Ready to Write

Play-based activities for drawing and writing








Ages 3 to 5 **40 activities**

Pre-writing · Tripod grasp · Visual motor

What's inside

The activities are grouped by the main skill each one builds, from big arm moves to small finger control, and most build more than one skill. Start anywhere your child is curious.

Up on the wall

Big arm moves on a wall or window that build steady shoulders.

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READY TO WRITE

Before you start

Every activity in this book comes from OTPlan and uses everyday things like markers, masking tape, cardboard and paper. There's no wrong way to play. Follow your child's lead and keep it fun.

How to use this book

Keep it short. Most activities take 10 to 15 minutes.

Let your child choose. Their interest is the best guide.

Adjust as you go. Every page has an easier and a harder version.

Stop while it's still fun. You can always come back another day.

Check off the days you play in the tracker on page 45. If your child sees a therapist, bring the book along.

How each page works

Time and place
How long it takes, setup time, and where to play

Skills it builds
The skills the activity works on

You'll need
Everyday materials to gather first

How to play
Step-by-step directions

Easier and harder
Ways to adjust to your child

What to notice
Things to watch for and share with your child's therapist

Things you'll use most

- [ ] Markers
- [ ] Masking tape
- [ ] Cardboard
- [ ] Glue
- [ ] Construction paper
- [ ] Buttons
- [ ] Aluminum foil
- [ ] Containers
- [ ] Pencils
- [ ] Plastic containers
- [ ] Paper rolls
- [ ] Scissors (grown-up setup)

Each activity page lists everything it needs.

Safety. Stay close during play. Small items like buttons, beads, pom-poms and marbles can be choking hazards, and shaving cream, playdough and colored water are for play, not for eating. A few setups use a knife, scissors or a sharp pencil. Those steps are for a grown-up.

These activities are for home practice and don't replace the guidance of a licensed therapist.

Vertical Sponge Trail

10 to 15 minutes **Setup: 5 minutes** **At a wall or easel**



Skills it builds

Finger Strength | Shoulder Strength | Visual Motor

You'll need

- [ ] Bowl
- [ ] Butcher Paper
- [ ] Markers
- [ ] Masking Tape
- [ ] Sponge
- [ ] Water

Why it helps

Tracing lines on a wall is a fantastic way for your child to build strength in their shoulders and arms. This proximal stability is the foundation they need for controlled movements at the table. By squeezing the sponge, they also develop the small hand muscles needed for writing. It feels like magic to watch the wet path appear on the paper! This simple setup offers big benefits for coordination and focus.

How to play

1. Secure a long piece of butcher paper vertically to a wall at your child's shoulder height using masking tape.
2. Use a marker to draw a simple, winding path across the paper.
3. Place a bowl of water on a nearby table or the floor.
4. Ask your child to soak the sponge and squeeze it until it is damp.
5. Challenge them to trace the path by squeezing the sponge along the marker line to leave a wet trail.
6. Encourage them to keep their arm high as they follow the winding road.

Make it easier

- Draw a short, gently curving path that stays within easy reach.
- Cut the sponge in half so it fits your child's hand and is easier to squeeze.
- Lower the paper to chest height so your child can work without reaching up.

Make it harder

- Draw the path higher on the wall so your child keeps their arm above the shoulder.
- Draw letters, numbers, or a zigzag for your child to trace with the sponge.
- Race to finish the whole path before the first wet marks start to dry.

In everyday life. Working with the arm raised builds the shoulder steadiness kids use to write on a classroom whiteboard, wash a window, and reach a high shelf or coat hook.

What to notice

Notice whether your child's elbow stays up and away from the body while tracing, or tucks down to the side.

Watch how hard your child squeezes the sponge. A soaking sponge drips, while a well-squeezed one leaves a neater line.

If wet hands bother your child, offer a paintbrush dipped in water instead of the sponge.

Safety. Adult supervision is recommended. Ensure that the floor beneath the paper is kept dry to prevent slips or falls.

We played M T W T F S S

Silver Leaf Branch

15 to 20 minutes **Setup: 5 minutes** **At a table**



Skills it builds

Fine Motor Control | Finger Strength | Tripod Grasp

You'll need

- [ ] Aluminum Foil
- [ ] Bottle
- [ ] Branches
- [ ] Glue

Why it helps

This activity focuses on the tripod grasp which is the way we hold a pencil or a small spoon. When your child pinches and wraps the thin foil around the tiny twigs they are strengthening the small muscles in their hands. This movement helps them learn how to control their fingers with precision. Using the thumb and first two fingers together builds a solid foundation for future writing and drawing. It also encourages eye-hand coordination as they aim for the tip of the branch. This play-based task makes a tricky hand position feel like a fun craft.

How to play

1. Before play, find a small, dry branch with several twigs and a clean plastic bottle.
2. Ask your child to tear a sheet of aluminum foil into small pieces about the size of a postage stamp.
3. Have your child place the branch inside the bottle so it stands up straight like a tree.
4. Invite your child to pick up one piece of foil using only their thumb and first two fingers.
5. Ask your child to pinch and squeeze the foil square onto the tip of a twig to make a shiny leaf.
6. Your child can add a tiny dot of glue to the twig if the foil needs help staying in place.
7. Continue until the branch is full of silver leaves.

Make it easier

- Use larger pieces of foil that are easier to grasp and squeeze.
- Use a thicker branch that is easier to see and target.

Make it harder

- Use very small pieces of foil that require even more precision.
- Try to wrap the foil around the entire length of the twig instead of just the tip.

In everyday life. The same finger pinch used here helps your child zip up a coat or manage a button. It also prepares their hands for holding a pencil when they start school.

What to notice

If the child holds the foil with their whole hand, offer a smaller piece of foil.

Notice if they prefer to use their left or right hand to do the pinching.

If they find the foil hard to squeeze, help them pre-crumple it a little bit.

Safety. Supervise your child with the branch to prevent any pokes to the eyes or face. Small foil pieces can be a choking hazard. Stay within arm's reach and keep them away from children who still put things in their mouths.

We played M T W T F S S

Shape Road Driver

10 to 15 minutes **Setup: 2 minutes** **At a table**



Skills it builds

Eye-Hand Coordination | Pre Writing | Visual Motor

You'll need

- [ ] Bottle Cap
- [ ] Construction Paper
- [ ] Lid
- [ ] Markers
- [ ] Masking Tape

Why it helps

This activity helps your child practice the movements needed for drawing and writing. The marker paths are the roads, and a bottle cap is the car. By sliding the car along the roads, they build the visual motor skills to follow a path. Drawing on top of the paths helps them learn how to form lines, circles, and crosses. These are the building blocks for letters. It also works on eye-hand coordination as they focus on staying on the road. This playful approach builds confidence before they start formal writing.

> **Choking risk:** bottle caps can be a choking hazard. Stay within arm's reach, and keep them away from children who still put things in their mouths.

How to play

1. Before play, tape a large sheet of construction paper to the table and use markers to draw several thick paths such as a straight line, a circle, and a cross.
2. Invite your child to choose a bottle cap to be their car.
3. Your child can slide the bottle cap slowly along each marker line.
4. Encourage your child to use a marker to trace right over the paths they drove.
5. Your child can try drawing their own lines or shapes anywhere on the paper.

Make it easier

- Use very short and thick straight lines
- Let your child use their whole hand to move a larger lid instead of a small cap

Make it harder

- Draw more complex shapes like triangles or squares
- Ask your child to use their non-dominant hand to drive the car

In everyday life. These movements are the same ones used to draw pictures and later to write letters and numbers. Following a path also helps with tasks like using a finger to follow words in a book.

What to notice

Notice if your child prefers to move the cap with their whole arm or just their fingers

Watch if they choose to follow the lines exactly or prefer to make their own paths

See if they switch hands while moving the cap around the paper

Safety. Supervise your child with the bottle cap to prevent them from putting it in their mouth.

We played M T W T F S S

READY TO WRITE

8-week play tracker

Check a box on each day you play. Write down the activity your child liked best.

Week	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	Favorite activity
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								
6								
7								
8								

Activities to play again

Notes for your child's therapist

Jot down what you notice as you play. The **What to notice** box on each activity page can help. Bring this page to your child's next visit.

What my child enjoyed

Which activities did they ask for again?

What seemed tricky

Where did they get stuck or want help?

Changes I noticed

Anything that got easier over the weeks?

Questions I want to ask