



Language
3 year olds

please read first

In creating this resource, my intention is to create ways for information about Montessori (the method, the philosophy, and pieces of the curriculum) and developmentally appropriate teaching/learning to be accessible to you at no cost. However, if you find that you benefit from this information and have the means/desire to "Buy Me a Coffee" via <https://www.buymeacoffee.com/themontessorio> I greatly appreciate it. Again, this is by no means required or asked of you, but a great deal of time and effort goes into making resources for you and your family so I appreciate any contribution to my own. Also, the links throughout this resource are Amazon affiliate links, which allow me to get paid a small percentage if you purchase those items using my links.

This resource is meant to bring you, the adult, information and give you ideas about how to help support your child's development at home. These activities and learning opportunities in here are just as important as playing outside, playing with their toys, experiencing new places, connecting/bonding with their families, working on tools for their social-emotional regulation, and doing practical life activities (like cooking, cleaning, self-care, etc.) with you around the home. Those are all equally important (if not more) important parts of child development.

This is also not meant to be something "extra" for after school if your child already attends school. In those cases, home time should be spent doing those other things I named. This is for families/caregivers home with their children all day looking for ways to support their child's development using the methods and principles of Montessori. This is also not an all encompassing curriculum or the same as it would be done in a classroom environment. This is a way to use the Montessori method with developmentally appropriate activities that will help your child grow within their current skills, abilities, and interests. Every child develops at their own pace and has different abilities. If your child is not able to do all of this by the time they turn 4, keep going.

If you're starting this and they are almost 4, that is fine too! If they are almost 3 and you want to get started because you think they are ready, please do. This isn't strictly only for three year olds, but rather for children around this age range that are capable of these skills over time. Some will start and be able to move quickly through the activities and some will need a slower approach, and that is exactly what makes Montessori so magical. It is for the child in front of you working and learning at their own individual pace.

If at anytime you find yourself confused or with questions, feel free to send me a DM on Instagram @montessorimamalife or send me an email at themontessorimamalife@gmail.com

This manual is lengthy, but please take the time to read all of it if you choose to use it (especially the notes to parents), as these will help guide you to be the prepared adult your child will need you to be to best support them. And please remember to have fun! This is the only time in your life and their life that they will be this age. Soak it all in and lean into the gift that you are giving your child by choosing to support their development in this way.

Thank you,
Gloria, @montessorimamalife

The prepared adult: your role

When thinking about your role in all that I am about to share, think about yourself as not only the person guiding your child in this stage of life but as your child's partner in this learning. All of the activities and lessons I list throughout this resource, should feel fun. If you are feeling stressed out, they will feel it. Take a deep breath. You've got this.

Ok, so lets get down to it. When you are showing your child a lesson/activity, model how to do it correctly one time and then give them a turn. You may not need to talk at all if it is something with your hands like cards or pictures or a fine-motor activity. If you don't need to talk-don't. Think of the acronym- SHOW (show hands omit words). Slow down what you are doing so they can focus on your movements. (If they seem eager to jump in before you finish, let them and just watch what they do.)

Throughout all of these examples that I am giving to you, your child will be incorrect at some point. Try to stop yourself from correcting them. I know it seems counterintuitive, but you want them to discover for themselves what is incorrect and be able to self correct their work. That is where the learning happens. If they are wrong, stay silent. Then, later write down in your observation book (we'll get to that on the next page) that they need to work on that skill more. Then, the next time you go to work on that specific skill, model how to do it with one or two examples first before allowing them to take their turn. This way you are modeling how to do it correctly without taking away their confidence, without discouraging their efforts, and you are seeing what they truly know and what skills they need to work on more. When we go to correct them in the moment, we stop them from wanting to try next time and we also stop that self discovery. Many of these things will be obvious in the end if they are incorrect and they might be able to work that out for themselves. If they are able to, they will internalize the mistake and learn from it.

The first section in this resource is about reading books. You want your child to equate reading and listening to stories with positive, happy, bonding, connecting memories with you. Therefore, choose a comfy place, snuggle if that's your child's thing, use your funniest, silliest voices, and HAVE FUN. Anything I mention, implement slowly (one thing at a time) to help make it feel natural and easy for you. Use your observational skills (that I will talk about on the next page) to help you know when you can dig deeper into the learning.

For the other activities, I have provided you with an order of the skills to introduce. You can then choose any of the starting points, collect what you need, think through what you want to say/do, and then find a time when it is just the two of you to do that activity. Get comfortable, make it feel like a game, and again don't take it too seriously. This is most likely your child's first introduction to a lot of these skills and to a more intentional lesson like this. You want it to feel joyful. Most of these things lend themselves well to feel like games. Feel free to use this as a guide and then get creative as well. I give tips from my experience, but you know your children best.

observation

The Montessori Method as it relates to education is rooted in the observation of the child. You may have heard people online say to “follow the child”. This can certainly mean to follow their interests, but it also means to use your observations of their skills and abilities to make decisions about your next steps.

What does that all look like in practice? Get a notebook for observations. When you do any of the lessons/activities I have laid out within this resource, write down your thoughts after by asking yourself 3 things-

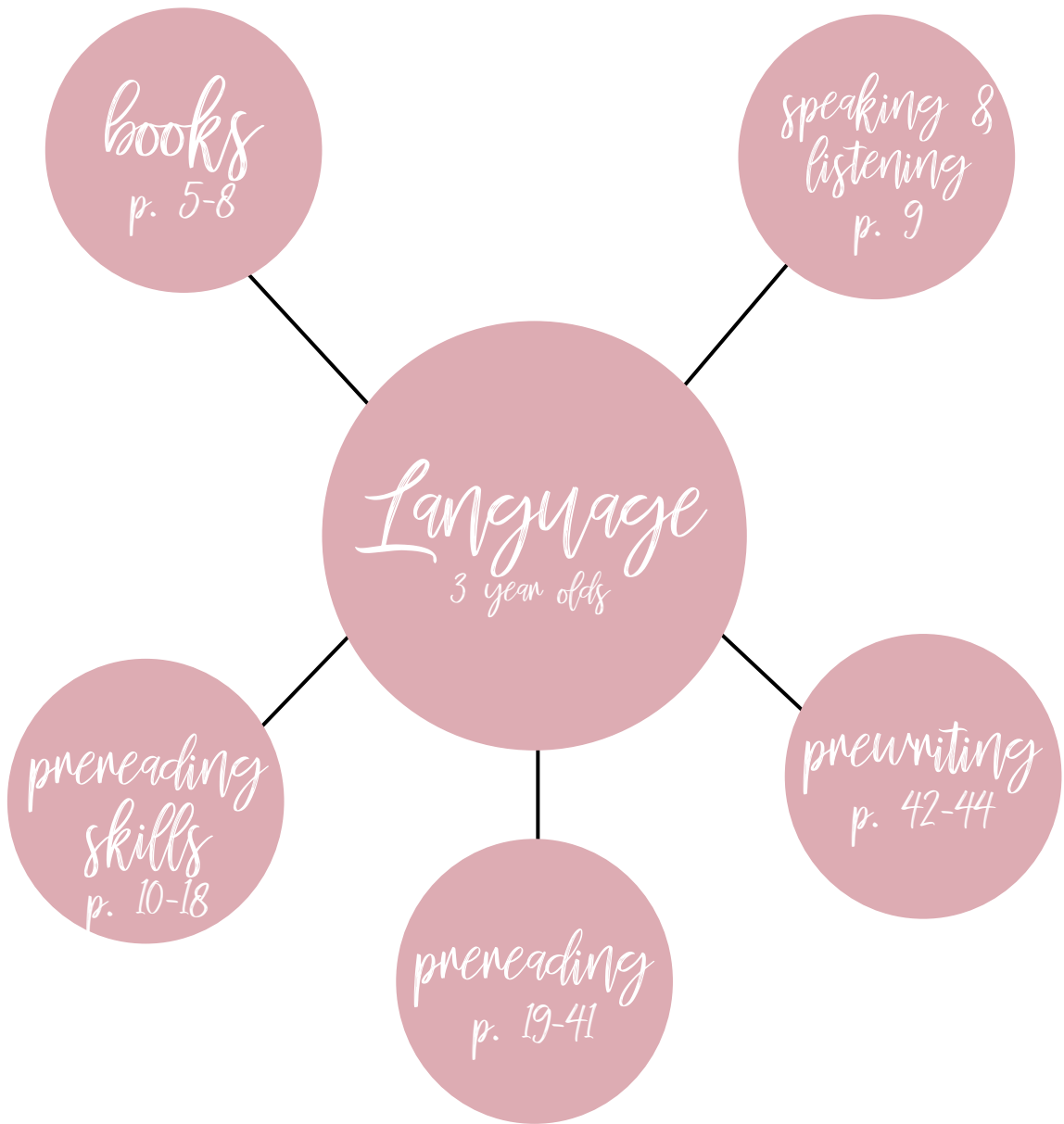
- 1) When you explained what to do, what did they do or say after that?
- 2) Did they do what you expected them to do/did they do something else?
- 3) Based on what they did, were they ready for that or did they seem like they could handle more challenge?

If they seemed fully lost, go back a step and put a pause on that. Whatever was supposed to come before that may need more developing. They may also need just more time to be ready for that, so just wait.

If they seemed like they understood or just might need some more practice, do it again a different day just the same. And then continue to allow them do that activity whenever they wish once it is introduced. That repetition will help them build and develop that skill.

If they were able to do it right away with no pause, try it again using different materials or using one of my suggestions for making it more challenging. If they still get it, move onto the next thing. That doesn't mean you can never do that activity again, but it does not need the time and repetition other skills will need.

If you observe them wanting to do something again and again or that they do your activity in a different way than you expected them to, write down what they did. Then, think what the skills were that they were working on. Those might be of interest and your child might be telling you they have an inner need to work on that skill. For example, if you are working on fine motor skills with tongs and they use their fingers instead, they might want more work picking things up with their fingers and you can provide opportunities for that throughout your home (cooking in the kitchen for example). Another example is if you are doing an activity where they are to match pairs together and they are matching something else, look at what that is- it might be a need to sort or color matching or something else that you could give more opportunities to practice throughout your home or throughout your day.



books

If reading is not already a part of your day to day routine, make it. Do it together before bed, before naps, while they eat snack, outside, in their bed, in your bed, while they use the bathroom, while you use the bathroom, when they wake up, anytime. The best way for children at any age to build their vocabulary and to grow a love for reading and language/literacy is by reading with your child. Go to your local library and find what speaks to your child. Make different voices for different characters. Have fun! If you have fun, they will too!

Read to your child:

- Nursery Rhymes
- Poems
- Fingerplays
- Song Books
- Wordless Books
- Search and Find Books
- Nonfiction Books (real)
- Fiction Books (not real)
- Books that model positive behavior
- Preferably books with real photographs or illustrations that represent reality

Try to avoid:

- Fantasy (magical/could never happen)
- Characters behaving in ways you wouldn't want your child behaving

*Children at this age have a hard time understanding what is real and what is not. Presenting them with stories about things that could never happen makes it hard for them to understand reality versus fantasy. Also, they are absorbing their environment and about social norms/how to treat others. We want to read books that present characters as positive role-models. Save these other types of books for when children are 6+ years old.

books

One of the very first things that a child needs to know/understand on a deep level as they become readers is something called "Concepts About Print". It is more or less the foundational understanding of how to use a book and how books work. I'm going to list out the Concepts About Print that children should have an understanding of over time. You do not need to go over these every time you read to your child. That would not make for a fun, enjoyable experience. Instead, think of how you can incorporate the language in a meaningful way in small amounts each time you read. Do not make this into a quiz. Just model and use the language. What I have written below in print is the concept and in italics I have put a way you could use that concept when talking to your child. They have an absorbent mind. They don't need you to teach them these words. They need meaningful exposure to these words.

Concepts About Print:

- What is the **title**? *The title of this story is...*
- Where is the **front of the book**? *This is the front of the book so the story must start here!*
- Where is the **back of the book**? *This is the back of the book so the story must be over.*
- Who is the **author**? *The author is _____. They wrote the words in this book.*
- Who is the **illustrator**? *The illustrator is _____. They drew all of these pictures or illustrations in this book!*
- You read from **left to right and top to bottom** (assuming you do in your language). I model this by pointing my finger to the words as I read.
- How to **hold a book and turn the pages**: For this, I like to let the child hold the book and then pause to signal to them that I'm ready for them to turn the page. Because I use my finger, they can see I am out of words.
- What is a **word**? *This word says _____. Hmm. I wonder what that means?*
- What is a **letter**? *This is a long word. It has a lot of letters. Let me count the letters.*
- How many **words are in this sentence**? *This was a long/short sentence. Let's count how many words were in it.*
- **Punctuation**: Notice when a sentence ends with an exclamation point or a question mark out loud. Compare it to when a sentence ends in a period. Model how you read those sentences differently and why- for excitement, because someone is yelling, to ask a question, etc.

There are more, but with the assumption that you are going to be sending them to school, I do not feel any more than this is necessary. Model, model, model and feel comfort in that by modeling how to read by doing it, you are giving your child the biggest language gift of all.

books

Just reading books to your children is great. However, you can go deeper by starting to build some comprehension of the stories they are reading without it feeling high-pressure. Remember, this time is about bonding, building a love of books and reading, and fun!

Build comprehension by:

Read stories over and over

This helps the children to really learn the stories, learn their pattern, builds deeper meaning, and helps them to see new things each time.

Read stories with the same characters

Story series with the same characters in different situations helps your child to get to know the characters on a deeper level and helps build their understanding of the story.

Read relatable stories

Stories about things your child has not and will not experience will make it hard for your child to relate to the character or understand what is happening.

Make Predictions

When you get to a suspenseful part of a story, ask them to predict or think about what might happen next. (Don't focus on them being right or wrong.) Doing this enough will help them start to do it naturally in their own heads predicting what might happen next and to use context clues as they listen to the story to think about what makes sense. It also brings added excitement to the overall storyline.

Make connections

When you make connections between what is known or has been experienced and what is new, that is where deep learning and understanding happens. When you are able to help your child make connections between events, characters, settings, or anything else in a story to something that has happened in their own lives or something they read in another book, they are able to understand that story in a deeper, more meaningful way.

Sequencing

Some stories really lend themselves to this easily like the ones I suggested on the next page. After you are done reading the story, work together to flip through the pages to retell the story together. "*What did they do first? What about after that? And then what happened?*" Try to use as many prompting questions to help lead them without flat out telling them. If they don't know or are confused, model it by sequencing the story yourself. You can also use pictures of the characters or objects to show the order to help make it more hands-on and concrete for them.

Stories with predictable text

Stories that have repeated phrases or your child can guess the next word or phrase helps them to get into a story because they are able to interact with it. It leaves a lasting impression and makes them want to read it again.

books

Below are some book recommendations based on my suggestions. This is just a list of some of my favorites with affiliate links if you are interested in purchasing them for your own home library. You can and should also look for these titles among others at your local public library.

Book Recommendations

Search And Find Books

[Bustletown Book Collection \(Our Favorite!\)](#)
[Wimmelbooks- There are many, I have linked one.](#)
[Let's Find Momo](#)
[Find My Favorite Things](#)

Books with Poems

[Mr. Roger's Neighborhood Book of Poems](#)
[Sing a Song of Seasons](#)
[Feel the Beat](#)
[Out and About](#)

Character Series Books

[Henry and Mudge](#)
[Pete The Cat](#)
[Little Bear Books](#)
[Elephant and Piggie](#)

Books that are great for Sequencing

[There was an Old Lady Books](#)
[The Very Hungry Caterpillar](#)
[Turkey Trouble](#)
[The Very Busy Spider](#)
[Brown Bear, Brown Bear](#)
[A House for Hermit Crab](#)
[Pancakes, Pancakes](#)
[Cookie's Week](#)

Wordless Books

[The Journey Trilogy](#)
[The Snowman](#)
[Pancakes For Breakfast](#)
[Carl's Birthday](#)
[Gerda Muller Seasons Set](#)
[Wolf in the Snow](#)
[Waltz of the Snowflakes](#)
[Hike!](#)

Books with Rhyming

[Frog on a Log](#)
[Moon, Sea, Bee, Tree Collection](#)
[Peck Peck Peck](#)
[See You Later Alligator](#)
[Zin! Zin! Zin! A Violin](#)
[Is Your Mama a Llama?](#)

Fingerplay/Song Books

[Clap Your Hands](#)
[We're Going on a Bear Hunt](#)
[Wee Sing Books](#)
[She'll Be Coming Round the Mountain](#)
[The Books of Fingerplays and Action Songs](#)

speaking & listening

In order to encourage your three year old to speak more, you need to be having real, authentic conversations with them. This may sound obvious, but how often do we adults speak to another adult over your child's head without including them in the conversation? or speak for our child as if they cannot speak for themselves? or assume we know something without talking to them about it first?

At its core, the foundation of Montessori's philosophy is rooted in respect, treating even the tiniest of humans as whole, complete people. Before we do anything to them, with them, or for them, we should speak to them about it. This is where the understanding of social norms and basic conversational dialogue begins.

Also, in order for our children to naturally and easily develop rich speaking and listening vocabularies, we need to model the use of rich vocabulary in our own conversations with them. Have you ever heard your toddler say something only to think, how on earth did they know that word? All language is new to them, so the more rich language we expose them to at a young age, the more will be readily available for them to use and understand without a second thought. They are in a period of time, also known as a sensitive period, for being innately interested in and for learning language. Therefore, this is the time to really dig deep in using those "big words" and to just give them as much exposure in context to as wide of a variety of vocabulary words as possible.

prereading skills

Before a child is able to read words or even letter sounds, we can work on some skills that have been coined “prereading skills” that will help prepare their eyes and brains to read. This, coupled, with preparing their ears to listen for sounds, is where you start on your “reading journey” with your child. I will provide as much as I can that you can DIY with minimal effort or money; however, feel free to extend these ideas in whatever way is most accessible to you. And remember, these are ideas to help achieve a common goal and not a checklist of things that have to happen.

These prereading skill activities can be started around the same time as sound games (page 19). However, you will follow the order of introduction for the prereading skills as listed below when you start and also work through the sound games into sandpaper letter learning at its own pace. They do not need to go at a certain pace together, but rather can both be started at 3 years old (or whenever you start using this manual). They may be able to do a lot of these activities very quickly and take a very long time to make sense of the sound games (which is normal).

Order of Skills Introduction

1. Object to Object
2. Object to Cards
3. Cards to Objects
4. Card to Cards
5. Part to Whole
6. Shadow Match
7. Close-Ups
8. What’s Missing
9. Go Togethers
10. Opposites
- II. Spatial Relationships
12. Classifications
13. Rhyming Ia.
14. Rhyming Ib.
15. Rhyming Ic.

*Puzzles in increasing difficulty can be done throughout.

pre-reading skills

Matching

We work from the concrete (real, tangible) to the abstract (in your head) so starting by matching objects to each other really helps them to conceptualize matching and to notice visual similarities and differences between things they see. Then, work your way to the next category gradually as you notice them being able to independently match.

Object to Object

- When doing the dishes, invite your child to put away utensils with the matching utensils in the utensil drawer. Allow them to differentiate between sizes and shapes on their own.
- When putting away laundry, have your child match socks that are the same together (this can also be done with gloves)
- If you have any sets of toys that have some identical matches, put those in a basket and have your child find the matching pairs.
- Make a pile of all of their shoes (or everyone's). Have them match the pairs of shoes that belong together.
 - If you go to the beach, hunt for matching shells for them to pair up.
 - When outside on a walk, collect leaves. Then, try to find matching pairs.
 - Make a fruit salad. Have them match up the pairs of fruit before eating them.
- Collect two of each item from your office/desk/junk drawer of little odds and ends or office supplies (think paper clips, erasers, tacks) and put them in a basket. Have them find matching pairs.



prereading skills

Object to Picture/Picture to Object

- For this, start by going into one room in your home and use your phone (or camera) to take pictures of different items around the room (a bed, a lamp, a basket, etc.). I want you to print those out (if you can or just show your phone picture to your child). Then, give that pile to your child and have them go on a scavenger hunt to match the pictures to the matching objects around the room. As they find things, verbally label those things with a name. At this age, they probably know the names for these things but the language exposure never hurts. If this brings them joy (and you), do it for as many rooms in your house as you'd like!
- Then, do the same on a walk around your neighborhood. Take pictures, print, and hunt! Don't forget to name the things they find. You can get super detailed outside with types of plants, insects, leaves, etc. The sky is the limit!
- You can also do this at the grocery store by making a picture list of the items you need (photo below). You can print them and put them on a binder ring or just put them all on one sheet of paper (think Google images on a Microsoft Word page). Then, at the store, have them hunt for the things you need. They can even cross them off as you find things. I would put the pictures in order of the store for this to be manageable for your child. *This can also be done anytime you need to go shopping at any store. By making a visual list, you are helping get your child involved and giving them a rich language experience as well as building those prereading skills!
 - Another way is to take pictures of your child's toys or items. It is easiest to do this in categories, such as art supplies or farm animals or vehicles. Collect the objects in a basket or container, take pictures of each item individually, print them out, and have them match the toys to their picture cards. Again, remember to give each thing a name.

*I will not continue to give examples as this could go on forever, but I think you can see how many different ways this can be done and how much vocabulary would be gained over time by doing this regularly.



Matching garland card to garland decoration



Matching different types of apples to apple cards



Grocery shopping with visual list

pre-reading skills

Picture to Picture

- Matching duplicates of family photos
- Print out 2 pieces of art by famous artists to match to each other
- Using any of the pictures from object to picture matching and printing it twice

This can be applied to any duplicate pictures, illustrations, or photographs you have. Get creative!



If you do not have access to a printer, please feel free to show the pictures you take on your phone or camera to your child and have them use that picture to match to objects in real life. It will be harder for picture to picture matching so consider duplicates of magazines, newspapers, or junk mail that you can use to make this possible. Please reach out if you need more ideas of how to make this accessible to you and your family.

Also, if you have the funds and the desire, [Safari Ltd. Toobs](#) and [Schleich](#) animals are often used for a lot of matching activities like this and, therefore, there are already many printable matching resources online with materials for this matching work.

Safari Ltd. Toobs have a wide range of small objects that can be used as small themed groups (musical instruments, ocean life, etc.) and Schleich is definitely more pricey, but has excellent quality animals that make great objects for parts of animals and that really capture the small details (like udders, correct coloring, paw/footprints, etc.) If you Google printables for matching cards for any of these, you will have many options if you don't want to DIY.

prereading skills

Puzzles

Honestly, puzzles are one of the best and easiest materials to practice so many different visual and spatial skills. I personally love to have access to a variety of types of puzzles simultaneously- knobbed, knobless, jigsaw, floor, and then those ones that don't really fit a category. They all work different muscles in the brain and hand, and they all serve different purposes. Starting with the simplest of all categories and continuing to add small challenges as they become successful will help your child really crave that need for puzzling. Some children are less drawn to puzzles, but like books, they should still be there and accessible. If your little one is less drawn to puzzles naturally, use their interest to draw them in, such as a truck loving kid with a truck puzzle. Once they feel repeated success with the types that meet their interests, the hope would be that they would continue to want to do more with different themes.

Again, as with everything else, do less. Don't try to teach them how to do a puzzle- they do not complete them like adults would. Let the puzzle guide them into knowing whether they are right or wrong. If you have a child with less frustration tolerance, I like to give strategies when they are presented with a challenge (only when they are getting visually upset) to stop them from completely giving up. Showing them how they can turn the piece, put it to the side for later, and use the picture have all worked but it really depends on the child and the situation. Do as little as possible, but as much as necessary to keep them from quitting in the face of struggle.

The Shelf Help Podcast has an episode on puzzles, types, and their value if you want to learn more:

<https://www.thekavanaughreport.com/2021/10/montessoripuzzles.html>

To accumulate a variety of puzzles in your home for a reasonable cost, check out your Facebook Marketplace page, eBay, or local garage/yard sales. These are easy ways to build up a variety of puzzles without having to pay the price for new ones.

prereading skills

More Visual Skill Building

Close-Ups

This is when a child matches a picture with an image of a part of that picture close up. This helps children to visualize in the abstract and to pay attention to small details.

The easiest way to do this concretely is to collect a few items (like animal toys, seashells, or anything from around your home). Take a picture of it and crop it on your computer or phone so you have an image of only a small part of that object. Then, print out those pictures and try to have them match the close-ups with their item. I like to pair this with a magnifying glass so they can look at the object up close to connect what the picture being "close up" really means. If they can do this regularly over time, you can do this with just a picture and then a close-up of that picture printed out to make it more abstract.

[Flower Close Up Freebie](#)

[Nature Close Up Freebie](#)



Shadow Matching

Having a child match a picture to its silhouette helps them with visual discrimination, to pay close attention to details, and to explore background to foreground relationships.

There are many printable online options for practicing this skill.

I would use them as a matching game. You could also play memory with them where you flip over all the cards and take turns trying to find a match.

Some free online options:
[Leaf Shadow Matching Freebie](#)

[Animal Shadow Matching Freebie](#)

[Fruit Shadow Matching Freebie](#)



Part to Whole

This is when you take 2 parts of a picture and are able to match them together almost like a 2 piece puzzle.

For this, the easiest thing to do is to take any photographs or printed images and cut them in half. Then, allow your child to find the two parts that go together to make a whole picture. This helps them pay attention to detail and builds that visual discrimination.

[Paintings Part to Whole Freebie](#)

[Butterfly Part to Whole Freebie](#)

These puzzles were also a hit with my children, but definitely not necessary:

<https://amzn.to/40dkZ5X>

<https://amzn.to/3Ju5b8M>



prereading skills

More Visual Skill Building

Opposites

This is one of those things that is best taught in context throughout your day to day like going to the grocery store and saying, "I see a small banana. Let's find one that is the opposite size?" and then use that to compare them using the words big and small. There are also lots of opposite books that do a great job illustrating opposites. To make this into a learning opportunity with a book, I would cover the page with the opposite word/picture and have them try to guess what the opposite of it might be. If they aren't getting it, as always stop, go back to using it in the real world and read the book as normal.

Eventually they may try to tell you what the opposite is themselves.

I will link some resources below that may be useful if you are finding you need more to help with this.

Opposite Books:

[My First Padded Book of Opposites](#)

[My First Opposites Book](#)

[Exactly the Opposite](#)

[Opposite Puzzle](#)

[Free Opposite Printable](#)

Spatial Relationships

Take 2 objects (such as a block and a bowl) and take photos of them in different positions (inside, next to, on top of, under, in front of, behind). Then give your child those objects and one picture at a time. Have them try to match their objects to the way they are assembled in the picture. If you don't want to print a picture, you can make it right next to the child and then give them identical objects to copy right next to yours. You can also do this anytime you're out and about waiting (like a restaurant or waiting room) because you can use what is there or something in your bag.

As they get really good at copying your objects, do it with 3 objects and then eventually 4.

Another way to do this is to act it out. Use their body and your body, a sibling, a toy, or other objects around the home to act out these different positional words. You can do it with items in their doll house, animals in a barn, or anything else. Be creative and follow your child's interest!

What's Missing?

Place several objects in front of your child. Have them cover their eyes and then remove one item. Have them open their eyes and figure out which one is missing. Start with 3 objects and over time build up how many you put in front of your child. For an added challenge, use items that are very visually similar such as the same set of objects in a variety of colors.

prereading skills

Rhyming

1a. Rhyming with Objects

Collect pairs of a few objects from around the house that all rhyme- for example: a toy cat & a hat, a dish & a bath toy fish, a can & a small fan.

Tell your child that each set rhymes as you pair them and say them out loud.

Then, see if your child can find any matches. Do this regularly and see if your child can match the pairs independently eventually.

Once your child is doing this regularly, you can extend this using cut outs of pictures that rhyme. I would not do more than 5 pairs of matches (10 pictures total) as to not overwhelm them. They also have rhyming puzzles online- some free and some paid. If you feel like you need more.

1b. Rhyming with Books

Read lots of rhyming books and nursery rhymes. (I have included some in the "Books Suggestions" on page 8.)

Over time, when it gets to the 2nd word of the rhyming pair, say the beginning sound and see if they can complete that word.

For example: "The cat in the h___" and then you wait to see if they say hat.

If they don't immediately say it, you model it by filling it in for them.



3. Rhyming I Spy

Once your child has been doing the first 2 confidently for some time, you can try playing the "I Spy" game with rhyming words.

You can do this as you go for walks, sit in your home, sit in a waiting room, are at a restaurant, or are just out and about.

For example: "I spy something that rhymes with call." (You see a ball.) If they get it wrong, just say, "oh I saw a ball. Ball rhymes with call."

Try a few more times. If they are getting it right, keep going until they want to stop.

If they are having a hard time, stop and continue to work on the first 2 for longer and try again a different time.

Rhyming Resources

These should only be used as repeated practice after you have observed their ability to rhyme in the ways above. None of these are necessary.

[Rhyming Puzzle:](#)

[Rhyming Dominoes](#)

[Freebie Rhyming Printable](#)

prereading skills

Conceptual Skill Building

"Go Together"

This is to understand the association between things that go together, such as lock and key, hand and glove, etc. You can collect things from around your home that go together and have them work to match them. Once they have an understanding of how to match objects in this way, you can take pictures of things that go together to make "go together" cards or use pictures from magazines. Some examples are clothing to body part, animal babies to parents, people to their jobs, career person to a vehicle, etc. I would start with your child's interest and then go from there.

[Animal Go Together Freebie](#)

[Go Together Puzzles](#)



Classifications

This is similar to "go together" cards, but it is sorting many things into categories or groups based on commonality. For this, I would collect groups of similar things (like hats and gloves) and have them sort them into their 2 groups. Then, I might eventually add a 3rd or 4th group

Some examples:

- Collecting a pile of different types of hats and then sorting by hot weather vs. cold weather
- Collecting different career hats, trucks, and toy figures and then sorting by career (fire, police, mail, etc.)
- Collecting small things from different parts of the house and then sorting each item by room
- (such as- kitchen items: spoon, fork, whisk, bathroom items : toothbrush, floss, bath toy, bedroom items: stuffed animal, pjs, etc.).



prereading

Introduction

When thinking about starting to teach your own child how to read, starting by teaching them the alphabet may feel like a natural starting place. As a society, we decided that learning the alphabet and its song first was the best way to learn how to read. What if I told you that knowing the names of the letters of the alphabet isn't helpful in learning to read (and can actually make it harder)?

Knowing the names of the letters has no real use in learning how to read words. You cannot do anything with the letter names on their own. It would be like learning a new language, spending time learning their whole alphabet, and then after that also having to learn the sounds in order to read and write the words in that language. You'd probably mix up the alphabet with their sounds and feel very frustrated.

Instead in Montessori education, we teach the letter sounds first. That way the children can learn to put those letter sounds together (also known as blending) to read and make words. They can and will learn the names of the letters later on just from being a part of society. Below are the letter sounds for the English Language as spoken in the United States. At 3, we will just be working on learning these sounds and not any of the irregularities or other types of sounds found in our language, and not on using these sounds to read just yet.

**Note: when pronouncing the sounds, DO NOT add the "uh" sound at the end. It is what most people do and it slows down their blending process as that adds an extra sound (like saying "tuh" instead of just /t/. Also, I put these in this order on purpose- stay tuned for why.*

I tried to make these examples as simple as possible. Let me know if you want more examples.

This a video of a woman (with a non United States accent) pronouncing these sounds:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hN9Clox6Biw>

/m/ as in mat

/s/ as in sat

/a/ as in apple

/t/ as in tap

/c/ as in cat

/r/ as in rat

/i/ as in it

/p/ as in pat

/b/ as in bat

/f/ as in fit

/o/ as in otter

/g/ as in get

/h/ as in hat

/j/ as in jet

/u/ as in up

/l/ as in lap

/d/ as in dog

/w/ as in wet

/e/ as in empty

/n/ as in net

/k/ as in kid

/q/ as in quit

(will introduce with u later on)

/v/ as in vet

/x/ as in fox - x is only an ending sound

/y/ as in yet

/z/ as in zip

prereading

Sound Games (I Spy)

Before our children learn the letters in their abstract, written form, we have them use their senses to understand the function of that sound or how we use those sounds in words. To do that we do something called playing “sound games”.

Like much else I have shared with you, after the basic concept has been understood, this can be done anywhere and should be done for a long period of time before they ever see a letter and equate it with a sound. Let me repeat this, this should take MONTHS. Yes, even if your child “gets it” right away. There is an internalization and a need for repetition involved here that is a necessary part of the process. This is a journey of learning to read not a destination. Take it slow and at your child’s pace and let it be truly the game that it is- fun, engaging, and low pressure.

Note: Children are in a sensitive period (naturally drawn to and want to work with) for working with small objects at this age. You may choose to use tiny objects as traditionally used in Montessori environments OR you can simply use the toys and objects that are already in your home. The only important part is that your child knows the name of the object and you both refer to it with the same name.

Also, as noted at the beginning of this, DO NOT correct your child if they are incorrect. This means they are not ready for this stage. Simply go back one step and keep repeating it until they seem to really understand it.

Steps

1. One object: Place one object (such as a toy cat) in front of the child. Say “I spy something that starts with /c/” (or whatever sound your object starts with). They should be able to choose the cat easily. If they do not, they are not ready for this. If you still think they are, try a different object.
2. 2 objects: Place 2 objects in front of the child that start with different sounds (such as the cat toy and a ball). Say “I spy something that starts with /c/.” They should be able to choose the cat. Then say, “I spy something that starts with /b/.” They should be able to then choose the ball. Do this again and again with 2 different objects with different sounds until you observe that they repeatedly are able to do this.
3. More objects: Continue this same process with 3 objects that start with different sounds and then 4 and then 5 or more only moving on after enough time has passed for you to observe continued successful repetition of this skill.

Sound Games (I Spy)- continued

Steps (continued)

4. Once your child is able to identify the correct objects with their initial sound repeatedly over a period of time, you may now take this game to their environment. I would start with a space they know well like their bedroom or playroom and then branch to different parts of your home. "I spy something that starts with /s/." They look around the room and find something that starts with that sound. It doesn't have to be the thing you saw but can be anything that truly starts with the sound you gave them.

Once they are able to do it around your home, take it out into different environments- your neighborhood, a park, the grocery store, grandma's house, a restaurant, a waiting room. This will make them have to really think about what they are looking for as they scan their environment. This step should be played the longest and is a real deciding factor for when your child is able to start learning to match those sounds to their written letters.

5. After you have observed them being able to do this within a variety of environments with ease, I might try one last game to really help bring this game into the abstract. This is my favorite game to play in the car because they do not have one set environment to use as inspiration and have to really use their memory to come up with things. This game is called, "I'm going on a picnic". You may have played this before at summer camp or school as an ice breaker. You say, "I'm going on a picnic and I'm going to bring something that starts with /a/. They have to come up with anything they can think of that starts with that sound. Then, I move onto /b/ and move through the alphabet. They may have a hard time at points. I wouldn't give up on this if they just struggle to come up with a few sounds, but if this becomes frustrating- stop and go back to step 4.

prereading

Sandpaper Letters

Once your child is able to reach step 4 of the sound games, you should continue to play those but may also add sandpaper letters. Sandpaper letters are a Montessori material used in the classroom to teach what those letter sounds look like as symbols. They are unique in that the letter itself is made of sandpaper on a flat, smooth board to connect it to the sense of touch. As you teach the letter sound that each symbol represents, the child traces the letter with their middle and pointer finger to connect that sound and their muscle memory. It will help them with remembering it and later on for writing the letter symbol. They are taught the lowercase letters first as these are the ones seen most and, therefore, makes the use of them more accessible to them. Later on, you can match the uppercase and lowercase letters, but they may already have a good grasp on them from print they see in their environment and just from exposure in books. At this age, we're just going to focus on doing what makes reading most accessible to them and then you can build from there later on.

You can purchase sandpaper letters or you can make your own using any flat, hard, smooth material, use glue to draw the letter, and then use sand, glitter, or another fine material to create that rough textured feeling under their fingers.

If you want to purchase them, these are the two I recommend as you only need lowercase letters and they use a different color for consonants and vowels. Also, check out FB Marketplace and eBay.

[The Sandpaper Letters I have and love](#) (but more expensive)

[Less Expensive Sandpaper Letters](#)

***If your child will be attending a Montessori school, they often use cursive letters. Please check with that school if you wish to use the same as they are. I do not use cursive personally, but I can go more into detail on why if you contact me personally.*

prereading

Sandpaper Letters (continued)

I. Introduction

There is a method to introducing the sandpaper letters. Everyone has their own ideas of the order and amount of letters to introduce at a time. I used this one, which is a pretty typical way of presenting them, because the letters in each group have very different sounds and are visually different as to not confuse the child.

1. m, s, a, t
2. c, r, i, p
3. b, f, o, g
4. h, j, u, l
5. d, w, e, n
6. k, q, v
7. x, y, z

You do not teach all 4 letters at the same time. I would introduce 2 one day and then the other 2 the next day (or all 3 if it is a group with 3). They are taught using something called a "Three Period Lesson".

First Period: The first time you show the first 2 letters, place them facedown flat on a surface. Flip over the first one and as you say its sound, also trace it with your fingers. Then, have your child say the sound out loud as they trace it. Do the same for the second sandpaper letter. They may repeat this as much as they would like. The next day, I would introduce the next 2 letters using this first period.

Second Period: Once you've introduced all 4 (or 3) letters in that group, you want to know if they can identify the sounds. "Can you trace the letter that makes the ___ sound?". They will trace it if they can remember. You will do this for all 4 letters. Then, choose a sandpaper letter and ask them to put it on a body part. Continue to have them put all of them on different body parts one at a time. Then have them put them in different places around the room, etc. Mix it up until you have asked in a random order about each one several times. If they cannot do this one, go back and reintroduce them the next day.

Third Period: The last part of the "Three Period Lesson" is to see whether your child really knows the letter sounds. You flip over each letter like you did in the first period. Flip over the first one so it is face up and say, "What sound does this letter make?" They will tell you as they trace it and you will continue this until you have gone through all the sounds. If they got them all correct, you may move onto the next step on the next page. If not, go back to the second period the next day and just work on that step until they show confidence in identifying the sounds and then have them try this again.

I have added this video that goes over how to use the Sandpaper Letters using the 3 period lesson as well as some more information about the Sandpaper Letters.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LV84U8QhsNA>

prereading

Sandpaper Letters (continued)

2. Object Matching

This second step involves you using either the mini objects you used for the sound games or any objects around your home (such as toys, kitchen tools, office supplies, small nature finds, etc. - just make sure the child knows what they are called). I like to keep these somewhat small though or else the volume of items may become overwhelming for the child. I would choose about 3-4 objects per sandpaper letter for each grouping (so, about 9-16 objects total per group). Put them inside some kind of basket or bowl and then lay the letters out in front of them. Review them in the exact same way you did in step 1 where you do it and then they do it. Then, have them say each objects name out loud and match it to the symbol that has the same beginning sound. If your child is wrong, let them be and continue on. Then, after they have sorted them all out, have them go through and rename the letter sound and all of the objects. As they go through, they may hear any incorrect ones on their own and fix them. If they don't, they don't. Remember, the learning happens when they are able to hear that mistake themselves and correct it, not being told its wrong. Just keep repeating this activity along with the next few I will share with you until you observe that they are repeatedly able to sort all of the objects correctly.



3. Picture Matching

This is similar to object matching but with pictures. I personally like to make my child a part of this experience by having them choose any words they can come up with that start with the letter sounds in that group. Then, we search for it on Google Images and I print out their choice (within reason). If your child is capable of using scissors well, they can even cut out the images themselves. Once you have about 4-6 images per letter, you can shuffle the cards, lay the sandpaper letters out in a line, and let them sort the pictures underneath the letters. Once they've sorted all of the pictures, I like to have them read aloud all of the names of the images they put under each letter so they can hear if they need to correct anything. As always, let them hear it and correct it. If they do not, write it in your notes and move on.



prereading

Sandpaper Letters (continued)

4. Sound Books

I print out 2 copies of the images they choose for picture matching. After one of us cuts out the images, I use small pieces of cardstock or regular colored paper. I personally use blue for consonants and red for vowels. These are the colors used in Traditional classrooms (which is the opposite in Montessori classrooms) because I have materials already in those traditional colors from my teaching days.

Then, have the child glue the images onto (1 per page) those pages and staple the pages together to make a book. For the front cover, I have the child put a regular sheet of white paper over the sandpaper letter and then color over it to reveal the outline of the shape underneath. Then, on each page I write the name of the image under it. The child is then able to read their book aloud and hear the same beginning sound being repeated on each page. You can do this in any way you choose and get creative with it, but this is a great way for children to create a book that they can “read” themselves and then practice some of those “Concepts about Print” skills along with practicing hearing those sounds repeated.



pre-reading

Sandpaper Letters (continued)

5. Games

There are many games you can play to help repeat the exposure of hearing, tracing, and saying the letter sounds. I will name a few here, but feel free to get creative! You could put the names of these in a bowl and have them choose at random which one to play daily. Keep playing them until it feels like your child is completely confident in all of them. Once they have played through the games and you have observed repeated confidence in identifying the sounds, go back to step 1 to introduce the next set of letters. (Pictures are on the next page.)

Toe Touch

Place the letters in a large circle on the floor and say "Touch the ___ sound with your toes." Keep going going through all the sounds in a random order for as long as you'd both like.

Knock, Knock

Turn all of the sandpaper letters upside-down. Then, they will "knock, knock" on the back of one of the sandpaper letters. You will say "Whose there?" and then they will flip it over and say the name of the sound while tracing it. They will then flip it back over and go to a new letter.

Freeze Dance

Put the sandpaper letters face up on the ground all over the room. Put on some music and dance together moving from one letter to another. When you stop the music, they pick up the letter they are standing on and trace it while saying its name and you do the same. Then, start the music and continue for as long as you'd like.

Sorting with Cups

On the next pages, I have added some strips of paper with letters on them for you to cut out. Then get 4 disposable cups and write the letters on the outside- one letter per cup. The child will go through the strips of paper and sort them by cup visually.

Bingo

On the next pages, I have also added Bingo cards for you to use with your child. There are 2 for each set so you can use one and your child can use one. I use the strips to choose a letter. I don't show the child the strip, but I say the sound out loud. They have to find that letter mentally thinking of the sound and then cover it with whatever you have (coins, rocks, anything small that you have a lot of). I typically do it until we fill up the cards, not 3 in a row. Both cards have the same number of each letter on it so you both "win"..

Who is Missing?

Put all of the sandpaper letters in front of your child. Have them close their eyes or turn around. Take one away and hide it behind your back. Then have them figure out which one is missing. I like to mix up the letters while they aren't looking so they don't just remember the order and where they are.

The Clue Game

This one is the hardest. Line up one object for each letter sound (you can use your objects from the object matching). Then get 4 little strips of paper and write each of the object's names down (in lowercase). Put the 4 objects in front of the child and show them one of the strips of paper. Have them look at it and point to the first letter. See if they can figure out which object name it says on the paper. Go through all of the strips until they have matched each with its object.

*Note: After I've gone through all the steps for my first set of letters (m,s,a,t), I use those older letters along with the new letters for these games to help review those sound as well and make it more challenging.

If it becomes too overwhelming for the child, only choose some of the letters that they had the most trouble with to include as extras for these games.

prereading

Sandpaper Letters (continued)

5. Some Games Photos

Knock, Knock



Sorting with Cups



Bingo



The Clue Game



m s a t m s a t m s

m s a t m s a t a t

m s a t m s a t m t

m

t

a

s

free

m

t

a

s

s

a

t

m

free

a

t

s

m

c r i p c r i p c r

c r i p c r i p i p

c r i p c r i p c p

c

r

i

p

free

c

r

i

p

p

i

r

c

free

i

p

r

c

b f o g b f o g b f

b f o g b f o g o g

b f o g b f o g b g

b

f

o

g

free

b

f

o

g

g

o

f

b

free

o

g

f

b

h j u l h j u l h j

h j u l h j u l u l

h j u l h j u l h l

h

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d w e n d w e n d w

d w e n d w e n e n

d w e n d w e n d n

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k a v k a v k a v k

k a v k a v k a v a

k a v k a v k a v v

k

q

v

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free

k

v

k

q

q

v

k

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free

q

v

q

k

x y z x y z x y z x

x y z x y z x y z y

x y z x y z x y z z

x

y

z

y

free

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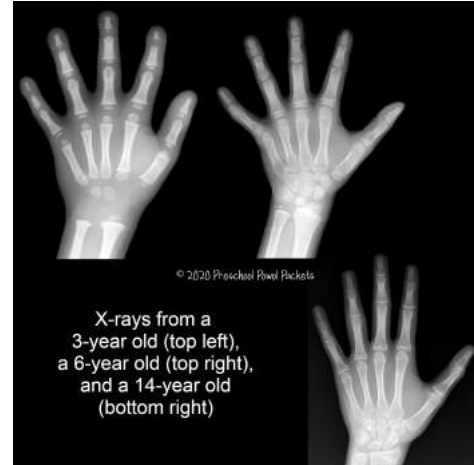
y

z

prewriting

In order to prepare the hand for writing, the muscles in the hand must develop the strength and form needed to hold a writing instrument correctly. One does not need to be taught “how to hold a pencil/crayon/anything correctly” at this age. They need to be given the opportunities to develop this strength and form, typically referred to as fine motor skills.

Link to information about pencil grasp development:
<https://www.growinghandsonkids.com/pencil-grasp-development-for-writing.html>

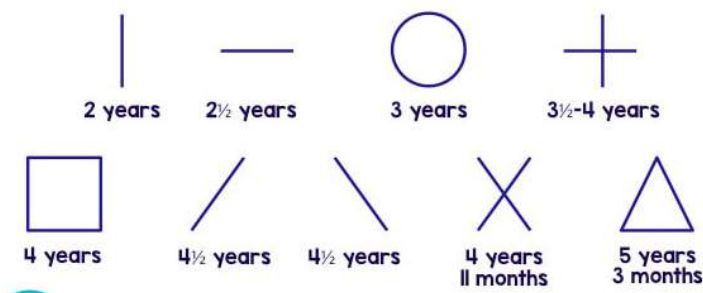


At 3, they should absolutely NOT be working on writing (or tracing) letters or numbers. Their hand, as you can see, is simply not developed enough for this complex skill. There are a multitude of ways to help to develop the skills needed to write these later on. The first is the observation and the practice of prewriting strokes.

These are the strokes needed in combination to make the letters and numbers written in the English language, but in their order of typical development along with their age. Do you notice how long these skills take to develop? Again, these things take time. If you are not taking that time to develop the necessary strength and these skills, it can set them back long term. Do not feel undue pressure from a society so quick to get to that final destination of writing letters and numbers.

PRE-WRITING SHAPES

Before your child can learn to write, he or she needs to be able to draw these shapes



pneuwriting

Best Tools for Developing Writing

When thinking of developing writing, in terms of handwriting (not writing style or grammar or writing stories), there are two things to focus on- developing grip/finger strength and developing the movements/strokes. The grip and finger strength come as a long process of refinement over time, shown on the previous page, and happen with the use of fine motor skills. Below I will list some options for developing fine motor skills for your 3 year old. This is not an exhaustive or complete list, but a list to help you think of how you can make these moments possible or use these things throughout your day within your own life.

**Note: Most of these things will come up again in other subject areas so I didn't get super specific. Feel free to use what you have already at home.*

Activities that Develop Fine Motor Skills


- Using clothespins on any object
- Using tongs to self serve at meals
- Using tweezers on something small
 - Playing with playdough- rolling, cutting, breaking apart
- Cutting with scissors (freely or on a line)
- Cutting yarn, fabric, or leaves (or other textured items)
- Closing and opening a bag of snacks with a "chip clip"
- Doing their hair or your hair with clips (big or small)
- Putting binder clips on groups of papers
- Putting paper clips on groups of papers
- Pushing push pins into cork board
- Buttoning/unbuttoning their clothing
- Zipping and unzipping their clothing
- Snapping/unsnapping their clothing
- Dressing/undressing dolls/toys
 - Opening an orange's peel
 - Opening a banana's peel
- Spooning items to self-serve at meals
- Pulling floss out of the container to floss
 - Food prep
 - Using a spray bottle
- Making bracelets out of beads and string/pipe cleaners/yarn
- Anything else that works the hand and finger muscles

prewriting

Movement/Stroke Practice

How do children learn those Pre-writing strokes that I showed a graphic of a few pages back? Through exposure and practice. They will develop naturally and on their own, but will be refined in tandem with developing that hand strength through the activities that develop fine motor skills. Again, this is not an exhaustive, complete list but is a way for you to think about how you can do this in your own home.

To start you can either draw the first 4 shapes on the Pre-Writing Shapes graphic (a diagonal line, a horizontal line, a circle, and a t shape) on 4 pieces of paper or just model how to draw each shape next to your child for them to choose to copy. Over time, you can add the next shape and then the next if you think they are ready for it based on how they do with the first 4.

- **Sand Tray:** Fill a tray with sand or any other fine material you have in your home (rice, glitter, sprinkles, dirt, kinetic sand, etc.). One at a time, have your child try to draw the shapes that are on the cards using their pointer finger and then shake the tray to clear it away.

- **Go outside:** Go to the beach, a patch of dirt, a sand box, even water and allow them to work on these same strokes out in nature using their pointer finger.
- **Window 'Art':** Whenever you see fogginess on a window or mirror (or even in a steamy shower), you can model drawing some of those pre-writing strokes with your pointer finger and see if they naturally draw along with you. Chances are they will because it will feel successful to them and like they are "writing".
- **Water Paint:** You can use a paintbrush (or just their finger) and have them dip it in water. They can draw the shapes using the paintbrush on a chalkboard, on a sidewalk, on black paper, or on a [Buddha Board](#).
- **Paint Away:** Draw shapes using chalk on the sidewalk or a chalkboard. Using that wet paintbrush or their finger, they can erase the shape by having to make the figure over it.
- **Dots:** Draw the shapes very large on large pieces of papers, have them use either [dot stickers](#) or [paint daubers](#) (like the ones used when people play Bingo) along the lines.
- **Trace:** Using either a tiny golf pencil, a broken crayon with just enough to hold it, a [rock crayon](#), a piece of very small chalk, or these [colored pencils](#), make these shapes on paper. Have them trace them in different colors using these different types of writing utensils. Being this size helps the child to hold the writing tool correctly to develop the proper pencil grasp.
- **Pre- Writing Board:** These are great if you can afford because of their longevity and ability for repetition without any prep for the adult.
