BLOOMING ABILITIES
Pediatric Occupational Therapy

Use it or Lose it!

Ideas for Printing practice during the Summer

Use the following ideas to encourage letters skills remain strong over the summer months! With a little encouragement, children can practice letters and numbers just about anywhere, anytime. If your child doesn't remember how to print a letter, print it for them using a highlighter for him to trace, or in the air for them to copy. Be creative… here's a few ideas to get you started

***** Ensure proper letter formation EVERY TIME!! STAR WORTHY LETTERS (or play the dice game) START LETTERS AT THE TOP!!!!*** Ensure correct pencil grip – working on vertical helps! ******

Print letter using various sensory tools… print in:

☐ sand, salt tray, beans, rice bin
☐ applesauce in bag (or soap, pudding, gel, etc…)
☐ shaving cream, bath tub paints or other fun "painting"
☐ water – using spray bottle, paintbrush on sidewalk or house, etc…
☐ use a stick in the sand or mud, OR build letters with sticks or stones at the beach or at the park
☐ print letters in clay, slime or playdough – use fingers, golf tee, pencil, etc…

Have your child write Lists about things they are excited about! Children can copy a list you have written or say the letters for each word verbally, or work on spelling:

☐ Shopping (e.g. grocery shopping)
☐ Vacation
☐ Camping
☐ What to take to the pool
☐ Picnic
☐ To-do
☐ Special projects

Activities:

☐ Complete **Mad Libs** stories
☐ Write messages in secret codes for someone else to figure out☺
☐ Write thank you cards or send invitations to a playdate or party
☐ Write letters to friends and relatives (grandparents!!)
☐ Find a summer pen pal – exchange letters weekly or monthly
☐ Keep a list of summer vocabulary words
☐ Create a summer journal
☐ Finger trace in the sand at the beach or park (or use a stick in the sand or stones)
☐ Play games, write with sidewalk chalk (e.g. hopscotch with numbers or letters)
☐ Paint with water (writing letters/numbers) on the driveway
☐ Create stories with friends, siblings or relatives – you can each write a line and pass the paper back and forth and see what hilarious stories you can create!

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☐ Make cards or send postcards

☐ Write on windows with whiteboard markers (it comes off I promise!)

☐ Trace a letter on your child's back and have them guess and write the letter on a piece of paper. Take turns and have them trace a letter on your back.

☐ Use different types of pencils for writing practice (gel pens, colored pencils, scented markers, crayons, squiggle wiggle pens, etc.)

☐ Use a flashlight and make letters on the wall. You or your child has to guess the letter that was made. You can also cut out letter templates to place in front of the flashlight.

☐ Put letters on a die and have your child roll the dice and they have to write a word that starts with the letter.

☐ Use a printing app such as Wet-Dry-Try (Handwriting without Tears), Letter School or Touch & Write (FizzBrain)

☐ What is your child interested in? Write about it! Your child need a little extra support? Share the writing – you write a sentence, your child writes a sentence ☺

Hand skills are crucial to successful handwriting. Here are some ideas to strengthen your child's hand muscles and fine motor skills.

☐ Do finger–plays. Or finger games (e.g. twiddle thumbs, "O" tug of war, copy finger patterns).

☐ Have your child put together small beads, Lego's, Tinker Toys, Lincoln Logs, etc. – ensure using pincher fingers and keep the last fingers tucked in!!

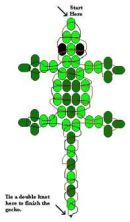
☐ Knead Play dough, Magic sand or clay. Build objects with them.

☐ Hide small objects in the Play dough and have your child find them.

☐ Play pegboard games or dice games.

☐ Perler bead (iron bead) – create lots of fun things

☐ Gather small objects from around the house (small buttons, beads, etc.) place them in a container and have your child pick them up off the table with a pair of tweezers and place them back in the container.



☐ Use "pony" beads to make animal shapes – you can find lots of patterns online! (See picture on right)

☐ Let your children squirt water bottle outdoors on the sidewalk (e.g. wash away sidewalk chalk or other targets). Or use a spray bottle to water plants!

☐ Squeeze a kitchen baster to move a cotton balls with air. Have a race on the table.

☐ Use small marshmallows and toothpicks to form letters.

☐ String, popcorn, buttons, beads to make necklaces.

☐ Using a hole-punch let your child create a design on a piece of paper.

☐ Have your children clip clothespins to a container or letters or words to a rope "clothesline".

☐ Mazes and dot-to-dots

☐ Colour pages in "adult" colouring book – ensure small finger movements and wrist resting on the writing surface

☐ These are just a few ideas… take your child's interest and create more fine motor fun!!!

Please encourage a tip to tip pinch pattern (instead of pad-to-pad grip or side of finger)

Pincer Grasp - enables a child to **pick up** small items using the thumb and index finger (tip-to-tip). NOT MIDDLE FINGER!!

- tip of the thumb meets the tip of any finger
- ALL the joints in the finger are flexed (bent)
- Finger look ready to move and use a writing tool!



Motoric Separation

- Develops skill side and power side of hand
- Needed for manipulation and fine motor skills like fastening buttons or zipper, printing and cutting
- Skill side
  - Thumb, index and middle fingers = Skilled, fast and small movements
  - Essential for fast, non-fatiguing, legible print
- Power side
  - Ring and little fingers
  - Stability and power



**** If a child is having difficulty keeping last 2 fingers tucked into hand – try giving them a small pompom or another small object to hold inside****

Have fun!! Please let me know if you have any questions at all!

Heidi

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