

Get Ready, Get Set for School Suggestions for Parents

There are many skills that children need to have in order to prepare them for school activities, such as printing and scissor cutting. They need good upper body strength and stability to give their hand a stable base to work from. They need to have well-developed fine motor skills to hold and manipulate a pencil efficiently. They need to develop good visual-motor coordination to be able to copy simple shapes and designs so they can then learn to print letters. The following activities are designed to help your child develop these skills and have fun:

Core/ Upper Body Strengthening

- Play on playground equipment – climb ladders, swing across monkey bars and push a swing.
- Do the bear, crab, or wheelbarrow walk.
- Throw and catch balls of different sizes (start with larger/ softer balls).
- Try activities on vertical surfaces – an easel, fridge magnets paper taped to the wall or window writers).
- Do activities on the floor while tummy-lying and supporting weight through the forearms.
- Do household jobs (sweeping, raking, washing tables and windows).
- Make up an obstacle course with a variety of activities (e.g., crawling, jumping, balancing).



Fine Motor Skills

- Pick up as many pennies/cheerios/Skittles as possible using only 1 hand (pick them up one at a time and keep them all in the one hand) – then put them in a container or, for edible objects, eat them one at a time.
- “Shred” (tear) paper to be recycled with 2 hands.
- Play with squirt guns or water plants with a spray bottle.
- Use tongs or tweezers to pick up cotton balls, sponge pieces or pom-pom balls.

- Use playdough – squeeze it, pinch it, make small balls with it, poke holes in it, make snakes.
- Use tiny pieces of broken crayons or chalk - this encourages a mature tripod grasp.



- Hold scissors properly– thumb should be up & in the smaller hole, long finger in the larger hole, and index finger on the outside of the larger hole. Use thick materials, such as cereal boxes, card stock, or even straws, to cut.



- Make the “helper hand” work – it should stabilize the paper while colouring or hold the paper while cutting.

Visual-Motor Coordination

- Combine the shapes below to make simple pictures (e.g. grass, snowman, house, truck, house, person).

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- Practice shapes and letters with paper and crayons, sidewalk chalk, shaving cream on the bathtub wall, in sand at the beach, in the garden, with finger paint.
- Encourage that letters be formed from top to bottom and left to right. Teach proper formation – it matters how the letter is formed, not just that it looks right when it is finished.
- Work on concepts such as top/bottom, right/left, in/under and other positional words. These will be important when learning to form letters.

Have Fun!