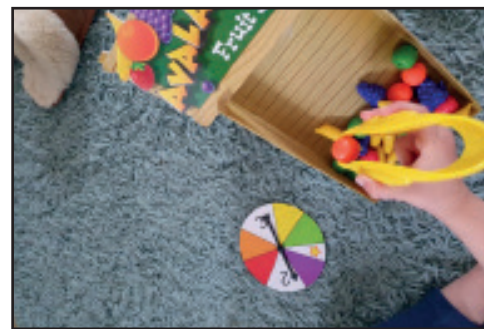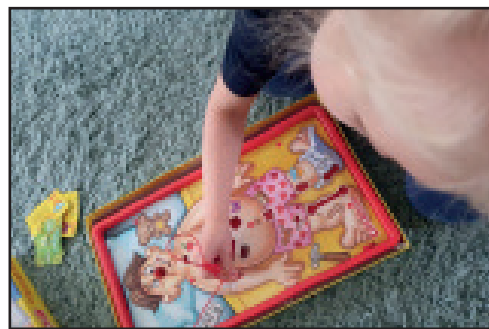# Development of Pencil Skills
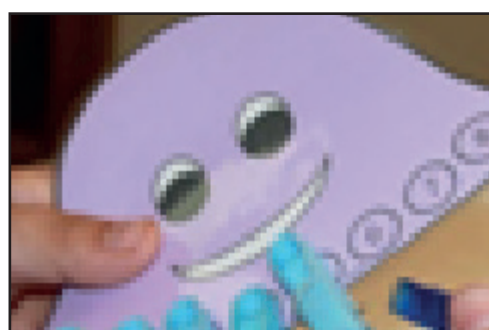
Getting started - Stage 1 of 4

## Shoulder Stability, Hand strength and Grasp Development

Tweezer Games / Activities e.g. operation, avalanche, sorting objects into colours, numbers


Pegs: Squeeze clothes pegs or spring loaded paper clamps onto pieces of cardboard to make pictures, match colours, for adding sums, or pretend play hanging doll clothes on a line

Construction Toys: Lego, duplo, puzzles, inset puzzles, magnetics, kid knex
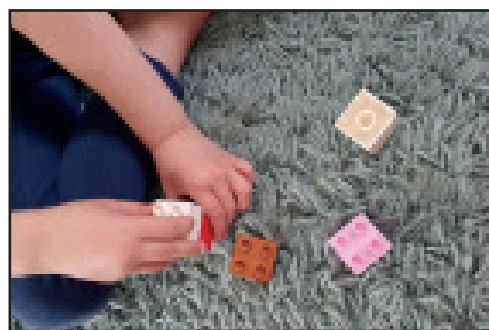
Fine motor activities - threading, board games, play dough activities, rolling, cutters, finding hidden objects, eg: pegs/beads. pushing in straws or toothpicks to make animals.
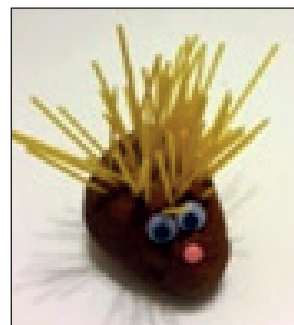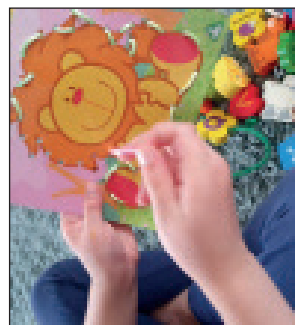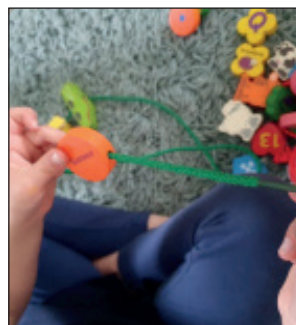
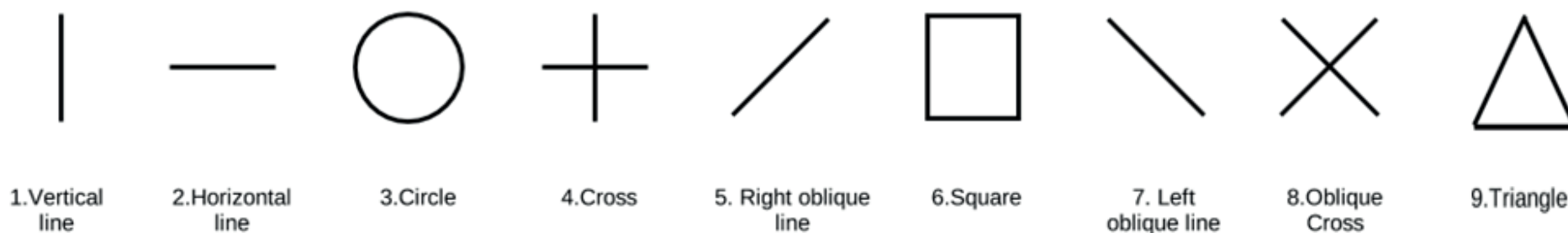Laying on your tummy when reading a book, playing a game, watching TV

Climbing frames, parks, wheelbarrow walks, throwing and catching a large ball, balloons
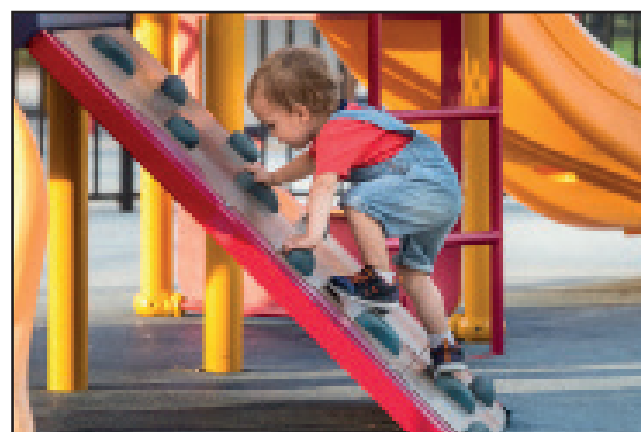
Pre – Writing Patterns and Shapes needed for the foundation of handwriting development

Practice the following shapes
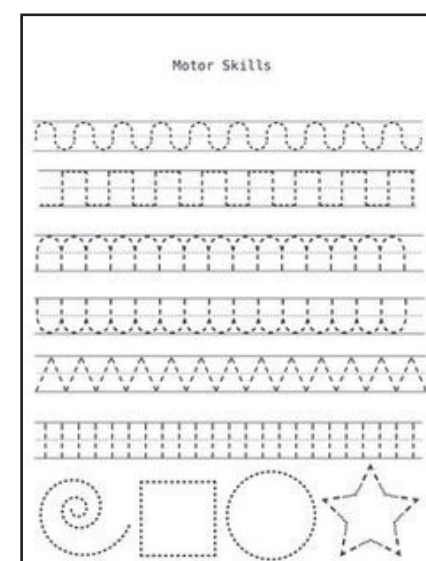

| 1.Vertical line | 2.Horizontal line | 3.Circle | 4.Cross | 5. Right oblique line | 6.Square | 7. Left oblique line | 8.Oblique Cross | 9.Triangle |

Draw and colour on a large scale e.g. white board, outside wall with chalk, pavement with chalk, easel encourage them to colour so they move their arms across their body
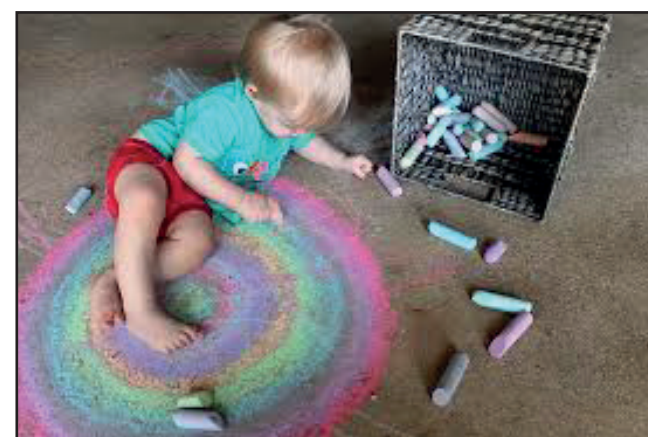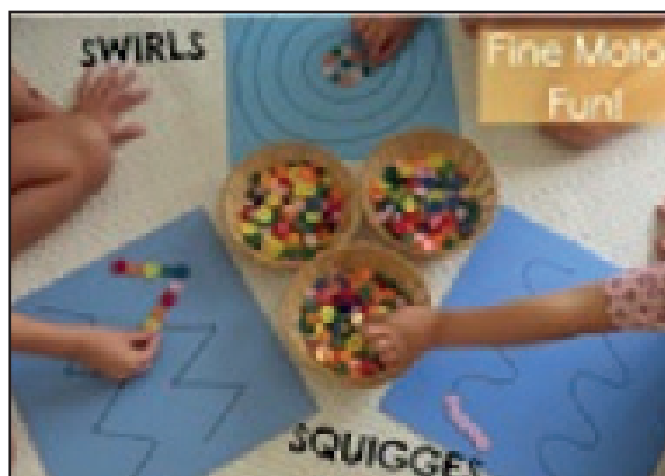

Encouraging children to draw a vertical line, horizontal line, square, circle both on a small and large scale, e.g. Mazes, dot to dots etc


Encouraging children to draw a vertical line, horizontal line, square, circle both on a small and large scale, e.g. Mazes, dot to dots etc

Bedfordshire Community Health Services

Luton Children & Adults Community Health Services

Patterns and lines on a large paper using buttons, cotton wool place the objects over the lines


Sensory Trays, drawing prewriting patterns e.g. zig zag lines, basic shapes and lines in different sensory materials e.g. sand, lentils, cornflour
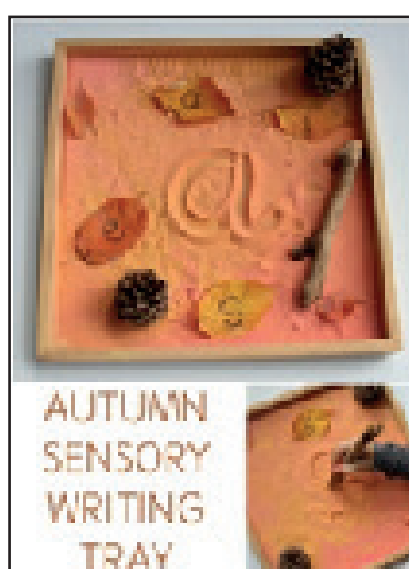
Letter formation:

Introduce Letters by shape and direction. There are a few shapes that letters have in common as well as stroke direction. If you want to introduce the letters in an order based on shape and stroke see the chart below.
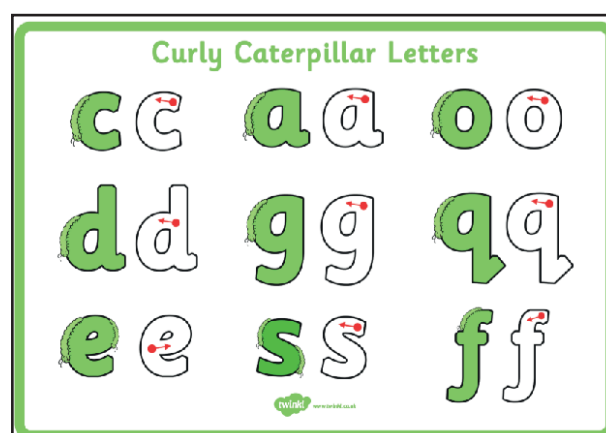
Illustrate starting and finishing points for letters. Encourage the child to put a green dot where the letter starts, and a red dot where it finishes when writing over pre-printed letters. Alternatively you can use printed squares and illustrate in which side of the square to start. This also assists with letter reversals, as b will start on the left, d on the right.
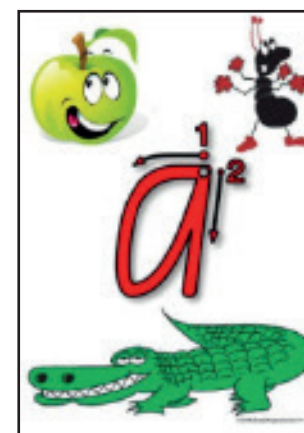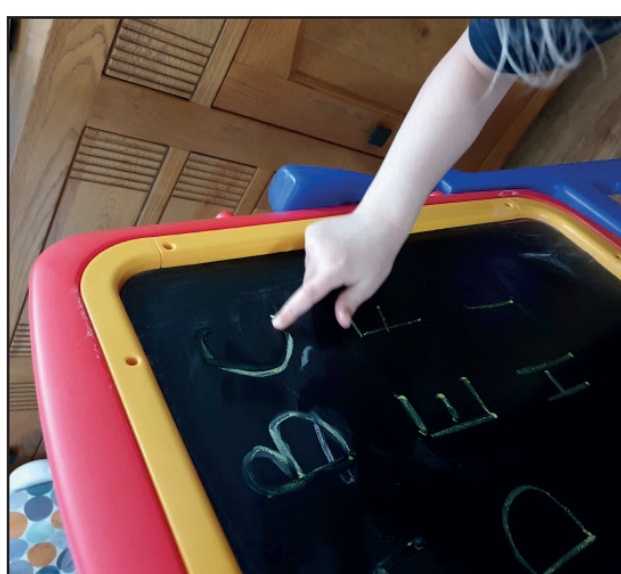

Encourage tracing the letter in the air and verbalise the stroke progression details e.g. 'a' = round, up and down.
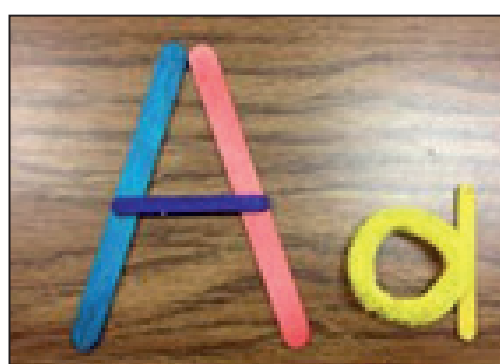
Tracing over sensory letters made out of different materials to help with feedback e.g. lefts, cotton wool, tin foil

Drawing on a blackboard using a wet finger/chalks or painting on an easel so that you can work on directions and verbalise up, down and across

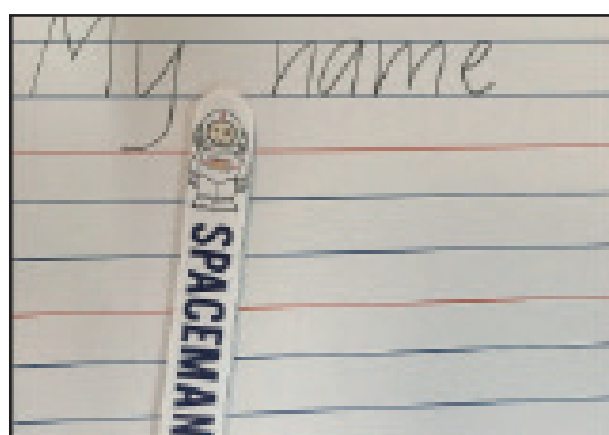Make letters out of materials e.g. pipe cleaners, lolly pop sticks, ton wool, tin foil

Handwriting apps on the ipad e.g. iTrace, finger, writingpad, colouring book, letterschool,

Focusing on forming along the line, distinguished ascenders, descenders and spacing see the chart below.

Use an appropriate sized spacer e.g. finger, piece of card, pencil, small sticker.

Use squared or graph paper to encourage a cognitive grasp of spacing. Practice spacing words with a square space in between words


Give the child an exercise using target sentences and providing blank rectangular boxes into which they can insert the appropriate words:

Use visual / verbal cues e.g. coloured lines to encourage children to place the letter in the correct place. Use double lined paper to help clearly define sizing. Consider using coloured lines, for example yellow on top, green in the middle, blue on the bottom.
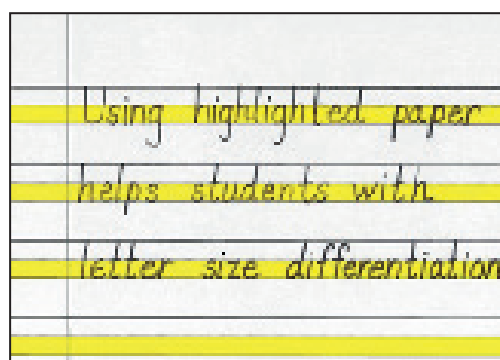
Clearly mark that letters with tales such as 'p' need to touch the soil and tall letters like 't' need to touch the blue sky etc.
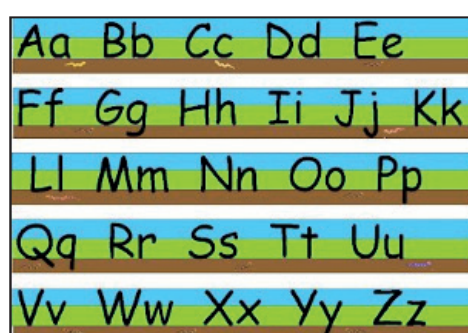
Use different sized lines. Every child has a natural script size; those with poor fine motor control often have a naturally larger script. Experiment.