



Module 5

Developing Emergent Writers

Early Literacy Matters

Module 5: Developing Emergent Writers

Module 5 at a glance...

In Module 4, you considered ways learning spaces and activities provide valuable opportunities for scaffolding and supporting listening, speaking, vocabulary, and phonological awareness skill development.

In this module, you will:

- Explore specific activities for developing hand-eye coordination, finger and hand muscle strength, and left-to-right directionality needed for writing.
- Gain a better understanding of the important role of teachers in modeling meaningful purposes for writing.
- Learn how to create age-appropriate activities to develop emergent writing skills.

Learner Outcomes for Module 5

Learner Outcomes:

- LO1: Learners will describe the ways fine motor activities prepare children for writing.
- LO2: Learners will describe the role teachers play in modeling purposeful writing and in providing opportunities for children to experiment with writing tools.
- LO3: Learners will create age-appropriate activities to develop emergent writing skills for children in their classroom.

Connections to the “Read to be Ready” Campaign:

This module aligns to the current Read to be Ready campaign’s following key beliefs:

- Early Literacy Matters:
- Teachers are critical:
- It takes a community:

Video link to “Early Literacy Matters” from Read to be Ready Website:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=60J8qRjRPkE>

Module 5 Overview

Overview: Module 5 will consist of three instructional presentations. These presentations will help you reflect on the special role a literacy-rich classroom environment plays in providing opportunities for children to develop emergent writing skills and interest in writing tools and materials.

- In **Presentation 1**, you will learn the importance of providing activities for children to develop muscles for hand-eye coordination, finger control, hand muscle strength, and left-to-right directionality. These skills physically prepare children for writing.
- In **Presentation 2**, you will focus on the important role teachers play in modeling the use of writing tools and meaningful purposes for writing.
- In **Presentation 3**, you will examine developmentally appropriate activities for developing emergent writing skills for children in the classroom.

Following each presentation, you will have the opportunity to apply your learning through Application Activities included in the Learning Guide.

Suggested Timeline for Completing Module

Each month, you will complete a literacy module. Modules were designed to allow you to complete small sections of the module at a time. The following timeline will help you successfully move through the module providing time to apply what you learn as you go.

- **Week 1:** Start at beginning of module and complete Presentation 1 and Practice Activity 1.
- **Week 2:** Complete Presentation 2 and Practice Activity 2.
- **Week 3:** Complete Presentation 3 and Practice Activity 3.
- **Week 4:** Complete the Learning Application Assignment for Module 5, and submit it electronically to your literacy coach for feedback and support.

Let's begin with a look at your books...

Before we dive into our Module 5 Presentations, let's start by having you look again through the books you received in your Early Literacy Matters start-up bag.

This time, you are looking for books that build children's knowledge and that would create opportunities for children to respond to in "writing."

Keep in mind that "writing" is not formal at this stage. Emergent writing includes all activities leading up to writing.

For infant teachers, think of which books you might use to create activities that would entice infants to crawl or to reach out.

- After looking through the book set, select one book that you think children would enjoy interacting with. Read the story aloud to yourself, and briefly respond to these questions in the Learning Guide:
 - Which book did you select?
 - What parts of the book would children likely respond to?
 - What are some ways your children could respond to the book (e.g., scribbles, drawing, pictures, dictated stories, others?)
 - How could you capture children's response to the text read?

Presentation 1: Developing Fine Motor Skills for Writing

Presentation 1: Developing Fine Motor Skills for Writing

Let's begin with a video clip which discusses why it is important to provide opportunities for children birth to five to develop their fine motor skills for early writing, and the important role the teacher plays in supporting this development.

<https://youtu.be/hp8gRvPepP8>

Developing Fine Motor Skills

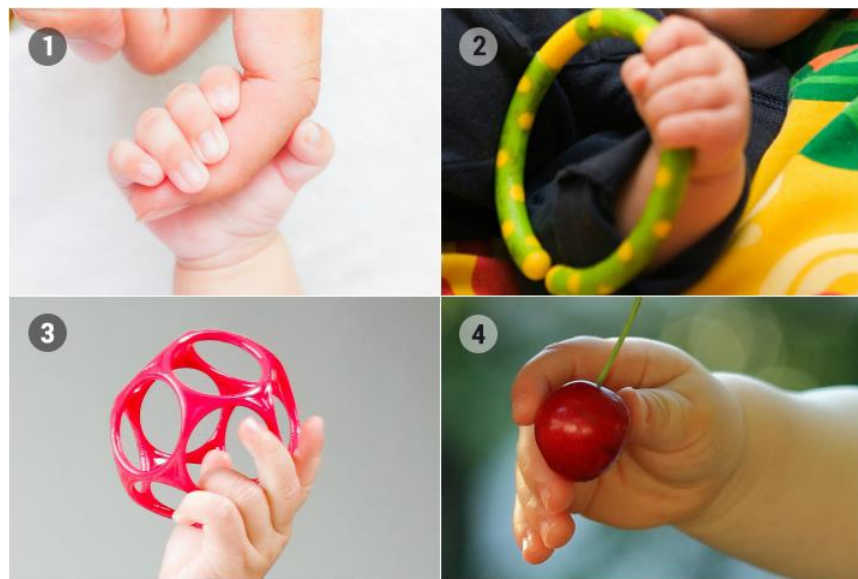
As you just heard in the video clip, the adult plays a critical role in providing children opportunities for developing fine motor skills essential for writing, including:

- Hand muscle strength
- Finger grasp
- Hand-eye coordination
- Transfer of objects or liquids from left to right, establishing directionality

Let's look at each of these strategies more closely so you can reflect on activities you can set up in the classroom to help develop your children's fine motor skills.

Hand Muscles and Finger Grasp

- Hand muscles and finger grasp strength begins developing in infants. Infants are quick to grasp an adult's finger tightly. Holding and shaking rattles and other hand toys adds challenge and opportunity to further strengthen muscles.
- Critical hand muscles for later handwriting are developed as babies crawl. Babies who skip crawling and go right to walking often experience difficulty holding a pencil later as a kindergartener. It's important to create time and space for babies to crawl. Consider adding interesting objects or toys for babies to crawl toward.



Hand Muscles and Finger Grasp

- During the toddler years, hand muscles and finger grasp continues to strengthen through scooping, pouring, squeezing, pulling, pushing, stacking, and building activities that are developmentally appropriate and safe.



Hand Muscles and Finger Grasp

- Picking up finger foods to eat such as Cheerios requires infants and toddlers to coordinate fingers to grasp the small object and hold it tight.
- Infants and toddlers are curious and interested in using eating utensils. Something many people are not aware of is that the way you hold a spoon is also the way you hold a pencil.
- Puzzles with large knobs are also great for developing fine motor control.



Activities for Developing Hand Muscles and Finger Grasp

Beginning with older toddlers and considering safety, the following activities develop hand muscles and finger grasp:

- sculpting with playdough
- finger painting
- building with blocks and/or Legos
- buttoning, snapping, zipping
- stringing beads
- using tongs and turkey basters
- washing tables with sponges
- wringing out sponges
- easel painting with various size brushes
- stamping
- lacing cards



What other activities can you think of that are not listed here?

Developing Hand-Eye Coordination

- Hand-eye coordination develops with time, exploration, and practice. Once infants discover that their hand can move, they are eager to gain control over its movements.
- Reaching toward and picking up objects are early signs of developing hand-eye coordination.
- Using eating utensils and drinking from bottles and cups offer opportunities to use hand-eye coordination.
- From working with puzzles, stacking blocks, filling and pouring out water cups, cutting with scissors, to scribbling or writing on paper—all require hand-eye coordination.



Reinforcing Left-to-Right Directionality

Left-to-right directionality is important for both writing and reading. It can be introduced and practiced through fine motor activities when the teacher models working from left to right to complete the activities.

For example, when demonstrating how to tong pom-pom balls, the teacher makes sure that the bowl full of pom-poms is on the left. She then uses the tongs to transfer the pom-poms to the empty bowl on the right.

Another example would be washing a table or chalkboard, moving the sponge in a left-to-right direction.

What other examples can you think of?



When to Introduce Writing Tools

It's never too early to model the purpose and use of writing tools; however, it is important to wait until children have developed fine motor control to hold the pencil. Children who are not able to physically hold or control the pencil will become frustrated and will not want to write.

A great alternative is to use moveable alphabet pieces, such as wooden, plastic, sponge, or magnetic tile letters that allow children to playfully explore with writing words.



Pencil Grasp Indicates Stage of Development

- Pencil grasp indicates stage of development and should be modeled correctly, but not be corrected for children younger than four who likely use a fist grip.
- Pencil grip supports can be added to pencils to help children with proper finger placement.
- Using thicker pencils and crayons are also easier for young children to grip.



Modeling Fine Motor Activities

- It's important to model slow, deliberate, and precise movement of fingers and the hand required to complete fine motor activities.
- Children learn through imitation and repetition.
- Provide numerous opportunities for children to practice using fine motor skills.

Practice Activity 1: Fine Motor Development Young Toddlers

- Choose a fine motor activity that is safe and developmentally appropriate for young toddlers (e.g., placing rings on wooden dowel stand, working with large knob puzzle, etc.)
- Practice working with the activity yourself to study your precise finger and hand movements to intentionally model for the child.
- Introduce the activity to a toddler in your classroom by inviting him/her to watch you first (“I do, you do”). Remember to use slow, precise movements and less talk so the child focuses on the movements.
- Observe the child during his/her turn. Remember, mastery will come with repeated modeling and practice. The child is developing muscle control and concentration. Praise any and all efforts toward the goal.



Reflection: Practice Activity 1

After engaging with a toddler in a fine motor development activity, briefly reflect on these questions:

- How did you interest the child in the activity?
- How did you model the use of fine motor skills?
- Describe the exact hand and finger movements the toddler made as objects were explored.
- How did the child respond to the 1:1 turn-taking with you to practice fine motor skills?
- Why was it important to engage with the child 1:1 rather than doing this as a group activity?

Include your responses in your Learner Guide.