

# Inclusive Developmental and Therapy Center

Hands, Pencil Grip & Handwriting: A Fine-Motor Home Program

inclusivetherapycentre.com · +92 314 6040262

✿ Written by the Inclusive Developmental and Therapy Center therapy team · **medically reviewed by Dr Muhammad Suffyan**, MB BS (GMC 8023727) · Last reviewed July 2026

## ✓ Can I help my child at home?

Yes, you really can. Build the hand strength, control and pre-writing skills your child needs before neat handwriting can come. This free program breaks it down into simple weekly steps, built from proven therapy techniques — things any parent can do at home, in everyday moments, at no cost. It doesn't replace a professional assessment where one is needed, but for a lot of children it makes a real difference, and it never does any harm.

Go at your own pace — a new, gentle focus each week.

Download the whole program as a printable PDF to keep.

Includes the signs that mean it's worth getting a bit of extra help.

Fine motor skills are the small, precise movements of the fingers and hands — pinching, pressing, threading, holding a pencil. If your child fights to hold a crayon, wilts after a few minutes of colouring, or their letters come out shaky and all over the place, the useful answer is usually not more writing practice. It is more hand practice. Strong, skilful hands are built through play — squeezing, pinching, threading, building — long before a pencil ever has to behave on a page. This is one of our free **parent-led home programs** — a gentle order to follow, not a test to pass.

The other thing worth knowing is that the trouble often starts higher up than the hand. A child who slumps, hooks a leg around the chair or props their head on one arm is using all their effort to stay upright, and there is nothing left over for careful fingers. So this program works from the outside in: big-body play first, then strength in the palm, then the neat thumb-and-finger pinch, then the shapes letters are built from, and only then the pencil. If the big movements themselves

still look wobbly — running, climbing, catching a ball — start with the **gross-motor home program** and come back to this one.

- 1 **Big body**  
Shoulders and core steady the arm
- 2 **Palm strength**  
Squeezing, squishing, tearing
- 3 **Finger pinch**  
Thumb and fingertips pick up
- 4 **Pre-writing shapes**  
Lines, circles and crosses
- 5 **The pencil**  
Short, cheerful bits of writing

Parents tell us this in their own words, and it is always the same three sentences: bacha pencil theek se nahi pakarta — my child does not hold the pencil properly; likhai bohat kharab hai — the writing is really messy; haath jaldi thak jaata hai — the hand tires very quickly. All three usually improve from the same place, which is play, not drills.

This is a supportive home program written for parents. It is not a diagnosis and it does not replace a proper assessment. Nothing in it can harm a child who turns out to be developing perfectly normally. But if your child is in real pain, is losing hand skills they clearly had before, or is a long way behind other children their age — a pattern that can point to **dyspraxia, or developmental coordination disorder** — please see a paediatric occupational therapist or your doctor as well as doing this.

## ♥ Who this program is for

- ✓ Children who dodge drawing, colouring or cutting
- ✓ A tight, awkward or fist-like grip on the pencil
- ✓ Hands that tire or ache quickly during table work

- ✓ Letters and drawings that come out shaky or very uneven
- ✓ A child who presses so hard the paper tears, or so lightly you can barely see the line
- ✓ Trouble with buttons, zips, threading or fiddly little pieces
- ✓ A school-age child who cannot manage laces, a lunchbox lid or a water-bottle cap

### **Important – when to get professional help**

This is a supportive home program — it isn't a diagnosis, and it doesn't replace a proper assessment. Please speak to a professional soon if:

Your child loses hand skills they clearly had before

Their hand use is far behind other children the same age

They avoid all hand and finger activities, not just writing

One hand is much weaker, stiffer or more clumsy than the other

Persistent shaking or a very weak grasp that does not improve

Real pain in the hand, wrist or arm — not just the ordinary tiredness of a long writing task

### **Getting help where you live**

Everything here is free to use **anywhere in the world**. If you'd like a professional to take a closer look, the best next step is someone local to you:

**Work with us online, from anywhere.** We offer **online sessions and parent coaching** worldwide — book an online consultation and we'll guide you and your child directly.

Talk to your child's **doctor, paediatrician, GP or health visitor** — share what you noticed.

Ask about **free early-childhood or early-intervention services** in your area — many countries offer them for young children (e.g. Early Intervention in the US, NHS referrals in the UK).

Search “**child speech & language therapist near me**”, or ask your doctor for a referral.

Near Multan, Pakistan? You’re also warmly welcome in person at our centre — **contact us here**.

## ☆ **Your step-by-step roadmap**

Move at your child’s pace, not the calendar’s — the “weeks” are just a gentle order, not a race. Feel free to repeat any stage for as long as it’s helping.

### **Week 1 – Strong body, strong hands**

**Wake up the shoulders and core that steady the hand.**

Play animal walks across the room — bear walks, crab walks, wheelbarrow walking.

Colour or draw on paper taped to a wall or window, so the whole arm works upwards.

Get your child helping to push, carry and stack cushions or light bags of shopping.

Let them hang, climb or push against a wall for a minute or two before any table work.

⚡ **Try this:** Big-muscle play first, table work second — a steady shoulder is what makes a steady hand.

## Week 2 – Squeeze and build hand strength

Build the deep strength in the palm and fingers.

Squish, roll and pinch playdough or soft dough into snakes and balls.

Squeeze a wet sponge or a spray bottle to “paint” with water outside.

Pop bubble wrap, and tear strips of paper for a collage.

Scrunch a sheet of newspaper into a tight ball using one hand only, then have a go with the other.

 **Try** A few minutes of warm, playful squeezing beats forced pencil drills  
**this:** every single time.

## Week 3 – Pinch and pick up

Grow the neat thumb-and-finger pinch that holds a pencil.

Pick up beads, buttons or dry pasta with fingers, then move on to tweezers or pegs.

Thread big beads or pasta tubes onto string or a shoelace.

Post coins or counters through a slot cut in a box lid.

Ask your child to hold two or three small items hidden in the palm while posting them one at a time — the little shuffle from palm to fingertips is a skill of its own, and it is the one handwriting leans on most.

 **Try** Snap crayons into tiny stubs — short pieces quietly force a tidy  
**this:** finger grip.

## Week 4 – Pre-writing shapes

Practise the lines and shapes that every letter is built from.

Draw big lines, circles and crosses in sand, flour or shaving foam with a finger.

Trace over thick dotted lines and simple shapes with a chunky crayon — our printable letter-tracing sheets are made for exactly this stage.

Follow the usual order children manage these in: a straight down line, then a straight across line, then a circle, then a cross, then a square, then a triangle and slanted lines.

Draw the shape big in the air together first, then on paper — big before small, always.

 **Try** Get vertical lines, circles and crosses solid before letters — they're the **this:** building blocks of the lot.

## Week 5 – Bring it to the pencil

Move gently towards short, successful bits of writing.

Use short pencils or crayons and a slanted surface, like a folder propped on the table.

Draw simple pictures, then let your child “write” their name however they can — our name-writing practice sheets give them their own name to copy, which most children will stick with far longer than a worksheet.

Watch the hand, not the page — the moment the grip curls into a fist or the wrist twists over, stop and do a minute of squeezing, then come back.

Keep it short and cheerful — stop while it's still fun.

 **Try** Five happy minutes a day builds far more than one long, frustrating **this:** session a week.

## Little tricks that make it work

- ✓ Do these at the table or on the floor, never lying flat.
- ✓ Slip little bursts into daily life — peeling stickers, opening packets, helping cook.
- ✓ Sit them with feet flat on the floor and elbows supported at the table.
- ✓ If your child is left-handed, tilt the page the other way and seat them so their writing arm isn't knocking a right-hander's.
- ✓ Praise the effort and how hard they tried, not how neat it turned out.
- ✓ Let your child pick the colour or the activity, so they feel in charge.
- ✓ Let both hands work — one hand holding the paper steady while the other draws is a skill worth teaching on its own.
- ✓ If they get frustrated, switch to squeezing or building, and come back to the pencil later. A child who genuinely cannot bear the feel of dough, foam or sand may be telling you something about how they process touch and texture.

### **How you'll know it's working**

- Willingness comes back first — your child stops arguing about sitting down to draw
- Then stamina — longer stretches of colouring before the hand complains
- A more relaxed, comfortable grip on the pencil or crayon
- Neater, more controlled lines, circles and shapes — if these stay shaky long after the hand has clearly got stronger, it is worth reading about dysgraphia, or persistent writing difficulty
- Steadier pressure — less tearing the paper, less writing so faintly you can hardly see it
- Everyday jobs get easier too: buttons, zips, cutting, a lunchbox lid — and if five weeks pass with almost nothing shifting, that is useful information in itself, so run our **free 2-minute developmental check** and take the answers to a professional



**Is this based on real methods?** This program follows the paediatric occupational therapy principle of building the foundations before expecting neat pencil control — stability at the core and shoulder first, then strength and pinch in the hand, then the pre-writing shapes, in roughly the order children usually manage them. The hand milestones behind it (scribbling, copying a circle, drawing a cross, using scissors) are the everyday ones set out in the CDC and WHO developmental checklists.



**Educational information, not a diagnosis.** Our guidance follows standard, research-based practice (CDC, NHS, ASHA and WHO), is written by our therapy team and **medically reviewed by a GMC-registered doctor**. Every child is different, so we can't promise specific results — always use your own judgement and speak to a qualified professional about your child. **Read our full disclaimer.**

#### — FAQ

## Hands & Handwriting: questions parents ask

