

## Chapter 9

# Developing Writing Skills

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**W**hen starting the writing process with a preschooler or kindergartner, accept any squiggles or printing with joy. Parents *can* instruct their children in forming the alphabet and printing, but one must be careful because too much structure at this age can be frustrating to the child. Writing is at the end of the hierarchy, so it is developmental in nature. When children are taught to form letters, it must be taught gently and playfully. Watch your child carefully and determine when s/he is ready. S/he will show you! Here are some enjoyable activities that you can do with your child to start the process. Your child will let you know which hand s/he is to use. S/he may switch back and forth for a while.



### **Activities**

#### ***Trace Your Finger Around the Merged Animal Letter***

Take the *Merged Animal Letter Cards* (Set #2), and have your child trace her/his finger around the shape of the letter. This is a greaaaaaaaaaaaaat way to get children to write. You can also practice the capital letters this way when it is the appropriate time!

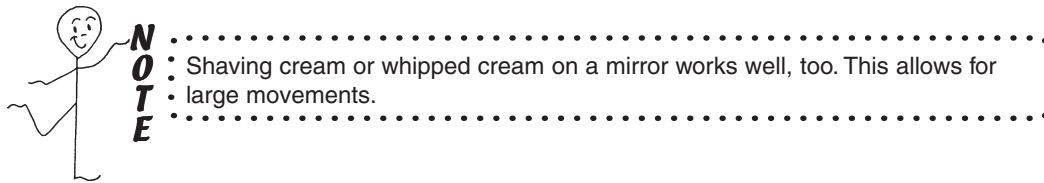
#### ***Sand Paper Letters***

Make a second set of *Merged Animal Letters* on card stock (heavier paper). Now, spread glue onto the letter (not the animal picture). Now sprinkle some fine sand onto the glue. Shake off the excess. When it is dry, your child can trace around the letters with her/his finger. Colored sand from a craft store would be fun! (*Thank you for the idea of colored sand, Tia King, Groveland, CA.*)

#### ***Pudding Writing***

Mix up a batch of your child's favorite pudding and spread it on a cookie sheet. Place the Animal/Letters in front on her/him, one at a time, and ask her/him to draw the letter. Ask her/him to sound the letter as well as write it. If s/he is very young, allow

her/him to form it anyway s/he can. You might make some suggestions (“make a circle, then a line...”) or just allow her/him to enjoy the process. As s/he matures, you can guide her/his hands, or smooth the pudding out with a rubber spatula and show her/him how to make the letter. Let her/him trace on top of your writing, smooth the pudding, and allow her/him to write. You can also practice the capital letters when it is the appropriate time! (She can lick his or her fingers too!)



**Writing In Air**

As your child becomes more aware of the letter shapes, you can have her/his draw them in the air. S/he can make big ones and small ones! You can also practice the capital letters in the air when it is the appropriate time!

**Writing Left to Right (Reading too!)**

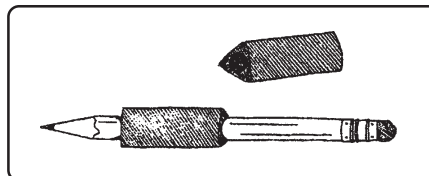
Children need to know that when you read, you must move your eyes. When you write, you must move your eyes and your hand from left to right. So practice this now. Have your child point her/his finger of whichever is her/his dominant hand. Move it from left to right and then do it all over again. It is important for your child to know her/his right from the left. This, too, is developmental. Play fun games with her/him by calling out, “Hold up your right hand!” “Hold up your left hand!” “Move it from left to right!”

Here’s an idea. Give your child a small car with wheels. S/he is to race the car from left to right. If you want, why not add some scenery. On paper draw a street, a country road, or a race track. Always travel left to right!

**Paper, Pencil and Pencil Grip**

When it is time to begin writing on paper, your very young child doesn’t need lined paper. Give her/him a pencil, felt pen, or crayon and let her/him write. When your child demonstrates readiness for some “serious” letter formation, give her/him lined paper that is large and has the broken lines in the middle. You can find this paper in teacher supply stores. Also, make sure that you child has the rubber grips for the pencils. (Start your child with a primary pencil – the thicker kind.) This will help your child with a good pencil grip. You can also purchase these at a teacher supply store.

*A note on pencil grips:* If the pencil is held incorrectly, the hand tires easily. When the hand fatigues, the child stops writing. Make sure your child learns to hold the pencil correctly. S/he should hold the pencil near the tip between the index finger and the thumb.



The pencil then rests on the side of the middle finger. We say, “The pincher crab sits on the rock,” which helps the child to see how the index finger and thumb ‘pinches’ the pencil as it rests on the middle finger (the rock). See illustration.

For great handwriting activities, take a look at the *Zoo-phonics® Activity Worksheets Level A Packet*. You can view and buy this at [www.zoo-phonics.com](http://www.zoo-phonics.com).

