

The Vertical Surface and Fine Motor Development

By, Marianne Gibbs, EdD, OTR
Gibbs Consulting, Inc.
www.writeoutofthebox.com

What: The vertical (up and down) surface refers to the appropriate plane in which young children should perform fine motor activities in order to promote an efficient pencil grasp position. We usually think of having students work and play at fine motor tasks at the desktop level. The desktop or horizontal plane is more appropriate for older children and adults to work in.

Why: The vertical surface is the natural and preferred plane to play in for young children. The vertical plane best supports hand skill development of young children in three ways. It engages the shoulder against gravity, which promotes the development of the hand and arm for writing, it encourages an extended wrist position needed for writing, and finally it is most appropriate visually for young children.

How: There are a variety of easy to access vertical surfaces in the classroom or at home. Here is a list for you to consider using today!

Chalkboard	Easel: tabletop or stand-up
Wall: tape on butcher paper	Filing Cabinet: instant magnet center!
Refrigerator	Washer/Dryer
Table: tipped on its side	Paper taped to underside of desk or coffee table

Put the following activities into vertical and watch your children have fun while developing more efficient hand skills for writing!

Coloring	Stickers
Stamping	Play Doh®
Shaving Cream	Arts and Crafts
Magnadoodle®	Magnets
Velcro® matching games	Cutting: tape top side to surface
Painting	Experiential Writing

