

# CLASSROOM STRATEGIES

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# CLASSROOM STRATEGIES

Attention and focus



# INCREASE ATTENTION

Getting students to pay attention can feel discouraging at times, especially if a child views an activity as challenging, they are more likely to give up trying. Here are some strategies to help improve a child's attention span and improve their overall performance.



# BRAIN BREAKS

## **Benefits:**

Reduce stress and frustration

Increase attention/focus and productivity

Improve behavior

Valuable to teachers and students

Examples:

Yoga stretches

Just jump

Stir the pot

Focus on sound

Mindfulness

Cross the body exercises

Walking worksheets

Make X's and O's

Energize with 5,4,3,2,1



# MODIFY TIME FRAME

If you find that, no matter what you do, the kids just can't stay on task, it may be time to break content into smaller time intervals. Children can only focus on one task for two to five minutes per their age. For example, if you have a classroom of 6 year olds, expect 12 to 30 minutes of attention for your students.

Examples:

- Use timers
- Call child to your desk
- Ask questions



# REMOVE VISUAL DISTRACTIONS

Remove unnecessary clutter from the child's workspace. This gives less excuses to not be focused.

Pencil box

Papers/folders

Containers



# PLAY MEMORY GAMES

Red light green light

I spy

Simon Says

Memory matching cards

Memory games are a fun way  
for the kids to increase  
their concentration.

# MODIFY TASKS

Have the child do part of the tasks, take a brain break and come back to the task to complete.



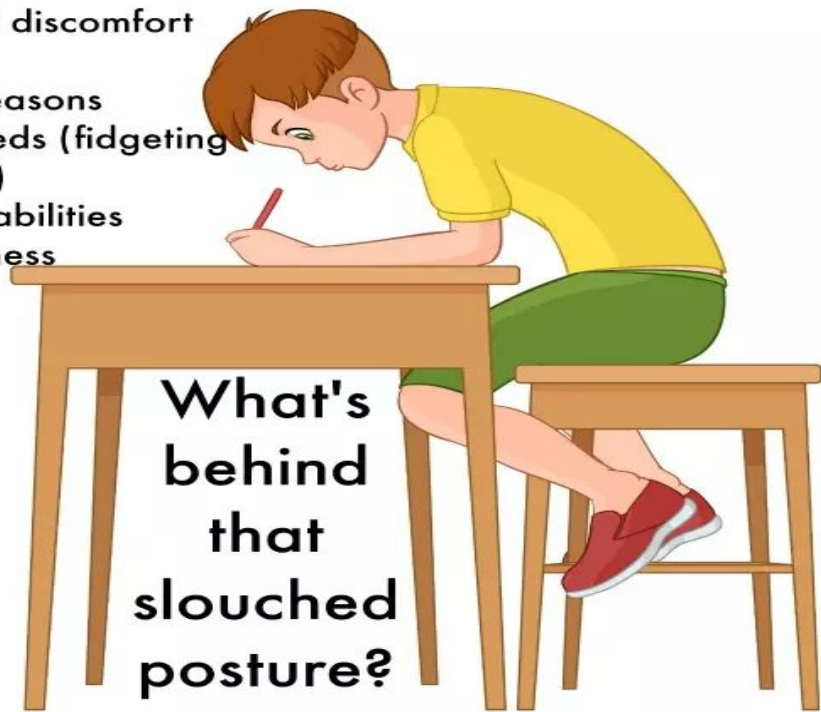


# CLASSROOM STRATEGIES: HANDWRITING



# POSTURE LETS STACK OUR BLOCKS AND SIT THE "WRITE" WAY

- Chair or Desk Size
- Fatigue and discomfort
- Inattention
- Cognitive reasons
- Sensory needs (fidgeting or wiggling)
- Physical disabilities
- Core weakness
- Boredom
- Visual difficulties
- Retained primitive reflexes



- Flexion at the hips with an upright back
- Strait on positioning so that the student is square to the desk
- Legs parallel and in neutral position
- Feet flat on the floor
- Dominant arm slightly abducted at the shoulder with the elbow flexed
- Elbows even with the desk surface
- Wrist slightly extended enabling a functional pencil grasp
- Non-dominant arm is slightly abducted with a flexed elbow enabling stabilization and re-positioning of the paper.

<https://www.theottoolbox.com/chair-posture-while-writing-slouched-handwriting/>

# PENCIL GRIP

## Reasons

Weak finger muscles

Lack of coordination

Weak shoulder muscles

## Signs of poor pencil grip

Poor handwriting

Poor posture

Red/white knuckles or fingertips

Holes or tears in the paper

Breaking pencil lead

Incomplete work

Lack of confidence

## How to improve pencil grip

Focus not on pencil or paper

Small or broken pencil

Use supports

Pencil grip



# HANDWRITING DIFFICULTIES AND ERRORS YOU MIGHT SEE

- Forming letters
  - Placing letters and words on the page
  - Making letters the right size
  - Spacing letters and words
  - Holding and controlling a pencil
  - Holding paper with one hand while writing with the other
  - Applying the right amount of pressure on the paper with a writing tool
  - Using the right arm position and posture for writing
- 
- Letters written from the bottom up, instead of the top down
  - Letters written with too many strokes, or the strokes done in the wrong order
  - Words and sentences floating above or below the line
  - Words or sentences written on too much or too little a slant
  - Letters and words spaced unevenly or running into each other
  - Some letters darker and others lighter

# WHAT CAUSES MESSY HANDWRITING?

Poor fine/visual motor skills

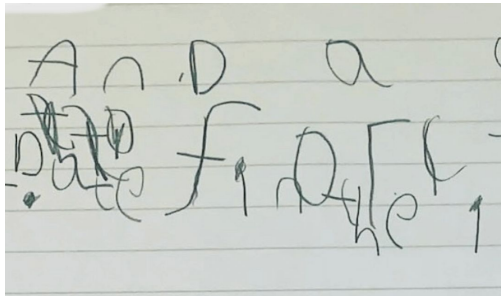
Inability to control impulses

Proper body positioning

Poor upper body strength/control

Decreased attention/focus

Poor body awareness



What can help improve handwriting?

drawing/tracing exercises

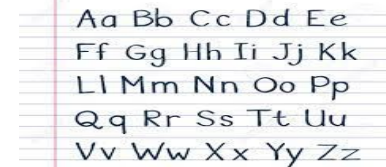
Writing on a vertical surface

highlighting/darken lines

Make boxes for words

Prior to writing “get your body ready”

Handwriting without tears program



# EASY WAYS TO IMPROVE LEGIBLE HANDWRITING

MORNING EXERCISE PROGRAM

FINGER WARM UPS BEFORE HANDWRITING

MOVEMENT STATIONS

INCLUDE MESSY PLAY



Finger push ups

Playdoh

Hand squeezes

Wall push ups

Jumping/feet jacks

Jack Hartmann (crossing midline)

Push/pull hands

Shoulder shrugs

Stomp feet

Shaving cream/different tactile media play

# TECHNOLOGY TO FACILITATE WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

Dragon Dictation/Dragon Speak: voice recognition technology for talk to text.

[Dragon Education Solutions—Improve Student Learning | Nuance](#)

Snap Type App: students can complete worksheets on an Ipad that have been uploaded. Speech to text option available. Demonstration:

[https://youtu.be/k1gHivT\\_Tzk](https://youtu.be/k1gHivT_Tzk)

Notability App for Ipad

Google Chrome: Evernote and One Note-word prediction software.

Word Q: Demonstration: <https://youtu.be/FXY6v9SzHts>

Read and Write Toolbar for Google: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YJ5N1BQc0bc>

<https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/readwrite-for-google-chro/inoeonmfapjbbkmdafoankkfajkcphgd>

# CLASSROOM STRATEGIES: VISUAL MOTOR





# VISUAL MOTOR STRATEGIES FOR THE CLASSROOM SETTING

Visual motor integration is a set of skills, like, visual perception, visual motor control and eye hand coordination.

Visual motor integration is the ability to translate a visual plan into a motor action.

Begins at birth and continues throughout life by practice and exposure to developmental activities.

## Activities that build visual motor skills:

Playing ball/bean bag toss

Building with blocks/lincoln logs

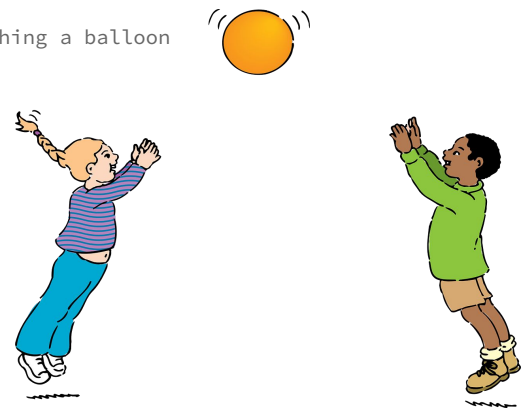
tracing/writing/drawing

Cutting

Blowing/popping bubbles

I-spy/puzzles

Batting/tossing/catching a balloon



# VISUAL MOTOR

Practice visual motor activities daily for 15-30 minutes

This will help improve build important foundation for pre-writing and writing skills

Toys and games are an important part of learning and help in all areas of development



# VISUAL MOTOR ACTIVITIES

- Allow the child time to explore and just indulge in scribbling. Gradually introduce these activities to begin shaping their strokes.
- Attach a large piece of drawing paper to the wall or refrigerator. Make a long vertical line. Have the child trace over your line using preschool crayons or markers and going from the top to the bottom 10 times. Then have the child draw the line next to yours, 10 times.
- Practice drawing horizontal lines from the left to the right in a similar way. Also practice drawing circles, starting at the top of the paper.
- Practice these prewriting strokes in a variety of media such as writing with a finger in a tray of wet sand, shaving cream, finger-paint, playdoh or salt. They can also be done using driveway chalk on paved surfaces. Gluing on beads or dry pasta on the lines/circle also reinforces the concept.
- Be creative, draw different scenes and have the child draw vertical, horizontal and circular lines to “drive the car into the garage” or “take the dog for a walk” or “push the shopping cart in the store”. You can create a narrow path outlined with colored glue and have the child trace between the “bumpy lines”.
- Between the ages of 3½ and 4 years introduce shapes such as a square and the uppercase letters of the child’s name. Be sure to use a variety of tactile media and tracing to teach formations instead of using paper and pencils.
- Trace around stencils of different shapes and figures. The non-dominant hand should hold the stencil flat and stable against the paper, while the dominant hand pushes the crayon firmly against the edge of the stencil.
- Have the child draw the letter or shape on your back and you guess it, with your eyes closed. Switch and allow the child to guess. This builds kinesthetic recognition of the letter shape. You can also play the same game with using an index finger to write invisible letters and shapes in the air.
- Using commercially available waxed strings known as “Wikki Stix”, have the child “build” letters and shapes, At first, the child can position these flexible strings over the lines of the letter or shape drawn by you. Then as they learn the formation, they can try to build their own letter or shape without using a “template”.
- Letters and shapes can also be built by rolling out pieces of playdoh or modeling clay, using popsicle sticks, and pipe cleaners.
- Use a Multi-Sensory approach to handwriting

# UNDERSTANDING SENSORY BEHAVIOUR

Sensory Child

Sensory processing disorder

Sensory information

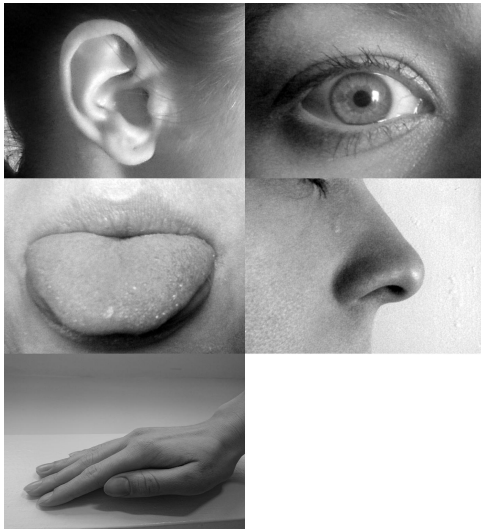
A child with sensory difficulties has a hard time processing their environment

When the brain has a difficult time receiving and interpreting information from the senses

Things the brain collects from our senses in the environment around us

We have 5 basic senses (taste, sight,hear,touching and smell)

6th and 7th sense (vestibular and proprioception)



# HOW TO IDENTIFY SENSORY ISSUES

## OVER SENSITIVE

- THINK LIGHTS SEEM TOO BRIGHT.
- THINK SOUNDS SEEM TOO LOUD.
- THINK SOFT TOUCHES FEEL TOO HARD.
- EXPERIENCE FOOD TEXTURES MAKE THEM GAG.
- HAVE POOR BALANCE OR SEEM CLUMSY.
- ARE AFRAID TO PLAY ON THE SWINGS.
- REACT POORLY TO SUDDEN MOVEMENTS, TOUCHES, LOUD NOISES, OR BRIGHT LIGHTS.
- HAVE BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS.
- THINKS CLOTHES ARE SCRATCHY OR ITCHY



# HOW TO IDENTIFY SENSORY ISSUES

Under sensitive child typically are  
“sensory seekers”



- Can't sit still
- Seek thrills (loves jumping, heights, and spinning).
- Can spin without getting dizzy.
- Don't pick up on social cues.
- Don't recognize personal space.
- Chew on things (including their hands and clothing).
- Seek visual stimulation (like electronics).
- Have problems sleeping.
- Don't recognize when their face is dirty or nose is running.

# IS IT SENSORY OR BEHAVIOR?

## How can you tell the difference between behavior and sensory?

Typically with behavior, once a child gets what they desired or your attention, the tantrums typically cease.” On the other hand, a sensory based tantrum is generally a reaction to feeling overwhelmed by their surroundings. It often has no clear endpoint and does not even end if they receive what they want or can be redirected with another type preferred activity.



# HOW TO WRITE A SENSORY DIET?

**Step 1: Identify:** The first step in creating a sensory diet requires identifying sensory related behaviors, attention issues related to impaired sensory input, challenges with focus or emotional regulation as a result of sensory needs, or meltdowns that impair independence in their daily activities.

**Step 2: Reasoning:** The next step in creating a sensory diet involves finding out “why” the behaviors are happening.

**Step 3: Create a sensory diet:** In this step of developing the sensory diet, strategies need to be tried for effectiveness within the child and families routine. Sensory strategies need to be incorporated as indicated across a variety of settings, based on various sensory needs as they change throughout the day.

**Step 4: Monitor:** In this step of the sensory diet you need to monitor for effectiveness. As part of this monitoring process, you can check in with the adults who oversee the child’s sensory diet strategies.



# SENSORY IDEAS

SENSORY BINS

FIDGETS

HAND HELD MASSAGERS

LOTIONS

SENSORY PATH

MOVE N SIT



# GROSS MOTOR IDEAS/RTI STRATEGIES

- Assist with environmental design to reduce or enhance performance.
- Provide in-services to administrators, teachers, and other staff members on strategies to promote alertness through incorporation of movement activities. (Monster Transition Cards on THERAkids website)
- Provide in-services to teachers and staff on possible environmental modifications that can maximize posture to enhance learning and participation.
- Provide in-services to administration on benefits of including recess in the students' school day.



- FUNCTIONAL MOBILITY
- Have students transition at beginning or end of class on stairs
  - Practice walking on a line on the floor or have class walk holding onto a rope.
  - Mark doorways, stairs, and changes in surface with brightly colored tape.
  - Be sure feet are on floor when sitting in classroom chair. Lower seat height or use a footstool if needed.
    - Encourage students to make space for an invisible friend in front and behind them in line.
    - Use a back pillow or a seat cushion to promote good posture.
    - Provide bag/backpack to carry multiple materials.
  - Encourage “buddy Partnering” for playground and recess activities.
    - Play games like Simon Says and the mirror game to practice imitating movements



# WEBSITES

THEOTTOOLBOX.COM

[WWW.AOTA.ORG](http://WWW.AOTA.ORG)

[WWW.READINGROCKET.COM](http://WWW.READINGROCKET.COM)

YOURTHERAPYSOURCE.COM

UNDERSTOOD.ORG

[HTTPS://SCHOOLS.SHREWSBURYMA.GOV/OT/VISUAL-MOTOR](https://SCHOOLS.SHREWSBURYMA.GOV/OT/VISUAL-MOTOR)