

Handwriting Without Tears

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Handwriting Without Tears (HWT)

The Intent to Prevent

Good handwriting skills result from thoughtful attention and instruction. Students require deliberate instruction to develop good habits and overcome bad ones. The earlier we instill good habits, the better the result. What you teach in preschool affects later handwriting development.

With HWT curriculum and materials, you will be able to help preschoolers become natural and automatic writers. You'll find that their abilities vary. Regardless of where they start, you can help them develop good skills. In later grades, teachers are required to do two things: teach and correct. By starting early, you can instill good habits, thus minimizing the need for correction and remediation.

Capitalizing on the Capitals

Teachers agree that capitals are easier, and that's where we begin. When children learn to write their capitals, they develop a strong foundation for printing. They learn important handwriting rules (such as top-to-bottom, left-to-right habit), proper letter formation, and solid visual memory for capital letters.

Children who learn capitals first also learn:

- Start letters at the top
- Use the correct stroke sequence to form letters
- Orient letters and number correctly – no reversals

Capital letters are easy	Lowercase letters are more difficult
Start at the top	Start in four different places (a, b, e, f)
Are the same height	Are not the same size. Fourteen letters are half the size of capitals. Twelve are the same size as capitals.
Are easy to recognize and identify (compare A B D G P Q with a b d g p q)	Occupy three different vertical positions – small, tall, descending.
Are big, bold, and familiar	Are more difficult to recognize because of subtle differences (a b d g p q)

The Role of Readiness in Early Literacy and Handwriting

Informal vs Formal Handwriting Instruction

HWT is not about formal handwriting instruction. Preschoolers simply are not ready for either formal paper-pencil lessons or for kindergarten style worksheets. Preschoolers need an informal readiness program that suits their developmental needs and abilities. Here's the difference between informal handwriting readiness and formal instruction:

INFORMAL	FORMAL
Informal Handwriting Readiness Structured, teacher selected activities	Formal Handwriting Instruction Structured, teacher directed lessons
When Preschool and kindergarten	When Kindergarten
Readiness Materials <i>Get Set for School Sing Along CD, Wood Pieces Set, Mat, Slate, Roll-A-Dough Letters, Stamp & See Screen (Used for instruction)</i>	Readiness Materials Wood Pieces, Mat, Slate (Used before paper/pencil instruction)
Writing Materials <i>Get Set For School workbook (a crayon book), unlined paper, paper strips for Name, chalk, crayon</i>	Writing Materials <i>Letters and Numbers for Me workbook (a pencil book), lined paper, chalk, crayon, pencil</i>
Pre-handwriting Skills Attention Behavior Language Imitation Stop/start Fine motor	Handwriting How to hold a pencil correctly Form capitals, lowercase letters & numbers Write simple words & sentences Develop top-to-bottom, left-to-right orientation for reading/writing

The informal handwriting program prepares children to hold a crayon, color and draw, and imitate a few capitals and numbers. Beginning writing skills prepare a child to do well in a formal handwriting program.

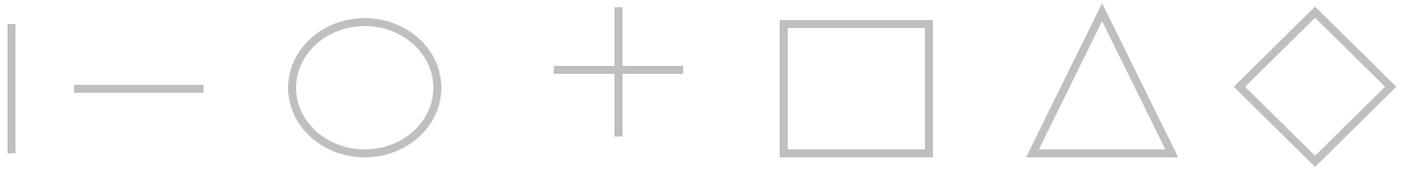
Informal or Formal?

All young children should participate in readiness because the activities promote effective learning. Readiness activities appeal to the children's varied learning styles. The hands-on letter play also offers social and motor skills benefits. This prepares children for formal handwriting instruction. Even in kindergarten, formal instruction should not begin until children can demonstrate the following:

1. Hand dominance
2. Knowledge of simple size and shape concepts for big line/little line, big curve/little curve
3. Ability to hold a crayon with the fingers place correctly
4. Satisfactory level of attention, cognitive skills, and cooperation
5. Imitation of vertical line, horizontal line, circle, and cross

BASIC STROKES:

Because some letters are easier to form than others, in Pre-K and Kindergarten we teach pre-strokes to children based on developmental principles. Studies show that children gradually develop the ability to copy forms in a very predictable order as show below.



ORDER OF CAPITAL LETTERS

We teach the Capital Letters in a specific, developmentally appropriate order.

Vertical and Horizontal (L, F, E, H, T, U, I)



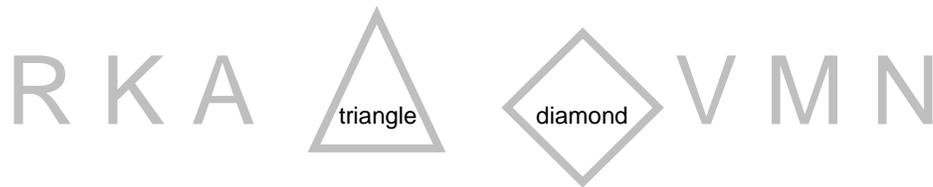
Magic C (C, O, Q, G, S, J)



Big and Little Curves (D, P, B)



Diagonals (R, K, A, V, M, N)



More Diagonals (W, X, Y, Z)



Numbers



HWT's Get Set for School curriculum is designed for 4 & 5 yr olds, but there are many developmentally appropriate activities that we can and should be doing right now with the 18 mos, 2's & 3's.

18 mos & 2's:

- Fingerplays, fingerplays and more fingerplays!
- Play with play-doh
- Play with bigger manipulatives designed for "whole hand" pick-up
- Go vertical with painting, coloring, shaving cream, chalkboard, magnets
- Parachute play
- Sing songs together
- Tear paper & then use tongs/grabbers to pick up the pieces to throw away
- Snipping paper with scissors (for the 2's)
- Sensory bins (sand and water play are great)
- Get Set for School Songs:
 - *Toe Song* (great to do before naps)
 - *Five Fingers Play*
 - *Count on Me*
 - *Ten Little Fingers*

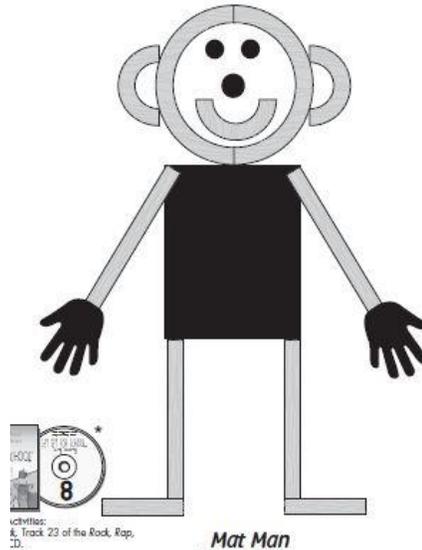
3's:

- Everything from the 18 mos and 2's list
- Cutting with scissors – start with thicker papers and transition to thinner
- Play with smaller manipulatives to get their fingers better at picking up, encourage sorting and classifying
- Two-handed activities (one hand to hold/stabilize and one hand to move a tool/toy – i.e. dust pan and broom, putting nuts and bolts together, wind-up toys)
- Checkout a set of the HWT wood pieces and let the children "polish" them with a cloth, sort them, build with them (flat on the floor), wood pieces in a bag, make curves and circles
- HWT's Mat-Man(see end of hand-out for lyrics)
- Get Set for School Songs:
 - *There's a Dog in the School*
 - *Crayon Song* (for older 3's who are interested in writing to help develop tripod grip)
 - *Five Fingers Play*
 - *Count on Me*
 - *Ten Little Fingers*
 - *Bird Legs*
 - *Animal Legs*
 - *Where Do You Start Your Letters?* (also on Rock, Rap, Tap and Learn)
 - *Mat Man*
- Crayon aim and scribble activities (once child can pick up and hold crayon correctly)

Mat Man

Young children are often asked to draw pictures of themselves or a person. Mat Man makes drawing easy. Mat Man activities develop:

- Body Awareness – body parts, body functions
- Drawing Skills – Placing body parts correctly, sequencing, and organization
- Socialization – Participation, following directions, contributing, taking turns
- Number Awareness – Counting body parts



Mat Man™ Song

Tune: "The Bear Went Over the Mountain"

- Mat Man has 1 head, 1 head, 1 head, Mat Man has 1 head, So that he can* think
- Mat Man has 2 eyes, 2 eyes, 2 eyes, Mat Man has 2 eyes, So that he can* see
- Mat Man has 1 nose, 1 nose, 1 nose, Mat Man has 1 nose, So that he can* smell
- Mat Man has 1 mouth, 1 mouth, 1 mouth, Mat Man has 1 mouth, So that he can* eat
- Mat Man has 2 ears, 2 ears, 2 ears, Mat Man has 2 ears, So that he can* hear
- Mat Man has 1 body, 1 body, 1 body, Mat Man has 1 body, To hold what is inside heart, lungs, stomach
- Mat Man has 2 arms, 2 arms, 2 arms, Mat Man has 2 arms, So that he can* reach
- Mat Man has 2 hands, 2 hands, 2 hands, Mat Man has 2 hands, So that he can* clap
- Mat Man has 2 legs, 2 legs, 2 legs, Mat Man has 2 legs, So that he can* stand
- Mat Man has 2 feet, 2 feet, 2 feet, Mat Man has 2 feet, So that he can* walk

*Wait for your children to respond. Add extra verses when you add new accessories Your children may call out other body functions (feet= run, kick, dance).