

### **The ABCs Of School Related Readiness Skills**

- A- art work...coloring (different size crayons), cutting ("thumbs up"), pasting (glue stick, school glue), painting (finger and different size brushes). These activities strengthen young hands and increase visual skills, fine motor skills, and how they incorporate the use of these skills together. Art work is also a wonderful sensory experience.
- B- blocks... build towers and designs. Imagination can soar here! Crayons stacked in a square formation are fun. See how high you can get it before it falls! These activities encourage different grasp patterns while having fun. You don't have to color with a crayon, to play with one!
- C- cards... play card games, i.e. Old Maid, Go Fish. Teach your child to hold the cards "fan style" pinching between thumb, index, and middle fingers. This is a workout for little hands and the position is great for writing!
- D- dig... digging in the garden is a great way to introduce and encourage tactile experiences. Use spoons, shovels, container lids ect. This can encourage the use of both hands, crossing the midline, weight bearing (leaning on one hand and digging with the other) as well as strengthening.
- E- eating...encourage children to open containers, bottles, jars, juice boxes, snack packages independently. Not only will they feel good about their accomplishments (in and out of school), but they will practice skills and use muscles and grasps that will later help with other activities of daily living.
- F- freeze...dance! This is a great game to play with a group or just one child. Play music and randomly turn it off. Dancers have to "freeze" in place when the music stops. This encourages listening skills and motor planning. It's fun and great exercise!
- G- games...board games are great for kids of all ages. Pick games that are appropriate for your child's developmental skill level. You do not want them to be too difficult. Games are a great way to teach turn taking, listening skills, right/left discrimination ("person on your right goes next"). Family game night is a great way to discuss the days of the week ("game night will be in two days, on Friday").
- H- highlight...letters in the newspaper. Give your child a highlighter and ask them to mark "every P" they can find in a paragraph. Encourage visual scanning from left to right which is a skill needed for reading. Even if your child is a reader already, this task is a great visual exercise.
- I- include...your children in household chores. For example, kids love to use spray

bottles which strengthen hand muscles. A job like loading and unloading the dishwasher can demand muscle use, crossing midline, two handed coordination, and motor planning. Even planning a job, gathering the things needed, and remembering to put everything away can help develop organization skills needed throughout life.

- J- jumping...rope, hop scotch, trampoline, jump to music ect. All of these activities increase balance, motor planning, endurance, and strengthen muscles. Drawing a hop scotch game on the sidewalk is a great prewriting exercise! Writing on the bumpy sidewalk is a wonderful way to add a sensory component to learning numbers and letters.
- K- kick... kicking a ball is great exercise and it also increases balance and motor planning. Shifting weight from one side of the body to the other naturally strengthens trunk muscles. Strong trunk muscles are the foundation needed for strong upper extremities that support writing skills.
- L- Legos... Any small connecting type toys help increase fine motor skills. Some good ones are K'nex, Bristle Blocks, Tinker Toys, and Lincoln Logs.
- M- modeling clay... Any malleable material is a great way to strengthen hands as a preparation for writing. Play-doh sets are great or you can make your own. Scented materials can add another sensory component to the tactile experience!
- N- number games... introduce and reinforce numbers at home and in the car. At home play games that include numbers. For young children, magnetic plastic numbers/letters on the frig are a lot of fun (not to mention the strengthening and perceptual benefits of working on a vertical surface). In the car, play read the letters on the license plate. Older children love to be the first to find a word on a plate.
- O- one... two, buckle my shoe!!! Teach nursery rhymes and songs. This is a great way to increase memory skills needed throughout school and life.
- P- puzzles... This may be the best investment you can make in regard to increasing school related task performance. Working on a puzzle increases visual perceptual skills, fine motor skills, crossing midline of body, bilateral coordination (encourage children to use both hands). Younger children can practice sorting skills by separating pieces into two piles, "straight edges" and "middles". Have your child use the picture on the box for help as they complete the puzzle. Pick puzzles that are developmentally appropriate for the individual child (24 piece puzzles are great for most children). Completing a puzzle gives a feeling of independence and accomplishment.

- Q- Q-tips... these are a great tool for painting. The skinny stick elicit's a nice grasp as a prerequisite for writing.
- R- ring-toss..horse shoes, Toss Across, magnetic darts. These are nice games that address eye-hand coordination. Perceptual skills are needed to reach the "target". Practice makes perfect!
- S- swings...slides, and sand; playgrounds are a wonderful way to get kids moving. It is also a great place to have those "movers and shakers" expend energy. Movement can be helpful for a child with low tone as well as those who have trouble sitting still. Movement can be calming to some and stimulating to others. There are many sensory experiences found there too.
- T- tissue paper.. crinkling up into little balls. Tissue balls can be glued onto paper to make pictures or beautiful mosaic designs. This is a great way to strengthen hands and increase fine motor skills.
- U- usual routines.. for homework, snacks, tv, play, and sleep. Children need to rely on some kind of schedule. For example, a child that goes to sleep at the same time every night and gets the appropriate rest will have an easier time focusing and staying on task in school.
- V- Velcro...can be used as a resistive force. Velcro can be purchased in many different sizes with adhesive backing and can also be cut to size. Use it for things like holding markers on boards or giving games a resistive component where the child has to "pull" pieces apart. A simple tic-tac-toe board game can be fitted with Velcro on the back which adds a whole new twist and benefit to the game. Pulling the pieces off will help with strengthening, grasp, and bilateral coordination.
- W- word searches...these can be made on the computer or found in books. This is a great way to increase perceptual skills. Encourage scanning from left to right and row by row as you would do in reading. This is a foundational skill for reading readiness.
- X- marks the spot with a dot dot dot! Bingo markers are a fun fine motor activity. These can be used to fill in pictures in coloring books or the child can make their own pictures.
- Y- yoga... can be relaxing and increase focusing skills. Children can improve posture, and increase the sensation of knowing where their body is in space. Yoga for beginners can be found on Cable and tape/cd.
- Z- zippering coats, snaps, buttons, and clasps. Activities of daily living are part of a child's school day. Practice back pack and lunch box clasps too.