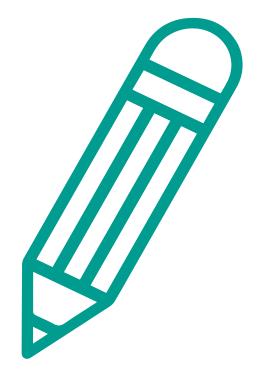


### Teacher tool kit for children with Down syndrome

### **Hand Strength**

Children with Down syndrome often have reduced grip and pinch strength and so it is important to practice hand strength activities frequently to aid handwriting skills.



#### **Activities**

- Squeezing out water from large sponges.
- Using chalk on playground floor and walls.
- Painting, drawing or printing onto an easel (increases shoulder stability).
- Drawing with fingers in sand.
- Ping pong football use empty squeezy bottles (washing up liquid bottles work well) to blow ping pong balls back and forth across the table to friends.
- Pegs on a flowerpot encourage children to clip easy squeeze pegs around the rim of a flower pot, encourage the use of tips of index and middle fingers and thumb.
- Playdoh roll out a sausage. Pinch all the way along using the tip of fingers and thumb. Roll up the sausage into a ball and push straight fingers into the ball of putty.

- Friends or teaching staff can hide a small, motivating toy in a ball of putty for child to extract.
- Popping bubble wrap with finger and thumb. Take turns with another child until all the bubbles are popped.
- Use a container with a lid and place a small toy, sparkly paper, feather or word inside. Encourage child to stabilise the box with non-dominant hand and dominant hand opens the box to retrieve what's inside.
- Pick up cotton wool balls with large tweezers or tongs.
- ▶ Bead threading.



## Writing

Once children have developed their early pre-printing skills at larger paper and at an easel or similar set up, he or she is ready to begin working at a desk.

It is very important to ensure that children are sat in a comfortable position for writing practice.

- Straight back.
- Feet flat on floor or supported on a box.
- Right angles at hips, knees and ankles.
- Clearence between back of knees and seat should be approximately 2 fingers width.
- Ensure that there is a comfortable space between top of knees and table.
- Head in a central position discourage child lying forwards onto arm or onto table with head down.

#### Pens and writing tools

- Children with Down syndrome often have low visual acuity (think looking through Perspex instead of glass) so a black pen is preferable to a pencil. Paper should be white/buff or very pale.
- White boards and markers (take photographs as evidence for books if necessary).
- A tripod grip should be encouraged
  thumb and 1st, 2nd fingers.
- Experiment with different pens and pen grips. Brands like Stablo make a variety.
- A rubber band wrapped around the shaft of the pen, 3cm up from the nib can make a cheap, useful grip.

- Some children benefit from using a writing slope. Trial using a ring binder as a makeshift slope initially.
- Keep desk writing activities relatively brief to begin with. Due to lower muscle tone many children find it difficult and tiring to sit up straight at a desk for an extended time.
- Letter tracing activities are a good place to start. Magic markers allow children to trace over an adult's letters and change the colour of the writing as they trace.





# Helpful resources

- Praise and encouragement
- Working For Boards
- Motivating rewards
- ▶ Black pen
- ► Magic/colour change markers
- White or pale paper
- Mini white boards
- White board markers
- **▶** Electronic timers
- Sand timers
- Writing slopes
- Wedge cushions
- ► Foot block
- Tactile letters eg sandpaper letters
- Easy grip scissors / push down table scissors
- ► Playdoh / therapeutic putty
- Pen grips



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