



The first five years of a child's life are a time of tremendous physical, emotional, social and cognitive growth. Children enter the world with many needs in order to grow: love, nutrition, health, social and emotional security and stimulation in the important skills that prepare them for school success. Children also enter the world with a great capacity to learn.

Research shows that children are more likely to succeed in learning when their families actively support them. Families who involve their children in activities that allow the children to talk, explore, experiment and wonder, show that learning is both enjoyable and important. They motivate their children to take pleasure in learning and to want to learn more. They prepare them to be successful in school and in life.

There is a strong connection between the development a child undergoes early in life and the level of success that the child will experience later in life. When young children are provided an environment rich in language and literacy interactions and full of opportunities to listen to and use language constantly, they can begin to acquire the essential building blocks for learning how to read.

*"A child's best educational opportunities & growth depend on the combined efforts of the parent, the teacher & the child. The greatest contribution on the part of the parent should come before the child even begins their formal education." From Parents Are Teachers Too by Claudia Jones*

### How do you decide what skills your child needs to begin school?

Children need good posture, muscle tone and fine motor control to begin school. A child who is clumsy & can't move well, who is floppy, hasn't got a good pencil grip and can't hold scissors properly is probably going to have some difficulty in their first year of school.

Kids need to have sufficient physical development to competently master the technical stuff of school. If they can open their school bag, take lids of lunch boxes, get out pens and put their shoes on, it will help them to feel comfortable in the school environment from the beginning.

Developmental levels give you an indication of where your child is in relation to other children, organizing knowledge and competencies into age groupings. These age groupings are not rigid directives but approximate guidelines based on research that, within a given area, suggests a progression of skills and knowledge. Because young children learn at different rates, we at [www.GetReadyForSchool.com](http://www.GetReadyForSchool.com) believe no child should be unduly rushed or held back solely based on the age groupings specified although as a parent you can help to develop these skills.

#### Problems Preschoolers Often Have

- Low muscle tone
- Poor postural development
- Poor balance
- Poor sense of body position and movement
- Poor fine tactile discrimination
- Poor bilateral integration
  - development of hand dominance
  - symmetrical movements
  - alternating movements
  - crossing the midline
- Poor motor co-ordination
  - eye-hand co-ordination
  - slow control
  - motor planning
- Poor visual-motor co-ordination where the eye directs fine movements of the hand
- Poor visual attention
- Delayed visual perception
- Limited memory and problem solving skill - reduced concentration
- Delayed speech and language
- Social and emotional immaturity

## Motor Development for 4 Year Old Children

### BODY SCHEME

- Draws man with head and legs

### GROSS MOTOR

- Stands on one foot for 4 seconds
- Manages a broad jump
- Runs with good arm & leg co-ordination
- Goes up and down steps with one foot per step
- Gallops

### VISUAL PERCEPTION

- Builds a 6 block pyramid
- Matches shapes same color and size
- Beginning to distinguish foreground from background
- Copies block model of a gate

### EYE - HAND CO-ORDINATION

- Follows moving objects smoothly with eyes
- Copies a cross
- Imitates a square
- Able to put 10 pellets into a bottle in 25 seconds
- Bounces a ball awkwardly
- Tries to cut on a straight line

## Motor Development for 5 Year Old Children

### BODY SCHEME

- Copies "Simon Says" postures
- Draws 6 part recognizable man
- Can point to the front, back, near, up and down with eyes closed
- Aware of but confuses left and right

### GROSS MOTOR

- Walks down stairs alternating feet with no support
- Balances on one foot 6-8 seconds
- Begins to balance on tiptoes
- Able to do a running broad jump
- Begins to walk backward along a balance beam
- Attempts roller skates, jump rope and stilts
- Marches in time to music
- Reproduces simple rhythmic clapping

### VISUAL PERCEPTION

- Imitates a ten block pyramid
- Begins to mentally rotate puzzle pieces

### EYE - HAND CO-ORDINATION

- Develops tripod pencil grip
- Copies diagonal lines, a square and a diagonal cross
- Imitates a triangle
- Able to slowly thumb-finger touch
- Throws and catches large playground ball

## Getting a Grip on Writing

The pencil grasp! It seems by the time children start kindergarten they have developed a "good" or "bad" pencil grasp.

Pencil grip difficulties become more apparent in primary years as writing demands increase, however, they can develop in children as early as preschoolers. Children usually begin their grip development around the age of 1 to 1½.

Grip is important because it allows the fine movement necessary for writing. The pencil should be held 1/2 - 1 1/5 inches (1-3 cm) from the tip of the pencil and the fingers need to be able to move individually.

### LEFT-HANDED WRITERS:

It is recommended that left-handed writers grip the pencil 1½ inches (3 cm) from the tip of the pencil to help the child see what has been written. If the thumb, index finger and middle finger share holding the writing implement, the child will find the writing position easy to maintain.

### PROBLEMS TEACHERS & OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS SEE REGULARLY:

- Middle finger on top
- Thumb over index finger
- Pencil low in web-space
- Straight thumb
- Thumb & index finger parallel

### WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?

Children should be encouraged to RELAX.

Remember, pencil grip is one small element of the complex nature of handwriting. Handwriting difficulties can cause low self-esteem, poor motivation for class work and homework, and frustration. In addition to grip, handwriting problems to keep an eye out for include:

- Slow at completing writing tasks
- Heavy pressure
- Poor spacing and written organization
- Poor letter formations and reversals
- Pain in fingers, wrist and forearm
- Poor writing posture

At Get Ready For School we believe in early intervention. It is important to establish a good pencil grip as early as possible. As a parent you can teach and encourage a good pencil grip.

To view different grips go to:

[www.getreadyforschool.com/newsletters/pencil\\_grip.htm](http://www.getreadyforschool.com/newsletters/pencil_grip.htm)

After working with many children we have found that the majority would significantly benefit if their parents, grandparents, nannies or sitters simply sat down with them, one-on-one, to teach them some skills for school.

The problem is that most people don't know what basic skills to teach their preschooler or even where to start!

**Early Intervention is the key.**

**You can help your child.**

To find out more simply  
log on to our website.

