest of the hand (finger plays, legos, pick-up sticks, games with tongs). This supports the development of the skilled side of the hand.

Daily Living Skills

What it is: Independence in everyday tasks

Why it matters:

- ❖ Builds confidence
- ❖ Helps children keep up with classroom routines
- ❖ Reduces frustration



Kindergarten Expectations:

- ❖ Puts on coat/backpack
- ❖ Uses the bathroom independently
- ❖ Opens lunch containers
- ❖ Washes hands

Independence is more
important than perfection

Examples of Activities to Promote

Daily Living Skills Development:

- ❖ Let your child dress themselves (even if imperfect!)
- ❖ Practice opening containers at home
- ❖ Use simple routines (same steps daily)



Screen Time

- ❖ Remember, children best learn spatial concepts and how things work together by actually moving within their world and manipulating objects (not by watching TV or using a mouse/touchscreen). Children learn through exploring with their whole bodies, including all of their senses.
- ❖ Excessive screen time (TV, tablets, etc.) can limit:
 - Social skills
 - Language
 - Creativity
 - Attention
 - Fitness
- ❖ Some carefully monitored screen activities with quality content can benefit older children. But what's most important for children is lots of time for hands-on creative and active play, time in nature, and face-to-face interactions.

Key Takeaways

- ❖ Kindergarten readiness is about participation and progress, not perfection
- ❖ Play is the best way to build these skills
- ❖ Small daily opportunities make a big difference

If your child is still developing in these areas, that's okay! Growth happens with practice, support, and time.

Resources

- ❖ [Learning Without Tears](#) – handwriting readiness tips
- ❖ [The OT Toolbox](#) – fine motor and sensory activities
- ❖ [Go Noodle](#) - Fun gross motor movements for kids
- ❖ [Understood.org](#) – child development information
- ❖ [Pinterest](#) - search Kindergarten Motor Skills for fun ideas
- ❖ [PE Central](#) - movement games and activity ideas
- ❖ [STAR Institute for Sensory Processing](#) - parent education about sensory processing
- ❖ [Sensory LifeStyle](#) - ideas for sensory friendly routines and activities
- ❖ [Common Sense Media](#) - reviews of age-appropriate media