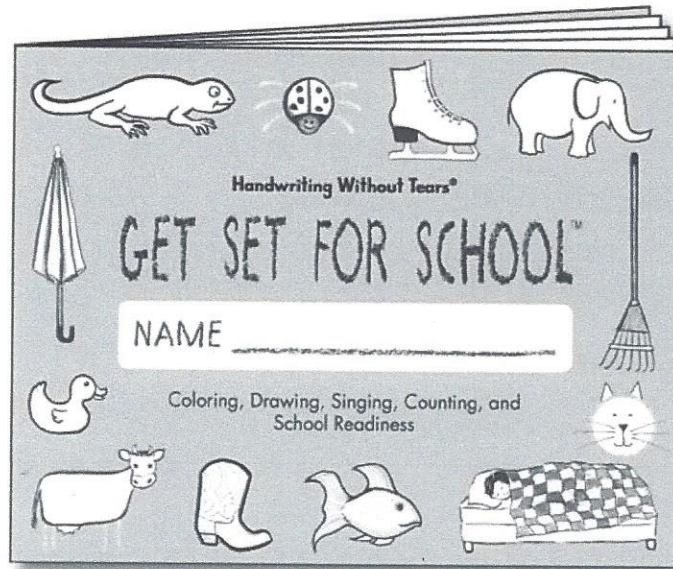


Welcome to Pre-K



Copy for
Parents

Dear Parents,

We are excited about the Pre-K curriculum we are using. It has won the Distinguished Achievement Award for the best children's curriculum as well as a Teacher's Choice Award from *Learning Magazine*. This Pre-K curriculum develops coloring, drawing, counting, and handwriting readiness. The program uses music, multi-sensory learning materials and the "crayon only" *Get Set for School* workbook.

During the year, we will introduce new activities. The children will build Mat Man™ on the floor with wood pieces and draw a picture of him. They'll make capital letters and numbers with wood pieces and dough. Music is important! Just wait... you will soon be hearing new songs for letters, counting and even for fingers and toes!

We will be teaching important pre-writing and alphabet skills. We are sending home information so that you'll know what we're teaching and how to help at home. Please let us know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

P.S. If you would like more information about the *Get Set for School*™ program visit the Handwriting Without Tears® website; www.hwtears.com.



Learning Magazine
Teacher's Choice Award



Association for
Educational Publishers
Children's Curriculum



Get Set for School
Sing Along CD
Recorded by 2004 and 2005 Grammy
winning artists, Cathy & Marcy

Help Me Write My Name

"That's my name. My name starts with ____." Maybe your child is trying to write or even make letters you can recognize. If so, then it's time to start demonstrating how to write a few letters. Here's how:

1. Be a good example.
2. Write in all capitals.
3. Start every letter at the top.
4. Teach letters step-by-step.
5. Write on paper strips with a smiley face in the top left corner.



How can I be a good example?

Hold the crayon correctly. Your child will be watching how you form letters and hold the crayon or pencil. Be a good model. You may need to make a special effort to hold the crayon correctly.

Why should I use all capitals?

Capitals are the first letters that children can visually recognize and remember. They are the first letters children can physically write. If a child can write his or her name correctly in capitals, you may introduce lowercase letters.

Does it matter where my student starts?

Yes, it does. English has one basic rule for both reading and writing: read and write from top to bottom, left to right. When you write with a child, always start at the top.

What do I say when I teach the letters?

Always say, "I start at the top." Then describe the part you're making. Say "big" or "little" for size. Say "line" or "curve" for shape, like this:
D = "I start at the top. I make a big line. Now I make a big curve."

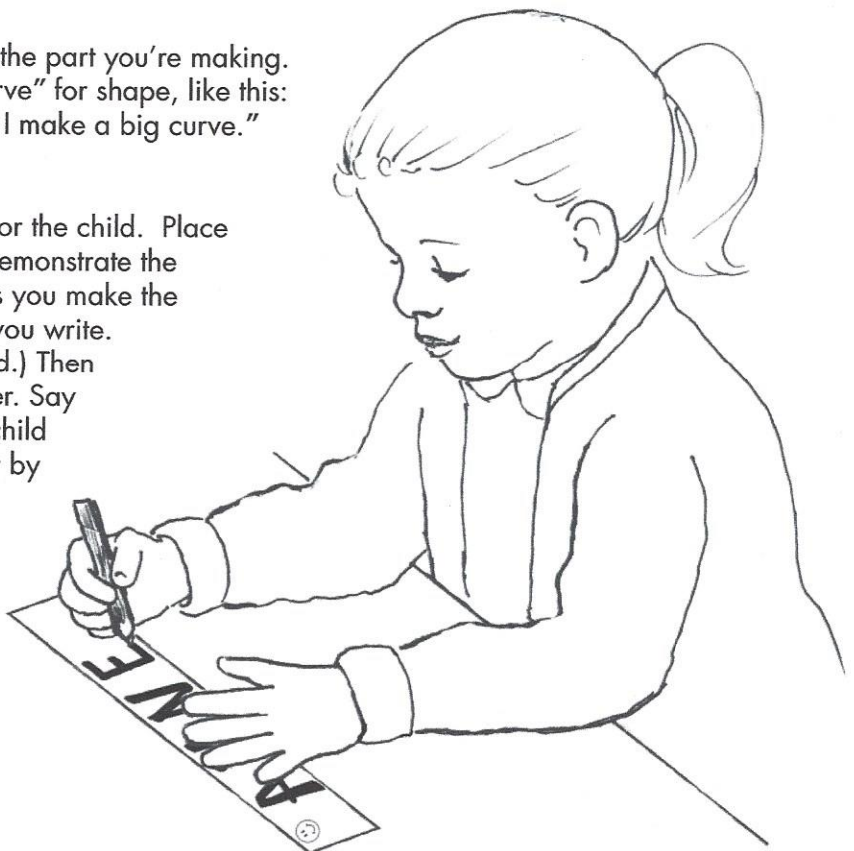
What do I use and how do I do this?

Use two strips of paper, one for you and one for the child. Place your strip directly above the child's strip and demonstrate the first letter in the child's name. Say each step as you make the letter. Be sure the child can see the strokes as you write. (Avoid blocking the child's view with your hand.) Then tell the child to make the letter on his/her paper. Say the steps as the child writes, encouraging the child to say the steps aloud with you. Continue letter by letter.

NOTE:

To Make Paper strips – Use a standard sheet. Fold it in half the long way, and then in half again. Cut on folds to make 4 strips.

Extra help – If the child has difficulty imitating your letter, you may use a gray crayon to pre-write each letter on the child's paper. Do this letter by letter and let the child crayon trace over your letter. Make your gray letters progressively lighter and discontinue pre-writing as child gains ability.



Help Me Hold the Crayon

There are easy ways to help your child. Even if you're not a teacher, and don't hold the pencil correctly yourself, you can still be a very good influence on your child. Here's how:

1. Choose the right writing tools.
2. Show your child how to hold them.
3. Be a good example.

Copy for
Parents

How do I choose the right writing tools?

- As soon as your child is past age 3 or the puts-things-in-his-mouth swallowing stage, give him or her little broken pieces of chalk or crayon and lots of big sheets of paper for loose scribbling/drawing.
- Little pieces of finger food also encourage finger skills.

Why little pieces?

Little pieces develop fingertip control and strength. They encourage the precise pinch that's used for crayons and pencils. Notice how well your child uses his/her fingers with little pieces. There's research to show that starting with small pieces encourages the correct grasp.

What about regular crayons and pencils?

They're fine, but you must show your child how to hold and use them. Save the pencils for later. Pencils are sharp pointed sticks and really aren't appropriate for beginners. Fat pencils and crayons are too heavy for little hands.

When should I start?

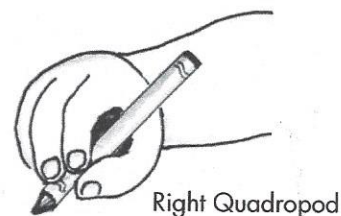
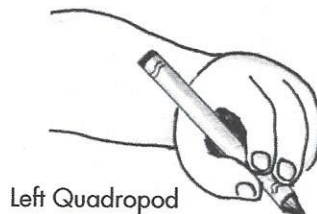
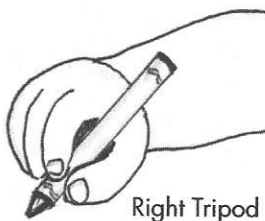
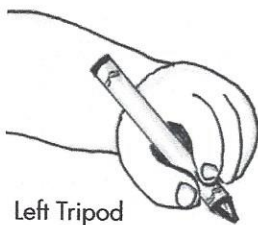
Right now. You can start showing your child how to use crayons as soon as your child wants to color.

How do I show my child?

1. Teach your child to name the first 3 fingers – the thumb, the pointer, and the tall man.
2. Move them - Give a thumbs up and wiggle the thumb. Have your child point with the pointer finger and then put the tall man beside the pointer finger.
3. Make a big open O pinch – this positions the thumb and pointer correctly.

What is the correct grip?

Here's a picture. Notice that there is a choice. Some children like to pinch with the thumb and pointer. That's the tripod (3—pinch with thumb and pointer, pencil rests on tall man). Others like the quadropod (4—pinch with thumb and pointer/tall man together, pencil rests on ring finger).



What else can I do?

1. Pick up and Drop it! This is a fun way to practice placing the fingers correctly. Help your child pick up the pencil and get all the fingers placed. Then drop it! See if your child can put all the fingers back in the right place again. Repeat two or three times.
2. Aim and Scribble. Make tiny stars or spots on paper. Teach your child how to aim the crayon and land on a star to make it shine. Help the crayon hand rest on the paper, with the elbow down and the hand touching the paper. Help the helper hand hold the paper. Now just wiggle the fingers to scribble.
3. Show your child how to hold and move the crayon to make different strokes, back and forth, up and down, round and round.

Teaching Crayon Grip

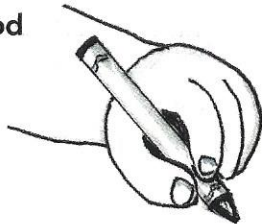
Close to 50 percent of three-year-olds have the fine motor ability to hold a small crayon correctly (Schneck & Henderson 1990). But the correct grip has to be taught. You can end awkward or even fistful pencil grips with direct teaching of specific strategies. Young children are pliable and can learn good habits. Here are strategies to teach correct crayon grip.

Demonstrate Grip - Standard or Alternate

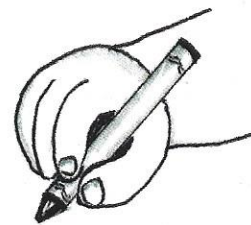
The standard grip, also called the "tripod grip," uses three fingers to hold the crayon or pencil. The thumb is bent, the index finger points to the tip of the crayon, and the crayon rests on the side of the middle finger. The last two fingers are curled in the palm and give the hand stability.

An alternative grip called the "quadropod grip" (four fingers) is another way children may hold the crayon. The thumb is bent, the index and middle finger point to the tip of the crayon, and the crayon rests on the ring finger. This grip is efficient and does not need to be corrected.

Left Tripod

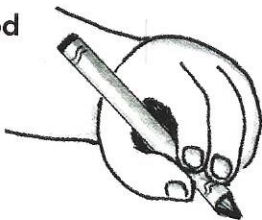


Standard Grip

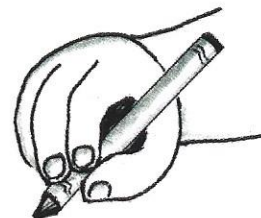


Right Tripod

Left Quadropod



Alternative Grip



Right Quadropod

Little Crayons/Little Pencils

The best tool for Pre-K children is the crayon. Crayons create a natural resistance and build strength in the hand. They prepare the hand for using a good pencil grip. Our Flip Crayons® are ideal for little hands. They are designed with dual colors and dual tips to encourage fine motor development: when children flip the crayons, they use in-hand manipulation skills, which lead to improved coordination. If you do move a child to pencils, use a golf-size pencil. Avoid fat primary pencils because those are too heavy and long for little hands. Children will do better with a short pencil that's in proportion to their hands. You can use markers in moderation.



Pencil Grips

Avoid using pencil grips or any other type of adaptive writing device for Pre-K children. Pencil grips are for older children who find them helpful. Young children are motivated to learn new skills. If they are holding a crayon or small pencil incorrectly, demonstrate the proper grip and try the techniques described above or on page 29.