

Activities that parents can do at home to stimulate perceptual areas:

Visual discrimination and memory – Talk about what things “look like” when you are not looking at them. Play memory games such as “Guess Who” and “Concentration”. Another informal game that can be played in the car is “I’m thinking of something that looks like ... (describe objects, letters, numbers, etc. with enough information to help paint a picture in the child’s mind)”, and then ask, “What is it?”

Visual-motor - Have child draw large shapes, letters, numbers, or designs on a chalk board (rather than a white marker board) for tactile/kinesthetic stimulation. Encourage large, fun movements and don’t insist on perfectly formed letters or numbers – only that they be written from top to bottom. Have child use a chalk holder and use the correct pencil grip. Often we ask children to write too small, too soon, which is a big reason why so many children have developed an incorrect pencil grip. When they do write on paper, be sure child uses a large pencil that helps develop proper grip (a triangularly-shaped one is great). Be sure to allow them to write large.

Auditory discrimination – Playing rhyming games and reading nursery rhymes is one of the best ways to develop this area. Play games like taking turns saying as many words as you can both think of that begin (or end) with the same sound. While looking at a picture book or a group of individual pictures spread on a table, ask child to show you the “/ch/ /l/ /ck/”. Play game of “Same/Different” by saying two words and have child tell you if they are the same or different. This is not for rhyming, but for exact words. Notice if your child often asks you (and others) to repeat words.

Articulation – The most important function in proper articulation is hearing correctly. Be sure your child’s hearing is within the normal range by allowing them to have their hearing screened each at school. Most children talk the way they hear. Have your child look at your mouth as you pronounce a word that he/she had difficulty pronouncing. Help him/her see where your tongue, teeth or lips are in relation to the word being pronounced. Have child repeat exactly what you said. Sometimes just insisting that they listen more carefully will make the necessary difference, and sometimes having them say the word more slowly will help. If it seems your child is not hearing the difference between specific sounds, you may need the help of someone trained in deficit stimulation educational therapy such as the TEACH method or Lindamood Bell’s auditory training.

Directionality – Talk about things in relation to right and left as often as possible in a natural way. “Is it the one on the right or the left?” “Are you standing on my right or left side?” “Which way do we turn when we get to our street?” Play “Simon Says” using commands that involve left and right use of body. Just thinking about directions, seeing the relationship of things in directional terms, and most importantly verbalizing them will help a child learn left and right. Encourage

any writing or scanning of any visual material to be done in a left to right flow which will help establish the natural left to right progression of the reading process.

Finger Schema – Finger schema refers to a student's sensory feedback from tactile (touch) stimulation of the fingers. It indicates how aware a child is of his body in space in relation to the fingers, which is key in developing proper pencil grip and other fine motor control. A "Feely Meely" box is a fun way to develop a sense of tactile awareness. Another way to stimulate this is to have child close his eyes and then touch the first knuckle of a finger or two and then ask him to show or tell you which finger(s) was touched.

Praxis – This refers to pencil grip. It is very important that you monitor this at home any time your child picks up a writing instrument. Encourage large, fun movements on a chalk board or large paper tablet. The most helpful adjustment that you can make is to provide your child with a larger (fatter) writing instrument. Use of a triangularly-shaped pencil and/or use of a chalk holder when writing on a board are ideal. Often the biggest deterrent to proper pencil grip is requiring a child to write too small too soon. Don't insist on perfectly formed letters, but do encourage a *consistent top to bottom* formation of letters, with circles drawn counterclockwise for a right-handed child and clockwise for a left-handed child.