



Fine Motor Preferences Checklist:

How much time does your child spend practising fine motor skills required for developing handwriting? To find out check how many of their top 10 activities have the following characteristics. In the left hand column list the child's spontaneously chosen top 10 activities and analyse them for the characteristics. Those characteristics that are absent or less well represented are those that need to be emphasized in play more often to provide a stronger foundation for the development of writing.

Activity Choice	<i>Rely on finger movement rather than whole hand or arm movements</i>	<i>Using 2 hands together</i>	<i>Glue, paint, dirt, sand, food stuffs or other messy media</i>	<i>Eye-hand co-ordination</i>	<i>Sustained Focus</i>	<i>Combining, or forming shapes, colours, letters or numbers.</i>	<i>Utensils of different types.</i>
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							
7							
8							
9							
10							



Guidelines

This is not intended as a diagnostic tool. Rather this fine motor preferences checklist is designed for reference purposes to assist in planning. Following are some explanations of each of the characteristics outline in the table for ease of use:

1. **Finger movements** – by age 5 years children should be comfortably using active finger movements to colour and draw. They enjoy threading, beading and can handle small construction games and wind-up toys. At this point they can manipulate several small objects in hand, shifting them from finger to palm, and palm to finger.
2. **Using two hands together** – by school age children usually have a strong hand preference, which means that for any particular activity, one hand is the action hand, and the other is the supporter e.g. mixing food in a bowl, cutting paper with scissors.
3. **Messy media** – if there is a preference to avoid messy media it may be an indication of **sensory hypersensitivity** – this is best assessed by an occupational therapist trained in sensory processing treatment. If the child’s reaction is associated with distress, this suggests **sensory defensiveness** and should be referred without delay as it can be associated with a wider range of developmental and behavioural difficulties.
4. **Eye hand co-ordination** – hand and finger activities that are visually directed e.g. mazes, marbles, jacks.
5. **Sustained focus** – fine motor activities that generally require close visual attention and the ability to stay with the task until completed such as arts and crafts, puzzles etc.
6. **Drawing and writing play** – children naturally want to be like their peers who love to draw and write, if children are avoiding these activities because they say they’re “boring” it is more than likely that they are finding it too difficult. By school age children should at the least be able to draw simple shapes such as a cross, circle and triangle and draw a simple representation of a person which is clearly recognisable.
7. **Using a variety of utensils** – by school age children should be using knife and fork together, able to cut with scissors effectively, use a paintbrush, and hammer like implements, varying their grasp according to the activity e.g. spoon use to feed a doll is a different pattern to feeding themselves or to mix food.

NB: If completion of the Fine Motor Preferences Checklist raises any concerns for development, a consultation with an occupational therapist is recommended.