

# Cambridgeshire Occupational Therapy

## School Ready to Learn Pack



## Occupational Therapy School Ready to Learn Pack

The purpose of this resource pack is to give school staff and parents ideas to support their children to practise and develop skills, prior to accessing our Advice Line or referring to Occupational Therapy.

We hope that by providing advice and strategies at a universal level, a more specialised and targeted service can be provided for children who are presenting with complex difficulties.

School staff and parents should work together and use this resource pack to help with developing an appropriate support plan as part of the Graduated Response to Supporting Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN)- Assess, Plan, Do, Review. For more information visit

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/children-and-families/local-offer/local-offer-care-and-family-support/send-information-advice-and-support-service-sendiaass>

This pack is intended as a guide only; the strategies are appropriate for children with motor skills difficulties. The Occupational Therapy service should always be consulted if;

- The need appears more complex than the solutions offered
- The child has a neurological condition e.g. Cerebral Palsy which may impact upon the appropriateness of strategies given
- The child has a degenerative condition and their needs are changing rapidly
- There are safety concerns related to the activity or strategies provided

The Occupational Therapy referral form can be found at

<https://www.cambscommunityservices.nhs.uk/what-we-do/children-young-people-health-services-cambridgeshire/contact>

### **How to use the pack:**

- Many of the ideas can be incorporated into **Finger/Hand Gym sessions and Gym Trail sessions in school**, but can also be incorporated into **everyday activities in the classroom and at home during leisure activities**. Many of the ideas can be delivered as whole school/whole class approaches and can be of benefit to many children and not just individuals with SEN.
- The activities should be carried out regularly for a **minimum of one school term** to allow for progress.
- Identify which difficulties the child is experiencing from the table below and then refer to the relevant worksheet.

**What to do if expected progress is not seen:**

- If the child is not making progress and/or school staff/parents feel further advice is required, then please contact our Advice Line as a referral to Occupational Therapy may be appropriate. If a referral is deemed appropriate, the worksheet/record forms in this pack can be used to support the referral as they provide evidence of strategies already trialled.

Please note that Cambridgeshire Community Services Occupational Therapy Service currently does not offer a diagnostic service for Developmental Coordination Disorder or Dyspraxia.


**Occupational Therapy Ready to Learn Pack**





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### Early Pencil Skills and Reluctant Writers

Handwriting is one of the most complex skills we have to learn. It involves linguistic, cognitive, perceptual and motor components, all of which have to be integrated. Before children can hold a pencil, they need to be able to sit up and move their arm independently of their body. They need to be able to isolate their fingers to hold their pencil. To write, they first need to visually understand the difference between letters. They need to have success with pre-writing shapes. And, then they need to remember how to form the letters.

The relevant pre-writing activities for the child's area of difficulty should be completed for 5-10mins a day at home/school.

Area of Difficulty	Strategy	Tick when strategy has been tried and add comments.
Child does not show an interest in mark making	Do not force the child to pick up a pencil. Set up an area with an appropriately sized table and chair, and a range of fun and interesting crayons, coloured pencils and paper which they can freely access throughout the day. If and when they do begin to mark make, you can begin copying the marks/scribbles that they are making whilst providing a verbal commentary e.g. "up and down, round and round". You can then slowly and subtly start taking turns and encourage them to copy the marks that you make.	
	Consider other fun ways to explore simple lines and shapes which may align with their areas of interest e.g. using a car to follow along roads, you could even strap a crayon to the front/back of the car so it makes a mark on the paper. 	
	Multi-Sensory Play Use various textures to practise drawing horizontal, vertical and circular scribble e.g... - Shaving foam can be smeared onto a mirror/easel or onto a tray. - Drawing with finger or stick in a tray of sand/shaving foam/mixture of cornflour and water.	
	Refer to 'Reluctant Writers' section for more ideas	

Child does not have a hand dominance	Do not force the child to use one hand or the other. Observe them carrying out a range of activities and make a note of which hand they tend to choose.	
	Present objects (e.g. pencils, spoon) in the middle so you don't influence them to just use the hand closest to the object. Observe which hand they choose to use more often.	
	Provide opportunities to practise activities that require a stabilising and dominant hand e.g. unscrewing lids of containers, wind up toys, musical instruments that are held and hit with a beater.	
	Some children show a clear hand dominance but they swap to the other hand when they get tired or they are unsuccessful with their dominant hand. This should be discouraged; they should be encouraged to rest and then try again with their dominant hand.	
Child has difficulties holding a pencil	Refer to <a href="https://www.griffinot.com/what-does-good-pencil-grasp-look-like/">https://www.griffinot.com/what-does-good-pencil-grasp-look-like/</a> and <a href="https://www.griffinot.com/supporting-pencil-grasp-development/">https://www.griffinot.com/supporting-pencil-grasp-development/</a> (Resource book)	
	<p>Trial the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Short pieces (2-3cm) of chalk/crayon/chunky pencil or finger crayons <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pa1kASdNTW0">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pa1kASdNTW0</a></li> </ol>   <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide visual and verbal prompts to remind the child how to position their fingers e.g. 'Crocodile Snap' song by Griffin OT-YouTube <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N6kPcQSSsEY">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N6kPcQSSsEY</a></li> </ol>  <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grotto Pencil Grip/ Cross Guard Ultra Pencil Grip <a href="https://www.griffinot.com/pencil-grip-reviews/">https://www.griffinot.com/pencil-grip-reviews/</a></li> </ol> 	

4. Twist n Write Pencil or Pen Again ('Rocket' pencil/pen)



5. The 'Get a Grip' Kit available from TTS includes all the popular pencil grips which can be trialled with the child.



[https://www.tts-group.co.uk/get-a-grip-pencil-grips/1002033.html?gclid=EAlaIqobChMIglq59oOG8wIV1GDmCh123QDaEAAAYASAAEgKAaD\\_BwE](https://www.tts-group.co.uk/get-a-grip-pencil-grips/1002033.html?gclid=EAlaIqobChMIglq59oOG8wIV1GDmCh123QDaEAAAYASAAEgKAaD_BwE)

Provide opportunities to practise hand strengthening, in hand manipulation and pincer grasp activities to help develop the hand skills required to hold a pencil. These ideas should be completed in school finger gym sessions and at home at least 3 times a week. E.g.



**Stencil/Texture Rubbings**

- Use chalk/crayons on their side to colour in large patterns, to do tree bark/wall rubbings or rub over stencils.
- The child holds the crayon flat on the paper between their index finger, middle finger and thumb (tripod grasp).



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**Clothes Pegs**


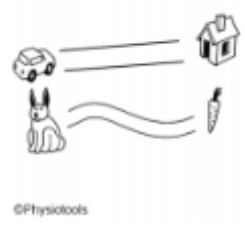
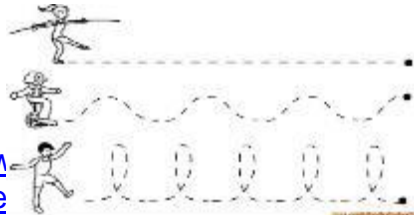
- Squeeze clothes pegs between the thumb and index finger. Wooden pegs are usually easier so you may need to start with these and progress to plastic pegs.
- Use pegs as 'soldiers' and peg them along the edge of a box.
- Make pegs into animals, e.g. a crocodile or shark.
- Write numbers/letters on pegs and peg them on the edge of a box to spell out words or complete maths equations.





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**Play Doh**




- Roll the Play Doh into a snake. Pinch the Play Doh between thumb and index finger
- Roll a ball of Play Doh between palms of your hands
- Roll small balls of Play Doh between your thumb and first two fingers
- Find small items hidden inside a large piece of Play Doh.

	Dough Disco and other similar YouTube videos could be used	
	<p>Provide opportunities to practise drawing at a vertical surface e.g. paper on the wall, easel, white board. This will help in the development of shoulder stability/control and promote a good wrist posture and pencil grasp.</p> 	
Child has difficulties controlling a pencil	<p>Firstly, check their pencil grasp and consider the above strategies if necessary.</p>	
	<p>Provide opportunities to practice graded pencil control pathways and mazes i.e. starting with wide straight pathways and over time progress to narrow curved pathways with multiple changes in direction.</p>  <p>Then ask the child to draw on the line, rather than between a pathway.</p>  <p><a href="https://www.early-years-motor-skills-pencil-control/4">https://www.early-years-motor-skills-pencil-control/4</a> <a href="https://www.racy-eyfs-ears-fine-motor-skills-pencil-control/4">racy-eyfs-ears-fine-motor-skills-pencil-control/4</a></p> <p>You may need to draw dots at intervals along the pathway/line to keep the child focussed. They could score points for each dot they draw through.</p>	
Child struggles to apply appropriate pencil/pen pressure	<p>Firstly refer to advice regarding 'difficulties holding a pencil' above.</p>	
	<p><b>Activity ideas and strategies for children that press or grip too hard:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Write or draw with a sharp pencil on a piece of paper placed on the carpet or over a flat piece of play dough or carbon paper. Try not to rip the</li> </ul>	

	<p>paper or make an impression on the dough/carbon paper</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use self-propelling pencils that will snap if pressed too hard (avoid this strategy with children that are easily frustrated).</li> <li>- "Light-up pens" press so the light doesn't come on.</li> <li>- Colour in a picture using light grey, medium grey and dark grey. Then discuss how applying different amounts of pressure changes the shade of grey.</li> <li>- Writing/drawing on a whiteboard or laminated piece of paper. Aim to avoid making the pen squeak.</li> <li>- Try using a Kush-N-Flex (spikey) pencil grip which can help the child to grip the pencil less tightly <a href="https://www.tts-group.co.uk/kush-n-flex-sensory-pencil-grips-10pk/1004742.html">https://www.tts-group.co.uk/kush-n-flex-sensory-pencil-grips-10pk/1004742.html</a></li> </ul>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provide chunky pens and pencils which will enable a more stable grasp and reduce the effort required</li> <li>- Place Blu-Tack around a pencil approximately 1 cm from the drawing tip and avoid making an impression in the Blu-Tac when holding it.</li> <li>- Encourage regular rest/stretch breaks</li> </ul>	
	<p><b>Activity ideas and strategies for children that don't press hard enough or grip too lightly:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use chalk or crayons on their side to do tree bark/brick wall rubbings or rub over stencils. Child holds the crayon flat on the paper between their index finger, middle finger and thumb (tripod grasp). Encourage the child to apply enough pressure so they reveal the stencil underneath.</li> <li>- "Light up pens"- press so the light comes on</li> <li>- Write or draw with a felt pen or gel pens, or soft lead pencils which allow the child to succeed more easily.</li> <li>- Provide chunky pens and pencils which will enable a more stable grasp</li> <li>- Try weighted pens/pencils during colouring/drawing activities.</li> </ul> 	



	<p><a href="https://www.sensorydirect.com/blog/make-weighted-pencil/">https://www.sensorydirect.com/blog/make-weighted-pencil/</a></p>	
<p>Child has difficulty drawing simple lines and shapes</p>	<p>Children need to be able to recognise shapes before they are able to copy and reproduce them.</p> <p>Creating shapes with objects is easier than drawing them. Try activities such as...</p> <p>1. Lolly Sticks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Start with copying simple lines and shapes from an example produced by an adult (rather than a 2D pattern cards).</li> <li>- Pattern card templates can be downloaded from online resources such as Twinkl but are more difficult to copy from than a physical example.</li> <li>- Remember to break the design down into parts.</li> <li>- Verbally discuss the design e.g. 'on top of', 'next to' etc.</li> </ul>  <p>2. Block/Brick Designs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ask the child to copy simple block designs from a model made by an adult. Some children may need to watch the adult demonstrate building the model.</li> </ul>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Start with just 3 blocks of the same colour. Over time you can introduce more blocks and different colours and make sure that the child copies the colours accurately.</li> </ul>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Talk about the position of the blocks in relation to each other e.g. 'on top of', 'next to', help the child to identify if their attempt is 'the same' or 'different'.</li> <li>- Later, the child can copy block designs from 2D pictures on a card rather than a model.</li> </ul>	
	<p>Multi-Sensory Shape Practise Use various textures to practise drawing:   - o + / □ \ X Δ ∩ U</p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Shaving foam can be smeared onto a mirror/easel or onto a tray.</li> <li>- Writing with finger or stick in a tray of sand/shaving foam/mixture of cornflour and water.</li> </ul> <p>Please also see the video on multi-sensory drawing ideas: <a href="https://www.cambscommunityservices.nhs.uk/cambridgeshire-children's-occupational-therapy/paper-pencil-and-scissor-skills/pre-writing">https://www.cambscommunityservices.nhs.uk/cambridgeshire-children's-occupational-therapy/paper-pencil-and-scissor-skills/pre-writing</a></p> <p>Provide hand over hand support to help the child 'feel' the movement. Visual cues such as dots may also help create the plan.</p>	
	<p>Progress from tracing over a shape to joining dots.</p> 	
	<p>If a child is struggling with spatial concepts such as 'top' and 'down' it may be helpful to initially work on a vertical surface so top really means top.</p> 	
	<p>Also see; <a href="https://www.cambscommunityservices.nhs.uk/cambridgeshire-children's-occupational-therapy/paper-pencil-and-scissor-skills/pre-writing">https://www.cambscommunityservices.nhs.uk/cambridgeshire-children's-occupational-therapy/paper-pencil-and-scissor-skills/pre-writing</a></p>	


## Reluctant Writers

### Common Challenges

- Some younger children do not show an interest in mark making and rarely choose to pick up a pencil.
- Some children struggle to follow an adult's agenda, and it can be difficult to encourage them to use a pencil.
- Child may lack motivation or interest in writing, require a lot of encouragement to initiate the task and ultimately get very little onto paper. They may not see the purpose in writing.
- Child may have a tendency to rush to get the task completed as quickly as possible, resulting in messy handwriting
- Child complains of painful or achy hands. Strategies have been tried, but the aches and pains remain, and child may begin to be reluctant to write.
- Child dislikes the feel of a pen/pencil or the sound of the pencil/pen on the paper.
- Child can express lots of great ideas verbally, but does not reflect these on paper.
- Some children can become anxious about making mistakes. This sometimes prevents them doing any work unless they feel confident they can do it perfectly



Area of Difficulty	Strategy	Tick when strategy has been tried and add comments.
Reluctant writers of all ages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Make sure the writing task is set at the 'just right level' so that the child feels able to achieve, rather than overwhelmed by the task. You may need to reduce the expectation of how much writing is completed in order for the child to engage at all.</li> <li>- Keep sessions short – up to five minutes initially. Alternate 5 minutes of handwriting practice with 5 minutes of a fun activity or treat, then return to handwriting practice. A visual timer or sand timer could be used to help the child work for the time set, and know that the task will end.</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Encourage the child to take regular rest breaks, not only to rest their hand but also allow a 'brain break'.</li> <li>- Use of a 'Now and Next' approach may be helpful</li> </ul>	
Reluctant Pre-writers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Set up an area with an appropriately sized table and chair, and a range of fun and interesting crayons, coloured pencils and paper which they can freely access throughout the day.</li> <li>- If and when they do begin to mark make, you can begin copying the marks/scribbles that they are making whilst providing a verbal commentary e.g. "up and down, round and round". Slowly start taking turns, and encourage them to copy the marks that you make.</li> <li>- Refer to the Multi-sensory activity ideas on our other advice sheets or the video on our website to consider more ways to explore simple lines and shapes which may align with areas of interest for example, using a car to follow along roads; you could even strap a crayon to the front or back of the car so it makes a mark on the paper.</li> </ul> 	-
Reluctant children that can write independently.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Remind the child that it is not about quantity of writing, but quality.</li> <li>- Incorporate art into writing activities – e.g. fold a piece of paper into four quarters and think of four topics. Write one topic on each square. The child can then draw a picture to represent each of the topics before writing about them.</li> <li>- Choose writing activities with a purpose – allow the child to write about a topic that means something to them so they can see the purpose beyond just learning to write.</li> </ul>	

	<p>Fun handwriting activities could include writing birthday cards, secret notes, diaries, letters to Father Christmas and captions to pictures.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Guided writing – parent/teacher and child write something together. Let the child choose the topic. The adult does the physical handwriting and the child helps to think of, and organise the ideas and sentences. Often a child's physical writing skills and stamina don't match their creativity and voice. Guided writing helps them to see what's possible with writing.</li> <li>- Children who dislike the feel of the pencil/pen can be given a variety of foam/rubber pencil grips to try. They may prefer to write in pen rather than pencil. Easy flow rollerball pens glide nicely over the paper and are generally not 'scratchy' like pencils or standard handwriting pens.</li> <li>- Consider additional means of recording (e.g. a scribe, typing, dictation), that the child may be more motivated by, and therefore be more able to demonstrate their learning and ideas more accurately. See additional advice sheet on use of ICT for more details.</li> </ul>	
<p>Fear of Failure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Spelling and grammar are important, but only as a way to help us communicate thoughts and ideas. Focus on the child's ideas first and leave spelling/grammar for the revision process. Encourage children who are worried about spelling to write down their whole thought in their best-guess spelling and check the spelling afterwards.</li> <li>- A Social Story can be helpful to reassure that it is okay to make mistakes.</li> <li>- Allow use of a rubber initially, then gradually limit use, e.g for tasks they will find difficult, but not for routine tasks.</li> </ul>	



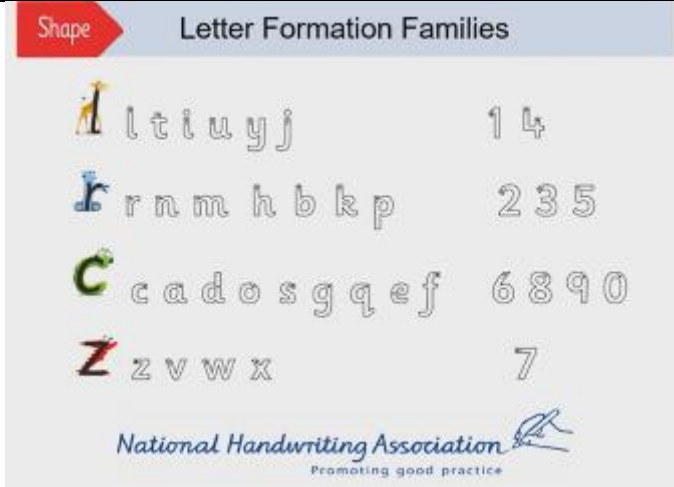
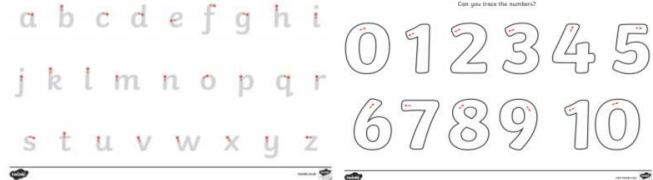
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Erasable pens may give the child confidence to write in pen as they can erase any mistakes</li></ul>	
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## Handwriting

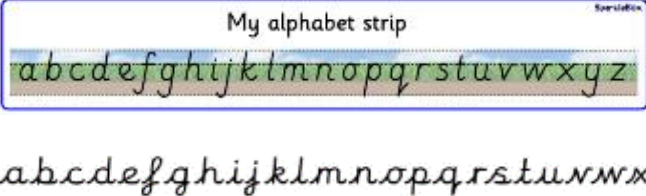
Handwriting is one of the most complex skills we have to learn. It involves linguistic, cognitive, perceptual and motor components, all of which have to be integrated. Before children can hold a pencil, they need to be able to sit up and move their arm independently of their body. They need to be able to isolate their fingers to hold their pencil. To write, they first need to visually understand the difference between letters. They need to have success with pre-writing shapes. And, then they need to remember how to form the letters.

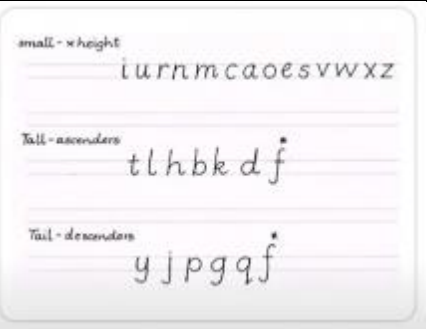
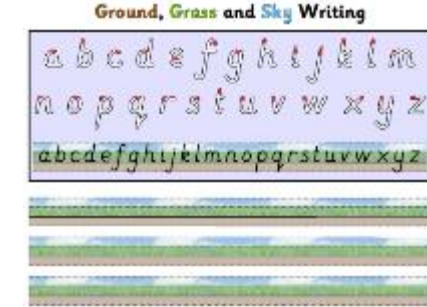
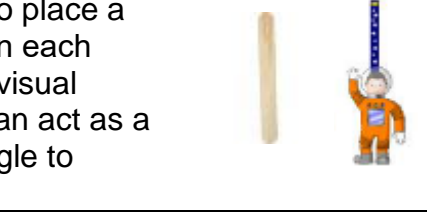

The relevant handwriting activities for the child's area of difficulty should be completed for 5-10mins a day at home/school.



Area of Difficulty	Strategy	Tick when strategy has been tried and add comments.
Child is left handed	Check the child's pencil grasp. Holding the pencil at least 3cm from the point may help to see what is being written.	
	Offer fast drying/non-smudging pens (e.g. Jetstream Uniball)	
	Left handers should always sit on the left hand side of a right hander; this will avoid their arms colliding.	
	<p>Paper Position:</p> <p>a. Paper should be tilted a maximum of 45 degrees.</p> <p>b. The paper should be principally on the same side of the body as the writing hand.</p> <p>c. The best writing position is when the forearm is supported. The child should be encouraged to move the paper up rather than his/her arm down.</p> <p>e. Once a good paper position has been found this angle can be marked on the desk with tape.</p>	
Child has difficulty writing	Practise one letter family at a time. This will help reinforce the correct starting points and movement patterns.	


<p>legible letters and numbers</p>		
	<p>Position work on a vertical surface (paper on the wall, chalk/white board or easel) to help them realise that top means top, and not further away from the body when on a horizontal surface.</p>	
	<p>There are a number of printable 'tracing and copying' resources available online or dry wipe books can be purchased from shops.</p> <p>Letter Formation Practice Sheet</p> <p>Number Formation <small>Can you trace the numbers?</small></p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <a href="https://teachhandwriting.co.uk/">https://teachhandwriting.co.uk/</a></li> <li>- <a href="https://www.twinkl.co.uk/resources/literacy/handwriting-and-letter-formation-english-key-stage-1/literacy-handwriting">https://www.twinkl.co.uk/resources/literacy/handwriting-and-letter-formation-english-key-stage-1/literacy-handwriting</a></li> <li>- <a href="https://www.education.com/worksheets/handwriting/">https://www.education.com/worksheets/handwriting/</a></li> <li>- <a href="https://www.jellyandbean.co.uk/free-resources">https://www.jellyandbean.co.uk/free-resources</a></li> </ul> <p>It is important to be aware however that learning the correct movement of the letters and numbers is often not achieved from just copying/tracing.</p>	
	<p>Multi-sensory strategies can be used to help reinforce correct movement patterns e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Writing with finger or stick in a tray of sand/shaving foam/mixture of cornflour and water</li> <li>- Paint brush dipped in bucket of water-painting on walls/patio/fence</li> </ul>	



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Air drawing/sky writing/ - the child uses their arm to draw the letter in the air</li> <li>- Torch directed onto the wall/Jedi writing using a lightsabre/ribbon waved in the air</li> <li>- Chalk/crayon on an easel or paper on the wall</li> </ul> <p><a href="https://nha-handwriting.org.uk/handwriting/help-for-parents/a-motivational-fun-approach-to-developing-handwriting-skills/">https://nha-handwriting.org.uk/handwriting/help-for-parents/a-motivational-fun-approach-to-developing-handwriting-skills/</a></p>	
	<p>Letter Formation Apps which can be used in combination with the above multisensory techniques. It is advised that the child uses a stylus instead of their finger to trace the screen.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Wet, Dry, Try</li> <li>- Letter school</li> <li>- Writing Wizard</li> <li>- Letter Quiz</li> <li>- Little Writer</li> <li>- Ready to Print- Essare LLC (only available on a tablet not a phone)</li> </ul>	
	<p>Always have an example of letters and numbers on the table in front of the child to copy rather than have to remember the letter shape and formation pattern from memory. Alphabet and number strips can be downloaded online and it is important to ensure that parents are aware of the schools handwriting scheme i.e. is the child expected to be writing cursive letters.</p> 	
<p>Child is struggling with continuous cursive letter shapes</p>	<p>To better understand the arguments for and against teaching continuous cursive, the National Handwriting Association has 2 useful articles on their website <a href="https://nha-handwriting.org.uk/handwriting/articles/continuous-cursive-cure-or-curse/">https://nha-handwriting.org.uk/handwriting/articles/continuous-cursive-cure-or-curse/</a></p> <p><a href="https://nha-handwriting.org.uk/handwriting/articles/teaching-fully-cursive-writing-in-reception/">Teaching Fully Cursive Writing in Reception (nha-handwriting.org.uk)</a></p>	

<p>Child has difficulty sizing their letters and orientating letters to the line</p>	<p>Provide a clear and easy to use 2 lined handwriting paper. This could be laminated to use with a whiteboard pen.</p> <p>It is important that the lines reflect the natural size of the child's writing.</p> <p><a href="https://nha-handwriting.org.uk/shop/printable-line-guides/">https://nha-handwriting.org.uk/shop/printable-line-guides/</a></p>		
	<p>Try a 4 lined handwriting paper e.g. Sky, Grass and Ground paper. The benefit of this particular type of paper is that you can give clear verbal instructions e.g. "start in the sky".</p>		
<p>Child has difficulty orientating their writing on the paper and/or spacing letters and words</p>	<p>Use green tape/stickers or highlight on left hand side of the paper to show starting point and use red to show stopping point on the right hand side.</p> <p>Try using graph paper or squared paper in various sizes. Instruct the child to put one letter in each box and leave one box free as a space between words. Start with large boxes and progress to smaller boxes.</p>		
	<p>Encourage the child to place a 'finger space' between each word. A lolly stick or visual prompt (see below) can act as a reminder if they struggle to remember.</p>		
<p>Child complains of pain and/or fatigue when writing</p>	<p>Try chunky pencils, easy flow roller ball pens, soft foam pencil grips with the aim of making their pencil grasp more comfortable.</p>		

	<p>Break the writing task down into more manageable chunks allowing for regular rest breaks in between.</p> <p>Encourage the child to practice some handwriting warm ups (see advice sheet for details). These ideas can also be used during rest breaks to stretch the fingers.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Handwriting Warm Ups-Penpals (Cambridge University Press) can be found on YouTube</li> </ol>	
<p>Child has an unconventional pencil causing difficulty</p>	<p>Rubber pencil grips (Get a Grip Pencil Grip assessment kit available from <a href="https://www.tts-group.co.uk/">https://www.tts-group.co.uk/</a> ) can be useful for younger children who are still working on developing a mature grasp and need help to position their fingers correctly.</p> <p>The 'Get a Grip' Kit available from TTS includes all the popular pencil grips which can be trialled with the child.</p> <p><a href="https://www.tts-group.co.uk/get-a-grip-pencil-grips/1002033.html?gclid=EAlalQobChMIglq59oOG8wIV1GDmCh123QDaEAAYASAAEgKAa_D_BwE">https://www.tts-group.co.uk/get-a-grip-pencil-grips/1002033.html?gclid=EAlalQobChMIglq59oOG8wIV1GDmCh123QDaEAAYASAAEgKAa_D_BwE</a></p>  <p>A loose hair band or a 'handwriter' can help children who tend to hold their pencil very upright. These can be purchased from a variety of websites.</p>  <p>Holding a coin or small item in the small and ring finger can stop children adopting a grip using more than three fingers.</p> <p>It can often be difficult to correct a child's pencil grasp beyond the age of 10 years, as their natural grasp has become habitual and forcing a more conventional grasp can actually hinder their handwriting further.</p> <p>Pencil grips and ergonomic pens can be trialled at any age and may simply be more comfortable for</p>	

	<p>some children, particularly those children with joint laxity (bendy fingers).</p> <p>For older children (10 and above) compensatory strategies need to be considered such as use of chunky pencils and easy flow pens to help reduce handwriting strain, as it is likely to be more difficult to change the nature of their pencil grasp through use of a rubber pencil grip by this age</p> <p>Unconventional pencil grasps can be functional and do not always cause the child any difficulties therefore careful consideration needs to be given to why the grasp needs to be changed.</p>	
<p>Child has lots of great ideas but struggles to record them legibly on paper</p>	<p>Trial allowing the child to verbalise their ideas to an adult to scribe. The child can then copy the sentence which reduces the complexity of the task and allows them to focus on just the physical elements of writing.</p> <p>Consider allowing the child to utilise ICT as an additional means of recording their work in order for them to be able to demonstrate their true potential.</p>	
<p>Child finds it difficult to sit comfortably for handwriting tasks.</p>	<p>A good position at the table will help the child to be stable and be able to concentrate and use their hands most effectively.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The child's feet should be flat on the floor with hips and knees at about 90°. A foot box may be required to enable the child's feet to be supported.</li> <li>b. The height of the desk should be (5cms) above the bent elbow (when the child is seated correctly on his/her chair).</li> <li>c. The head should be kept central and the child's bottom should be well back in the chair.</li> <li>d. When copying from a whiteboard the child should be facing it directly.</li> </ol> 	

	<p>e. A slanted work surface can help (e.g. posture pack or wide A4 lever arch folder or angled board available at IKEA).</p> <p><a href="https://www.cambscommunityservices.nhs.uk/cambridgeshire-children's-occupational-therapy/paper-pencil-and-scissor-skills/posture-and-seating">https://www.cambscommunityservices.nhs.uk/cambridgeshire-children's-occupational-therapy/paper-pencil-and-scissor-skills/posture-and-seating</a></p>	
<p>Child is struggling to move onto cursive script</p>	<p>This is a topic covered in detail on the National Handwriting Association website (<a href="https://nhahandwriting.org.uk/handwriting/articles/">https://nhahandwriting.org.uk/handwriting/articles/</a>)</p> <p>.</p> <p>The most important factor to consider is whether the child is able to produce legible writing which enables them to demonstrate their true potential.</p>	
<p>Children who haven't been given their 'pen licence'</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Some schools adopt a 'pen licence' scheme. This means that children generally have to demonstrate consistent letter formation, letter sizing and spacing, joined up and fluent writing in order to gain permission to use a pen.</li> <li>- For children that are experiencing difficulties with handwriting, the pen licence scheme can have an impact on their confidence and self-esteem, as they observe their peers progressing around them.</li> <li>- Most children will find it easier to write with a pen as the shaft is usually thicker (enabling a more secure and less effortful grasp), pen requires less pressure than pencil (so can assist pressure and reduce effort) and the easy flowing nature of rollerball pens (e.g. Uniball or erasable pens) can aid fluency and help reduce fatigue.</li> </ul>	
<p>Child isn't engaging in the traditional school handwriting</p>	<p><b>Handwriting Programmes</b> that can be followed as part of small group interventions or additional practise at home:</p>	

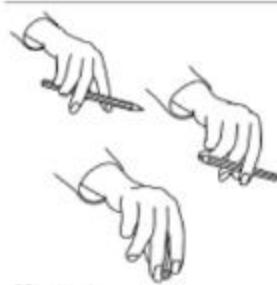
<p>practice sessions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>'Getting Ready to Write'- Alistair Bryce Clegg.</b> This book takes practitioners through the developmental stages, looks at gender differences in mark making and then provides some innovative ideas for intervention such as Dough Gym and writing like a Jedi</li> <li>- <b>'Start Write Stay Write'</b> addresses the environmental, postural and physical elements required for effective and automatic writing. Available from <a href="https://www.tts-group.co.uk/">https://www.tts-group.co.uk/</a></li> <li>- <b>'Write from the Start'</b> contains over 400 graded activities that develop the intrinsic muscles of the hand and help develop perceptual skills required to orientate letters and organise the page. Suitable for children aged 4-6 (or older with additional needs).</li> <li>- <b>Speed up!</b> specifically for children aged eight to 13 years to develop speed and fluency.</li> <li>- <b>Penpals for Handwriting</b> is produced by Cambridge University Press and provides an easy to follow programme/whole school scheme for primary aged children aligned with national curriculum standards. It includes lesson plans, photocopiable worksheets, interactive videos, small group activities, homework activities. There are YouTube videos to explain about the content if you are considering purchasing this for your school.</li> </ul> <p><b>Other Handwriting Resources:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://www.twinkl.co.uk/resource/t-l-52341-handwriting-activity-sheets">https://www.twinkl.co.uk/resource/t-l-52341-handwriting-activity-sheets</a>.</li> <li>• <a href="https://www.education.com/worksheets/handwriting/">https://www.education.com/worksheets/handwriting/</a></li> <li>• <a href="https://www.jellyandbean.co.uk/free-resources/">https://www.jellyandbean.co.uk/free-resources/</a></li> <li>• <a href="https://www.sparklebox.co.uk/literacy/writing/ground-grass-sky-handwriting.html">https://www.sparklebox.co.uk/literacy/writing/ground-grass-sky-handwriting.html</a>.</li> <li>• <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/key-stage-2-tests-access-arrangements">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/key-stage-2-tests-access-arrangements</a></li> <li>• BBC Dance Mat Typing practise can be accessed for free online</li> </ul>	
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Also see:

<https://www.cambscommunityservices.nhs.uk/cambridgeshire-childrens-occupational-therapy/paper-pencil-and-scissor-skills/handwriting>

## Handwriting Warm Ups and Stretches



©Physiotools

### Pencil Windmill

Hold a pencil up in the air, as if you are about to write. Turn the pencil like a windmill, using only the fingers that are holding the pencil. Try clockwise 10 times and anticlockwise 10 times.



©Physiotools

### Chair Push Ups

Sit on a chair with your bottom right back. Hold onto the edge of a chair. Push up on your arms to lift your bottom off the chair. Hold for 5 seconds. Relax and pause for 2 seconds. Repeat 5 times.



©Physiotools

### Thumb to Finger Touching

Touch your thumb to each finger one after the other. Use only one hand. Then try both hands.



©Physiotools

### Palm Press

Place the palms of your hands together, with your wrists bent up at 90 degrees. Push your palms against each other for 10 seconds. Relax and rest for 5 seconds. Repeat 5 times.



©Physiotools

### Shoulder rolls

Roll your shoulders in both directions. Repeat 10 times.



©Physiotools

Reach to the sky  
Arms across chest (you can do this sitting on a chair rather than standing up)  
Take arms out to side with palms facing the ceiling and continue the movement so your hands meet above your head. Reverse.

Repeat 5 times.



Place your hands on your shoulders.

Make circles with your elbows.

Make 10 circles backwards

Make 10 circles forwards

Handwriting Warm Up videos for the classroom can be found on YouTube e.g. Penpals Handwriting Warm Ups (Cambridge University Press)

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## Using IT to Write

Whilst it is important to develop handwriting skills, this should not become a barrier to learning. For children who find writing for longer periods challenging, or struggle to produce legible writing, a computer laptop or tablet could support them to get their ideas onto paper and is often an option that can be used alongside continued handwriting practice.

Effective integration of technology into the classroom can reduce barriers to achievement, help pupils access the curriculum and complete work at a level that evidences their learning rather than their limitations. In the wider context beyond school, handwriting is often not the main means of recording and therefore it is beneficial to develop efficient typing skills as well.

Parents/school staff should check all sites before they are used by the children and ensure that suitable filters are in place on all devices.

Area of Difficulty	Strategy	Tick when strategy has been tried and add comments.
Standard keyboard and mouse isn't working well	<p><b>Learning to type</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A short-term trial of typing will not be successful. Lots of typing practise helps create muscle memory so that you can type without having to look at the keyboard and your fingers.</li> <li>- Using a Bluetooth keyboard with a touchscreen tablet will help support the development of touch-typing skills, typing speed and muscle memory. Typing on a touchscreen is not the same as typing on a keyboard.</li> <li>- More information can be found at Tips for Teaching: Keyboarding (<a href="http://nhahandwriting.org.uk">nhahandwriting.org.uk</a>)</li> <li>- There are websites and programmes that help children learn to find letters on the keyboard and type e.g.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Typing Club (free)</li> <li>- BBC Dancemat (free)</li> <li>- Ratatype (free)</li> <li>- Touch-type Read and Spell</li> <li>- Nessy Fingers</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	



### **Keyboards**

Alternative keyboards can be provided for children who struggle with standard keyboards

- e.g. keyboards with larger keys that are easier to see or press, small keyboards which are easier to cover when typing with one hand, high-vis keyboards for children with a visual impairment, lower case keyboards or lower-case keyboard stickers for children who are not familiar with capital letters.



- These are widely available at relatively low cost e.g. Inclusive Technology/Amazon

### **Touch Screen**

- A tablet with a touchscreen may be a useful option for children struggling to control and use a mouse.
- Using a stylus with a touch screen device may help support development of a dynamic tripod grip needed to handwrite. These are widely available at relatively low cost e.g. Inclusive Technology/Amazon

### **Dictation / Speech to Text Software**

Speech to text/voice recognition is an alternative to typing on a keyboard.




- This is an area where there have been huge improvements in technology, and lots of the options are now freely available.
- Remember that dictation is not the same as talking in conversation. Dictation is a skill that has to be practised and developed. It might help to begin with lots of short sessions, dictating a passage from a book rather than trying to compose ideas and dictate at the same time.
- Keep in mind that to use dictation, you have to be able to speak clearly.





	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A headset microphone will provide the greatest levels of accuracy, as there is less space between the users mouth and the microphone which reduces distortion.</li> <li>- Speech to text options are feasible for exams or tasks that can be completed at home or in a quiet breakout space in school, but the software does not produce accurate results when used in a busy classroom where there is background noise.</li> <li>- Free to use examples include:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Notes app on Apple iPad or iPhone</li> <li>- Dictate in Windows 10</li> <li>- Voice typing within Google Docs</li> <li>- SpeechTexter (requires Google Chrome)</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Word Prediction</b> Word prediction predicts what you are trying to type (even if it's misspelled) and lists suggested words.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- This can help improve the speed and flow of writing, avoiding the child getting stuck waiting for help to spell a word, or forgetting what the rest of the sentence was going to say after struggling to spell a word</li> <li>- E.g. Clicker/Penfriend/Text Help- Read &amp; Write</li> </ul>	
<p>Child is struggling to read their work back.</p>	<p>Text to speech reads back what's been typed to help listen for possible mistakes or support children who find it difficult to read.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- E.g. 'Read Aloud' under the 'Review' tab within Microsoft Word (Windows 10)</li> </ul>	
<p>Child finds it difficult to generate ideas</p>	<p><b>Word Banks</b> Word banks can help a child think of topic-related words, or help emerging writers build sentences from whole words e.g. <a href="https://www.cricksoft.com/uk/clicker">https://www.cricksoft.com/uk/clicker</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dictionaries and thesauri, some of which allow the child to look up words with sound or pictures or look up words in their first language.</li> <li>- e.g. Clicker, Text Help Read &amp; Write</li> </ul>	


	<p><b>Digital graphic organizers</b></p> <p>Digital graphic organizers can help organize thoughts visually prior to writing, by creating an on-screen spider diagram, flow chart or mind map. Some of these will also transfer the contents of the mind map into a word document.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- e.g. Clicker, Inspiration, Kidspiration</li> </ul>	
<p>Child is struggling to access standard settings on computer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessibility/Ease of Access features can make using technology easier           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- e.g. adjusting the font size or style, colour adjustment, speech-to-text, narrator, slowing the cursor speed and speed of the mouse clicks.</li> <li>- Many are built into the operating system of the computer or mobile device with no need to buy extra software, but features will vary between devices/software versions.</li> <li>- The accessibility menu (or Ease of Access) is usually found in the settings menu.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<p>Child struggles to use technology during maths.</p>	<p>Specialist software &amp; apps are available to support students to set out and solve maths problems, carry out maths calculations, draw and measure shapes and graphs, create science diagrams.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- e.g. Splash! City Maths</li> </ul>	

### Scissor Skills and Using a Ruler

Children can struggle to grasp and operate standard scissors when they have yet to develop adequate manipulation skills or hand strength. They may try to use two hands to operate the scissors meaning they cannot also hold the paper. Children can struggle to control and guide the paper and can get easily frustrated when they fail. Some children lack safety awareness when using scissors or they may not be developmentally ready to use scissors but need to practise other bilateral activities to develop their skills ready for using scissors in the future. Standard rulers can be difficult to hold in place, particularly when children are focussing on measuring as well.

Area of Difficulty	Strategy	Tick when strategy has been tried and add comments.
Child struggles to hold scissors correctly	Ensure left handed children have access to left handed scissors. <a href="https://www.griffinot.com/difference-left-handed-scissors/">https://www.griffinot.com/difference-left-handed-scissors/</a>	
	Provide Mini Easi Grip, Easi Grip or Long Loop Scissors which are easier to hold  <a href="http://www.ik.com/shop/easi-grip-scissors/">http://www.ik.com/shop/easi-grip-scissors/</a> - <a href="https://peta-uk.com/shop/long-loop-scissors/">https://peta-uk.com/shop/long-loop-scissors/</a>	
	Provide opportunities to practise activities with tongs, tweezers or Handy Scoopers which are held in a similar way but can be a safer option for children with poor safety awareness 	
	Provide hand over hand support (position yourself behind the child and place your hands over their hands) to help the child 'feel' the correct movement and help them maintain the correct grasp  Visit <a href="https://www.griffinot.com/scissor-skills-children/">https://www.griffinot.com/scissor-skills-children/</a> for more ideas.	
Child struggles to hold and guide the paper	Keep the paper small. Start with thin strips of paper, Play Doh sausages or straws etc and just practise snipping... 	

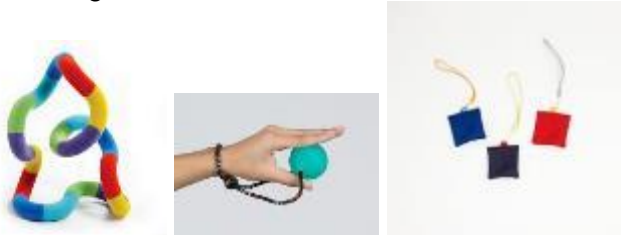

	<p>Encourage the child to hold scissors and paper with their thumb uppermost. A sticker on each thumbnail or googly eyes on the scissors will act as a visual prompt.</p>		
	<p>Don't be tempted to hold the paper for them, they need to learn to operate the scissors in one hand and hold the paper in the other hand. Instead of holding the paper for them, tape one end to the table and let the child cut from the other end.</p>		
	<p>Encourage and prompt the child to move the hand holding the paper as they cut along the line. Numbered dots for where to position thumb may be useful. E.g. if child is guiding the paper with their left hand, place numbered dots along the left hand edge of the paper and call out the corresponding number when they need to move their hand as they progress with the scissors along the line. A coloured dot and corresponding coloured sticker on the child's thumbnail would be helpful.</p>		
<p>Child lacks accuracy when cutting.</p>	<p>Make sure the task is set at the 'just right level'. If the child feels the task is unachievable they are likely to take little care over their work.</p>		
	<p>Use graded scissor activities i.e. start with cutting between wide, straight pathways on small pieces of paper. When the child is more confident and able, you can slowly make the paper larger and the pathways narrower and introduce changes in direction. Then ask the child to cut on the line, rather than between a pathway. Remember to keep the paper small (1/4 A4 is about right).</p>		


	<p>Draw dots along the line they are cutting along to help focus and slow them down. They could score points for every dot they are able to cut through.</p> 	
<p>Child has difficulty holding a ruler still</p>	<p>Provide a ruler with a handle or non-slip ruler</p> <p> <a href="https://www.amazon.co.uk/Alligator-Easy-Grip-Ruler-Pack/dp/B01LA6VR7W">https://www.amazon.co.uk/Alligator-Easy-Grip-Ruler-Pack/dp/B01LA6VR7W</a></p> <p> <a href="https://www.thedyslexiashop.co.uk/maped-kidy-grip-ruler-30cm.html">https://www.thedyslexiashop.co.uk/maped-kidy-grip-ruler-30cm.html</a></p> <p> <a href="https://www.whsmith.co.uk/products/classmaster-finger-grip-ruler-clear-10-pack-fgr10/5055353605377.html">https://www.whsmith.co.uk/products/classmaster-finger-grip-ruler-clear-10-pack-fgr10/5055353605377.html</a></p>	
	<p>Also see; <a href="https://www.cambscommunityservices.nhs.uk/cambridgeshire-children-s-occupational-therapy/paper-pencil-and-scissor-skills/scissor-skills">https://www.cambscommunityservices.nhs.uk/cambridgeshire-children-s-occupational-therapy/paper-pencil-and-scissor-skills/scissor-skills</a></p>	

### Attention and Focus

Some children struggle to sit still due to difficulties with attention and focus. Some people need to move regularly to maintain their arousal levels and help them to stay focused. Others are easily distracted by their environment or find it hard to suppress the urge to fiddle with objects or get up and explore the room. Children will struggle to initiate and/or stay on task when the activity is too difficult, they feel unable to achieve or they do not understand what to do.

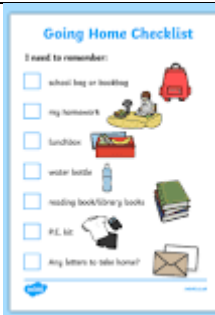
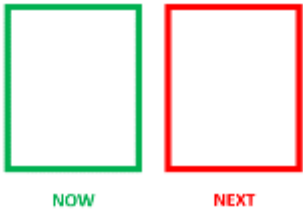
For more information on how **sensory processing difficulties** may contribute to a child's struggling to sit still and maintain focus, please access our **Training Package for Schools**.


Area of Difficulty	Strategy	Tick when strategy has been tried and add comments.
Child excessively touches objects	<p>Allow access to a box of fidget items e.g. tangle toys, squeeze balls, putty. The child may be more able to attend to the task whilst manipulating these items. Fiddle toys should not be visually distracting.</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <a href="https://www.sensorydirect.com/behaviour/concentration/fidget-toys">https://www.sensorydirect.com/behaviour/concentration/fidget-toys</a></li> <li>- <a href="https://www.griffinot.com/top-five-tips-fidget-toys/">https://www.griffinot.com/top-five-tips-fidget-toys/</a></li> </ul>	
	Remove all unnecessary materials from the child's work area.	
Child is distracted by their environment	Consider where the child is positioned in class, aim to move them away from the window and towards the front of the class room/whiteboard.	
	<p>Keep the child's desk clutter free. Make sure only relevant information is on the white/chalk board.</p> <p>Consider using a pop-up workstation distractions during focused activity.</p>  <p><a href="https://www.tts-group.co.uk/pop-up-desk-barrier/1004416.html">https://www.tts-group.co.uk/pop-up-desk-barrier/1004416.html</a> to block out <a href="#">concentration-</a></p>	
Child excessively seeks movement	<p>Allow regular movement breaks particularly prior to and after times in which the child needs to concentrate on an activity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <a href="https://www.griffinot.com/sensory-movement-breaks-tips-for-success/">https://www.griffinot.com/sensory-movement-breaks-tips-for-success/</a></li> </ul>	

<p>Child is lethargic/ lacks energy and zones out /daydreams</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <a href="https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC5ulZ2KOZZeQDQo_Gsi_qbQ">https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC5ulZ2KOZZeQDQo_Gsi_qbQ</a> (Cosmic Yoga movement break)</li> <li>- <a href="https://www.youtube.com/c/GriffinOT/videos">https://www.youtube.com/c/GriffinOT/videos</a></li> <li>- Children that are lethargic and need 'waking up' will need to complete 'alerting' activities. Children that are seeking movement and fidgeting will need to complete more 'organising/calming' movements.</li> </ul>	
	<p><b>Consider the use of a Move &amp; Sit cushion</b></p> <p>An air-filled cushion creates a moving surface for the child to sit on. The idea is that this helps to keep the child alert and focus. therefore helps the attention and focus.</p>  <p>- They can help children who are constantly fidgeting and rocking in their chair of fidgeting by providing a sense of movement without such noticeable movements.</p> <p>- They can also help a child who is slumped in their chair and appear to have low energy as it may help them feel more alert.</p> <p>- Wedge shaped cushions help tip the pelvis and therefore promote a better upright sitting posture.</p> <p><b>Before considering an air-filled cushion, check to see if the child is fidgeting because their feet can't touch the floor when sitting on a chair. If this is the case then provide a foot box for the child to put their feet on.</b></p> <p>Key points to remember when using air-filled cushions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- When sitting on the cushion check to see if the child can put their feet on the floor, if they can't then a foot stool should be used to help keep them stable. If the child is too unstable on the cushion then their fine motor control will be compromised.</li> <li>- For some children the use of these cushions causes them to fidget more as they have to work harder to maintain a good posture and therefore fatigue. The use of the cushion should be built up over time and used selectively e.g. when sitting and listening not during tasks that require fine motor skills.</li> <li>- Monitor the child's response to the cushion. Has using the cushion improved their attention and or focus? If the cushion is not helping then a different strategy should be tried.</li> <li>- The cushions need to be inflated. However, be careful not to over inflate the cushion. Watch the video by OT Griffin for further advice: <a href="https://youtu.be/IrqnsqDfpYc">https://youtu.be/IrqnsqDfpYc</a></li> <li>- The child must be sat on the cushion with their bottom back in the chair so that they are sat fully on the cushion.</li> <li>- Make sure you are using the right sized cushion. The child's entire bottom and the top of their thighs should be on the cushion. Their thighs should not be bulging over the sides. Don't just assume a child will need a child's size</li> <li>- If the child doesn't like the lumps on the cushion, it is okay to flip it over and use the smooth side to sit on.</li> </ul>	



	<p>- Air-filled cushions often don't work well on the classroom floor. If it is decided that the air-filled cushion is the best option, it may be better for the child to sit on their cushion on a chair, instead of sitting on the floor.</p>	
	<p><b>You may want to consider weighted items to help calm and focus.</b></p> <p>The core idea behind all weighted products is that weight offers proprioceptive feedback which can have a calming effect, helping to improve a child's attention span and reducing excessive fidgeting. Weighted lap pads and shoulder wraps apply calming deep pressure whilst the user is sitting down.</p> <p>Please remember that everyone is unique so while some children will find these strategies calming, for others it may not work.</p> <p>When can they be used?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To help reduce fidgeting and support self-regulation during carpet time and assembly.</li> <li>• When needing to focus for a when sitting at the classroom reading time or at the dinner</li> <li>• Not recommended for night</li> </ul>  <p>period of time table, during table. time use.</p> <p>How should they be used?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lap pads and shoulder weights can be used for short periods of time throughout the day when the child is expected to sit still.</li> <li>• Over time the child is likely to get used to the sensation and therefore it will become less effective. Therefore, they should be used for short, focussed periods and not all day.</li> <li>• It is important that the child has control over when the lap pad is used. A child should never be forced to use the lap pad or shoulder wrap if they do not want to.</li> <li>• The child should be able to remove the lap pad or shoulder weight by themselves.</li> <li>• Users should always ensure they follow the manufacturer's safety guidelines when using a weighted product.</li> </ul> <p>There are a number of online suppliers including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <a href="https://www.sensorydirect.com/deep-pressure/lap-shoulder-weights.html">https://www.sensorydirect.com/deep-pressure/lap-shoulder-weights.html</a></li> <li>- <a href="https://www.amazon.co.uk/Lap-Weight-for-sensory-integration/dp/B00GSWT7D0">https://www.amazon.co.uk/Lap-Weight-for-sensory-integration/dp/B00GSWT7D0</a></li> <li>- Alternatively, wheat bags can be use</li> </ul> <p><i>Weighted Blankets- Please note that this advice sheet is not referring to the use of weight blankets. If you wish to know more about the safe use of weighted blankets please refer to the Royal College of Occupational Therapy Briefing - the safe use of weighted blankets (2011) which is available online.</i></p>	
<p>Child doesn't always pay attention to,</p>	<p>Check that the child has listened to your instructions, and understands what to do, by asking them to repeat the instructions back to you.</p>	




<p>or follow instructions</p>	<p>Break down activities into smaller down instructions or use simple schedules to help prompt. The child tasks off as they complete them.</p>	 <p>The image shows a 'Going Home Checklist' with the following items: school bag or bookbag, my homework, lunchbox, water bottle, reading book/library books, P.E. kit, and any letters to take home? Each item has a corresponding icon and a checkbox.</p>	<p>steps. Write visual can tick the</p>	
	<p>Consider using a 'Now and Next' board.          A "Now and Next" board supports a child to understand what will be happening and the order that this will happen. It can help alleviate anxiety and support the child to follow an adult's agenda rather than their own. It is a useful strategy for home and school, it can be used to encourage learning activities and/or personal care routines.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Place two activity photos/symbols/objects on the 'Now and Next' board. To begin with the "Now" activity may need to be short and not too challenging for the child. <i>The length of the activity should increase over time, try to keep all activities positive when first using the board to encourage the child to cooperate. The "Next" activity should be something enjoyable as it is a reward for completing the "Now" activity e.g. bubbles</i></li> <li>Encourage your to the 'Now and (you may initially the board to encourage your the first activity</li> <li>Support your compete the 'Now' activity. <i>It may be helpful to have a green basket/box that you take the activity from. When the activity is finished say and/or sign "finished", put the activity away or into a red basket/box.</i></li> <li>Support your child to return to the 'Now and Next' board and remove the competed activity from the board. <i>Initially you may need to remove the activity symbol in view of your child, gradually encourage them to participate in removing this.</i></li> </ol> <p>Once the child is familiar with this concept, the activities can increase such as "Now", "Next" and "Then".</p> <p><a href="https://www.twinkl.co.uk/resource/t-s-111-now-next-visual-aid">https://www.twinkl.co.uk/resource/t-s-111-now-next-visual-aid</a></p>	 <p>The diagram shows two empty boxes side-by-side. The left box is outlined in green and labeled 'NOW' below it. The right box is outlined in red and labeled 'NEXT' below it.</p>	<p>child to come Next' board need to take them) child to look at say "Now....." child to</p>	


Child struggles to stay focused on a task	Break down activities into smaller steps. You could use visuals to help prompt.	
	Offer regular movement breaks to break long tasks up into more manageable chunks.	
	Make sure the task is set at the 'just right level' to enable the child to achieve and experience success.	
	Use a sand timer and prompt the child to refer back to this if they lose focus.	
Child struggles to complete tasks on time	Repeat instructions and use visual cues to reinforce understanding. Ask the child to repeat the instructions back, gradually increase the number and complexity of instructions given	
	Break task down, the child may need a step-by-step approach, either through written instructions or picture symbols	
	Highlight key information on a worksheet/written instruction	
	Use 'fill in the gaps' answers rather than the child having to organise a whole piece of work. When the child is ready slowly increase the amount of work the child needs to organise	
	Encourage the child to verbalise the steps needed in a task with questions such as 'what do you need to do first' and 'what materials do you need'	
	A child may benefit from the use of a clock or timer to help them understand how long they have to complete each step of the task	

For more attention and focus ideas visit [www.lambethschoolservices.co.uk/Article/42222](http://www.lambethschoolservices.co.uk/Article/42222)

### Organisational Skills

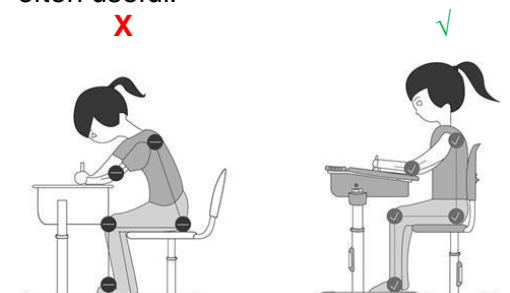

Organisation is dependent on having adequate motor planning, body awareness, timing, focus/attention and memory. Organisational skills are the basis of daily routines and impact a child's ability to gain independence. The key to supporting children to become more organised is teaching them strategies that they can use, rather than relying on an adult to prompt them and correct their mistakes.

Area of Difficulty	Strategy	Tick when strategy has been tried and add comments.
<p>Child struggles to get ready on time</p>	<p>Break down activities into smaller steps. Write down instructions or use simple visual schedules to help prompt. The child can tick the tasks off as they complete them.</p>  <p>The image shows a 'Going Home Checklist' with the following items: school bag or bookbag, my homework, lunchbox, water bottle, reading book/library books, P.E. kit, and any letters to take home? Each item has a checkbox and a small icon representing the item.</p>	
	<p>Try to minimise distractions, a child may need to get ready in a quiet space so they can focus on the steps of the task. Ensure the space is clutter free.</p>	
	<p>Use a sand timer and prompt the child to refer back to this if they lose focus.</p>  <p>The image shows a yellow sand timer with a clear glass body and a yellow top and bottom.</p>	
<p>Child struggles to pack their school bag and organise their belongings. They may frequently lose objects.</p>	<p>Encourage the child to pack the bag in advance e.g., the night before when there is less time pressure</p>	
	<p>Label the child's belongings so they know which items they need to pack in their bag to bring home</p>	
	<p>Choose a school bag with compartments and encourage the child to allocate compartments for certain items.</p>	
	<p>Use a checklist for the child to tick off when they pack an item. Create the list with the child using the school timetable to encourage them to plan what items they need.</p>  <p>The image shows a simple icon of a checklist with a clipboard and four items, each with a checkmark.</p>	
<p>Use visual cues so it is clear where the child needs to put their belongings e.g., name/picture above coat peg/PE peg</p>		




	Encourage the child to help sort objects into different criteria e.g. size, shape, texture, colour, length, purpose. This could be when tidying toys after playing or putting away clothes		
Child finds it difficult to collect materials needed for lessons or home/school leisure activities	Break the task down into smaller simple steps. E.g. ask the child to collect a specific item.		
	Encourage the child to help with tidying up. Label trays/cupboard doors/baskets with words and pictures so they child can locate where the items belong easily.		
Child struggles to follow school/home routines	Provide the child with a timetable of the school day, either using words or pictures. Lessons could be colour coded.		
	Ask the child to check their timetable at the end of each lesson, rather than them relying on you telling them what is next		
	Keep routines consistent where possible so the child can learn what is expected		

**Sitting Posture**

Children with poor postural control/poor core stability may slump when sitting, lean on the table or other surface for support, fidget to find a comfortable position as they fatigue quickly, and may sometimes choose to kneel on the chair/sit on their feet. It is important that children have a good stable base of support in order for them to achieve maximum fine motor control.

Area of Difficulty	Strategy	Tick when strategy has been tried and add comments.
<p>Poor/slumped posture when sitting on a chair.</p> <p>Child needs to adjust position regularly</p> <p>Child wraps feet around legs of the chair</p> <p>Child perches on front of chair</p> <p>Child falls off chair</p> <p>Child stands at table</p>	<p>Ensure the child can sit with their bottom at the back of the chair and feet flat on the floor. Their hips, knees and ankles should be at 90 degrees. The height of the desk should be (5cms) above the bent elbow (when the child is seated correctly on his/her chair).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Some children may need a smaller or bigger chair depending on their size.</li> <li>- Consider using a foot box to support their feet. An empty upturned book bag tray is often useful.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">X <span style="margin-left: 150px;">✓</span></p> 	
	<p>Avoid basic chairs with little ergonomic shape e.g...</p>  <p>There are some standard classroom chairs that offer better support e.g. Postura chairs...</p> <p><a href="https://www.tts-group.co.uk/postura-plus-classroom-chairs/1008806.html">https://www.tts-group.co.uk/postura-plus-classroom-chairs/1008806.html</a></p>	
	<p>Give the child a Move 'n' Sit cushion to sit on to encourage 'active sitting' and promote a more upright posture. Ensure the child's feet can touch</p>	

	<p>the floor or provide a foot box. See 'Move n Sit' advice sheet for details.</p> <p>Provide opportunities for regular change of position and movement breaks. See links at end of booklet for ideas for whole class movement break videos available on YouTube</p> <p>Provide opportunities for the child to practise some core strengthening exercises. These ideas should be completed in PE/Gym Trail sessions and at home at least 3 times a week for 15-20mins.</p> <div data-bbox="384 613 660 712"> </div> <p><b>Bridge</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lie on your back with knees bent and feet flat on the floor. Small gap between your knees.</li> <li>- Lift your bottom off the floor as high as possible.</li> <li>- Hold for 1, 2, 3...secs. Aim to increase length of time.</li> <li>- Try passing a ball under your bottom and over your tummy.</li> <li>- Return to starting position SLOWLY.</li> <li>- Repeat.</li> </ul> <div data-bbox="384 775 480 815"> <p>©Physiotools</p> </div> <hr/> <div data-bbox="384 972 651 1240"> </div> <p><b>Sitting on a Gym Ball</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sit on a gym ball. Make sure the ball is the correct size and allows you to sit with feet flat and thighs level.</li> <li>- Carry out activities at the table, watch TV or listen to a story.</li> <li>- Play throwing and catching</li> <li>- Reach in different directions for puzzle pieces.</li> </ul> <div data-bbox="384 1240 480 1258"> <p>©Physiotools</p> </div> <hr/> <div data-bbox="384 1330 676 1621"> </div> <p><b>High Kneeling/Side sitting.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Start in side sitting (A), try to move into high kneeling (B) without using your hands to help push off. SLOWLY lower to side sitting the other side (C).</li> <li>- Child can hold a ball or other object in their hands to prevent them using hands to push off.</li> <li>- Activities can be completed in the high kneeling position (see above 'half kneel' for ideas)</li> <li>- Repeat.</li> </ul> <div data-bbox="384 1599 480 1617"> <p>©Physiotools</p> </div>	
<p>Poor posture when sitting on the carpet.</p>	<p>Allow the child to sit in a place where they can lean against a wall or other appropriate surface</p> <p>Give the child a wobble cushion or Move 'n' Sit cushion to sit on to encourage 'active sitting' and promote a more upright posture. See advice sheet for more details</p>	



	<p>Allow the child to sit on a chair if they are unable to focus and concentrate because they are uncomfortable.</p> <p>Provide opportunities for regular change of position and movement breaks. See links at end of booklet for ideas for whole class movement break videos available on YouTube</p> <p>Provide opportunities for the child to practise some core strengthening exercises. See above ideas.</p>	
Child leans excessively over the table despite good chair and table position	<p>Give the child a Move 'n' Sit cushion. See advice sheet for details</p> <p>Give the child a writing slope/angled desk top.</p>  <p><a href="https://www.thedyslexishop.co.uk/writing-slope.html">https://www.thedyslexishop.co.uk/writing-slope.html</a></p>	
Child leans to one side	<p>Consider a chair with arm rests or adding Rokzi Arm Rests to existing chair with metal legs.</p>  <p><a href="https://www.nrshealthcare.co.uk/bedroom-seating-aids/children-s-bedroom-equipment/children-s-seats-postural-aids/rokzi-chair-armz-legs">https://www.nrshealthcare.co.uk/bedroom-seating-aids/children-s-bedroom-equipment/children-s-seats-postural-aids/rokzi-chair-armz-legs</a></p>	
	<p>Also see: <a href="https://www.cambscommunityservices.nhs.uk/camb-ridgeshire-children's-occupational-therapy/paper-pencil-and-scissor-skills/posture-and-seating">https://www.cambscommunityservices.nhs.uk/camb-ridgeshire-children's-occupational-therapy/paper-pencil-and-scissor-skills/posture-and-seating</a></p>	



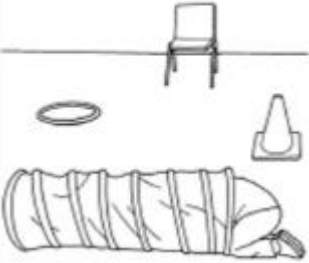



### Balance, Coordination and Motor Planning

Some children struggle with balancing due to poor core strength. Other's struggle due to instability of their joints. For some, it can be a fear of falling that limits their practise opportunities. Some children lack general coordination skills which makes them appear clumsy and awkward. It can take these children longer to learn unfamiliar motor skills and sequence movements.

Children with more **significant gross motor concerns** e.g. deteriorating or loss of skills, difficulties getting up from the floor, significant trips and falls, pain etc should be **referred for physiotherapy assessment** <https://www.cambscommunityservices.nhs.uk/what-we-do/children-young-people-health-services-cambridgeshire/contact>

Area of Difficulty	Strategy	Tick when strategy has been tried and add comments.
Child has difficulty balancing	<p>Offer regular opportunities to practise core stability (see sitting posture ideas) and balance activities. These ideas should be completed in PE/Gym Trail sessions and at home at least 3 times a week for 15-20mins.</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 45%;">  <p>©Physiotools</p> </div> <div style="width: 50%;"> <p><b>Half Kneeling</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Kneel on the floor with one foot positioned forward.</li> <li>- Throw, catch or bounce a ball with your partner or throw objects onto a hoop/box.</li> <li>- Be careful not to fall over or use your hands to support on your legs.</li> <li>- Repeat with other foot positioned forwards. Try swapping feet without falling over or putting hands down.</li> </ul> </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; margin-top: 20px;"> <div style="width: 45%;">  <p>©Physiotools</p> </div> <div style="width: 50%;"> <p><b>Box/Ball Balance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Stand on one leg with the other foot resting on a low box or ball for 1, 2, 3... etc aim to beat your own record.</li> <li>- A slightly deflated ball would be easier to start with as it wont roll around so easily.</li> <li>- Try rolling the ball forwards, backwards and to the sides just using your foot.</li> <li>- Roll the ball to the child and see if they can stop it by placing their foot on top of it. See if the child can hold the ball still with their foot for 1, 2, 3...etc.</li> </ul> <p>Repeat with the other leg.</p> </div> </div>	

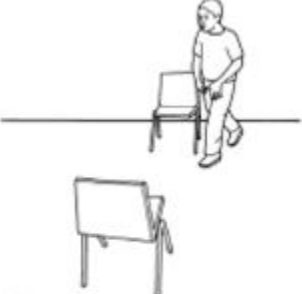
	 <p>©Physiotools</p> <p><b>Bridge</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lie on your back with knees bent and feet flat on the floor. Small gap between your knees.</li> <li>- Lift your bottom off the floor as high as possible.</li> <li>- Hold for 1, 2, 3...secs. Aim to increase length of time.</li> <li>- Try passing a ball under your bottom and over your tummy.</li> <li>- Return to starting position SLOWLY.</li> <li>- Repeat.</li> </ul>  <p>©Physiotools</p> <p><b>Line walking/Line jump</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tape a line on the floor about 5m long using masking tape.</li> <li>- Walk forwards along the line, using your arms to balance.</li> <li>- Once you have mastered walking forwards, try other ways. For example, heel-to-toe, walking sideways, walking backwards, walking on tip-toes, walking on heels.</li> <li>- Start at one end of the line and jump from side to side to the other end. Make sure you bend your knees and keep your feet together.</li> </ul>	
<p>Child struggles to coordinate their body to perform new or unfamiliar motor tasks or movement sequences</p>	<p>Include the child in regular motor sessions) to enable</p> <p>Ensure the child is wearing</p> <p>Offer regular opportunities and bilateral coordination incorporated into Gym training, PE lessons, playtimes and leisure activities at home. They should be completed at least 3 times a week for 15-20 mins e.g. see next page</p>	
	 <p>©Physiotools</p> <p><b>Obstacle Course</b></p> <p>Go through an obstacle course that incorporates different movements e.g. rolling, creeping, crawling, kneeling, hopping, jumping etc.</p> <p>Use boxes, barrels, chairs, tables, ropes, blankets, ladders etc.</p> <p>Follow instructions that tell you how to move your body in space.</p> <p>For example 'Crawl under the chairs', 'Stand on the chair', 'Make your body as big as an elephant', 'Make your body as little as an ant'.</p> <p>Practise the following terms: in, out, over, under, little and big.</p>	



**Imitate Body Positions**

Look carefully as someone demonstrates some body positions.  
Try to copy them.  
Include body positions that involve crossing the midline of the body e.g. hand to opposite knee.

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**Weaving around Chairs**

Place two chairs or cones about 2 - 3 m apart on the floor.  
Make sure you have adequate space around them.  
Walk around the chairs in a figure of eight pattern.

Can you skip around the chairs in a figure of eight pattern?  
Can you hit a balloon up in the air at the same time as walking around them?  
Make it more difficult by having a partner start at the other end and try to pass you in the middle without bumping into one another.

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**Don't Spill**

Walk from one side of the room to the other whilst balancing a tray with small non-breakable items on it.  
Step carefully to avoid




**Star Jumps**



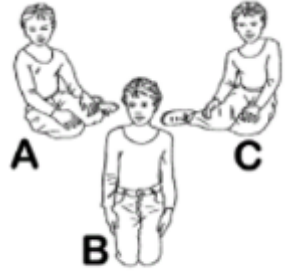
Stand with your legs together and your arms by your sides.  
Jump into the air, landing with your feet shoulder width apart and your arms out wide  
Jump into the air again, bringing your feet back together and your arms by your side.  
Repeat until a rhythm is obtained.  
Floor spots could be used to mark foot position on ground e.g. one red spot in the middle with a blue spot either side.

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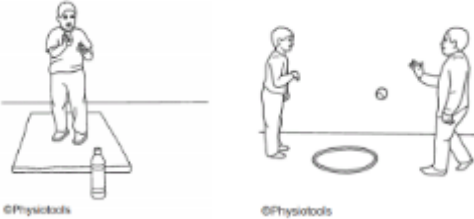
	<p>Remember the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate for the child to copy</li> <li>• Talk the activity through, describing exactly what the child's arms/hands/legs need to do.</li> <li>• Break the activity down into parts and practise each of these first.</li> <li>• Visual cues e.g. spots on the ground for them to position their limbs on may also help.</li> <li>• The child may need more repetition than others when learning new tasks.</li> <li>• You may need to give the child some "hands on" prompting / help to give the child a "feel" of the required movement or position.</li> </ul>	
	<p>YouTube videos, for example those produced by Griffin OT can be used to guide children through easy movement sequences and could be used as part of a warm up.</p> 	
<p>Child trips and falls and bumps into people and objects Child appears clumsy and awkward in their movements</p>	<p>Refer to above strategies</p>	
	<p>Consider the child's position in the classroom e.g. move them closer to the door to reduce their need to negotiate a busy classroom</p>	
	<p>Consider that the child may not be paying attention to their environment and this is why they are having accidents.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Encourage them to slow down</li> <li>- Encourage them to look where they are going</li> </ul>	
	<p>Consider offering more focussed activities during playtimes e.g. set up games which will encourage the child/children to stay in one area of the playground rather than moving around the busy playground where they may be more at risk of tripping/bumping into others etc.</p>	
<p>Child is floppy and requires increased effort to initiate movements</p>	<p>Offer 'alerting' activities to help prepare the child to engage their muscles more easily. Fast, exciting movement, with frequent change in direction will help 'wake them up'.</p>	
<p>Child fatigues quickly</p>	<p>Provide opportunities for the child to practise some core strengthening exercises. These ideas should be completed in PE/Gym Trail sessions and at home at least 3 times a week for 15-20mins.</p>	

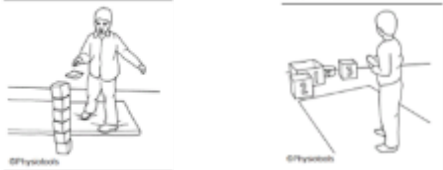
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	<p>Allow the child to have regular rest breaks to avoid them becoming too fatigued and unable to continue. It is important that they continue to participate in physical activity to help build their stamina and strength.</p>	
	<p>Also see; <a href="https://www.cambscommunityservices.nhs.uk/cambridgeshire-children-s-occupational-therapy/coordination-and-motor-skills---online-learning">https://www.cambscommunityservices.nhs.uk/cambridgeshire-children-s-occupational-therapy/coordination-and-motor-skills---online-learning</a></p> <p>Online Learning Sessions</p> <p>Please click on the different tabs below to move through the different sessions</p> <p>Session 1   Session 2   Session 3   Session 4   Session 5</p>	

## Ball Skills

Children can struggle to learn basic ball skills for a number of reasons. Some are scared of the ball and therefore lack confidence to practise. Others struggle to develop the correct timing and eye-hand coordination. Some children struggle to focus on the ball and are distracted during the activity and therefore have limited success. Some children find throwing and catching activities can be exciting and they therefore struggle to remain focussed and regulated which impacts on their accuracy.

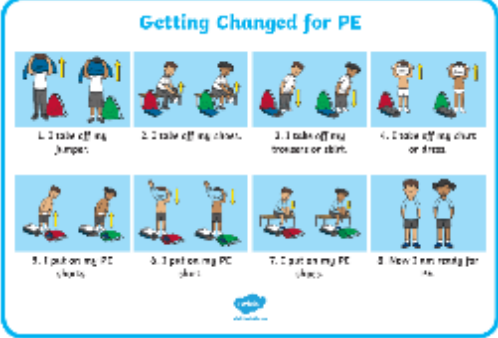
These ideas should be completed in PE/Gym Trail sessions and at home at least 3 times a week for 15-20mins.

Area of Difficulty	Strategy	Tick when strategy has been tried and add comments.
Child has difficulty with timing to catch	Consider using larger beach balls, balloons, bubbles (they move more slowly and give the child time to react and develop their eye-hand coordination) 	
	Provide verbal cues to help with timing e.g. "ready, steady ( <i>throw the ball</i> )...catch"	
	Encourage child to start with their hands by their side, rather than just expecting the ball to be thrown onto their outstretched arms.	
Child is easily distracted when catching	Remind the child to "watch the ball"	
	Break the task down by giving a numerical target to aim for e.g. try to catch 5 balls before having a break and trying again.	
	Provide additional visual cues to support the child to remain focussed e.g. use skittles, hoops etc to aim at 	
Child struggles to throw the ball	Use a hand over hand technique to allow the child to feel the correct smooth movement. Encourage the child to end with their hands pointing to the target.	

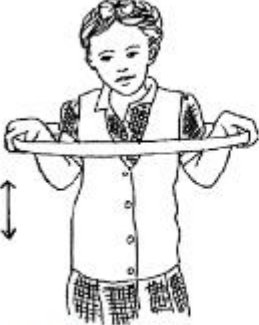


<p>accurately at a target</p>		
	<p>Encourage them to start to throw from the front of the body using two hands, rather than from the side.</p>	
	<p>Use graded targets for the child to throw at. Start with large targets and progress to smaller targets as the child's skills develop.</p> 	
<p>Child struggles to kick a ball</p>	<p>Encourage the child to practise the movement needed for kicking without the ball. Stand on one leg and swing the other leg backwards and forwards from the hip. They may need to hold onto something to help balance.</p>	
	<p>Encourage the child to sit on a chair, or stand and hold onto an adult's hand for support, and kick a stationary ball. Once the child has gained this skill start rolling the ball for the child to kick.</p>	
	<p>Once the child is confident provide large targets for the child to kick the ball at.</p>	
	<p>Also see:  <a href="https://www.cambscommunityservices.nhs.uk/cambridgeshire-children-s-occupational-therapy/coordination-and-motor-skills---online-learning">https://www.cambscommunityservices.nhs.uk/cambridgeshire-children-s-occupational-therapy/coordination-and-motor-skills---online-learning</a></p> <h3>Online Learning Sessions</h3> <p>Please click on the different tabs below to move through the different sessions.</p> <p> <span style="background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 2px 5px;">Session 1</span> <span style="padding: 2px 5px;">Session 2</span> <span style="padding: 2px 5px;">Session 3</span> <span style="padding: 2px 5px;">Session 4</span> <span style="padding: 2px 5px;">Session 5</span> </p>	


## Dressing

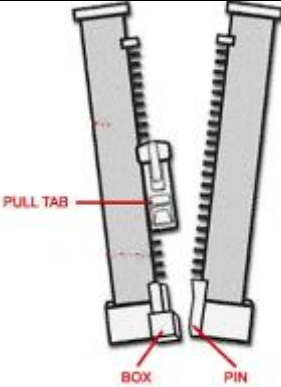
Children can have difficulties sequencing the stages of dressing or staying focussed and on track. Children with fine motor difficulties can find buttons, zips and laces challenging. It is common for young children to get clothes on back to front, inside out or shoes on the wrong feet but some older children continue to struggle with this, particularly in busy classroom environments where they are easily distracted.

Area of Difficulty	Strategy	Tick when strategy has been tried and add comments.
Child does not know how to start getting dressed	<p>Establish a routine of putting clothes on in the same order each time, so for example, vest first, then pants.</p> <p>Lay clothes out on a surface/table in the order they will be put on, so underwear would be placed on top.</p>	
Child struggles to remember the order of how to get dressed	<p>Create a picture dressing schedule. This would remind the child of the sequence for dressing. Photos or pictures could be stuck on with Blue tack or Velcro, and pulled off by the child as they go.</p> 	
Child struggles to undress themselves	<p>Use a “Forward Chaining” approach. This approach is best used when the beginning of the task is easier than the end e.g. the child removes their arms from a t-shirt and the adult finishes the task by pulling the t-shirt off over their head.</p>	
	<p>Practise with loose clothing. Make sure clothes are not too tight, it may help if they are one size bigger.</p>	
Child struggles to dress themselves	<p>Use a “backward chaining” approach.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Complete all the steps of the task for your child/young person <b>except for the last one i.e. you put their t-shirt over their head, push their arms through and they pull it down.</b></li> <li>2. Practise, practise, practise this step until your child/young person can do it without your help.</li> <li>3. Now complete all the steps <b>except for the last two i.e. you put their t-shirt over their head, push their first arm through, but they push their second arm through and pull the t-shirt down.</b></li> </ol>	



	<p>4. Keep going like this until they can do all of the steps. E.g.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Child lays the t-shirt front side down on the bed/floor/table.</li> <li>2. Child picks up the t-shirt and places it over their head, pushes both arms through the sleeve openings and pulls down the t-shirt.</li> </ol>	
	<p>Try these ideas during Gym Trail or PE</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 30%;">  <p>©Physiotools</p> </div> <div style="width: 65%;"> <p>Whole Body Dressing/Undressing Practice.</p> <p>Child stands in a large hoop. Child picks hoop up, brings it up and over their head. Hoop is placed on floor. Child steps into hoop again and repeats.</p> <p>Try this sequence in reverse.</p> </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; margin-top: 20px;"> <div style="width: 30%;">  <p>©Physiotools</p> </div> <div style="width: 65%;"> <p>Upper Body Dressing/Undressing Practise</p> <p>Practise putting one arm through a small hoop/quoit. Try pulling the hoop from your hand to the top of your arm and down again. Practise on both arms</p> </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; margin-top: 20px;"> <div style="width: 30%;">  <p>©Physiotools</p> </div> <div style="width: 65%;"> <p>Lower Body Dressing/Undressing Practice.</p> <p>Practise putting one leg through a small hoop/quoit. Try pulling the hoop from your foot to the top of your leg and down again. Practise on both legs</p> </div> </div>	
<p>Child struggles to put socks on</p>	<p>Use “backward chaining” approach...</p> <p>First – adult puts the sock on the child’s foot and the child pulls it up their leg</p> <p>Then - adult bunches the sock up and puts it over the child’s toes and the child does the rest.</p> <p>Finally- adult bunches the sock up and hands it to the child who does the rest.</p>	

	<p>Tubular socks with no specific heel position can be a good sock to start with. As the child develops their dressing skills introduce heeled socks.</p> <p>Use socks with coloured toes and heels or pictures on top to help the child with correctly positioning the sock on their feet</p>	
Child struggles putting on shoes.	<p>Make sure child is supported, either sitting on a chair or against the wall, or on the bottom stair.</p>	
	<p>Child can place their foot on a raised box to enable them to reach more easily.</p>	
	<p>To help the child put the shoe on the correct foot, cut a simple picture (e.g. smiley face) in half. Stick one half in each shoe or write one half of the child's name in their left shoe and the other half in their right shoe. The child has to match the picture up or complete their name to know which way round their shoes go.</p>	
Child loses arm holes when putting on a t-shirt, jumper or coat	<p>Lay clothing flat in front of the child with sleeves showing. Place arms into garment first so sleeves cannot get lost and then put head in.</p>	
	<p>Drape coat/zip up jumpers over the back of a chair (with lining facing outwards and sleeves freely hanging). Child sits on chair and puts arms in sleeves before standing.</p>	
	<p>Child puts hood on first and then slips arms into sleeves</p>	
Child puts clothes on inside out or back to front	<p>Try not to automatically correct a mistake. Instead place the child in front of a mirror or just ask them to see if they can identify where they have gone wrong</p>	
	<p>Remind the child that labels need to be on the inside and often the back of clothing</p>	
	<p>Provide the child with t shirts or jumpers that have a picture or logo on the front of them. This can be a useful reminder to make sure the picture is at the front</p>	
	<p>Encourage the child to lay garments face down on a table/bed</p>	
	<p>Encourage the child to help sort clothes as they come out of the washing machine/tumble dryer. They can practise turning things the right way around before sorting them into piles. Alternatively, they could practise with PE bibs.</p>	
Child struggles with zips and buttons	<p>Use "backward chaining" i.e. encourage the child to pull the 'pull tab' up once an adult has put the 'pin' into the 'box' - see below</p>	

	 <p>The diagram shows a zipper with three labels: 'PULL TAB' pointing to the top puller, 'BOX' pointing to the bottom housing, and 'PIN' pointing to the bottom slider.</p>	
	<p>Encourage the child to open and close a variety of bags/clothes with zips and buttons. Fun things can be hidden inside to interest them.</p>	
	<p>Attach a key ring or small pieces of ribbon to the 'pull tab'. This will make it easier for a child to grasp.</p>	
	<p>The child needs to hold onto the pin side of the garment while pulling the zip up with their other hand, otherwise the pin will come out of the box.</p> <p>Verbally remind the child, tap the hand that they should use to pull the 'pull tab' or use a mark/stitch a cross where the child needs to keep holding the garment while using the other hand to pull the 'pull tab'.</p>	
	<p>Practise buttons and zips on garments laid out in front of the child as they will be able to access and see the fastening more easily.</p>	
	<p>In order to build up confidence start by practicing unbuttoning and unzipping a garment.</p>	
	<p>Choose large buttons and buttons that are a different colour to the garment.</p>	
	<p>Ensure the button hole is slightly loose for the buttons. The hole may need to be snipped slightly. It can also be useful to reattach the button with a looser thread or elasticated thread</p>	
	<p>Elasticated trousers are an alternative if a child is struggling with fastenings. M&amp;S and Asda sell an 'Easy Dressing' school uniform range online.</p>	

Encourage the child to complete the following activities These ideas should be completed in Finger Gym sessions and at home at least 3 times



**Feely Bags/Hide and Guess**

- Hide items in a tub of rice/lentils or a bag.
- Child places one hand in the tub/bag to search for the items.
- Encourage the child to identify/name the item before removing it from the bag.
- To make the game easier, identical items could be placed on the table in front for them to match.

a week for 15-20mins.

**Posting**



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- Pick up a coin/bead/small object using one hand and hide it in your palm.
- Move the object from palm to fingertips using only thumb and finger movements (not rolling it).
- Post the object into a purse/money box/small necked container.
- Start with larger coins/objects before progressing to smaller coins/objects.
- Progress to collecting 3 objects in your hand and then post one object at a time.
- Repeat with the other hand.



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**Threading**




- Thread beads onto a cord. Start with a thick stiff cord (or pipe cleaner/straw) and large beads. Uncooked spaghetti and penne pasta can be used.
- Progress to thin cord and small beads.
- Remember to hold the cord with one hand and the beads with the other hand.
- Try not to swap hands mid task.

Button snakes and button pizzas are just a couple of examples of fun ways to practise buttons.





Child struggles with laces


The bunny ear method as well as the single loop

	<p>method. There are a variety of you tube clips illustrating these methods. Also see; <a href="https://www.cambscommunityservices.nhs.uk/cambridgeshire-children's-occupational-therapy/looking-after-yourself/getting-dressed">https://www.cambscommunityservices.nhs.uk/cambridgeshire-children's-occupational-therapy/looking-after-yourself/getting-dressed</a></p>	
	<p>To keep the initial knot secure whilst the bow is tied on top, wrap the lace over and under a second time before pulling tight.</p> 	
	<p>Alternative shoes laces can be used, a few examples are shown below.</p>  <p>Elasticated GREEPER®                      Magnetic (Zubits)</p>	
	<p>Also see: <a href="#">Putting on your coat</a></p>	

### Cutlery Skills

Children with poor sitting balance and/or attention difficulties can struggle to sit properly at the table. Some children with bendy fingers or poor hand strength and/or in hand manipulation can struggle to grasp cutlery correctly and apply sufficient pressure to spear food with their fork or cut with a knife. Others struggle to coordinate their two hands together to use a knife and fork.



Area of Difficulty	Strategy	Tick when strategy has been tried and add comments.
Child has difficulty sitting at the table	Refer to strategies described in Worksheet B for 'Sitting Posture and Attention/Focus'	
Plate is slipping and moving on table.	Try using non-slip matting (e.g. Dycem) or consider bowls and plates with suction grips.	
Child has difficulty holding cutlery correctly	Make sure the child has the correct size cutlery e.g. child size, chunky plastic handles are best	
	Mark the cutlery to help prompt the child where their index fingers should be with stickers/nail varnish or marker pens	
	Consider trying adapted cutlery e.g. Nanna's Manners or NRS Kura Care Cutlery which has a moulded handle and prompt for where to extend their index finger	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <a href="https://www.nrshealthcare.co.uk/eating-drinking-aids/cutlery-aids/kura-care-adult-cutlery-set">https://www.nrshealthcare.co.uk/eating-drinking-aids/cutlery-aids/kura-care-adult-cutlery-set</a> (also available in child size)</li> <li>- <a href="https://www.nanasmanners.com/">https://www.nanasmanners.com/</a></li> </ul>
Child has difficulty loading a spoon or fork	Start with things which stick easily to the spoon, such as thick yoghurt, porridge or mashed potato.	
	Use a bowl with a raised edge, so the child has something to push against.	

<p>Difficulty in bringing food accurately to mouth</p>	<p>Provide hand over hand support (position yourself behind the child and place your hands over their hands) to help the child 'feel' the correct movement and help them maintain the correct grasp</p>	
<p>Child is not able to cut with a knife.</p>	<p>Make sure the knife has a serrated edge.</p>	
	<p>Start off using the knife on its own, to practice with play dough or soft snack food. Encourage a sawing action, allowing the child to hold the food with their other hand to begin with.</p>	
	<p>Provide hand over hand support (position yourself behind the child and place your hands over their hands) to help the child 'feel' the correct movement and help them maintain the correct grasp</p>	
	<p>Set small achievable targets e.g. encourage the child to attempt to cut up a small amount of food on their plate, and offer support for the rest.</p>	
	<p>Also see; <a href="https://www.cambscommunityservices.nhs.uk/cambridgeshire-children's-occupational-therapy/looking-after-yourself/meal-time">https://www.cambscommunityservices.nhs.uk/cambridgeshire-children's-occupational-therapy/looking-after-yourself/meal-time</a> for further ideas</p>	

## Toileting

For children that require help with continence, useful information can be found <https://www.cambscommunityservices.nhs.uk/what-we-do/children-young-people-health-services-cambridgeshire/cambridgeshire-0-19-healthy-child-programme>

The strategies below are intended for children that are yet to master the practical aspects of toileting.

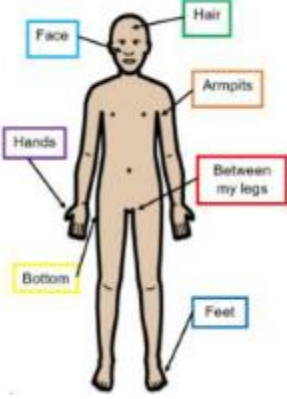
Area of Difficulty	Strategy	Tick when strategy has been tried and add comments.
Child struggles to sit on the toilet stably	Ensure that the child's feet are supported, they may require a foot box under their feet	
	Consider reducing the size of the toilet seat aperture to prevent the child slipping through. Family toilet seats or inserts can be used.	
	Consider allowing the child to use the disabled toilet where they can hold onto a rail for support	
	Consider if some core stability activities could be completed to help their posture and balance (see sitting posture worksheet for ideas).	
Child struggles to sequence the stages of the task	<p>Use visual cues, such as a photo, illustration or symbol to prompt. Follow a consistent sequence, for example:</p>  <p><a href="https://continencevictoria.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/EasyGuideBook.2nd-Ed.-pdf.pdf">https://continencevictoria.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/EasyGuideBook.2nd-Ed.-pdf.pdf</a></p>	
Child struggles with bottom wiping	Backward chaining -the adult will begin the sequence but the child will finish the task, gradually achieving more steps along the way. E.g....	





	<p>1. The adult supports the whole toilet routine but allows the child to flush.</p> <p>2. The next step could be the adult allows the child to throw the used toilet roll in the loo and then flush.</p> <p>3. the adult completes all but the final wipe of the child's bottom. the Child completes the final 'clean' wipe, and flushes.</p> <p>Etc, etc, etc</p>	
	<p>Use hand over hand guidance. Encourage them to hold the toilet tissue and guide their hand as they attempt to wipe themselves –this gives them more feedback and helps them to orientate to where they are wiping.</p>	
	<p>Use wipes or damp tissues so that the child/young person can feel where they have wiped. Sometimes cheap toilet roll that is rougher provides more feedback and awareness of where has been wiped</p>	
<p>Child uses too much or too little toilet paper and/or soap.</p>	<p>Count out loud the number of toilet sheets required</p>	
	<p>Mark on the wall with colourful tape/stickers to provide a visual guide of how much paper to pull out.</p> <p>Using a toilet roll holder with a cover can help with tearing off paper using an upward motion.</p> <p>Alternatively, show your child how to hold with one hand and tear with the other.</p>	
	<p>Use alternative soap and toilet paper dispensers e.g. motion sensor soap, individual sheets rather than roll of toilet paper and wet wipes.</p>	

### Washing Body and Hair

Becoming independent in personal care is an important life skill that can give a young person a sense of pride and achievement. Even becoming independent in parts of the task can help a young person to feel engaged and more confident.

Area of Difficulty	Strategy	Tick when strategy has been tried and add comments
<p>Child struggles to complete steps of the task and/or forgets to wash body parts</p>	<p>Use visuals e.g. a diagram labelling body parts that need to be washed. Sample visuals can be found on <a href="https://www.nhsggc.org.uk/kids/lifeskills/self-care/looking-after-my-body/">https://www.nhsggc.org.uk/kids/lifeskills/self-care/looking-after-my-body/</a></p>  <p>Start with just a few body parts for the child to practise and you help with the rest, and slowly add in more body parts</p>	
	<p>Many children benefit from visual prompts of the steps of a routine such as showering. These are available from websites such as Do 2 Learn. Have the pictures laminated and displayed where the child can see them and prompt your child to look at the next picture in the sequence rather than telling them what to do.</p>	


		
	Hand over hand support may be required to guide their hand.	
	A mirror may help your child to see what they are doing.	
	Have a consistent routine where stages of the task are completed in the same way each time	
Child struggles to wash hair	A mirror may help your child to wash areas that are more difficult because they are out of sight e.g. their hair	
	Hand over hand support may be required to guide their hand and to guide how much pressure they need.	
	Break the task of hair washing down and encourage your child to be confident and independent in one step before moving onto the next, for example encourage your child to put shampoo on their hand then head, you then take over for lathering the hair and rinsing.	
Child struggles to dispense soap and/or shampoo	Use soap in a pump bottle as it can be easier to control than turning and squeezing a bottle with one hand into the other.	
Child spends a long time in bath/shower but does not follow steps to clean themselves	Use above strategies e.g. using visual schedule, breaking task down and hand over hand support	
	Set small goals e.g. you put the soap on the sponge then give it to your child to wash their body. Once your child has mastered one step, introduce another aspect of the routine e.g. putting the soap on the sponge	
	Use a shower timer to help focus your child when in the bath/shower.	
Child slips in the bath	Have an anti-slip mat on the floor and in the bottom of the bath	
Further advice – see our website	<a href="https://www.cambscommunityservices.nhs.uk/cambbridgeshire-children-s-occupational-therapy/looking-after-yourself/keeping-clean-and-looking-after-your-hair">https://www.cambscommunityservices.nhs.uk/cambbridgeshire-children-s-occupational-therapy/looking-after-yourself/keeping-clean-and-looking-after-your-hair</a>	
 <p>Keeping clean and washing your hair</p>		

Child regularly slips and falls in the bath/shower and/or is unable to get in/out independently /safely	Please contact Occupational Therapy to discuss potential equipment solutions and if a referral is required.	
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## Managing Periods

The start of periods is one of the biggest changes during puberty. They usually start between 11-14. Here are some ideas to help.


Area of Difficulty	Strategy	Tick when strategy has been tried and add comments.
Child is anxious about starting her periods and worried about how she will manage her personal care	There are many useful books and leaflets that can be read with girls to help them begin to understand the changes to her body.  E.g. <a href="https://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/puberty/Documents/fpa-periods-PDF.pdf">https://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/puberty/Documents/fpa-periods-PDF.pdf</a> <a href="https://www.robynsteward.com/books-and-media">https://www.robynsteward.com/books-and-media</a>	
	Begin practising with sanitary products before they are needed- ensure your child knows how to open sanitary towels and place them in her pants correctly. Some girls may benefit from opportunities to wear pads from time to time before starting their periods, to get used to the feel of the pad in her pants.	
Child gets messy when changing a sanitary pad	Reassure your daughter that this is perfectly normal and most girls have the same difficulties when they are learning to manage their periods	
	Keep a small pack of baby wipes with her sanitary pads to help with any clean up that is required.	
	Keep a change of pants/trousers and fresh pads in her school bag.	
	Keep a bin in reaching distance of the toilet so that she can dispose of used pads whilst still sat on the toilet.	

<p>Child struggles to sequence the stages of the task</p>	<p>Use visuals: Step step pictures like available from such as Do 2 Learn help with learning steps of the task. the pictures next to toilet and prompt daughter to look at next picture in the sequence rather telling her what to</p>	 <p>by those websites can the Keep the your the than do.</p>	
	<p>Consider period pants – which are available from the high street stores.</p>		
<p>Child is often unprepared for when her period begins</p>	<p>Help your child keep track of her periods by marking on a calendar when her period starts and ends. This will help your daughter learn to predict when her next period is due so that she is prepared and has pads with her.</p>		
	<p>Keep spare pad and knickers in school bag</p>		

### Teeth Brushing

Supervise tooth brushing until your child is seven or eight years old. Do this by either brushing their teeth yourself or, if they brush their own teeth, by watching how they do it. From the age of seven or eight, they should be able to brush their own teeth, but it's still a good idea to watch them now and again to make sure they brush properly and brush for two minutes.

Area of Difficulty	Strategy	Tick when strategy has been tried and add comments.
Child struggles to hold their toothbrush.	A toothbrush with a chunky handle will be easier for the child to hold (Battery operated toothbrushes often have novelty chunky handles).	
	Offer hand over hand support	
Child struggles to orientate the brush around their mouth to clean all of their teeth and struggles with the brushing action.	Use a mirror. They will feel more in control if they can see what they are doing, and the visual feedback will be helpful for them to orientate the brush in their mouth. A footbox/step may be required so the child can see themselves in the mirror	
	Giant teeth brushing puppet models can be used to demonstrate and let the child practice the actions required	
	A finger toothbrush may be easier for your child to use and could be used to help them explore areas of their mouth outside of tooth brushing times	
	Offer hand over hand support to help your child learn the movements and pressure required	
	An electric toothbrush may be useful. The child will only need to position the toothbrush in their mouth and not coordinate the brushing action as well.	
	Use a 3-sided toothbrush. This will help provide a more thorough clean	
Child struggles to squeeze toothpaste onto brush.	Children may find it easier to use toothpaste in a pump dispenser or tube squeezer.	
	Provide hand over hand support to help the child feel the pressure required.	
	Practise squeezing other tubes, e.g. icing tubes to decorate cakes, glitter glue during Art and Craft.	
	Use visual cues, such as a photo, illustration or symbol to prompt. Follow a consistent sequence.	

Child struggles to complete the correct steps of the task	Visuals can be found on <a href="http://Twinl.co.uk">Twinl.co.uk</a> and <a href="http://do2learn.com">do2learn.com</a>	
	Break the task down. The child starts by putting toothpaste on the brush and over time they take more responsibility as they grow in confidence	
Child avoids or dislikes cleaning their teeth.	Make tooth brushing as fun as possible e.g. sing songs and use fun apps (see <a href="http://www.dentalhealth.org">www.dentalhealth.org</a> for ideas).	
	Singing songs, counting or reciting the alphabet can be useful distractions but also help the child to see there is an end to the activity	
	Use reward charts, stickers and certificates to award achievements however small they may be.	
	Consider if your child does not like the taste of the toothpaste. Use mild or unflavoured toothpaste e.g. Oranurse	
	Experiment with using cold or warm water to see which one your child prefers.	
Child does not clean their teeth for the desired 2 minutes.	Use an egg timer or toothbrushing app to time brushing for two minutes	
For further ideas see our website; 	<a href="https://www.cambscommunityservices.nhs.uk/cambridgeshire-children-s-occupational-therapy/looking-after-yourself/hygiene">https://www.cambscommunityservices.nhs.uk/cambridgeshire-children-s-occupational-therapy/looking-after-yourself/hygiene</a>	