



Training Your Preschooler's Hand for Writing

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Supporting the First Steps to Mark Making

To begin with, we'll talk about how kids make their first steps in writing letters and words and what difficulties they face.

The Early Years Foundation Stage ([EYFS](#)) guidance, created by the British government to support young children's development, says that by the age of five a child should be able to:

“use a pencil and hold it effectively to form recognizable letters, most of which are correctly formed.”

Considering this as the early learning goal, there is a lot of work pre-school needs to go into ensuring a child is able to comfortably meet this expectation once they reach kindergarten (reception in the UK). To achieve this, the EYFS guidance suggests little ones need to develop strong gross and fine motor control, a recognition of pattern, a language to talk about shapes and movements and the main handwriting movements involved in the three basic letter shapes (l, c & r).

Difference Between Gross and Fine Motor Skills

Gross motor skills describe the skills undertaken that include large muscle movements, examples of these include independent sitting, crawling, walking, or running. These activities require strong and coordinated muscle usage in the predominant muscles in the arms, legs and torso and are incredibly important in helping children with everyday physical activities like throwing, lifting and kicking.

Gross motor skills development helps children gain strength and aptitude in their body and supports them to live a healthy and active day to day life. It is these types of skills that will aid their capacity to play team sports, like football, basketball or rounders.

Fine motor skills engage the smaller muscles in the body and developing these helps children grasp, manipulate objects, draw and write. It is the strengthening of these smaller muscles that allow children to use pens and pencils, to cut using scissors and construct and build in more complex play activities such as Lego, Duplo, puzzles and train tracks.

Fine motor skills are also crucial to support self-care practices like dressing, tying shoelaces, using zips, buttons and belts.



Techniques to Develop and Improve Gross Motor Skills

It is useful to note that you can help your little one to develop their handwriting skills through gross motor skill-focused activities. You can show children how to make large movements in the air using their arms, hands and shoulders such as attaching ribbons to the end of sticks and telling them to swirl these in the air. This encourages them to use both sides of their body and lets them make different shapes including curves, round and round, up and down lines and slow and quick movements. These mirror the required shapes that the main letter types utilize (c, l & r) and are helpful for them to know before getting to fine motor skill practice.

Another way to develop letter shapes using gross motor movements is to draw on your little one's back. This one works best for older children - get your child and a few friends to sit in a line, one in front of the other and draw a letter or shape on their back. They then need to guess what it is and draw it on the person in front's back. Go all the way down the line and see what the child at the front of the queue thinks.

You can also help your little one practice letter shapes in the sand trays and encourage the movement of the letter shapes to help them learn. For example. A curly caterpillar for 'c', the one-armed robot for 'r'. This can be reinforced by doing so with eyes closed.

Techniques to Develop and Improve Fine Motor Skills

Ensuring your little one has a confident hand and works to improve their fine motor skills is crucial and you can develop these from a very early age.

Encouraging your child to make patterns using pegboards will encourage them to formulate a pincer grip and help with specific placement and dexterity. Another way to develop this movement is to show children how to use tweezers to pick up small objects such as sequins and small beads.

Introducing finger rhymes with words and sounds is also a great way for them to utilize their digits and practice counting and using smaller muscle groups.

Focusing on Patterns

When you introduce patterns for writing to children it is important to focus on the recurring features which are predominant in letter formation. These tend to be, as mentioned previously, the three basic letter shapes: l, for example the long ladder; c, for example the curly caterpillar; r, for example the one-armed robot.

Children will need to practice patterns that move across the body, from left to right, as well as producing a pattern across the entire line. This will help with the development of a fluid writing style and encourage their ease of writing from left to right.

If it is useful, you can utilize specific 'sounds' that little ones can make as they draw their patterns, for example a bouncing sound as they bounce up from the one-armed robot's feet, a buzzing sound as you draw anticlockwise spirals, a /shsh/ sound as you make wave patterns. Get creative with the process and your child will enjoy it as they grow and advance in their hand writing skills.

Kids Academy: Talented and Gifted — Helping Children Develop Their Writing

The Kid's Academy: Talented and Gifted App has lots of resources useful for pre-school children.

For students of a younger age, the pre-writing worksheets shown below are perfect to practice tracing curves and will particularly help them master the familiar 'c' shape that

is found in a lot of the letters within the alphabet. The T&G [learning app for kids](#) offers lots of opportunities for pre-schoolers to train their hand for writing utilising both curved and wavy line patterns.



You'll find helpful video materials on the app to guide young learners through their ABC's. For instance, this video shows how letter should be pronounced and written, and offers lots of fun animated examples to help children learn whilst they remain engaged.



Watch on [YouTube](#)

You can also go to the Kids Academy website and find a range of free [interactive writing worksheets](#) that specifically aid letter and word formation. They guide learners through capital and lowercase letter formation, as well as provide different illustrated word examples. These worksheets include two types of tracing – following the dotted line activities and filling in the outline as shown below.

Kk

Trace and write the capital letter **K**.
Start at the big red dot.

Trace and write the lowercase letter **k**.
Start at the big red dot.

Trace the **K** and the **k** to complete each word.

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Tracing Sight Words: Cat

Trace the word "cat".

Trace the word "cat" on lined paper. The letters are large and outlined with dashed lines for tracing. Arrows and numbers indicate the stroke order: 1 for the main curve, 2 for the tail.

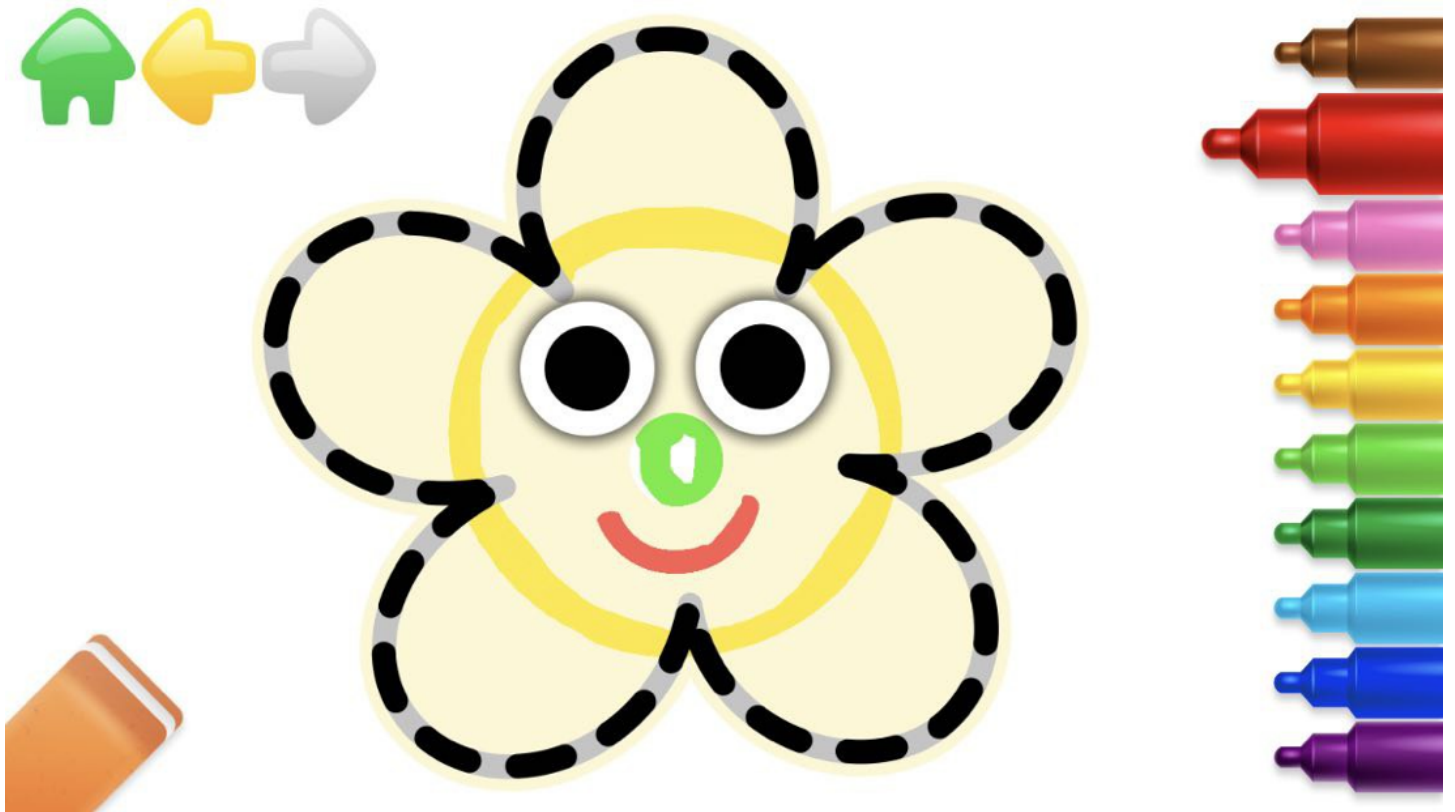
What animal sleeps an average 15 hours a day?
Circle the correct answer.

a bee a mouse a dog a cat

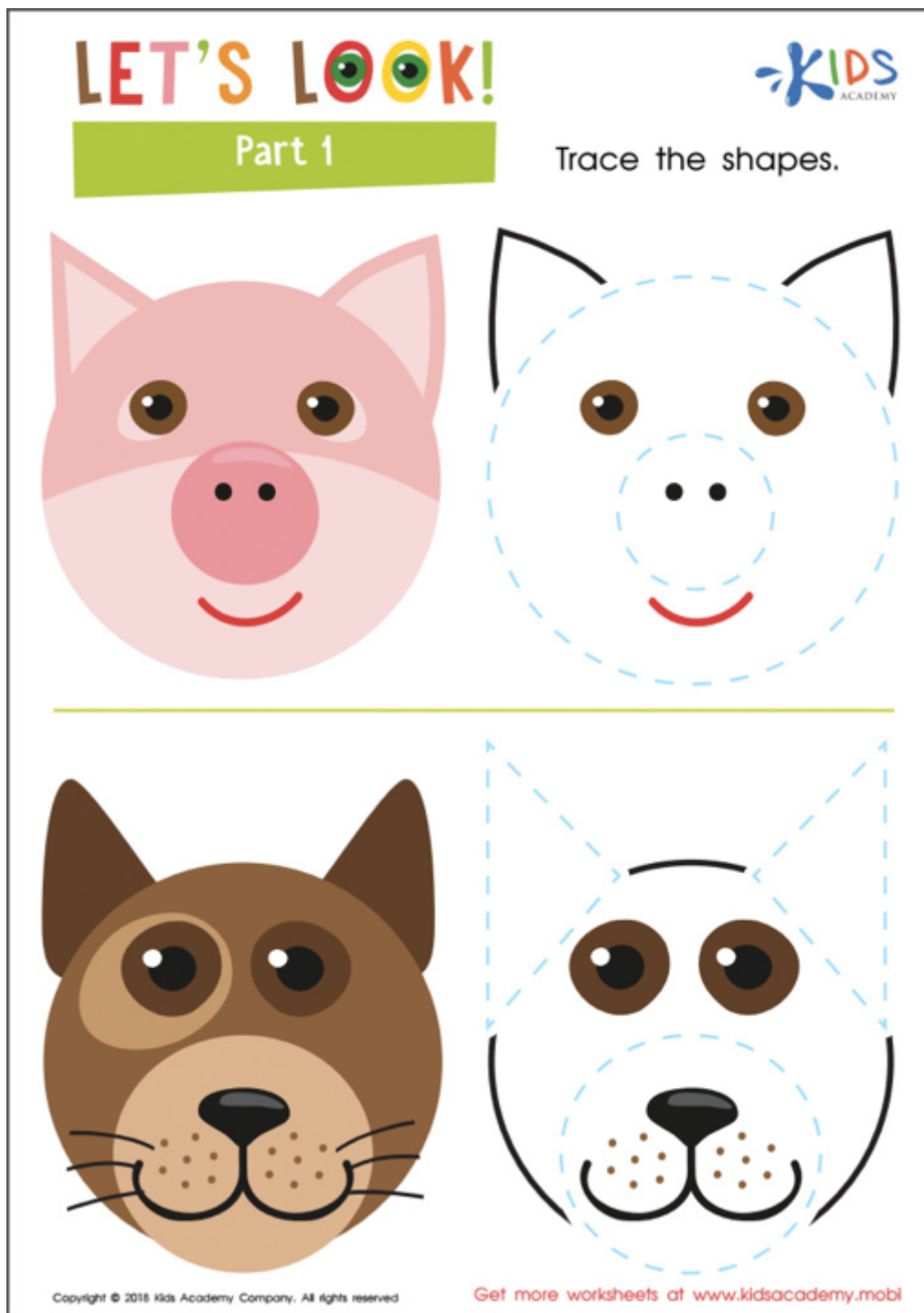
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The word **duck** begins with the letter **d**.

Your little learners can also immerse themselves within the app and enjoy the drawing games, shown below. They provide kids with a chance to draw different objects by following the instructions listed, before counting and tracing a number. These games are colourful and eye-catching as well as combine literacy, maths and handwriting development skills in one place, in an engaging way.



Besides, the app has worksheets to practice drawing different animal shapes. These are both amusing and excellent for strengthening the smaller muscle groups that aid fine motor skill development.



Using Valuable Resources to Boost Development

Ensuring you utilize beneficial resources to boost your child's handwriting development is crucial. The Talented and Gifted Program by Kids Academy is a [preschool app](#) designed for children ages 2-10. The learning tools and content are curriculum-based and have been developed by working in close partnership with professionals with experience within today's digital education system.

The app comes equipped with various features, which can allow parents and caregivers a comprehensive systematic approach to their children's literacy improvement while saving time, effort, and fees. Parents are given ease of mind in the knowledge that the app is aligned with the [New York State Generation Learning Standards](#) and [Common Core State Standards](#), whilst being streamlined with modern learning techniques for children from the preschool to grade 3 levels.

The wide range of literacy activities included can help boost and refine your child's ELA skills and make Kids Academy a parent's top choice for educational apps. The creators of Talented and Gifted also offer a selection of other apps [educational apps for kids](#) that will give one a rich choice for organizing their child's quality screen time.

The Best Chance to Develop

If children, and the caregivers and teachers they learn alongside, follow the advice listed above it is expected that they will acquire a legible, fluent and fast handwriting style by the time they reach kindergarten. Regular and consistent practice using a variety of activities, materials and resources is advised and that everything undertaken is fun and age appropriate. This will ensure your little one develops and enjoys learning as they grow up.

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Links and references:

<https://www.foundationyears.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/Gateway-to-Writing-Developing-handwriting.pdf>

