



Developmental writing Spring 2025

“Reading and writing float on a sea of talk...”

Sue Palmer

You learn to *write*

better by *reading*.

You learn to *read*

better by *writing*.

Reading and writing *work*

together to improve your

ability to *think!*



Our aim today is to:

- To gain an understanding of how children's writing develops.
- To understand how we teach writing here at Hampton Infants.
- To give you some practical ideas about how you can support your children at home with their writing.

Young children's
engagement in
high level play
is one of the best
indicators of
school success.

(Smilansky 1990)

Time to reflect....

- When do we write?
- What motivates us to write?

- ‘Writing is about who we are. It is particular and personal and individual.’

- To communicate to others



- To create imaginary worlds



- To organise and explain information



- To explore experience



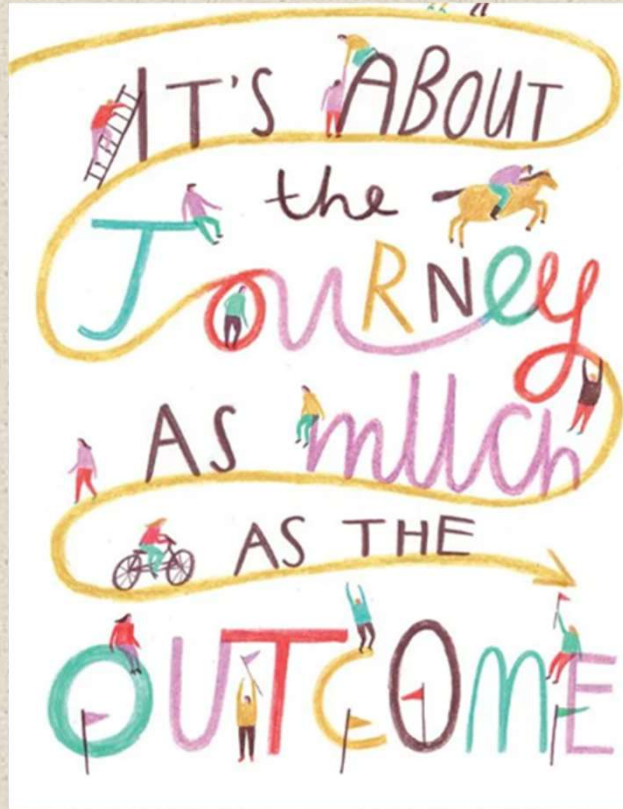
Why Bother...

Handwriting proficiency impacts on all areas of learning. If the child can write well they can concentrate on the content and not how to form the letters. Research shows that there is a unique relationship between the hand and the brain when it comes to composing thoughts and ideas. Finger movements in handwriting, unlike those for keyboard skills, stimulate the brain to engage thinking, language and working memory which improves the storage and management of information (Virginia Berniger - Educational Psychologist University of Washington 2011).

Key things to consider...

- Handwriting is a MOTOR skill and unrelated to phonics, reading and composition.
- The hand is not fully developed until 6 years of age.
- Content is significantly affected until script is automatic
- Phonic knowledge requires auditory and visual processing but is not useful for writing until letter formation is mastered.
- Motor development is therefore essential for handwriting.

Essential Skills for writing



Visual motor skills

- Can draw a person with 3 different body parts.
- Can pedal a tricycle around obstacles and make u-turns.
- Can dress and undress without much help.
- Catches a large ball from 3 feet away.
- Can point to the smallest object when asked.
- Points out two groups of objects that are alike based on shape, color, or size.
- Can choose long, longer, and longest from a group of 3.
- Can copy colour and shape patterns with blocks or beads.



Visual perception



- Visual perception is our ability to make sense of what we see. [Visual perceptual skills](#) are essential for everything from navigating our world to reading, writing, and manipulating items. Visual perception is made up of a complex combination of various skills.
- Visual perceptual skills include visual memory, visual closure, form constancy, visual spatial relations, visual discrimination, visual attention, visual sequential memory, and visual figure ground.

Fine Motor Skills

Statutory ELG: Fine Motor Skills

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Hold a pencil effectively in preparation for fluent writing – using the tripod grip in almost all cases;
- Use a range of small tools, including scissors, paint brushes and cutlery;
- Begin to show accuracy and care when drawing.

By four years old most children will be able to:

- Build a tower of 10 cubes
- Thread small beads onto a lace
- Hold and use a pen with a tripod grip
- Draw a person with head, body, arms, legs and some facial features
- Copy H, T, O, X, V
- Touch each finger with the thumb of the same hand



Gross motor skills

By four years old most children will be able to

- Jump from a low step
- Walk backwards and sideways
- Stand and walk on tiptoe
- Ride a pedal bike
- Climb up stairs with one foot on each step
- Move around each other without bumping into each other
- Throw a ball over-hand and bounce a ball
- Catch a ball with hands outstretched
- Kick a ball with force
- Walk along a painted or taped line
- Run on tiptoe
- Balance on one leg for 5+ seconds

Statutory ELG: Gross Motor Skills

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Negotiate space and obstacles safely, with consideration for themselves and others;
- Demonstrate strength, balance and coordination when playing;
- Move energetically, such as running, jumping, dancing, hopping, skipping and climbing.



Trunk control and shoulder stability



- The movements of our body rely on having a strong and stable base from which to work. We often talk about “core stability” and this refers to the muscles in our back and tummy working to hold our spine shoulders and hips in a strong and stable position. This is important for holding our body in a straight and upright posture so we can move and work in a flexible and smooth way when doing more complicated activities.
- Good fine motor control needs to have a good base to work from. It is very difficult to use the muscles of the hand when the body, shoulder, and arm that the hand is attached to are moving around or having trouble maintaining their position.

Development Matters – EYFS expectations for Physical Development: Moving and Handling

3 and 4 year olds:



3 and 4-year-olds will be learning to:

Continue to develop their movement, balancing, riding (scooters, trikes and bikes) and ball skills.

Go up steps and stairs, or climb up apparatus, using alternate feet.

Skip, hop, stand on one leg and hold a pose for a game like musical statues.

Use large-muscle movements to wave flags and streamers, paint and make marks.

Start taking part in some group activities which they make up for themselves, or in teams.

Increasingly be able to use and remember sequences and patterns of movements which are related to music and rhythm.

Match their developing physical skills to tasks and activities in the setting. For example, they decide whether to crawl, walk or run across a plank, depending on its length and width.



3 and 4-year-olds will be learning to:

Choose the right resources to carry out their own plan. For example, choosing a spade to enlarge a small hole they dug with a trowel.

Collaborate with others to manage large items, such as moving a long plank safely, carrying large hollow blocks.

Use one-handed tools and equipment, for example, making snips in paper with scissors.

Use a comfortable grip with good control when holding pens and pencils.

Show a preference for a dominant hand.

Be increasingly independent as they get dressed and undressed, for example, putting coats on and doing up zips.

Development Matters – EYFS expectations for Physical Development: Moving and Handling

- A Reception child:

Progress towards a more fluent style of moving, with developing control and grace.

Develop the overall body strength, co-ordination, balance and agility needed to engage successfully with future physical education sessions and other physical disciplines including dance, gymnastics, sport and swimming.

Further develop and refine a range of ball skills including: throwing, catching, kicking, passing, batting, and aiming.

Develop confidence, competence, precision and accuracy when engaging in activities that involve a ball.

Revise and refine the fundamental movement skills they have already acquired:

- rolling
- crawling
- walking
- jumping
- running
- hopping
- skipping
- climbing

Develop their small motor skills so that they can use a range of tools competently, safely and confidently. Suggested tools: pencils for drawing and writing, paintbrushes, scissors, knives, forks and spoons.

Develop the foundations of a handwriting style which is fast, accurate and efficient.

Use their core muscle strength to achieve a good posture when sitting at a table or sitting on the floor.

Combine different movements with ease and fluency.

Confidently and safely use a range of large and small apparatus indoors and outside, alone and in a group.

Develop overall body-strength, balance, co-ordination and agility.

Development Matters – EYFS expectations for Physical Development: Moving and Handling

Early learning goal – by the end of Reception

Statutory ELG: Gross Motor Skills

Children at the expected level of development will:

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Statutory ELG: Fine Motor Skills

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Hold a pencil effectively in preparation for fluent writing – using the tripod grip in almost all cases;
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- Begin to show accuracy and care when drawing.

Scribbling

Working within the 3-4 year age range

- Scribbling looks like random assortment of marks on a child's paper.
- Sometimes the marks are large, circular and random. Sometimes they resemble drawing.
- Although the marks do not resemble print, they are significant because the young writer uses them to show ideas and can talk about them



Development Matters – EYFS expectations

• Writing for 3-4 year olds:



3 and 4-year-olds will be learning to:

Understand the five key concepts about print:

- print has meaning
- print can have different purposes
- we read English text from left to right and from top to bottom
- the names of the different parts of a book
- page sequencing

Develop their phonological awareness, so that they can:

- spot and suggest rhymes
- count or clap syllables in a word
- recognise words with the same initial sound, such as money and mother



3 and 4-year-olds will be learning to:

Engage in extended conversations about stories, learning new vocabulary.

Use some of their print and letter knowledge in their early writing. For example: writing a pretend shopping list that starts at the top of the page; writing 'm' for mummy.

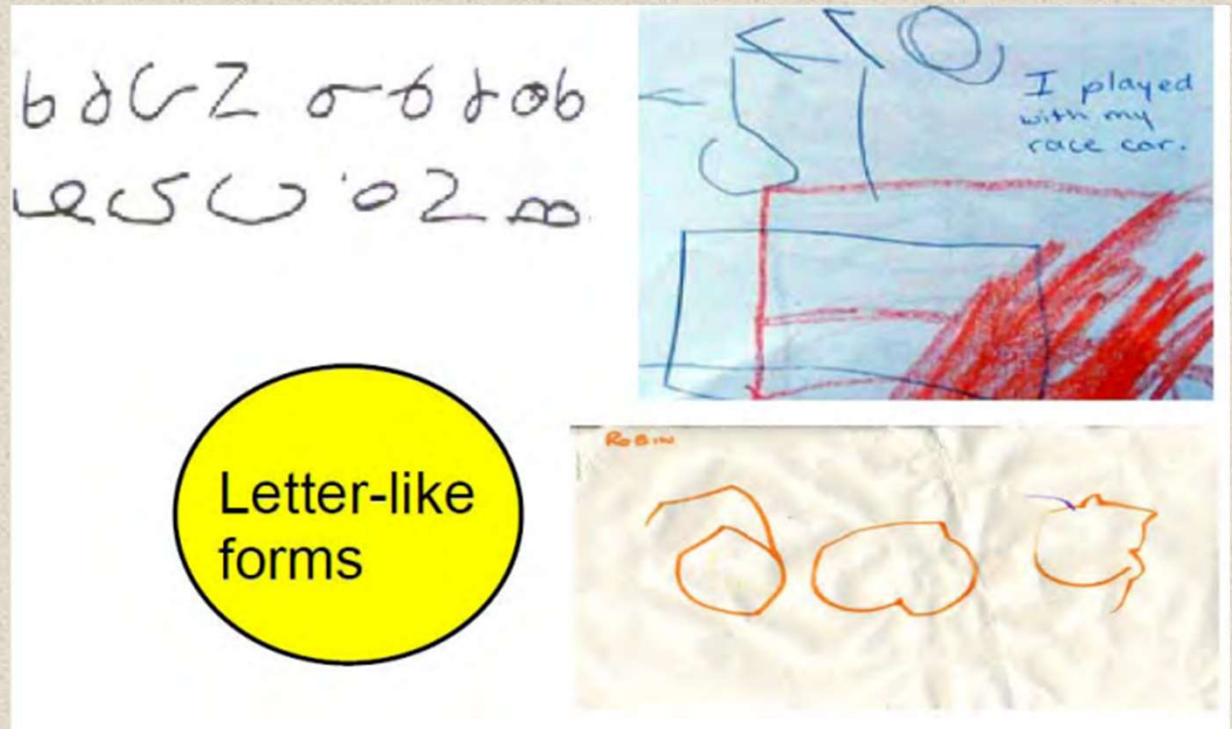
Write some or all of their name.

Write some letters accurately.

Letter-like symbols

A child starting in Reception

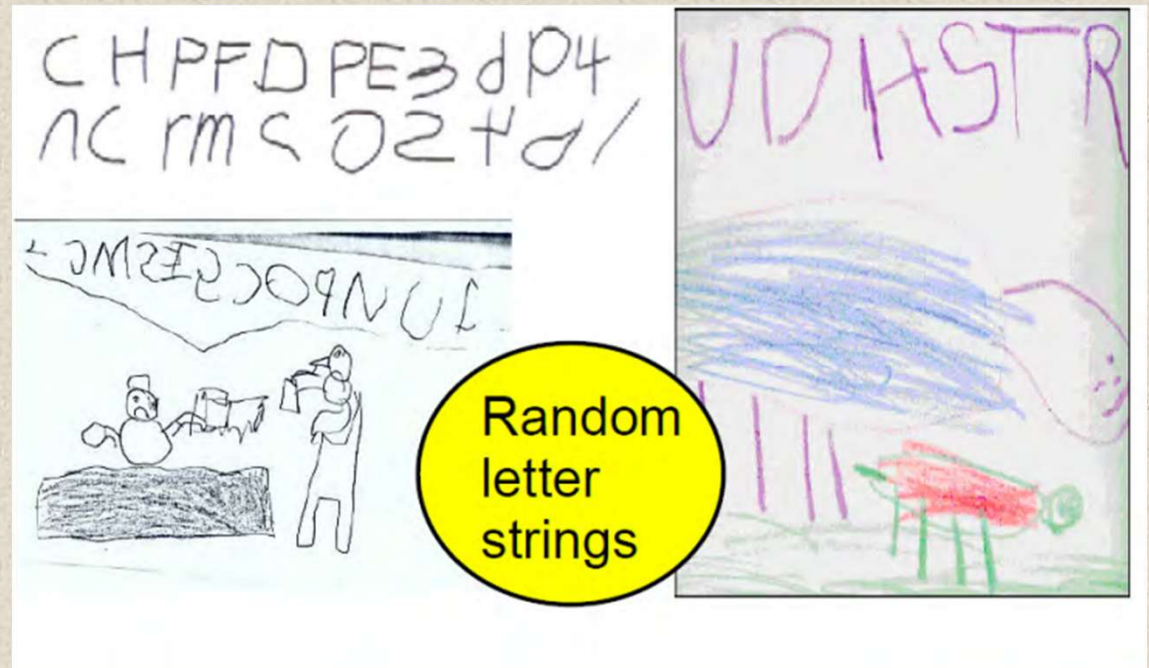
- Letter-like forms emerge, sometimes randomly placed and often interspersed with numbers.
- The children can talk about their own 'writing'. In this stage, spacing is rarely present



Strings of letters

Working within the
Reception age range

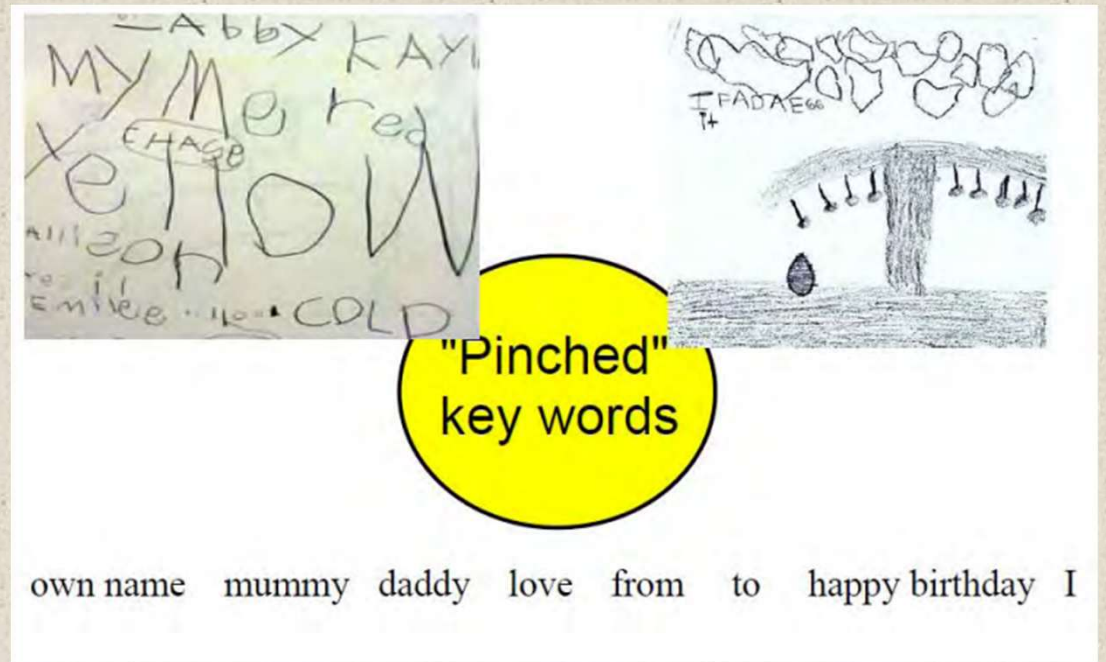
- In the 'strings of letters' phase, children write some legible letters that tell us they know more about writing. They will often use letters from their names.
- Children are developing awareness of the sound-to symbol relationship, although they are not matching most sounds.
- Children will often write in capital letters and have not yet begun spacing.



Beginning sounds emerge/familiar key words

Working within Reception
age range

- At this stage, children begin to see the differences between a letter and a word, but they may not use spacing between words.
- Children are beginning to match some sounds to symbols.
- Their message makes sense and matches the picture, especially when they choose the topic.



Invented spelling

Working within the
Reception age range

The child begins to leave spaces between their words and may often mix upper and lowercase letters in their writing.

- Usually they write sentences that tell ideas



Development Matters – EYFS expectations

In Reception:



Children in reception will be learning to:

Read individual letters by saying the sounds for them.

Blend sounds into words, so that they can read short words made up of known letter– sound correspondences.

Read some letter groups that each represent one sound and say sounds for them.

Write short sentences with words with known sound-letter correspondences using a capital letter and full stop.

Re-read what they have written to check that it makes sense.

Read a few common exception words matched to the school's phonic programme.

Read simple phrases and sentences made up of words with known letter–sound correspondences and, where necessary, a few exception words.

Re-read these books to build up their confidence in word reading, their fluency and their understanding and enjoyment.

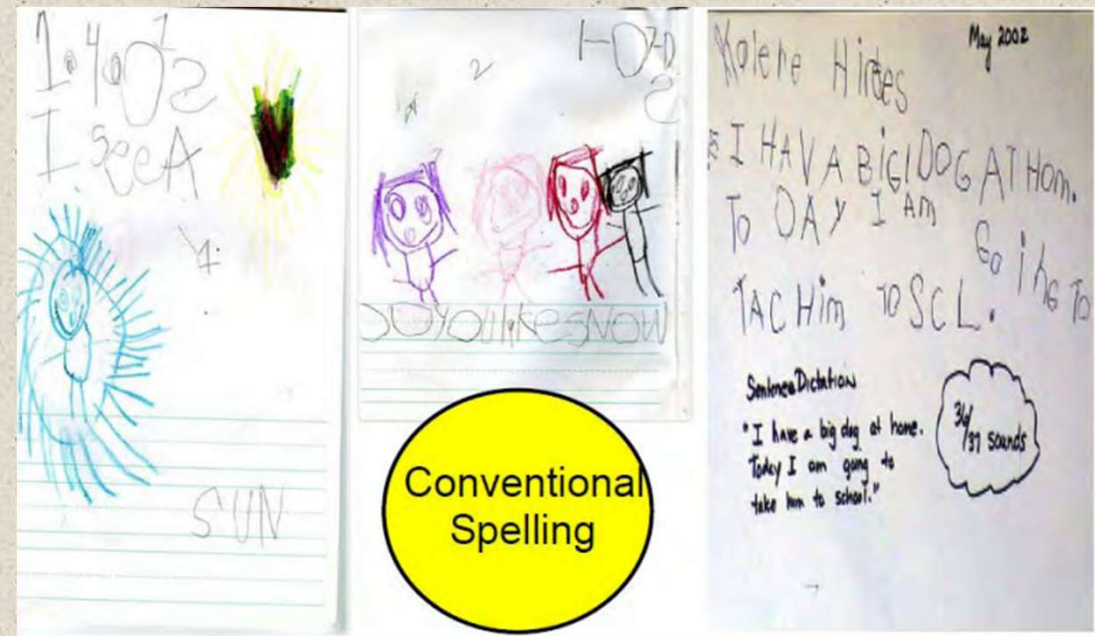
Form lower-case and capital letters correctly.

Spell words by identifying the sounds and then writing the sound with letter/s.

Conventional spelling

Early Learning Goal

- Children in this phase may spell correctly some sight words, familiar words and names, and environmental print. Other words are spelled the way they sound.
- Their writing is readable



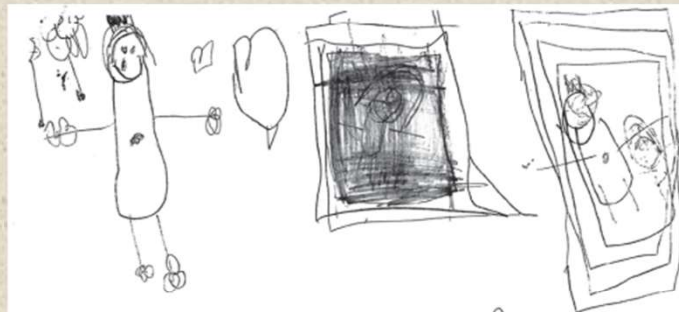
Statutory ELG: Writing

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Write recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed;
- Spell words by identifying sounds in them and representing the sounds with a letter or letters;
- Write simple phrases and sentences that can be read by others.

I got a To feree
can pat my woble toof I
bed. plcese toof in my
giver a coin
Love from Bilal

Bilal - independent writing at busy table



I went to
Landa I son dingsga
bong I went to
the moyste ser
m

on saturday I
Went to the
met fodoam
Iswamandplala wivsar
I went on the side

The success of children's ability to write is based on:

- A rich talking environment.
- Experience of many stories that have been read to them.
- Being able to join in with stories and adding their own ideas.
- Practising and developing their own story language - 'talking like a book'.
- A range of engaging speaking and listening activities related to drama.

How Children Begin to Learn to Write

1. They strengthen their shoulder and arm muscles by making large (gross motor) movements with their arms such as waving flags



2. They strengthen the muscles in their hands and fingers by doing fine motor activities such as pegging



3. They begin to make marks with their fingers in sand, paint, soil

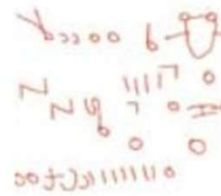


4. They make marks with equipment such as sticks, chalk or paint brushes on a large scale

6. They write circles and lines and begin to gain some control over equipment



7. They write in shapes and symbols and begin to give meaning to the marks they make



5. They make marks with equipment such as crayons or pens on a smaller scale

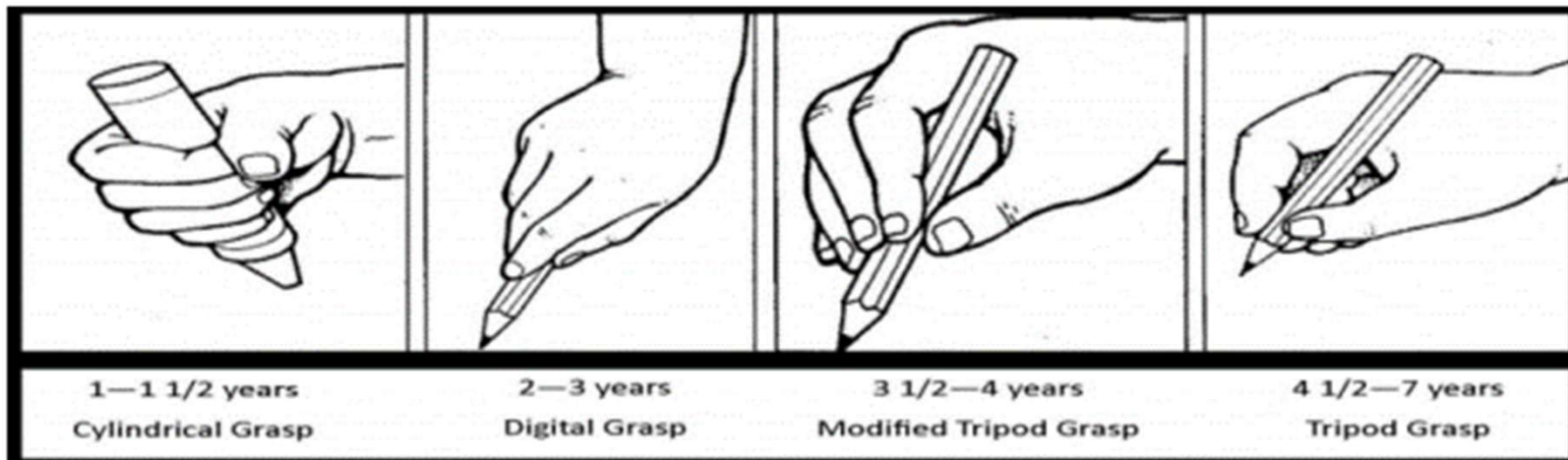


8. They use letters from their name to write messages



Developing pencil grip

- How children use their body to aid their early mark making and then writing is by using a sequence of muscle movements. Which muscles they use depends on which stage of development they are at.





What we do at Hampton Infants

- Children are encouraged to write as part of their purposeful play.
- They write in a variety of role play situations that match their interests and stimulate talking.
- They experiment with writing by making marks, personal writing symbols and conventional script.
- They are given lots of praise and encouragement to have a go
- When ready, we support the children's writing by encouraging them to hear the sound at the beginning of the word in their writing.
- Then they progress in hearing other sounds in words in their writing. We support children in writing stories, poems and information texts.
- They begin to write in sentences sometimes using punctuation (mainly full stops).

Teaching letter sounds and patterns

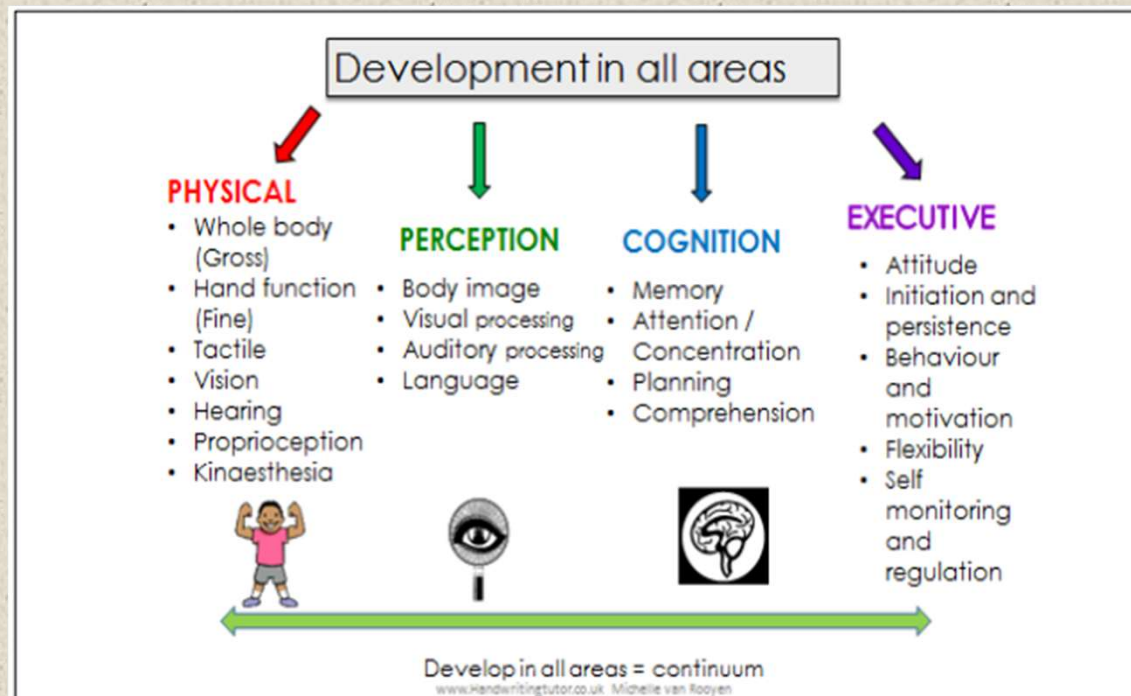
- Children learn by becoming aware of how words sound and look.
- Learning to spell is part of learning to write so in the early stages it is very important to encourage your child to have a go at writing.
- You can:- *find different ways to help your child write their name
*encourage your child to join in when you write lists, letters, birthday cards. *give lots of praise and enjoy your child's attempts at writing and spelling. *when you write with your child try use lower case (not capitals) except at the beginning of a sentence or name. *look at words together when you're out shopping, on television, or reading together

Handwriting

- For handwriting children need to be well co-ordinated through their whole body, not just their hands and fingers.

Gross motor

climbing · jumping ·
balancing · skipping · batting
· swinging · throwing ·
skywriting · writing on backs
· water/paintbrushes ·
chalks outside · steamy
windows · BIG
painting/drawing



Fine motor

sewing · threading · tap a
shape · jigsaws · playdough ·
lego/building · drawing ·
colouring · cutting/sticking ·
patterns · painting · letter
shapes · computers

Fig.2. Areas of development underpinning handwriting (Michelle van Rooyen)

The Beery – Buktenica Developmental Test of Visual- Motor Integration

Writing readiness can be guided by the child's ability to write these first 8 to 9 shapes as these form the foundations of all letters and numbers.

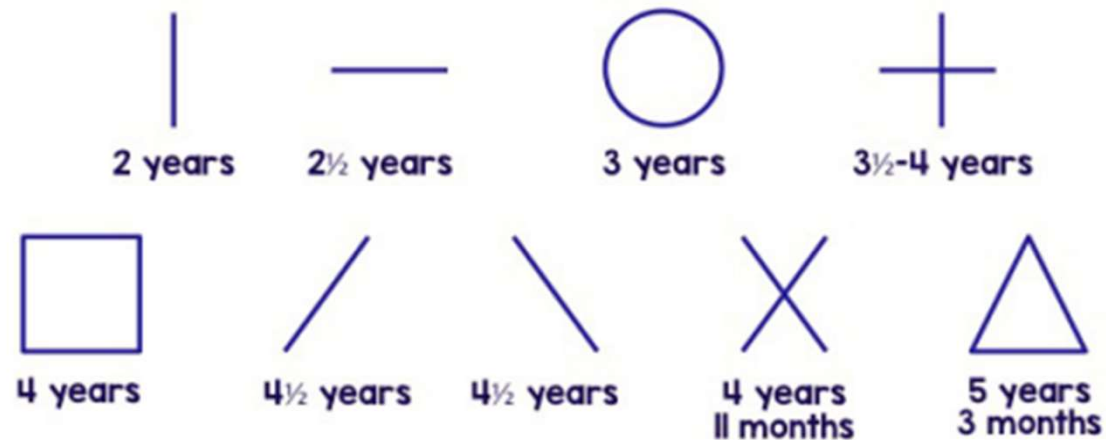


Fig. 4. From VMI Administration, Scoring and Teaching Manual. 6th Edition (Beery, 2010)
(summarised by Michelle van Rooyen)

Handwriting

- We model how to form letters correctly, so that children can eventually acquire a fluent and legible handwriting style. These skills develop over a long period of time.



Writing at Hampton infants is.....

Workshops e.g. a
theatre group or singing
hands

Dough disco

Story maps

Funky fingers

Reading

Creating
meaningful
opportunities
to write

Daily phonics

Helicopter
stories

Tummy time

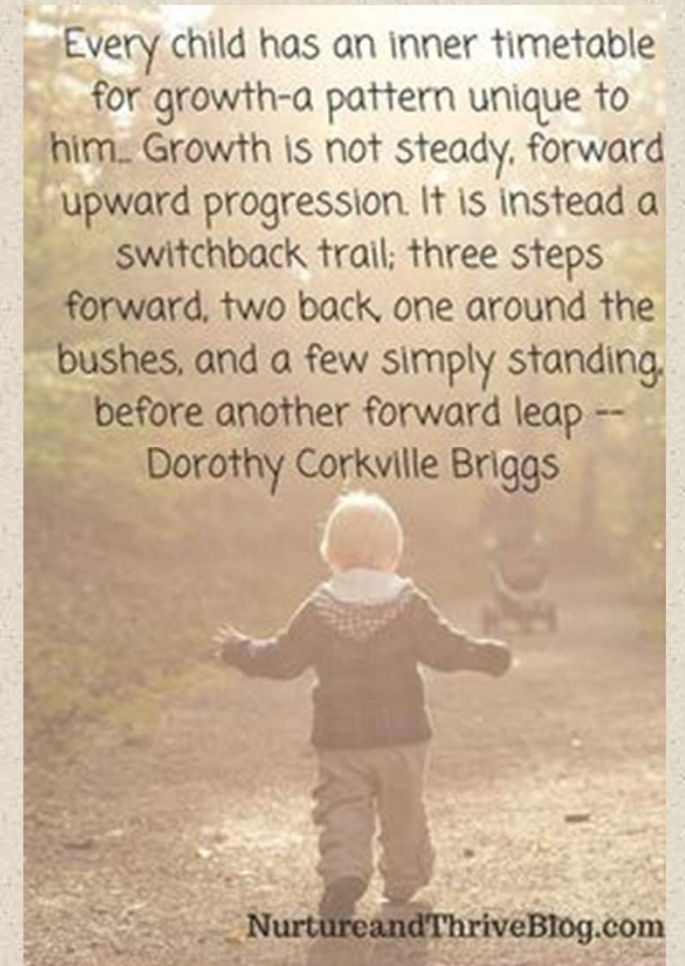
Focus text

Handwriting

Shared writing

Messy play

Scissor skills





How to help your child....

- Sing songs and nursery rhymes with your children.
- Be interested in language and words –have an interesting word place at home.
- You can't write a story unless you can tell a story.
- You can't tell a story unless you have heard a story.
- Use letter sounds and not letter names
- Write shopping lists and letters.
- Write in lower case letters
- Go to the park, climb, swing, run and crawl!
- Messy play and playdough time!
- Make it an enjoyable experience, keep it fun!

Thank you and any questions?

