OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY GUIDE
INCLUDING STRATEGIES TO DEVELOP FINE MOTOR
AND HANDWRITING SKILLS IN SCHOOL AGED
CHILDREN

INTENDED FOR PARENTS, TEACHERS, EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANTS
AND RESOURCE TEACHERS

DEVELOPED BY CHAMPLAIN LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORK IN
COLLABORATION WITH COMMUNICARE THERAPY SERVICES
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Purpose of the guide

The Champlain School Health Support Services Team has developed a resource guide for parents and those working with children in schools. The purpose of this tool is to help identify the most common areas of difficulty experienced by children in the school setting and to provide some strategies on how to deal with them.

If after using the suggestions proposed in this guide for a certain length of time, the child continues to struggle with tasks, it may be appropriate to initiate a referral for occupational therapy services by filling out the intake referral form located online on the LHIN Home and Community Care website:

http://healthcareathome.ca/champlain/en/Getting-Care/Getting-Care-at-School/School-Health-Support-Services

Please record the strategies tried with the student and include the record form with the referral. You will find the record form on page 54 of this guide.

Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions, comments or suggestions about this guide. Your feedback would be appreciated in order to make any improvements to this tool.
Children need to develop good stability at the trunk, shoulder and upper extremities in order to be able to use their hands in a functional manner for fine motor activities. If a child has poor trunk control and lacks stability at the shoulder it will have an impact on their ability to perform activities such as holding a pencil for writing.

**Activities to develop upper extremity stability:**

- Weight bearing activities through the arms (animal walks such as bear, crab or turtle walk, wheel barrow walking and climbing activities)

- Heavy work activities such as pulling or pushing heavy objects, carrying a back pack, a pile of books, stacking chairs, wiping the board, holding the door, shoveling snow, pushing a cart)

- Push-ups, pushing with hands against the floor or wall
- Crawling through an obstacle course
- Playing statue
- Chair presses
- Catching and throwing large balls
- Working on a vertical surface (ex. Drawing on a chalkboard, paint on an easel in a standing position or tap paper on a wall to do a drawing activity)
- Coloring while lying on stomach and propped on forearms
- Encourage the child to work in various postures in order to develop upper extremity stability (Refer to the pictures on page 5)
Variations in Positions

When doing any fine motor activities, encourage your student to vary his position...Here are some suggestions:

- Kneeling at easel or wall or at small coffee table
- Quadruped
- Side-Leaning
- Standing at easel or wall
- Half-Kneeling
- Sitting at proper desk and chair height
- Laying on stomach
POSITIONING AND SET-UP AT THE TABLE

A child needs to maintain a stable upright sitting posture at his desk in order for his shoulders, hands and eyes to function together for optimal hand function.

Criteria to consider for an optimal sitting posture:

- Both feet should be flat on the floor to improve stability (a stable foot stool may be used if the chair is too high)
- Hips are positioned at the back of the chair
- The angle between the hips and the knees is approximately at 90 degrees
- Both arms are resting comfortably on the desk without causing the shoulders to shrug (desk height should be approximately 1” above elbows bent at 90 degrees (refer to the picture below). If the desk is too high, it will create tension in the shoulders. If too low, the child will have a tendency to lean forward on their desk.
- Adjustable desks and working surface are recommended when possible
- Make sure that the child is directly facing the board
- A recent visual exam might also be beneficial in order to ensure that the child does not present any visual dysfunction especially if the child has a tendency to bend to close to the writing surface
FINGER ISOLATION

Finger isolation is the ability to move each finger one at a time. Infants move all fingers together in unison. As they develop, children learn to move the fingers individually. This ability is very important in the development of fine motor skills. It also contributes to developing an efficient pencil grasp or typing on a keyboard, playing a musical instrument, tying shoe laces and other daily living skills.

Activities and games to work on finger isolation

- Use pointing finger while reading books and looking for objects in picture
- Finger puppets
- Place a tape around each fingertip, sticky side out, to pick up small and light items such as small beads, beans, sequins or hole punch cutouts
- Playing with musical instruments (ex. Toy flute, trumpet or piano)
- Finger painting activity
- Use pointing finger to trace shapes, numbers in sand, shaving cream etc
- Count on fingers one at a time
- Play finger games such as Itsy Bitsy Spider
- Use a toy calculator, telephone or cash register
- Pick up small and light items on dampened fingertips of each finger (ex. hole puncher cutouts, sequins, glitter, beans or small beads)
GRASP AND FINGER STRENGTH

In order for children to be accurate and efficient with their fine motor skills (drawing, using scissors and pencils, opening containers, fastening buttons etc.) it is important they have adequate hand and finger strength. Below is a list of different activity suggestions to work on hand and finger strengthening.

Activities and games to improve hand and finger strength

- Playdoh or Theraputty activities (pushing fingers or hiding objects into the playdoh and finding them, pinching and molding with isolated fingers, pushing cookie cutters into playdoh)
- Tearing small piece of paper with finger tips and pasting them onto a sheet of paper to make a picture
- Crumbling small bits of tissue paper using fingertips, dip in glue and paste onto paper plate or paper to make a flower bouquet
- Opening and closing containers of various sizes
- Playing with squeeze toys or spray bottles
- Playing with small construction toys that snap together and must be pulled apart
- Picking up small objects with tweezers or tongs
- Pinching clothespin, metal clips or eye droppers
- Popping bubbles in packaging materials
- Craft activities that requires using bottles to squeeze such as glue, glitter glue or puffy Paint
- Squeezing water out of a sponge or cloth
- Squeeze a turkey baster to have a race and blow cotton balls or pompoms across finish line
- Pop beads
- Hole-punch art activities
PENCIL GRASP

Proper grasp is necessary to achieve good pencil control. Often a child with a poor grasp uses too much energy holding onto the pencil and therefore has inefficient hand movements, poor letter formation and fatigues easily. The best way to hold a pencil is by using a dynamic tripod grasp which allows the fingers to move without using the wrist or whole arm. This means that less effort is used and writing can be more fluent. Helping children achieve the best way to hold their writing tools takes practice. Try finding time each day to review especially in kindergarten and 1st grade. Some children are not ready to hold a pencil in the early elementary years, time should be taken to work on basic fine motor skills, hand and finger strength to allow them to develop the skills necessary to obtain a functional pencil grasp. (see page 8 for suggestions)

Please note that other pencil grasps can also be functional such as an adapted tripod or a four fingers grasp (Please refer to the pictures below)

Strategies to promote an appropriate pencil grasp

- Use short (1’’), wide pencils /crayons/chalk to encourage the child to hold the pencil correctly. Try to keep writing tools short. Triangular pencils can also be used. You can also do drawing activities on a chalkboard while using small pieces of chalk to encourage the child to hold the writing tool with their fingertips.
• Encourage the child to hold the pencil between the thumb pad and the index finger pad. The pencil then rest on the middle finger.

• Put a tap or a sticker, as needed, on the pencil to show where to place the thumb near the tip of the writing tool.

• A pencil grip can also be put as needed on the pencil to encourage a dynamic tripod grasp. Introduce its use slowly so that the child can get familiar with it. Some supervision might be needed at the beginning to ensure that the child is using the tool properly. There are many pencil grips available (Refer to page 49 for details regarding different types of pencil grips cushions and resources). See which one works better for your child.

Ensure that the child’s elbow and forearm are resting on the writing surface during graphic activities and that their feet are supported on the floor or with a foot stool. Sitting in a good position helps to provide the stability that is needed to perform pencil tasks. A slanted surface such as a three ring binder or a wedge can be used under the writing sheet to help stabilize the wrist on the desk.

**Paper placement**

**For right handed:**

• Paper is parallel to the edge of the table
• Push paper slightly high and away from the edge of the desk
• Raise the right hand corner slightly higher than the left to create a slant. This will encourage neutral wrist position

**For left handed:**

• Paper is parallel to the edge of the table
  Raise the left hand corner slightly higher that the right to create a slant
Pencil pressure

When children press too hard on their pencil, it makes it difficult for them to write and keep up with their classmates. They also tire quickly with pencil and paper tasks and often have poor awareness of how much force they are using as well as poor awareness of their fingers and hands. They may break their pencil lead and spend a lot of time sharpening their pencil. This often results in reduced productivity and quantity of written work.

Strategies to reduce pressure on the pencil:

- Try a mechanical pencil with a thin lead. This might take a little bit of practice but if you apply too much pressure the lead will break
- Practice writing on onion paper, tracing paper, carbon paper, aluminum foil or parchment paper. If you press too hard it will tear the paper
- Try pencil rubbing activities. Use template under paper and rub crayon over without ripping the paper
- Try modeling with the child by sitting down with them, showing them and letting them experiment writing lightly or applying just enough pressure

Strategies to increase pressure on the pencil:

- Try using a pencil with a different graphic density such as a dark leaded pencil (H lead instead of HB)
- Try pencil rubbing activities. If too little pressure is applied, the image does not come through clearly onto paper.
- Try to play with squeeze toys or games (ex. turkey baster, spray bottles)
- Stretch rubber band with fingers
- Theraputty/play-doh games: squeeze, pull, press, pinch and hide objects into the play-doh
PENCIL CONTROL AND FLUENCY

Pencil control and fluency play an important role on the development of motor precision which is directly related to the child’s ability to print within lines, color in space and complete tracing activities. This skill requires precise finger movements and should be practiced along with other finger manipulation activities.

Activities to work on pencil control and fluency

- Coloring in a designated space
- Mazes
- Dot-to-dot
- Tracing and drawing along roads
- Matching one object to another

Start by tracing and drawing between two wide lines (1 to 1.5 cm) rather than along a single dotted line. Reduce the width between the lines as the child improves. Introduce changes of directions gradually as well as curves.

Some examples and activity sheets have been enclosed to work on pencil control and fluency.

The program ‘Hands at Work and Play’ also offers activity suggestions graded by level of difficulty.
Examples of activity sheets to develop pencil control and fluency
38. Pencil Skills
Start at the dot and go to the X.
39. Pencil Skills
Start at the dot and go to the X.
40. Pencil Skills
Start at the dot and go to the X.
41. Pencil Skills
Start at the dot and go to the X.
44. Pencil Skills
Start at the dot and go to the X.
43. Pencil Skills
Start at the dot and go to the X.
45. Pencil Skills
Start at the dot and go to the X.
40. Pencil Skills
Start at the dot and go to the X.
49. Pencil Skills
Start at the dot and go to the X.
54. Pencil Skills

Start at the dot and go around to the X.
**Fluidity Movements**

To improve ease of movements in writing, complete these series of patterns before a writing task. The fluidity component influences the quality of handwriting. It really impacts in cursive writing. These examples also can help to develop visual motor control skills.

A) Up and Down

B) Over and Under

C) Across up, Across down

D) Valleys

E) Hills

F) Rabbit Hopping

G) Elaborate Rabbit Hopping

H) Ocean Waves

I) Fish on a Line

J) Combine patterns

To add a complexity factor:

- Do some with eyes closed
- Do speed trials, time for thirty seconds
- Do some in the air
- Do some on the chalkboard
Distal Finger Control

Rest side of hand on desk. Use one stroke to circle left from top around to top within the donut.
LEFT HANDEDNESS

- Try not to sit a left-hander on the right of a right-hander during writing activities as their arms will touch each other and limit movement.

- Place paper to the left of the body midline and tilt the paper clockwise to avoid the child’s hand reducing the view of the line. It may be helpful to place a tape on the child’s desk to indicate where it should be positioned until the child gets used to it.

- Encourage the child to steady the paper with their right hand in the middle or towards the right edge of the paper. The writing tool should be held in below-the-line position so work in not smeared.

- The left forearm should remain parallel with the sides of the paper to avoid the development of a “hooked hand”.

- Encourage the use of left handed scissors for cutting. Forearms should be kept tucked in close to the body and both hands should be “Thumbs up”. Scissors should be pointing forward. Ensure the child holds the shape being cut with his right hand to ensure proper direction of the scissors (clockwise orientation).

- Use teacher prepared workbooks that are stapled on the right-hand margin or at top of page. Write models and notes in right hand margin or at top of page.
HAND DOMINANCE

Children develop hand dominance at around 3 to 5 years old (sometimes later). Having hand dominance allows one hand to become the stabilizer and the other one to be active. This skill is important to complete many activities at school such as using pencil, using scissors or utensils or during play activities. To determine which hand is dominant, you can ask the child to pick up a pencil (from the middle of a desk), to open a jar or observe which hand they are using to brush their teeth or to hold a utensil.

Suggestions to promote the development of hand dominance

- Encourage the child to use one hand as the stabilizer and the other hand as the lead hand (the left hand is the stabilizer if the child is right handed)
- If the child doesn’t hold the paper still with one hand when writing, cut out the picture of a hand and install it on their desk (on their non-dominant side) as a visual reminder
- When using scissors, encourage your child to rotate the paper with one hand while cutting with the other hand
- Stencil or rubbing activities. The child has to hold the paper very still with one hand
- Opening jars and containers with one hand while the other hand is stabilizing
- Lacing beads. The child has to hold the string with one hand and pick up and string the beads with the other one.
- Pick up items (pencils, brushes) around the classroom and place them in a container. Ask the child to hold the container with one hand and pick up with the other one.
- Cooking activities where the child has to stabilize the bowl and mix/beat with the other one
**BILATERAL USE OF HANDS (Bilateral coordination)**

Bilateral coordination is the ability to use both sides of the body in a coordinated manner. Children need to use both hands simultaneously in a coordinated manner in order to perform many school activities such as cutting with scissors, sharpening a pencil, opening containers, buttoning, tying shoe laces etc.

**Activity suggestions to develop bilateral use of hands**

- Clapping hands to music
- Tearing paper and pasting it with glue to make a collage
- Playing a musical instrument
- Playing with blocks or construction toys that can be pushed together or pulled apart (Duplo blocks, legos)
- Stringing beads to make a necklace
- Lacing a thread or yarn around a piece of cardboard using a dull needle
- Opening and closing containers of different sizes
- Catching and throwing activities with large balls. Progress towards catching smaller balls as the child progresses
- Folding paper / origami activities
- Carrying objects with both hands (ex. a pile of book, a small box)
MIDLINE CROSSING

Crossing the midline of the body is the ability to cross the imaginary line that separates the left side from the right side of the body. It is an important step in integrating the two sides of the body and it is thought to be related to the establishment of hand dominance. Children who avoid crossing midline, will tend to use whichever hand is closest to the object they want. Although this ambidextrous tendency is commonly considered an asset, there are possible connections with printing difficulties and letter reversals.

Activity suggestions to promote the development of midline crossing

- Ask the child to erase the chalkboard or to wipe the table in front of him/her after lunch without switching hands. Present the brush or the cloth in front of the child. If the child switches hand in the middle of the task remind them not to.
- Ask the child to draw X or + designs on a chalkboard or in the sand without moving his/her body
- Ask the child to touch his/her right foot with his left hand and vice versa. Repeat this sequence 5 times
- Encourage your child to make large drawings on a chalkboard without shifting his/her body from side to side
- Make a puzzle. Put the puzzle pieces on the floor or on a table (on each side of the child and not too far- the child should be able to reach them easily). Ask the child to pick up the pieces on each side with one hand only
- Play with darts, balls horseshoes and bean bags
- Catching a small ball in a container
- Play ‘Simon says’. Imitate postures that involve midline crossing.
- Have the child practice doing infinity loop on a chalkboard using one hand. Trace over the loop multiple times without moving body position
PREWRITING SKILLS

Children need to be able to draw basic shapes and lines before they are able to form letters correctly. We first learn to go up and down, then side-to-side and then circles, then diagonals. Children learn to draw prewriting shapes and lines in the following sequence:

I --- O + / \ X \n
If a child cannot do these basic strokes or shapes, they will likely experience difficulties with forming letters and numbers.

- Remember that children learn to imitate before they are able to copy independently
- Start with child imitating your movement so they learn how to make it
- Start by using large movement to draw shapes (ex. Write on a chalkboard, on a white board, in the air or on a large piece of paper). Once the child is able to form the shapes and lines correctly, it will be easier to make them smaller

The use of a multisensory approach should be encouraged to facilitate learning as children learn best when using different senses. The goal of a multisensory approach is to use as many senses as possible in the learning process to help your child integrate the information into their memory.

When practicing prewriting skills with your child it is important to keep the activity short and fun to maintain your child’s interest and motivation.

Example of multisensory activities to develop prewriting skills

Visual:
- Use different tools such paintbrush, chalks, crayons, light up pens, markers or changeable markers that change color when you trace over it.
- Use special coloring books in which the color appears when children paint with water

Tactile:
- Finger painting
- Using painting or crayons on sandpaper, around shapes, on textured surfaces
- Follow a path in the sand with cars
- Draw shapes in various textures such as sand, salt, sugar, mud, shaving cream
- Trace with finger around shapes made of popsicle sticks, cutout of sand paper Wikki Stix or glue sticks
- Trace shapes over a big Ziploc filled with hand cream, finger paint or hair gel
**Olfactory (smell):**
- Try drawing with scented markers
- Use scented lotions to draw on
- Make shapes with scented play-doh
- Add mint, vanilla or cherry flavorings to finger paints or play-doh

N.B. Be careful to do the above activities under supervision of an adult as the smell might be so great that the child may want to taste it. It is suggested to use edible products.

**Auditory:**
- Use musical crayons
- Attach bells to paintbrush

**Gustatory (taste):**
- Draw shapes in whipping cream or pudding
- Use licorice to form letters
- Draw on frosting on a cake to decorate it

**Proprioception:**
Proprioceptive activities involve those that stimulate joint muscle feedback. They include activities in which there is increased weight and resistance
- Use weighted or vibrated pen for drawing
- Write on a child’s back and ask them to guess what you have drawn.
- Draw/write on a chalkboard with eyes closed using large movements of the body.

Weights can also be used at the wrist during this activity to increase the proprioceptive feedback.

N.B. Consider using other vertical surfaces such as an easel or a mirror to write / draw shapes and lines using large movements of the shoulder. Working on a vertical surface also promote the development of the upper extremity stability and wrist extension which is an important component to promote the development of fine motor skills.

**Vestibular:**
Vestibular activities involve those in which the child has to move and change positions
- Walk, run, skip or jump -- shapes drawn on the floor, over string or rope with or without shoes
- Imitate shapes with the body
HANDWRITING SKILLS

Learning how to print is a skill that requires a lot of practice in order to integrate the patterns of letter formation and for movements to become automatic. It is important to practice on a regular basis. Sessions should be kept short (10 to 15 minutes) to maintain interest and motivation.

Common handwriting problems observed:
- Poor legibility (letter formation)
- Poor adherence to baseline
- Poor spacing
- Difficulty with size
- Poor speed

Strategies to facilitate handwriting skills

Letter formation
The use of multisensory approaches should be encouraged when learning how to print. (Please note that the same strategies used on page 32 and 33 can be used for learning letters)

In order to integrate the patterns of letter formation into the kinesthetic memory (memory of the movement) ask the child to write letters with their eyes closed and using large movement first. Then progress to smaller movement as well as paper and pencil tasks

There are multiple printing and cursive writing programs and resources.

Children often find it easier to learn letters in groups. The Handwriting Without Tears Program resource book provides a technique of teaching letters by similarity of formation. There is a lot of information on their website on how to get the books at www.hwtears.com/canada.

Other printing programs
- ABC Boom http://abcboom.net/
- Big Strokes For Little Folks

Cursive programs
- Handwriting without tears (www.hwtears.com/canada)
- Loops and other groups Complete kit (www.therapro.com)
- ABC Boom (in French only) (https://abcboom.net/)

Ipad or tablets application to work on letter formation
Wet Dry Try, ABC Circus, Letter school, Itrace, Tracing ABC
Adherence to baseline

- Use boxes to provide added cues for spatial orientation
  Ex. | S | K | Y |

- Use visual cues such as color or pictures to assist with letter placement
  Ex. Yellow represents the sun, green represents a tree and brown the roots

- Try using darker or thicker lines
- Try using Wikki Stix under the writing line to provide a tactile input and provide sensory feedback to promote alignment
- Try using raised lined paper

Spacing

- Encourage the child to leave a space between each word
- Spaceman – Decorate a tongue depressor or a popsicle stick that looks like a spaceman. The spaceman is positioned just at the end of the word written to cue where the next word should be written. The child can also decorate the stick with stickers and individualize it
- Use a sticky note cut into a strip. Put the post strip note strip on page when a space is needed
- Draw a red flag at the end of a sentence when inappropriate spacing has been used. Ask the child recheck their work and to correct spacing errors using necessary strategies.
- Use self-correction. Present a sentence to the child with no spaces and ask him to correct it and rewrite the sentence with proper spaces
- Use graph paper to promote proper spacing. Squares can be enlarged if the child doesn’t have enough control to write into the small squares.
- Use Mead Redispace transitional Notebook Paper (Refer to the equipment and resources section on page 52 for supplier details)
**Sizing**
- Provide good visual support to the child. Sometimes when visual support is not in place, children have a tendency to enlarge the size of their letters.
- Visual-motor activities will also help develop more control and fluency which will help in reducing size of letters (Please refer to page 12 for pencil control and fluency activity suggestions)

**Speed**
If the child presents with poor writing speed, some compensatory strategies might be anticipated.

**Compensatory strategies for poor handwriting speed**
- Allow more time to complete work and assignment
- Use carbon paper or photocopy notes from other students when possible
- Take a picture of the chalkboard instead of transcribing notes
- Allow for oral reports or testing, if possible
- Reduce the volume of written work
- Use a technology tool, if appropriate
- Encourage every small progress to keep the child’s motivation and decrease anxiety
PRE-SCISSORS AND SCISSORS SKILLS

Mastering the use of scissors is a necessary component of fine motor skills development for preschool and school aged children. This skill requires proficiency in eye-hand coordination, bilateral coordination, manual dexterity and hand strength.

**Appropriate scissors position:**

- Thumb and 1 or 2 fingers (index and/or middle finger) are in the loops (This is dependent on the size of the loops and child’s hands)
- Index finger can be outside the loop to stabilize the scissors
- Thumb is visible to the child
- Finger four and five are curl in towards the palm
- Scissor tip is pointing forward away from the child and the wrist is extended
- Forearms should be tucked in close to the body
- Both hands should be “Thumbs up”
- Scissors should remain pointed forward while the non-dominant hand makes paper shift for changes in direction

- Start by practicing opening and closing scissors. Activities such as picking up objects with kitchen tongs can help.
- Start by cutting in material that offers resistance such as cutting playdoh rolls, plastic stir sticks or straws
- Begin with simple snipping activities such as snipping long narrow strips of paper which requires only one snip and gradually increase the paper width to encourage two or more snips
- Use cardboard paper as it is easier to stabilize than regular paper
- Use wide lines and progress towards smaller and thinner lines as the child improves
- Progress from straight lines to curved lines to simple shapes
Some helpful tips:

- Use a sticker on the child’s thumb, as needed, to encourage the thumb up position. If the child can’t see the sticker, it is quick reminder to change their hand position
- Ensure that left-handed cutters have access to left-handed tools
- Scissors should be sharp enough to cut
- Small scissors for small hands are most appropriate
- Double loop scissors are useful for children who are easily frustrated and who have poor motor accuracy
- Self-opening scissors might be helpful for children with poor muscle strength
Examples of scissor activity sheets
9. Scissor Skills
Begin at the white triangle.
10. Scissor Skills
Begin at the white triangle.
11. Scissor Skills

Begin at the white triangle.
17. Scissor Skills

Begin at the white triangle.
DRESSING SKILLS

Children are ready to participate and engage in self-help activities such as dressing when they have had the exposure to the task, have the necessary fine and gross motor skills and are able to sequence the steps in a task. Children are eager to be independent so it is important to give them time and opportunity to try things on their own.

General strategies to practice dressing skills

- Start by practicing undressing first as it is easier for the child
- Look for pieces of clothing at home that have large buttons, zippers, snaps or velcro closures to practice on. Some hand bags, purses, wallets also have some interesting fasteners to practice on.
- Model the task first by sitting behind the child and guiding him through the process and holding/stabilizing the material for him. Provide verbal cueing through each steps of the process (ex. push, grab, pull) to facilitate learning
- Practice the task by having the clothes in front of the child first. Once this is mastered, ask the child to practice with the clothes on his body
- Ask the child to dress a doll or a teddy bear
- Play dress up with mom or dad’s clothing. Try to select clothes with large buttons first and with large and loose buttonholes to facilitate the task
- It is important to encourage the child to be engaged in multiple fine motor activities to help reinforce his hand and finger strength. Please refer to the grasp and finger strength activities on page 8 of this booklet.

Buttons:

- Practice putting buttons of all shapes and sizes through slots of various width such as in a piggy bank
- Push things through one side of a slot and pick it up with the other hand as it goes on the other side
- Start with large buttons and progress to smaller ones as the child improves
- Try the backwards chaining method. You model the steps by doing the task and you ask the child to do the last step. The second time, you ask the child to do the last two steps and so on until the task is mastered and the child is independent to complete the whole task
- When practicing buttoning, it is easier to align the buttons at the bottom of the shirt and to start from bottom to top.
- Use a mirror as needed in front of the child. This might be helpful for managing the top button
• It is important to give the child enough time and multiple opportunities to practice and to try things on their own and to experiment success

**Zippers:**

• Start by practicing unzipping first
• Use large zippers. A tab might be added to the tip of the zip to facilitate the grasp
• Start practicing on attached zippers first such as those that are on backpacks, purses, pants or wallets
• Try the backwards chaining method. Ask the child to zip ¼ of the zipper, then ½ and so for until the child is able to complete the task independently
• Give the child lots of opportunities to practice

**Snaps and velcros:**

Many children lack the pinch strength to close snaps especially those that are on jeans or other garments with thick materials. You can adapt the piece of clothing by sewing a square of velcro over the snaps (self-stick velcro are usually not strong enough)

Pinch strength activities will also help to promote the development of the fine motor skills necessary to facilitate the manipulation of snaps
EQUIPMENT AND RESOURCES SUGGESTED

Slanted boards

Available through FDMT
Code number 3547100

Pencil grips

The pencil grip (regular)  The Crossover grip

Pencil grip pack

Available through FDMT and School Specialty
**Handi Writer**

Available through FDMT and School Specialty
FDMT product number: # 0307
School Specialty product number: #0171123

**Adapted scissors**

**Easy Grip Scissors**

Available through FDMT
Code product number: # 0151100
**Automatic Self Opening Scissors**

Available through FDMT  
FDMT code product: 3597100

**Triangular pencils**

Available through FDMT and School Specialty  
FDMT product code: #0659  
School Specialty product code: #1440814 (Prang large Non Toxic Pre-sharpened triangular pencils – pack of 12)
Wikki Stix

Available through FDMT
Code product number: #0231100

Mead Redispace Transitional Workbooks

Available through Amazon or at WalMart stores

**FDMT:**
2199 de la Métropole
Longueuil (Québec)
J4G 1S5
Phone number: 1-866-465-0559
www.fdmt.ca

**SCHOOL SPECIALTY:**
6800 Côte de Liesse, Unit 300
Montréal (Québec)
H4T 2A7
Phone number: 1-866-519-2816
www.schoolspecialty.ca
# Form for recording of strategies tried with students
To be completed by teachers or educational assistants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date /Time</th>
<th>Activities/strategies tried</th>
<th>Length of time spent trying the strategies/ Frequency</th>
<th>Observations</th>
<th>Staff signature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</table>

Student’s name: ___________________

Class/grade level: ________________
Feedback Form for OT school guide

Please fill out this form to help us improve our school guide

1) Was the guide helpful and useful to you? YES/NO
Comments:
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________

2) Was the information clear? YES/NO
Comments:____________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________

3) Have you put any of the strategies into practice? YES/NO
Comments:______________________________________________________________________

4) Is there any other information that should have been included into the guide YES/NO
Comments:______________________________________________________________________

Additional comments:
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
REFERENCES

Miller Knight J, Gilpin Decker Mary J. (1994), *Hands at Work and Play* by Therapy Skill Builders

Rouleau, N. (2001), *ABC Boom* Méthode d’enseignement multisensoriel de la calligraphie des lettres