

Reception Handout

Activities And Tips To Help
With Reading And Writing
Skills At Home





The benefits of having 'funky fingers'!

When children begin to write, their fingers and hands have to work as hard as a marathon runner's legs! No one would run a marathon without training first, therefore in the Nursery and Reception we aim to make those little hands and fingers as strong as possible to improve our children's fine motor control.

Fine motor control skills are not only important for holding pencils, but also zipping up coats and fastening buttons, cutting with scissors, using utensils, completing jigsaws and the list goes on!

What is Funky Fingers?

Funky Fingers a series of fun activities for children to build up their upper body strength (gross motor skills) and finger/hand strength and control (fine motor skills). There are a wealth of activities that you can do with your child to improve these skills and get them ready to write.

On the next page there are:

- Pre-writing and early writing activity ideas to get you started
- Examples of warm ups children can do before picking up their pencil
- The letter families to help you practice at home

Pre-writing activities to get you started:

- Complete activities whilst lying on their tummy, taking the weight through their elbows. E.g. watching TV, reading a book, puzzles.
- Climbing, seesaw, tug of war and swing activities with the child holding onto ropes.
- Craft activities – cutting, scrunching, gluing and ripping paper and bending pipe cleaners.
- Toy tools such as sawing, drilling, hammering, screws and bolts.
- Games involving flicking small objects e.g. flicking balls of paper on a table into a 'goal'.
- Place a firm elastic band around tips of fingers and thumb. Open and close it 10 times with each hand.
- Dough disco – pinching, pressing, rolling, squeezing, finger tapping and walking
(visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1OZHxLyALGY> for dough recipes and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ovgPLvue164> for fun videos at the dough disco).
- Holding a handful of items in hand and posting them into a jar one by one (buttons, coins).
- Picking up items with pegs, tongs, tweezers.
- Swimming
- Ribbon dancing
- Threading beads, straws etc.
- Walking fingers e.g. along tape placed on the table. Ring and little finger curled out of the way.
- Pop bubble wrap
- Turn keys in padlocks

- Tying knots into string and linking paper clips.
- Posting items into the 'hungry guy' (tennis ball with slit in the top).
- Picking up sequins off a table or stickers off a sticker sheet.
- Interlocking construction

Early writing activities:

- Tracing and stencil activities
- Colouring in activities, staying inside the lines.
- Dot to dots
- Drawing letter shapes in the air to music.
- Copying over letter shapes.
- Drawing letters in sand or shaving foam spread thinly on a table.
- Write with chalk, crayons, finger paints, pencils, pens etc.
- Write letters in the air with eyes shut.
- Recognition of letters through touch (stick letters, magnetic letters, fuzzy felt, etc).
- Drawing or writing on vertical surfaces (chalkboard, whiteboard, tiles at bath time).
- Drawing or writing with chinks on the ground or pavement.
- Water painting on outdoor walls with paintbrush.

Letter family groups:

Long ladder letters: l, i, t, u, j, y

One arm robot letters: r, b, n, h, m, k, p

Curly caterpillar letters: c, a, d, o, s, g, q, e, f

Zig-zag monster letters: z, v, w, x

In school we teach the children cursive handwriting - a formation sheet is included.

Phonics and Sound recognition Activities:

- Play 'I eye spy ...' initially just with initial sound 'c' and then segmenting a whole word 'c-a-t'.
- Rhyming pairs game with pictures, objects or just orally.
- Sorting items by initial sound.
- Sound treasure hunt – finding objects beginning with a 's'.
- Giving out instructions using robot sound talk e.g. 'Can you j-u-m-p?'
- Splat or jump on the sound – you say a sound for your child to identify or roll reverse and let them be the 'teacher' saying a sound for you.
- Using letter cards (home-made are perfectly fine), magnetic letters to 'spell / make' words.
- Spotting letters / sounds in the environment e.g. on road signs, street names, buses etc.

Really Useful Reading Tips And Suggestions

Book Care

Model how to look after the book sent home from school, holding it correctly and turning the pages carefully. Let your child practice this and take responsibility for looking after it. Talk about the best place to keep the book when you are not looking at it. Discuss the different parts of the book including the front cover, title, back cover and spine.

It costs school a considerable amount of money to build our book stock so we will definitely appreciate you having these conversations and preventing it from getting damaged.

Can you show me where the spine of the book is?

Show me how to hold the book correctly?

Why do we need to look after this book?

Vocabulary

Wordless books are a great way to expand children's vocabulary. Vocabulary is a key predictor of later academic success.

You can name the objects you see in the illustrations and identify anything else they may not be familiar with. Once you've named the objects you could encourage children to add a describing word "that is a big tree". On the next read you could model using an alternative word for 'big'. "That is an enormous tree" or add a verb "the tree loomed over the park".

What is another word we could use
instead?
Can you spot something that looks...
expensive, powerful, realistic, lethargic?

Oracy Skills

Wordless books are an incredible opportunity to develop oracy skills in children and support literacy rich conversations.

By sharing the book in a quiet space you can really focus on discussing the illustrations and story. Encourage children to ask questions about the pictures, give their point of view, listen to others and talk about what is happening.

‘Oral narrative skills are crucial to early literacy development, as they assist children in making the transition between oral narrative and written text’ (Collins and Glover, 2015).

Tell me about the story?

What do you think about the story?

What does ... think about the story?

Phonological Awareness

Even in a wordless book you can prepare children for later Phonics learning by developing their phonological awareness skills. These skills are at the foundation of learning to read.

You could point out or think of something that rhymes with an illustration or play 'I Spy' and find objects that start with a certain sound. You could also clap the syllables in words or the adult segments the phonemes in a word and children practice blending these sounds together to form the whole word and point to the correct picture.

I spy something that begins with ... ?

Can you spot something that rhymes with chair?

Look, it's a c-a-t!

Story Structure

A story is told through the illustrations within a wordless book rather than the text. The stories will still have a beginning, middle, end and, quite likely, a problem and resolution. Identifying these features within a story is great practice for when children are able to independently read books and it will positively impact their comprehension.

Discuss what is happening at the beginning of the story and predict what they think might happen at the end. Can they retell the story in the correct sequence using words like first, after that, then, next and finally?

What happened at the end of the story?

Did you think that would happen?

What happened next in the story?

Comprehension

Discussing the book together can really impact a child's comprehension skills. Can they talk about what is happening in the illustrations and make predictions?

You can look at the facial expressions of some of the characters and make inferences about what they might be feeling and why. Prompt children to imagine they are the main character and ask them what they might do differently or the same.

You can also discuss how the story might be similar to other stories that they are familiar with.

What might this character be feeling? How do you know?

What could happen next?

Which part of the story was your favourite?

Retelling and Imagination

Once you have visited the story several times you can encourage children to retell it in their own words. Can they correctly sequence the main events in the story?

You can prompt them to act the story out through role-play or using small toys, dolls or finger puppets. Acting out and retelling stories can further develop their familiarity with story structure and expand vocabulary and comprehension skills.

Children will love the practical playful nature of retelling stories through role-play.

What could we use to retell the story?
What happened at the beginning, middle and end?



Why Your Child Can't Skip Their 20 Minutes of Reading Tonight

James

reads 20 minutes per night,
5 times per week



Travis

reads only 4 minutes per night
...or not at all



In one week:

100
minutes of reading



20
minutes of reading

In one month:

400
minutes of reading



80
minutes of reading

In one school year (9 months):

3600
minutes of reading



720
minutes of reading

By the end of sixth grade:

21,600
minutes of reading



4320
minutes of reading

Which student would you expect to read better?
Which student would you expect to know more?
Which student would you expect to write better?
Which student would you expect to have a better vocabulary?
Which student would you expect to be more successful in school and life?
How do you think each student will feel about himself as a learner?



GREER GENIUS
MILLION MINUTES A YEAR

We would like children in Reception to read / practise their phonics for 10-15 minutes day, increasing to 20 minutes as they enter Year 1. This can be with books from school or from home.

Aa Bb Cc Dd

Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii

Jj Kk Ll Mm

Nn Oo Pp Qq

Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv

Ww Xx Yy Zz