

The Writing Handbook

Hérons Dale
Literacy Team

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ACTIVITIES TO SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF FINE-MOTOR SKILLS FOR WRITING

Children need to develop increasingly refined fine-motor skills in order to be developmentally ready to write. The ages listed below are for an average, neuro-typical child (from EYFS). All children will progress through these developmental stages as they are listed below.

AGE	DEVELOPMENTAL STEPS - I can...
0 - 6 months	Grasp objects
6 - 12 months	Pass objects from one hand to another Pick up and drop objects purposefully Pick up small objects between my thumb and first finger
12 - 18 months	Empty the contents of a container Grasp a mark-making object in the palm of my hand
18 - 24 months	Draw a horizontal line
2 - 3 years	Draw vertical lines
3 - 4 years	Draw horizontal and vertical lines and a circle
4 years plus	Draw simple, recognisable pictures

Fine motor skills include:

- **Hand-eye co-ordination** - the ability to execute activities with the hands, guided by the eyes requiring accuracy in placement, direction, and spatial awareness.
- **Ocular motor control** - the ability of the eyes to follow and focus on an object in the field of vision as required.
- **Manual dexterity** - the ability to accurately manipulate the hands and fingers for neat handwriting, drawing, typing skills etc.
- **Foot-eye co-ordination** - the ability to execute actions with the feet, guided by the eyes.
- **Tactile perception** - the interpretation of information transmitted via the fingertips to the brain.
- **Stereognosis** - the ability to recognise unseen objects using the sense of touch.

Upright working surfaces best promote the fine-motor skills needed for writing. This is for several reasons;

- Looking straight ahead requires less focus and concentration than looking down
- The child's wrist is positioned to develop good thumb movements
- The child is using the arm and shoulder muscles

Examples of upright working surfaces are: vertical chalkboards, easels for painting, flannel boards, lite bright, magnet boards (or fridge), windows and mirrors, white boards, etc.

Children can also make sticker pictures; do rubber ink-stamping, use re-useable stickers to make picture, complete puzzles with thick knobs, use magna-doodle and etch-a-sketch as well.

Below is a list of suggested activities to support the development of fine-motor skills in a range of areas.

Fine Motor Activities;

- Moulding and rolling play dough into balls - using the palms of the hands facing each other and with fingers curled slightly towards the palm.
- Rolling play dough into tiny balls (peas) using only the finger tips.
- Using pegs or toothpicks to make designs in play dough.
- Cutting play dough with a plastic knife or with a pizza wheel by holding the implement in a diagonal volar grasp.
- Tearing newspaper into strips and then crumpling them into balls. Use to stuff scarecrow or other art creation.
- Scrunching up 1 sheet of newspaper in one hand. This is a super strength builder.
- Using a plant sprayer to spray plants, (indoors, outdoors) to spray snow (mix food colouring with water so that the snow can be painted), or melt "monsters". (Draw monster pictures with markers and the colours will run when sprayed.)
- Picking up objects using large tweezers such as those found in the "Bedbugs" game. This can be adapted by picking up Cheerios, small cubes, small marshmallows, pennies, etc., in counting games.
- Shaking dice by cupping the hands together, forming an empty air space between the palms.
- Using small-sized screwdrivers like those found in an erector set.
- Lacing and sewing activities such as stringing beads, Cheerios, macaroni, etc.
- Using eye droppers to "pick up" coloured water for colour mixing or to make artistic designs on paper.

- Rolling small balls out of tissue paper, then gluing the balls onto construction paper to form pictures or designs.
- Turning over cards, coins, checkers, or buttons, without bringing them to the edge of the table.
- Making pictures using stickers or self-sticking paper reinforcements. Playing games with the "puppet fingers" -the thumb, index, and middle fingers. At circle time have each child's puppet fingers tell about what happened over the weekend, or use them in songs and finger plays.
- Place a variety of forms (eg. blocks, felt, paper, string, yarn, cereal, cotton) on outlines
- Match shapes, colour, or pictures to a page and paste them within the outlines

Self-Care Skills;

- Buttoning
- Lacing
- Tying
- Fastening Snaps
- Zipping
- Carrying
- Using a screwdriver
- Locking and unlocking a door
- Winding a clock
- Opening and closing jars
- Rolling out dough or other simple cooking activities
- Washing plastic dishes
- Sweeping the floor
- Dressing

Scissor Activities;

When scissors are held correctly, and when they fit a child's hand well, cutting activities will exercise the very same muscles which are needed to manipulate a pencil in a mature tripod grasp. The correct scissor position is with the thumb and middle finger in the handles of the scissors, the index finger on the outside of the handle to stabilize, with fingers four and five curled into the palm.

- Cutting junk mail, particularly the kind of paper used in magazine subscription cards
- Making fringe on the edge of a piece of construction paper
- Cutting play dough or clay with scissors
- Cutting straws or shredded paper
- Cutting

- Use a thick black line to guide cutting the following:
A fringe from a piece of paper
Cut off corners of a piece of paper
Cut along curved lines
Cut lines with a variety of angles
Cut figures with curves and angles

Sensory Activities;

The following activities ought to be done frequently to increase postural muscle strength and endurance. These activities also strengthen the child's awareness of his/her hands.

- Wheelbarrow walking, crab walking
- Clapping games (loud/quiet, on knees together, etc.)
- Catching (clapping) bubbles between hands
- Pulling off pieces of thera-putty with individual fingers and thumb
- Drawing in a tactile medium such as wet sand, salt, rice, or "goop". Make "goop" by adding water to cornstarch until you have a mixture similar in consistency to toothpaste. The "drag" of this mixture provides feedback to the muscle and joint receptors, thus facilitating visual motor control.
- Picking out small objects like pegs, beads, coins, etc., from a tray of salt, sand, rice, or putty. Try it with eyes closed too. This helps develop sensory awareness in the hands.

Midline Crossing;

Establishment of hand dominance is still developing at this point. The following activities will facilitate midline crossing:

- Encourage reaching across the body for materials with each hand. It may be necessary to engage the other hand in an activity to prevent switching hands at midline.
- Refrain specifically from discouraging a child from using the left hand for any activity. Allow for the natural development of hand dominance by presenting activities at midline, and allowing the child to choose freely.
- Start making the child aware of the left and right sides of his body through spontaneous comments like, "kick the ball with your right leg." Play imitation posture games like "Simon Says" with across the body movements.
- When painting at easel, encourage the child to paint a continuous line across the entire paper- also from diagonal to diagonal.

Activities To Develop Handwriting Skills;

There are significant prerequisites for printing skills that begin in infancy and continue to emerge through the preschool years. The following activities support and promote fine motor and visual motor development:

- **Body Stability**
The joints of the body need to be stable before the hands can be free to focus on specific skilled fine motor tasks; wheelbarrow walking, crab walking, and wall push-ups
- **Toys:** Orbiter, silly putty, and monkey bars on the playground.

Fine Motor Skills;

When a certain amount of body stability has developed, the hands and fingers begin to work on movements of dexterity and isolation as well as different kinds of grasps. Children will develop fine motor skills best when they work on a VERTICAL or near vertical surface as much as possible. In particular, the wrist must be in extension (bent back in the direction of the hand)

Attach a large piece of drawing paper to the wall. Have the child use a large marker and try the following exercises to develop visual motor skills

- Make an outline of a one at a time. Have the child trace over your line from left to right, or from top to bottom. Trace each figure at least 10 times. Then have the child draw the figure next to your model several times.
- Play connect the dots. Again make sure the child's strokes connect dots from left to right, and from top to bottom.
- Trace around stencils - the non-dominant hand should hold the stencil flat and stable against the paper, while the dominant hand pushes the pencil firmly against the edge of the stencil. The stencil must be held firmly.
- Attach a large piece of felt to the wall, or use a felt board. The child can use felt shapes to make pictures. Magnetic boards can be used the same way.
- Have the child work on a chalkboard, using chalk instead of a marker. Do the same kinds of tracing and modeling activities as suggested above.
- Paint at an easel. Some of the modeling activities as suggested above can be done at the easel.
- Magna Doodle- turn it upside down so that the erasing lever is on the . Experiment making vertical, horizontal, and parallel lines.

Ocular Motor Control;

This refers to the ability of the eyes to work together to follow and hold an object in the line of vision as needed.

- Use a flashlight against the ceiling. Have the child lie on his/her back or tummy and visually follow the moving light from left to right, top to bottom and diagonally.
- Find hidden pictures in books (there are special books for this).
- Maze activities

Eye-hand Coordination;

This involves accuracy in placement, direction, and spatial awareness.

- Throw bean bags/kooshi balls into a hula hoop placed flat on the floor. Gradually increase the distance.
- Play throw and catch with a ball. Start with a large ball and work toward a smaller ball (Kooshi balls are easier to catch than a tennis ball).
- Practice hitting bowling pins with a ball (you can purchase these games or make your own with pop bottles and a small ball).
- Play "Hit the Balloon" with a medium-sized balloon.

Ideas for Edible Sensory Mark-Making/Fine Motor Skills

(NB the idea is not necessarily that they SHOULD be eaten, but that they CAN be eaten- i.e. less inedible than soap!)

Wet/ sticky;

- Angel delight
- Mashed potato mix
- Tinned tomatoes
- Baked beans
- Condensed milk
- Honey
- Jam
- Golden syrup
- Coconut
- Cous cous
- Hundreds and thousands (sprinkles)
- Breadcrumbs
- Yoghurt
- Sugar
- Mushy peas
- Tapioca/semolina
- Rice pudding
- Spaghetti hoops
- Spaghetti numbers
- Spaghetti letters
- Mashed banana
- Marmite
- Gravy

- Princess snot (edible slime) 3 leaves gelatin melted in ½ cup boiling water then stir in ¼ golden syrup, food colouring etc
- Spaghetti painting – cook spaghetti, and stir in food colouring or edible finger paints (see below)
- Jelly
- ‘Mud’ – cocoa, oats, water
- Custard
- Polenta mixed with hot water and allowed to cool
- Porridge + warm water
- Cornflour/rice flour + water (experiment with different consistencies) (particularly good for painting)
- Cornflour/rice flour + water + dry polenta (thicker consistency) (use less water for a more ‘moon sand’ like consistency)
- Finger paints – 3tbsp sugar, ½ tsp salt, ½ cup corn flour, 2 cups water with food colouring
- Edible water beads – tapioca pearls cooked up and mixed with food colouring
- Marshmallow dough – 5 cups marshmallows melted with 2 tbsp water, then add 2 tbps oil, 5 cups cornflour
- Grated or blended vegetables
- Water – a thin layer of it in an active world tray + rubber bladed windscreen scrapers is LOTS of fun!

NB Where appropriate, involve the kids in mixing it up – allow them to experience the dry ingredients first, then slowly add the wet ingredients and encourage them to mix it up with their hands. Particularly good for those with any wet tactile resistance.

(Another tip for tactile resistance – give them latex gloves!)

Dry:

- Oats
- Coriander seeds (check out the 'exotic foods' section of Tesco)
- Cake mix
- Crisps
- Dry polenta
- Coloured rice/small pasta pieces (mix with a little hand sanitiser for better colour distribution) (hold scents well)
- Icing sugar (messy!)
- Flax seeds
- Sunflower seeds (available in bulk from pet shops)
- Salt (supervised!!!!)
- Tea leaves
- Ground coffee (your classroom will smell AMAZING)
- Play dough – 2 cup flour, ½ cup salt, 2 cups boiling water, 2tbsp oil, 2 tbsp cream of tartar, food colouring
- Cocoa (also good mixed with oats and a little water)
- Write on toast! Paint with milk + food colouring onto bread, then toast it
- Put your non-edible item into a ziplock bag. Chuck in some glitter for good measure. Zip it up and away you go. (You can also tape pictures or letters to the back of these for them to discover)
- Moon sand – Cornflour + water + dry polenta (thicker consistency) (use less water for a more 'moon sand' like consistency)
- Cloud dough – 5 cups flour, 1 cup oil
- Cereal – glue cheerios onto your name, thread cheerios, explore crushed up shredded wheat, squish the rice crispies etc

Switch it up:

- Blend in food colour and scents! Think spices, flavourings, essential oils (Essential oils that are edible: Basil, Cardamon, Sage, Oregano, Thyme, Black Pepper, Celery Seed, Clove, Fennel, Chamomile, Dill, Ginger, Lemongrass, Lemon, Orange, Tangerine, Lime, Mountain Savory, Rosemary, Grapefruit, Peppermint, Spearmint, and Tarragon).
- Consider your background – try mark making over foil/mirrors, clingfilm, coloured paper or acetate, borrow a light box (or make your own – cover the base/sides of a clear box with tracing paper, put in some fairy lights, upturn and taadaa!)
- Consider your temperature – can you chill/freeze it? Can you warm it up? Substances such as cornflour gloop can be frozen in lolly makers to make frozen paints with handles.

Incorporating Mark – Making Into Freeflow Activities

Inside experiences

Registers – self-registration marks, photographs of themselves to mark-make over

Name writing – different purposes

Diaries and calendars – recording significant events

Telephone/address book – recording phone numbers and addresses

Maths – squared paper, rulers, shapes to record mathematical thinking

Cooking – writing recipes and ingredients, providing scales, clocks and timers to record weight, volume and time

Dance – making marks to music, ribbons on sticks

Office – taking messages, signing in or out

Art area – collages, painting, glueing, using clay, paint on top of clingfilm/foil in black paint, put clingfilm on top of paint for 'dry' painting

Quiet area – pads, paper and pens to record feelings

Graphics area – different types of paper, diaries, letters, envelopes and stamps, postcards, invitations, tickets, maps, plus opportunities for recording counting, measuring, calculating and quantities

Recording measurements in big block area

Music area – recording the beat, length of sounds

White boards in group areas – registration, names, recording counting and calculations

IWB – drawing or writing programs or supported/independent mark-making

Role-play area, e.g. shoe shop – filling in slips and order forms, shoe sizes on boxes

Small world area – drawing maps, roads, homes, directions, using post-it notes to label items, make speech bubbles for animals

Creating portable writing kits (e.g. string attached to Pringles tin to make backpack) which can be covered in stickers, a range of marks in different materials

NB Vary height at which you set your mark-making...can be on floor, on low bench, table-top or standing height

Outside experiences

Big chalks on floor

Mud and twigs of different lengths and sizes

Sensory play – making marks on builders trays in different textures

Playhouse with pads, paper, books

Gazebo – clipboards and paper, envelopes

Fabric sheets – with mud, sticks different lengths and widths

Maps – huge sheets, fat felt pens
Spray painting – water sprayers
Picnic table covered in large sheets of paper
Rolls of paper on the floor
Mark-making trolley – variety of equipment, different shapes and sizes
Write and bury messages in the sand

Mark-make with margarine tub-sized ice-cubes with dowel through
Forest area, making marks with sticks in the mud
Garage area, filling in slips, recording findings

Resources and equipment

Mark-Making Surfaces

Transparent sheets
Plastic lids
Perspex
Chalkboards
Whiteboards
Windows
Table-top surfaces

Paper

Unlined paper – assorted sizes, shapes, colours, textures and types
Cardboard – assorted colours, textures and thickness
Music paper, graph paper, lined, plain
Pads, notebooks, envelopes (used and unused), stamps (used, real)
Sticky notes and labels
Address books, diaries, registers, spiral-bound notebooks

Tools

A range of writing tools of different thicknesses – multicoloured pens, markers, highlighters, chalk, crayons, writing pencils, coloured pencils, felt tip pens, gel pens and biros
A range of mark-making tools – feathers, lolly sticks, small sticks, combs, cotton buds, candles, old credit cards, cotton buds
Pencil sharpeners
Stampers and ink pads

Staplers

Hole punchers

Rulers and scissors

Clay tools

A range of paints including watercolours, inks and dyes, gouache, block, powder and poster paint – and palettes to give children opportunities to mix their own colours

A range of brushes of varying sizes (big, small, fat, thin, square-tipped or pointed) and painting implements including rollers, sponges, stamps

A range of fixing materials – sticky tape, glue, glue sticks, stapler, paper clips, treasury tags, masking tape, string, wool

Examples of environmental print – notes, timetables, adverts, leaflets, junk mail

Ready-made books – zigzag, stapled and stapleless

Message and display boards/communication pockets (at child height for children to use independently)

Clipboards, whiteboards and blackboards (a range of sizes, both fixed and portable)

Name cards and number lines

Outdoor learning

Buckets of water and a range of tools, including paint brushes, rollers, artists' brushes, sponges and dish mops

Chunky chalks

Blackboards and whiteboards and assorted chalks, paints, felt and dry wipe pens

Large rolls of wallpaper or lining paper

Clipboards – with writing tools attached

Portable writing toolkit – filled with resources such as sticky notes, masking tape, selection of pens and pencils, selection of paper and envelopes

Mark-making trolley with a variety of equipment (see photo on page 23)

Role-play

Small whiteboard

Pots of pens and pencils

Diary or calendar

Calculator

Notebook

Sticky notes and sticky labels

Variety of paper, envelopes, postcards and greetings cards

Noticeboard

Forms and junk mail

Variety of paper, envelopes, postcards and greetings cards

Noticeboard

Post Box

Phones – mobile and landline (non-functional and toy) – and phone book/address book

Construction area

Paper – large rolls and sheets to support planning and designing

Range of pens and pencils

Clipboards

Plans and diagrams

Noticeboard

DIY catalogues and order forms

Notebooks

DEVELOPING PENCIL CONTROL

The Developing Stages of Pre-Writing;

- Lines and dots
- Ability to imitate directional marks made by others
- Curves and enclosures
- Ability to copy curves and straights made by others
- Ability to link curves and straights to form a symbol

The 'simple' symbols are as follows;

Straight symbols are; Numbers - 1,4,7 Letters – w, i, k, l, z, x, v

Curved symbols are; Numbers – 0,8 Letters – o, s, c

These are easier to form and require a less-advanced stage of perception and hand-eye co-ordination.

The 'complex' symbols are as follows;

Numbers – 2,3,5,6,9 Letters – a, b, d, e, f, g, h, j, m, n, p, q, r, t, u, y

These symbols contain a combination of both straights and curves. They require a greater level of perception and hand-eye co-ordination.

Within both categories of symbol, there are symbols which require a change of direction on the part of the writer and are therefore additionally complex to form.

Pencil Grip Development;

Pencil grip development follows a particular pattern. This is as follows;



Stage 1

When your child first picks up a writing tool they will hold it in the same way as they pick up a knife and fork, other than the writing tool tip will be facing downwards.

Through the initial mark making process it is normal for their arm and elbow to stay rigid, with the movement coming from the shoulder.



Stage 2

With improved arm and hand control your child will start to hold the writing tool in the palm of their hand, with their thumb securing it in their hand. Note that the thumb is now close to the tip and not the end of the writing tool. The grasp is similar to that of using a knife and fork to cut food.

The increased arm strength allows the elbow to be slightly away from the body, providing greater flexibility.



Stage 3

Your child will hold the pencil with all five fingers resulting in the wrist being off the table. The grip is similar to a darts player holding the dart with all five fingers.

Movement of the writing tool now comes from the wrist but as the hand strength improves there will start to be some finger movement.



Stage 4

Your child will start to use the three finger or tripod grip.

Initially the fingers will be held rigidly but as your child improves their control of the finger muscles the fingers will start to move the writing tool.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROPRIOCEPTIVE SYSTEM FOR WRITING

The proprioceptive system is how you are able to 'feel' where you are in space. When pressure receptors within your muscles, joints and tendons are stimulated, they make a connection to your brain enabling it to create a 'map' of the location of these pressure receptors within your body. In this way, the location of muscles, joints and tendons can be felt or sensed even when your eyes are closed. As your body moves through space, the feedback from the pressure receptors develops a sense of where you are.

Until these neurological pathways are fully formed, children will be unable to sit still. They move their body continuously in order for their mind to locate the position of their body. They may sit on their feet, wrap their legs around things or constantly fidget. They have difficulty balancing on one foot with their eyes closed.

Therefore, children whose proprioceptive system is not fully developed will not be able to follow the lines, curves and shapes of letters and will be unable to remember the movements needed to create them.

In addition, before the age of six or seven, the vertical midline of a child is not fully integrated. This means that they cannot fully isolate the movement of one side of the body. When a child moves the fingers of one hand, the fingers on the other hand will also move, often subconsciously. If a child is forced to hold a pencil or pen and write before their vertical midline is fully integrated, they will develop a less relaxed pencil grip, cramped writing style and have increased difficulty with letter formation.

To ensure a child's proprioceptive system is fully formed;

- Provide lots of opportunities to strengthen physical movement such as sweeping with a broom, pushing a wheelbarrow, carrying bags, emptying rubbish, pulling weeds, hanging from monkey bars etc.
- Provide lots of activities to strengthen sensory integration such as imaginary play, climbing, jumping, hopping, skipping, walking the balance beam, playing circle games, singing, playing catch, painting, colouring, hand-clapping games, threading etc.

Based on an article by Susan R. Johnson MD (07.05.2007)

PICTURE-FIRST APPROACH

The picture-first approach works on the principle that a child will naturally learn to draw before they learn to write. Drawing will develop motor control and dexterity that will be built on when learning to write.

At all points, only felt tips (board markers are best), are used. This will ensure that no matter how hesitant a child is to draw, the smallest mark can be seen and celebrated.

There is also a focus of drawing happening everywhere on any surface, on large and varied paper, especially in the early stages. When a child can draw a representative image and assign meaning to it, they can move on to writing practice, initially labelling their drawing and building to sentences about the drawing. They initially follow modelled writing and then build onto independent writing. Having writing attached to a picture, will allow children who may not be able to read or recall previous written work, to assign a meaning to the text using their drawing as a cue.

At no point do staff draw on or annotate on the children's work or under their writing, as this does not empower the children to feel confident that what they write is correct and meaningful. Annotation is carried out separately. For a child to become a writer, their writing must come naturally and with confidence before supportive critical input is given. This approach includes exploring phonemes within words and whole-word labels.

A simple overview of a picture-first approach;

- child or adult chooses a stimulus to draw, initially something highly motivational
- child observes an adult recreating the picture on a large piece of paper with a felt pen, stating which shapes they are using to draw the image.
- child recreates the picture themselves on their own piece of paper with a felt pen, assigning meaning to their picture.

When representational drawing is being achieved

- child observes adult writing label in felt and discussing letter formation appropriate to their developmental level e.g. discussing phonemes and consequent graphemes
- child writes their own label in felt

This process can be adapted to suit the needs of a range of pupils. The drawing can be as simple as mark-making vertical lines or as complex as multi-line drawings with sentences to describe them. For children with physical disabilities which prevent them from grasping a tool and using it to mark-make, alternative media can be used, such as an I-Pad or touchscreen computer.

To cue-in the child to a writing session, a song can be listened to about hands and fingers. This means that the child will have warmed up their hands and fingers and developed an awareness that these are the body parts used to draw and write.

For the main part of the session, pupils are ability-grouped and work on specific targets with a drawing and writing focus;

Simplified Developmental Drawing Progression;

Horizontal lines

Vertical lines

Drawing circles (clockwise and anti-clockwise)

Combination of all line shapes with increased detail e.g. features, colours

Simplified Developmental Writing Progression;

Labelling with symbols to assign meaning

Single word *labelling*

Two word *labelling*

Simple sentences

Free writing of simple sentences

Labelling refers to an attempt to 'write' that the child can assign meaning to rather than an accurate reproduction of what the adult has written

Depending on the developmental level of the child, drawing can be done using fabric scarves, wet media, dry media, tools including pens, pencils, crayons, chalks.

Depending on the developmental level of the child, assistance can be given as needed in the form of verbal prompts, physical prompts, whether the child works in a small group or 1:1 etc.

Below are some examples of how to structure a picture-first session with different drawing and writing focuses. Because a child needs to experience something six times before it becomes a concrete experience, children working on consolidating the ability to create controlled horizontal, vertical lines and circles should repeat each step six times independently.

SLD;

- Explore object to feel movement (adult or child to comment on shape)
- Watch adult make movement with fabric
- Emulate making movement with fabric
- Watch adult make movement in wet media (eg shower gel on circular mirror)
- Emulate adult making movement in wet media
- Child-directed time with wet media
- Observe adult making movement on paper using felt-tip on paper
- Child to emulate mark-making on paper

Be aware of the posture of the child – it is developmentally easier for children to look straight ahead rather than down so use a wedge/easel etc

MLD;

- Look at a picture/object
- Assign meaning to it – what is it?
- Discuss shape, features, detail, colour appropriate to the developmental level of the child
- Observe adult drawing picture using child's description
- Child to use a range of coloured felt-tips to create their picture (may have discussion about colours required for their picture before beginning)
- Assign meaning to their picture
- Adult asks 'What do we need to write?'
- Child decides what label(s) to write (if they understand the concept of labelling. If not, offer a choice of symbols or provide alternative opportunities to explore labelling e.g. labels on Learning Journals accompanied by their photo)
- Adult models writing label (if developmentally ready, children can listen to phonemes in the label and explore graphemes)
- Child writes their own label and assigns the same meaning to what they have written as to what they have drawn in their picture

Where the picture-first approach has the most impact, it is tailored specifically to meet the needs of the child at their developmental level. This may incorporate a mixture of MLD/SLD approaches.

Key points;

- Always encourage pupils to write in felt-tip so it is bold and permanent
- All writing needs to be done in black pen so it can be easily distinguished from the drawing
- Initially pictures and writing should be done on large pieces of paper (at least A3 size)
- Be aware of the colour of paper – white backgrounds can be visually distracting for some pupils

- Demonstrate how much you value the child's work by **never** writing on their work – write on the back of their paper or use post-it notes

Transference of skills;

In order to transfer their skills to a range of contexts, the child needs to experience a range of writing activities, with differing levels of structure, on a weekly basis.

These could include;

- Messy mark-making opportunities using a range of wet and dry media, on different surfaces, using different tools
- Drawing opportunities, using topic-related or themed objects, as a stimulus for writing
- IWB/computer programmes to reinforce the development of phonemes and graphemes