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Hand Therapy in Nursery and Primary Settings:
Theory, Activities and Session Plans
Anna Bielak-Bajda · edutimo Teacher Academy

HT06

What Can I Do From Tomorrow?

8 principles for immediate implementation

This is your 'first aid' card after training. You do not need to implement everything at once.
Start with one principle – and be consistent.

1. SEQUENCE – from centre to periphery	
☐ **I start with the trunk, then the shoulders, and finally the fingers.**	Proximal-to-distal principle: I do not sit a pupil down to trace patterns if they cannot sit stably.
☐ **I do the warm-up on the floor, not at the desk.**	Start with 10–15 minutes of support work ('Aeroplane', 'Plank'), and only then move to manual tasks.

2. FEET ON THE FLOOR – the 90-90-90 rule	
☐ **I check whether the pupil's feet touch the floor.**	Dangling feet act as an alarm signal for the brain. A box under the feet is enough.
☐ **I check for 90° angles at the joints (ankles, knees, hips).**	One box under the feet can immediately improve handwriting.

3. HAND THERAPY SAFETY – what NOT to do	
☐ **I never force exercise – pain means STOP.**	Signs of pain may include sweating, red ears, change in breathing.
☐ **I never start from the end (tracing patterns without stability first).**	If the core is weak, writing in lines can reinforce postural problems.
☐ **A pencil grip is a prosthetic, not a cure.**	Without rehabilitating the wrist and fingers, a grip masks deficits.

4. OBSERVATION – I look at the whole body	
☐ **Before assessing handwriting – I assess posture.**	Slumping on the desk is NOT laziness – it is a fight for stability.
☐ **I correct W-sitting to cross-legged sitting.**	Do this kindly and consistently. W-sitting may stress hip and knee joints and blocks trunk rotation.

5. VERTICAL SURFACE – wall instead of desk	
☐ **I move some tasks to the board or wall.**	Working upright forces wrist extension and activates the shoulders. This supports natural rehabilitation.

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6. SENSORY – I respect the pupil's senses	
☐ **Pupil avoids messy substances? I provide a mediating tool (brush, spoon, glove).**	Never force it. Use a sensory bag instead of getting hands dirty.
☐ **Breaks pencils? That is proprioceptive hunger, not a behavioural issue.**	Five minutes of 'Pancake' wrapping or a hand massage with a spiky ball.

7. LANGUAGE OF FACTS – in conversations with parents	
☐ **I say 'avoids manual tasks, tires quickly during writing' – not 'is lazy'.**	For example: 'drops pencil 5 times per lesson', not 'is clumsy'.

8. ONE CHANGE IS ENOUGH	
☐ **I choose ONE principle and apply it for 2 weeks.**	Consistency is more important than perfection. A small change can make a big difference.

REMEMBER: You do not need to do everything at once. One change is enough to reduce tension and improve a pupil's functioning. Regulation is more important than discipline.

This is a general developmental resource. The activities support fine motor skills, coordination and sensory regulation, but do not replace diagnosis or specialist therapy. For pupils with an EHCP or diagnosed sensory processing difficulties, please consult a physiotherapist or occupational therapist. *© edutimo*

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