

Positions for Pre-Writing Activities

When we think about writing or pre-writing activities, why do we think of “table and chair”? It may be because that is how we write as adults. But remember, it took us a while to learn to settle down. What two or three year olds do you know whose sensory/motor system is *ready to sit to write*? Children will be forced into seats soon enough. Let’s give them the opportunity to change their position – and not use a chair – in our teaching of pre-writing skills.

Think for a moment. What positions can a child or group of children be in while they are practicing pre-writing and coloring skills?

- Half-kneeling position
- Prone “puppy” position
- “Centerfold” position
- Standing position
- All-fours position
- Kneeling position

Choosing Appropriate Pre-Writing Materials

Pre-writing activities do not have to be taught at a table, using a crayon or pencil and paper. A variety of media can be used that vary visual, tactile, olfactory, auditory, proprioceptive, vestibular, and even taste sensations. A varied approach can increase the child's interest level. Try changing the pre-writing tool and surface used daily to continually expose the child to new sensory experiences.

Visual Media

- Try “writing” on aluminum foil.
- Try “writing” on construction paper of different colors.
- Try “writing” on different kinds of paper (brown paper bags, butcher paper, waxed paper).
- Try “writing” on regular paper or coloring books.
- Try using special coloring books in which the color appears when children paint with water.
- Try using different colors of chalk, markers, crayons, pens pencils, and paints (including finger paints, watercolors, or tempera).

Auditory Media

Pre-writing activities can even include an auditory component.

- Try using a musical toothbrush to paint.
- Try attaching bells to the end of a paintbrush.

Proprioceptive Media

Proprioceptive media are those that stimulate joint muscle feedback. They include activities in which there is increased weight or resistance or two hand involvement with the pre-writing tool.

- Try using a weighted paintbrush.
- Use a paper-towel roll as a “wand” and draw in the air with both hands.
- Use a scarf to make lines or circles in the air.

Gustatory Media

Even the sense of taste can be incorporated in pre-writing activities for young children.

- Try finger painting whipped cream on a flat pan of gelatin.
- Try drawing on a frosted cake to decorate it.
- Try drawing with cheese spread on crackers or bread.

Tactile Media

“Touch” media include materials of different texture and temperature.

- Try “writing” on sandpaper with different crayons, paintbrushes, or chalk.
- Try “drawing” around sandpaper or wooden stencils.
- Try “drawing” with a finger around a yarn or popsicle-stick shape.
- Try “drawing” in sand or mud.
- Try using finger paints, lotions, pudding, gelatin, oatmeal, or whipped cream to finger paint.
- Change the temperature of the materials. Sometimes put the paint or markers or crayons in the refrigerator before the activity. Lotion can be warmed in a microwave oven.

Olfactory Media

The sense of smell can be incorporated into pre-writing tasks.

- Try “drawing” with scented markers.
- Add a few drops of bubble bath or scented oil to homemade finger paint.
- Add vanilla, mint, or cherry flavoring to finger paints.
- Use scented lotions for finger painting.

Finger Paint Recipes

1. *Ivory Snow Flakes Finger Paint*

Combine Ivory Snow Flakes with enough water to make it “gloppy.”
Mix with whisk or electric beater until it is gooey finger paint texture.

2. *Cornstarch Finger Paint*

Put a couple of cups of cornstarch in a pan and add water, while stirring, until it is a glue consistency. Cook this mixture, stirring constantly, to a clear gel consistency. Cool.

3. *Flour-Salt Finger Paint*

Combine 1 cup flour, 4 teaspoons salt, and 7/8 cup cold water. Add food coloring or tempera paint. Mix well. Store in refrigerator.