

## Developing Handwriting in the Early Years

The main building blocks for **teaching handwriting** in the Early Years include; developing your students' pre-writing and fine motor skills, encouraging crossing of their midline, correct pencil grip, strong pencil control and an understanding of letter patterns and letter formations. All of these elements are crucial in the successful teaching of handwriting in the early years classroom.

Pre-writing activities are the basis for **developing a strong pencil grip**.



Developing children's fine motor control is fundamental in any EYFS classroom. Fine motor development can be incorporated into a variety of activities. Ideas include:

1. Playing with **playdough** to strengthen little fingers and hands.
2. **Lacing** and **threading** activities to develop hand-eye coordination.
3. **Cutting** activities with scissors to strengthen hands.
4. **Open and closing** activities such as using pegs on **peg card** activities.



## Incorporate Crossing Midline Activities

Crossing the midline is a slightly different skill children will need to develop. A child that has established this skill will be able to cross a body part (e.g. hand or foot) over to the other side of the body with ease.

Sounds simple, doesn't it? But, for young children who are still developing this skill, simple things such as tracing, cutting or even beginning to write may be tricky.

Crossing the midline is an important developmental skill that children need to establish in order to be able to do things such as writing, cutting, tying their shoelaces, playing sports and much more. Therefore, it is a skill that Early Years teachers need to consider when planning activities for their little learners in their classrooms.

So, what exactly is the **body's midline**? Well, it's an imaginary line that goes between the left side and right side of the body.



## Crossing the Midline Activities for Kids

Have you ever noticed a child rotating their paper completely horizontal so they can write from the top to the bottom? Or, have you noticed them shifting their whole chair to write on the left-hand side of a worksheet while writing with their right hand? These children may be struggling to cross their midline and would benefit from some activities to help this skill develop more.

**Tip:** For some of the activities suggested, it's essential that the children are sitting directly in front of the activity. This will ensure that they are actually crossing their midline. Make sure when the child is crossing their midline that their body is rotating while their legs and hips stay in the same forward position.



### **Whole-Class Ball Passing Relay**

A super simple game that you can do with children as a morning activity. Have children sit in a circle and pass a ball or an object around the circle with both hands. Without realising it they are crossing their midline in a fun whole-class game where everyone can be involved.

Why not set a timer and see how fast the class can go around the circle (without throwing the ball of course). Or, perhaps children count as they go around the circle.



### **Back-to-Back Passing**

In this activity, two children sit back to back and pass the ball using both hands around their side to the other person and back around to the other side. Then, they can repeat.

### **Playing Clapping Games**

Simple clapping games such as Patty Cake, Miss Mary Mack or Double Double are fun ways that children can cross their midline.

Kids absolutely love learning these songs.



### **Play Twister!**

An adult-directed game of twister can easily incorporate the consolidation of left and right knowledge as well as some great crossing the midline practise.



Don't have Twister? That's ok, a similar outcome can be achieved with coloured dots positioned strategically on the classroom floor. Children are then directed to put their right hand on a coloured dot that is on the left-hand side of their body.



### Simple Stretching

A simple brain break in the classroom could be a great opportunity to get your children to cross their midline.

Simple stretching like reaching over to one foot with both hands and then doing the same on the other side is just one of the many stretches you could do with your children that encourages 'crossing the midline'.



### Infinity Loop Tracing

Using the infinity loop is another great way to encourage children to cross their midline. Use a blackboard and draw an infinity loop for them. Then provide them with a variety of different coloured chalk and get them to trace over your infinity loop again and again.

**Tip:** Make sure the child is standing directly in front of the blackboard.



## Pom Pom Fine Motor Activity

Many fine motor activities, if set up strategically, can be a great opportunity to encourage children to cross their midline.

An example of this is a simple set up like the image below. Children just have to pick up one pompom at a time and place it in the other jar.



## Get Active!

Encourage your child to stay healthy and active. Try to incorporate exercise moves where they will need to cross their midline to complete.

