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Hand Therapy in Nursery and Primary Settings:
Theory, Activities and Session Plans
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HT08

Hand Therapy Safety Card

4 safety rules + alarm signals –for display in the therapy room

For display in the therapy room or classroom. Applies to everyone leading sessions.

RULE 1: NEVER FORCE EXERCISE	
✅ DO:	If the pupil reports pain or strong discomfort –STOP IMMEDIATELY. There is no 'just a little longer'.
❌ DON'T:	Continuing an exercise despite signs of discomfort.
💡 WHY:	In pupils with sensory processing difficulties, pain signals may not be verbal – watch for sudden sweating, reddening of the ears or a change in breathing rhythm.

RULE 2: NEVER START FROM THE END	
✅ DO:	If a pupil has a weak core and 'melts' on the desk –do NOT force writing in lined books. POSTURE FIRST, WRITING SECOND.
❌ DON'T:	Demanding pattern tracing from a pupil who cannot sit stably.
💡 WHY:	Writing without central stabilisation deepens postural problems and reinforces compensatory patterns (stiff hand, 'hooked' wrist).

RULE 3: A PENCIL GRIP IS A PROSTHETIC, NOT A CURE	
✅ DO:	A corrective pencil grip will not solve the problem. It is useful ONLY in combination with therapy.
❌ DON'T:	Using the grip as the sole intervention and assuming the problem is resolved.
💡 WHY:	Without rehabilitating the wrist and fingers, the grip masks deeper motor deficits.

RULE 4: CHECK FOR ALLERGIES	
✅ DO:	Before activities with sensory substances (shaving foam, food products, oils) – ALWAYS check for skin allergies.
❌ DON'T:	Introducing new materials without prior discussion with the parent/carer.
💡 WHY:	An allergic reaction can be dangerous and may set back progress in sensory desensitisation.

⚠ ALARM SIGNALS –STOP THE EXERCISE

If any of the following occur –stop immediately:

- ☐ Pupil reports pain (verbally or through behaviour)
- ☐ Sudden sweating of the hands or whole body
- ☐ Reddening of the ears or face
- ☐ Change in breathing rhythm (speeding up, breath-holding)
- ☐ Trembling of the body or muscles (in 'Aeroplane' or 'Plank' position)
- ☐ Crying, withdrawal, aggression –this is a communication, not bad behaviour

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GOLDEN RULE: Well-planned sessions are FLEXIBLE. Respond to the pupil's current capacity. Modify the session without losing sight of the main therapeutic goal.

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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