



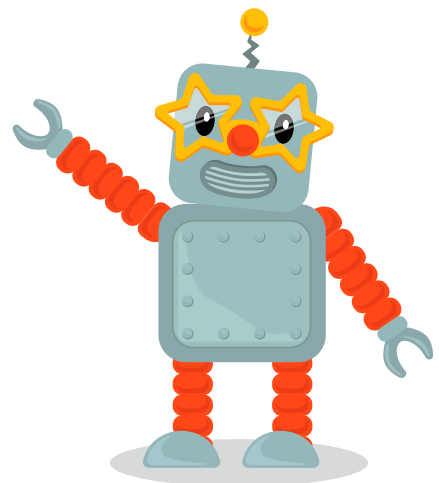
## The Write Stuff

Children as young as two years of age make marks on paper to express their feelings and communicate with others (sometimes they even use walls, furniture, and mirrors!). Although toddlers and preschoolers may not write conventionally, they demonstrate their writing abilities in a variety of ways such as scribbling, drawing, and making letter-like forms. The ways in which adults respond to children’s first writing attempts can nurture children’s natural desire to write, which is one of the many reasons why parents play such an important role in The Write Stuff!

One of the milestones of success with emergent writing depends on the development of fine-motor-skills; the development of fine-motor-skills enables children to make movements using the small muscles in their hands and wrists.

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# Squishy Bags

## Materials:

- Hair gel (many dollar stores sell hair gel)
- Large, resealable bags

## Details:

1. Fill a sealable bag approximately half-full of hair gel (or, invite your child to do so). If the hair gel is clear, you may want to add a few drops of food coloring to the bag. Carefully seal the bag (and, if you like, reinforce the bag with tape) and then invite your child to use her pointer finger to 'write' her name (and/or other words) into the cool, squishy gel.
2. If your child is struggling to write her name, copy the letters onto a sheet of paper and lay the paper underneath the gel bag. Encourage your child to trace the letters using her pointer finger.
3. If your child is not yet interested in writing letters or words, invite her to draw symbols, scribbles, lines, whatever it is she prefers (because the goal of this activity is to strengthen the muscles and coordination of your young learner!).
4. To further develop her fine-motor muscles, provide your child with cotton swabs (one at a time) to continue her writing practice. In addition, copy all the alphabet letters and invite your child to practice writing both upper and lowercase letters.



# Rainbow Letters

## Materials:

- Large variety of crayons
- Construction paper (or writing paper)

## Details:

1. Ask your child to write his name (in relatively large letters) onto a sheet of construction or writing paper. Next, provide your child with a large variety of crayons and invite him to trace over the letters in his name (using a different crayon with every trace).
2. Some children will trace the letters so many times that the letters extend to the edges of the paper, while others will enjoy keeping the rainbow colors in very close range to the letters; either way is acceptable! Fine-motor development and name-writing practice are the backbone of rainbow writing, so no matter the result, this experience fits the bill!
3. Please note, if your child is struggling to hold crayons, breaking the crayons in half can be helpful.
4. To switch things up, invite your child to write his name using a highlighter, and to trace over the highlighted letters using a ballpoint pen!



# Tracing, Racing Letters!

## Materials:

- Masking tape (or painter's tape)
- Toy cars

## Details:

1. Use the masking (or painter's) tape to form the letters of your child's name on the floor. Invite your child to help you as you create the masterpiece!
2. Next, ask your child to gather a variety of vehicles that she can 'drive' around the letters of her name!
3. Encourage your child to move the vehicles along the 'roads' (i.e. letters), the same way they would write the letters.
4. You can also invite your child to use the tape to make a variety of lines, angles, and/or other shapes (on the floor) and encourage your child to drive the vehicles on the 'roads'. Again, because the goal of this experience is to provide your child practice identifying letters, build hand and wrist strength, and enjoy the processes tied to writing, this practice is 'ride on'!

Please note, the following example illustrates the same activity, but with sidewalk chalk rather than tape, which is another great option for Tracing, Racing Letters!



# Drawing the Day

## Materials:

- Sidewalk chalk

## Details:

1. Create a hopscotch pattern (with sidewalk chalk) and add a letter to each hopscotch square. Depending on your child's comfortability with letter recognition, you may decide to use the letters that make up your child's name (i.e. S M I T H). You may also decide to write both upper and lowercase letters (A in one square, a in another). Or, you might decide to write all the alphabet letters (a mix of upper and lowercase, all uppercase, all lowercase, etc.).
2. In order to play letter hopscotch, you can teach your child how to play good old-fashioned hopscotch. (i.e. throw a flat stone, beanbag, or plastic toy to land on square one and then hop through the squares). Your child then hops in all the letter squares (EXCEPT the square in which the stone landed!). Ask your child hops into each square, ask that he say the letter name aloud.
3. You can also simplify Letter Hopscotch by saying the names of letters (one at a time, OR, share a short sequence and encourage your child to hop into each square in the order you shared—i.e. /A/, /j/, /z/).
4. In order to extend Letter Hopscotch play, erase and rearrange the letters (change the letters altogether, or add numbers to the hopscotch board!).



# Secret Message Writers

## Materials:

- Baking soda
- Water
- 2 mixing bowls (or cups)
- Cotton swabs
- White paper
- Kool-Aid packet

## Details:

1. Start by mixing the Invisible Ink (equal parts baking soda and water) into a small bowl or cup. Next, invite your child to write a secret message using the invisible ink! Encourage her to dip a clean cotton swab (cotton swabs are ideal for pincer practice!) into the mixture and to create the secret message onto the white paper.
2. The invisible ink takes a few minutes to dry, and as it does, work with your child to make a revealing potion!
3. To make revealing potion, empty the packet of juice mix (such as Kool-Aid) into a cup (or small bowl) and mix in about  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of water. The mixture will smell fruity and refreshing and has a nice texture too!
4. Once the invisible ink is completely dry, invite your child to use the paintbrush (also dry) or cotton swab and revealing potion to paint over the secret message. Not only does the revealing potion smell great, it makes a little 'sizzle' sound as the baking soda reacts to the citric acid in the juice mix!
5. If your child is not yet ready to write words, invite her to draw a picture (or letters, symbols, and numbers) with the invisible ink and revealing potion.



## It's All in a Name

1. What is more wonderful than writing your very own name?! Whether your child is on the verge of writing letters, or is full-fledge a writing machine, more than likely the first letters he wrote were those in his name (as well as the letters in "mom", or "dad"), and the following suggestions provide a number of ways to make name-writing FUN (and worthwhile!)
2. Whenever possible (i.e. once or a few times weekly), provide your child opportunities to practice writing his name.
3. Encourage your child to focus on his first name (first), and, when he is ready, invite him to write his last name too!
4. Write your child's name onto a piece of paper (in bold letters) and place a sheet of tissue over the name so your child can trace the letters.
5. Write your child's name onto a piece of paper (or an index card) and encourage her to use it as a guide as she writes it on her own (on another sheet of paper, a chalkboard, wipe-on/wipe-off board, into a tray filled with salt/sand/cornmeal/oatmeal, etc.).
  - Dot out the letters in your child's name and invite him child to trace the dots (using a writing utensil, or a paint-topped cotton swab).
  - Write your child's name on a piece of paper. Cut the letters apart and mix them up. Encourage your child to put the letters in the correct order and then try to copy them onto another sheet of paper.
  - Using water bottle lids (disposable and cleaned), write one letter on each lid and mix them up before inviting your child to put the letters into the correct order (to spell out his name!). To further challenge your child, invite him to write the letters onto water bottle caps before he spells his name.
  - Lastly, write LARGE, individual letters on a sheet of paper and invite your child to use bottle caps (or a stamper) to fill in the lines of the letters.