



Fine Motor & Handwriting Support

What Are Fine Motor and Handwriting Skills?

Fine motor skills involve using the small muscles of the hands and fingers to complete tasks such as handwriting, cutting with scissors, manipulating classroom tools, and typing on a computer.¹ Students spend a large portion of their school day using these skills. When fine motor tasks become easier and more efficient, students can focus more fully on learning and participating in classroom activities.¹

Impact on student participation

Parents and teachers may notice that a student:

- Takes extra time or effort to complete writing or cutting tasks
- Has difficulty lining up numbers or letters on paper
- Produces written work that may be difficult to read or hard for the student to read themselves
- Writes letters that are inconsistently formed, spaced, or aligned on the page
- Avoids fine motor tasks or complains of hand fatigue or pain

How school-based occupational therapy can help

Occupational therapy practitioners (OTPs) help students participate fully in their school day by supporting the skills needed for learning and daily classroom activities.² Because students may spend up to 60% of their school day engaged in fine motor tasks,¹ OTPs focus on helping students work more efficiently, confidently, and comfortably so they can attend to academic content.²

Evidence-Based OT Interventions May Include³

- Instruction using structured handwriting curricula
- Purposeful, activity-based practice
- Teaching students to self-evaluate and monitor their handwriting
- Environmental supports such as pencil grips, adapted paper, or slant boards
- Supporting appropriate posture, positioning, and hand mechanics

OTPs may also assess other factors that impact fine motor performance, such as visual-perceptual skills, sensory processing, posture, or environmental barriers. When appropriate,

OTPs may recommend accommodations or alternative tools, including typing or assistive technology, to support access to learning.

Contact

If you're interested in learning if OT services might be helpful for your child at AIM, please contact supportservices@aimpa.org.

Sources

1. Caramia S, Gill A, Ohl A, Schelly D. Fine motor activities in elementary school children: A replication study. *Am J Occup Ther.* 2020;74:7402345010. doi:10.5014/ajot.2020.035014
2. American Occupational Therapy Association. Occupational therapy practice framework: Domain and process (4th ed.). *Am J Occup Ther.* 2020;74(Suppl 2):7412410010. doi:10.5014/ajot.2020.74S2001
3. Grajo LC, Candler C, Sarafian A. Interventions within the scope of occupational therapy to improve children's academic participation: A systematic review. *Am J Occup Ther.* 2020;74(2):7402180030p1–7402180030p32. doi:10.5014/ajot.2020.039016