

During the beginning of the autumn term, we have a big focus on activities that promote mark making and pre-writing skills. This helps children develop their finger strength and fine motor skills. Every child's development is different and they will progress at different rates across the year. These sorts of activities are used as both direct adult-led tasks as well as independent activities for children to access when they choose to.

### Mark making and pre-writing.

Pre-writing or mark making are fundamental skills children need to develop before they are able to write. They are the improvised marks that children make and can take the form of lines, dots, shapes or patterns. Mark making begins from a very early age and these skills contribute to the child's ability to draw, write and colour. Activities to promote mark making can include:

- Chalks outside on the ground.
- Water and paint brushes to make marks on the ground/ walls outside.
- Using natural objects like sticks to make marks in sand or soil.
- Large paper or the back of wall paper rolls and felt tips/ wax crayons to make large marks and movements.
- Flour/ sand/ glitter in a tray and use fingers or brushes to make marks.



### Finger strength

Activities to strengthen children's fingers are important as this will support the development of their fine motor control when they begin to use tools for writing and mark making. Finger and hand strength is important if children are to eventually develop a fluid handwriting style. Activities that help to build children's finger strength include:

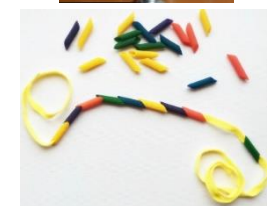
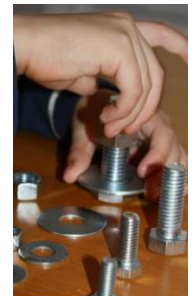
- Playing with playdough, manipulating the dough into different shapes.
- Using pegs to pick up and transfer objects such as pom poms or pegging on and off a string.
- Squeezing a soft ball or balled up socks.
- Wringing water out of flannel in the bath or water tray.
- Stretching elastic bands over a tin can or wrapping around fingers and stretching them out.



### Fine motor skills

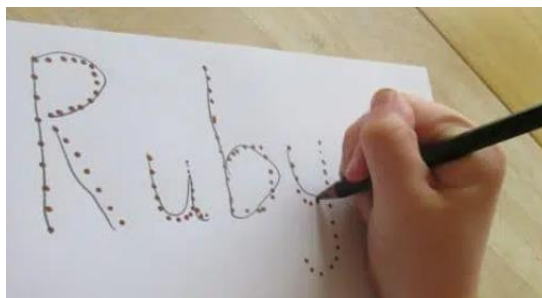
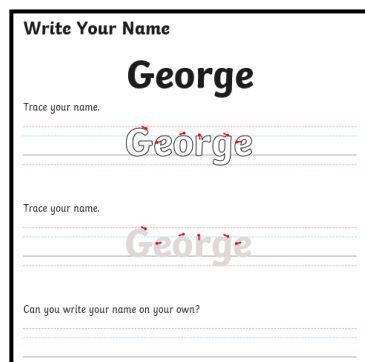
Fine motor skills are the small precise movements we make with our hands and fingers. They involve the coordination of your muscles, joints and nerves. The ability to control your fine motor skills enables you to produce small exact movements such as forming letters when writing. Activities to support the development of fine motor control include:

- Threading and lacing. Threading beads or pasta pieces on a string or lace.
- Peeling stickers off a sheet and placing them in designated places on paper or clothing.
- Fastening and unfastening buttons on clothing or activity mats.
- Putting nuts and bolts together and tightening and loosening them.
- Placing objects such as buttons or beads along straight, wavy and zigzag lines.



## Name writing.

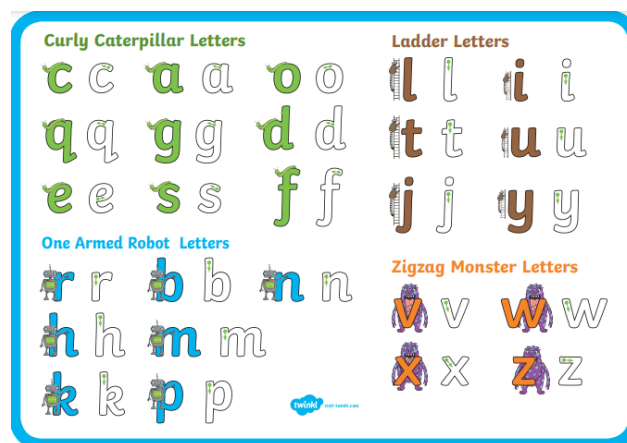
During the autumn term, one of the first things children are taught to write is their name. This can be done in many different ways as outlined in the 'mark making and pre-writing' section. Every child's development is different and as their fine motor skills progress, children will become more confident using a pencil to practise forming the letters in their name. Children usually begin by tracing the letters in their name, then copying them, before being able to write them independently. Children are taught how to form the letters correctly by learning where to start each letter and how to move their pencil to form each letter.



## Letter formation.

As we begin to learn the sounds linked to the 'Bug Club' phonics scheme, we teach the children the correct formation of each letter as we learn the sound it makes. The letters are split into 4 handwriting letter families.

- **Curly Caterpillar Letters** – c, a, o, q, g, d, e, f. Each one is formed with a rounded movement to start writing the letter. 'Curl the caterpillar round'.
- **Ladder letters** – l, i, t, u, j, y. These letters are formed by starting at the top and forming a straight line down, each one is finished slightly differently.
- **One Armed Robot Letters** – r, b, n, h, m, k, p. These letters always start 'at the robots head, go straight down, then up and over the robot's arm'.
- **Zigzag Monster Letters** – v, w, x, z. These letters are made up of diagonal or zig zag writing movements.



## Pencil grip.

Every child's development is different and the time they take to develop the skills to hold a pencil in the 'tripod grip' will be different to their peers. There are 5 developmental stages that children usually go through before they can successfully use a mature tripod grip.

- **Stage 1** – Palmer-supinate grasp. Holding the pencil in the fist/ whole hand.
- **Stage 2** – Palmer or digital pronate grasp. Hold the pencil with the palm of the hand facing down towards the table.
- **Stage 3** – Four finger and thumb grip. Holding the pencil between the thumb and four fingers with the pencil in a nearly vertical upright position.
- **Stage 4** – Static quadruped or tripod grip. Holding the pencil in almost the correct position.
- **Stage 5** – Mature/ dynamic tripod grip. Holding the pencil between the thumb and index finger with the pencil supported on the middle finger.

