**Teaching your child how to write: The basics**

**Source:** [www.parentlen.com](http://www.parentlen.com)

Parents, caregivers, and educators – all of them want to encourage children to learn the skills they will need for a lifetime. But, it is quite a challenge for most of us to figure out what age or stage is the right one to make our kids embark on this new journey, where they begin to write.

**When does a child actually learn to write?**

Many of us think that a child doesn’t start to learn how to write until he is in upper grades in his preschool days. But a study conducted by the Washington University in St. Louis uncovered some interesting findings, suggesting that a child starts to learn writing skills as early as the age of three.

What happens at this stage is quite interesting. Your child will begin to observe his family members at home. If they are people who love writing and are often seen writing, your child will naturally want to mimic what he sees. You will thus find your little one drawing zigzags and attempting to write.

**Preparing your child for writing**

Being able to write is one of the most crucial milestones in your child’s development. Coming to teaching your child how to write, it depends on several factors. This quintessentially includes the ease with which your child can hold a pencil or a crayon, his enthusiasm to write or draw, his focus and attention span so that he can concentrate well, his interest for big or small letters, and many more.

You need to have a lot of patience as your child will need a lot of practice to ace writing skills. The good thing is that you can easily teach him how to write, sitting at home, without any complex requisites.

**Strengthen your child’s hands**

The first and foremost thing you might want to do is help your child develop stronger hand muscles. One of the best ways to strengthen hand muscles is to encourage and applaud your child to write and draw (literally scribble) as much as he can.

Provide him with plenty of space and equip him sufficiently with writing materials like chalk and slate, chart sheets with crayons. You can also assign some play therapists-approved tasks to your child, like cutting with kid-friendly scissors, molding with play-dough, beading, making collages. These are all good opportunities to build hand muscles and improve dexterity.

**Grandma’s Tip:** In India, traditionally children were encouraged to write with their fingers on a plate of fine sand to develop hand and finger muscles. In villages, bread dough is being used for play dough even today. You can opt for these old-school techniques too since they are still quite effective.

**Inspire a good grip**

When it comes to early child development, there are certain principles of development. These are fundamentally called ‘Big to Small’ and ‘Proximal to Distal.’ Primarily, this means that kids initially develop control over the larger muscles of the trunk and arms, which are closer to the center of the body ‘proximal’ before the smaller muscles of the hands, which are further away from the body center ‘distal.’

Let your child develop pencil grip naturally as his gross and fine motor skills develop. Involve him in fun gross motor activities, such as crawling, climbing and pushing, which make the shoulder and arm muscles stronger and steadier. This further has a positive effect on the development of fine motor skills of your child, including his pencil grip.

**Encourage correct postures**

Children find it hard to hold a paper and pen at the same time while learning to write. Experts suggest that an easel can be used to prevent this problem and this also enhances the child’s writing technique. You can also encourage writing on a slanted surface as it will make your child extend his wrist and support the pencil appropriately while writing.

Here are some interesting ways to teach your child how to write, the basics:

1. Your child can either use her fingers or small sticks to trace in a plate of uncooked rice, breadcrumbs, oatmeal, fine sand, shaving cream, etc.

2. Begin with strokes like standing line, sleeping line, slanting line. Create simple lines and thereafter shapes and ask your child to write on them and then to copy them. Do not rush to the alphabets or numbers.

3. In order to keep practicing many times, you can encourage your child to write on dry erase boards, Magnadoodle, or chalkboard.

4. Provide him with ample time to move at his own pace. You can also make the writing activity interesting and fun using letter tiles, fridge magnets, and alphabet blocks.

5. In order to make writing on paper fun, add colors by providing non-toxic crayons and sketches. You can also opt for washable colors.

6. Ensure that this process of writing is fun and relaxed. Do not expect for perfection at the beginning itself.

7. Teaching your child to write the alphabet should be exciting to you and your child. Start with the uppercase letters first and then gradually move to lowercase.

8. Begin by putting dots in the form of a letter and assist your child to join them. Encourage him to trace by writing a letter between two broad lines. Write a letter while he is watching and help him trace it by holding his hand.

9. To add fun, you can draw pictures for the letters. For example, for the letter ‘I’ you can draw ice-cream from the letter. A cat from the letter ‘C’.

10. Allow the little one to draw on big sheets and help him remember it by saying aloud the structure of the letter. For example, for the letter T, you can say, ‘’A sleeping line on a standing line.’’