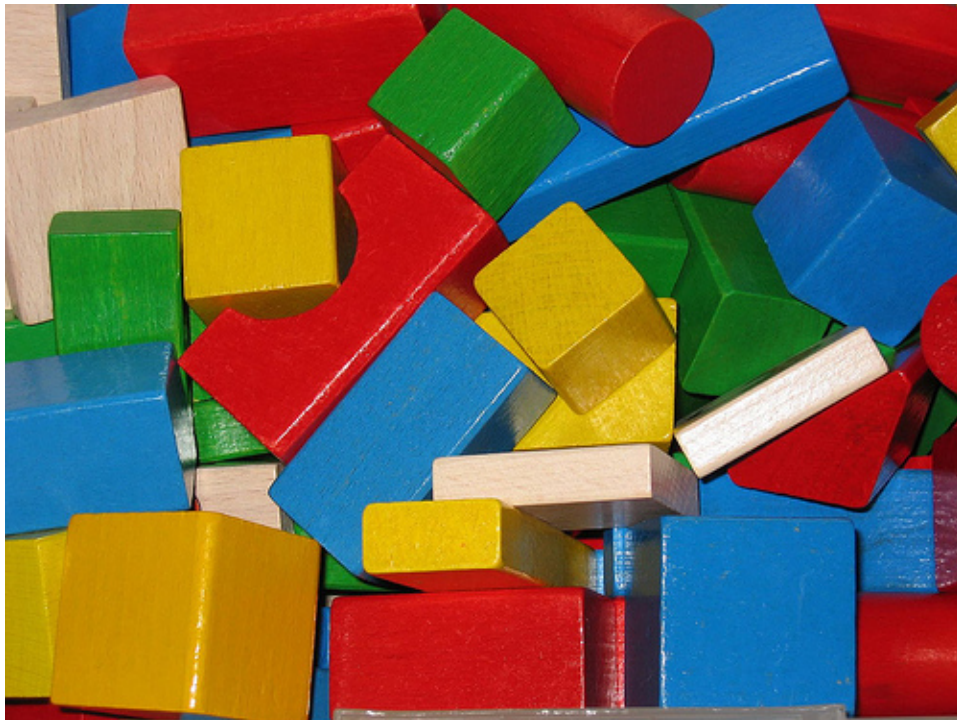


Occupational therapy pre-school referral and resource pack



This pack was designed by the Community Occupational Therapy Team for parents and carers of children 5 years and under. Pre-schools may also find this resource helpful.

This pack provides ideas on how to address the most common difficulties that we receive referrals for, and explains our referral criteria.

For a number of children, the activities in this pack need to be practiced before making a referral to occupational therapy - the exceptions to this are listed over the page.

About this advice pack

The role of the children's Occupational Therapist (OT) is to work with children, young people and the adults that know them best. Our aim is to help children and young people develop the practical skills they need to take part in and enjoy everyday life. These include activities such as:

- self-care - getting dressed, feeding, learning to wipe themselves
- play and pre-school – drawing and making marks, playing and using tools

We do this by looking at the child (what they can do and what they find difficult), the activity the child needs to do (we call this the 'occupation') and where the child needs to do this activity (the environment). This is called the PEO model – **p**erson, **o**ccupation, **e**nvironment.

Who is the pack for?

This pack is designed for parents, carers and pre-schools.

Why use the pack?

Lots of children find day to day activities difficult, and may take longer to learn new skills. Children make more progress when they carry out activities for a short time daily, rather than one long session per week. Some children may carry out these activities and will no longer need a referral to occupational therapy.

By using this pack you will provide the child with lots of opportunities to practice their skills and have fun. Regular practice with the child will help you to see the progress they are making.

How to refer to Occupational Therapy

Pre-schools, GPs, health visitors and other health professionals can make a referral to Occupational Therapy.

All referrals to Occupational Therapy should be made on the community children's services referral form and emailed to us, [e: gst-tr.evelinacommunityreferrals@nhs.net](mailto:gst-tr.evelinacommunityreferrals@nhs.net)

You can find a copy of our referral form at, [w: www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/community-occupational-therapy](http://www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/community-occupational-therapy)

We will consider referrals for:

- children/young people of any age whose physical impairments affect their ability to participate in everyday activities.
- children/young people who are over 5 years old and are struggling with four or more everyday activities, and whose difficulties are not in line with their overall developmental (learning) ability
- children under 5 years old and struggling with three or more everyday activities, and whose difficulties are not in line with their overall developmental (learning) ability
- children with Autism who are struggling with three or more everyday activities
- children who are struggling with some everyday activities, but who do not meet the criteria listed above can still be referred to Occupational Therapy, provided you have implemented the advice from this pack for at least three months before making a referral.

We ask that you record the child's progress throughout the pack, complete the supplementary form provided and include this with your referral.
This pack may not meet the need of children with specific diagnoses. Please contact the Occupational Therapy Team if you would like to discuss a referral

How to use the pack

We would advise that the child is supported to carry out the strategies and activity ideas daily for a minimum of 10 minutes. Ideally this should be done for at least 5 out of 7 days. You can do more than this but the child needs to be motivated so that the activities are still fun. The activities should be carried out for 3 months to allow for progress. These sheets can be used by everyone who knows the child at home and school.

The list below is designed to guide you to the most useful advice sheet for the child's area of difficulty. Identify which difficulties the child is experiencing from the list below and then turn to the relevant worksheet.

Worksheet	Area of difficulty
A	Developing through play
B	Attention strategies
C	Fussy feeders
D	Getting dressed
E	Bottom wiping
F	Beginning to use cutlery
G	Pre-writing skills
H	Starting out with scissors
I	Ball skills

What if they are not improving?

If the child continues to find the activity difficult after three months of regular practice, it may be appropriate for the child to be referred to the occupational therapy team. When referring to Occupational Therapy, please attach the completed worksheets and supplementary referral form.

Remember to make the sessions enjoyable and have fun!

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A list of sources is available on request

Activity sheet A

Developing through play

This leaflet offers tips and advice for parents about the development of their child's play skills.

Things to consider:

Play has a very important role in your child's development. It is through play that children learn about themselves and the world around them.

Children develop all of the following skills through play

- **Language:** Children begin by 'babbling' and using gestures to make themselves understood. Play is a great time for introducing new language. Talk to your child during play, repeating simple words. All types of play help your child practise their language.
- **Social:** Young children initially prefer to play alone and have limited interactions with others. When children begin nursery they start to move away from watching other children to playing alongside them. From ages 3 to 5 children will start to play with other children, develop friendships and preferences in their play. Through this social interaction children learn how to take turns and begin to share.
- **Physical:** Physically active play, such as crawling, jumping, climbing and running, helps develop children's strength, balance and coordination. Playgrounds, obstacle courses and soft play areas are great opportunities to develop your child's physical skills.
- **Emotional:** Play gives children the self-esteem and self-confidence they need to build relationships. It also gives them the opportunity to express themselves.
- **Cognitive/Intellectual:** Through play your child learns different concepts and ideas. For example, he/she might learn about the sizes and shapes of objects by putting shapes into a container or cause and effect play. Children begin to learn to problem solve through play and use their imaginations in different play scenarios.

Try the following

- When playing with your child limit distractions (for example turn off your mobile phone or TV) and focus on your child.
- Let your child lead the play, let them choose what they want to play with. You might make suggestions such as colouring, pretend playing with dolls or building blocks. It is important to go along with what your child initiates and build upon their ideas.
- Come down to your child's level when you are playing, for example sit on the floor with them.
- It is also important for children to explore the outdoors. So even if you do not have much space at home, go for a trip to the park.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about play development, please contact the occupational therapy team at the Mary Sheridan Centre (Lambeth) or Sunshine House (Southwark), t: 020 3049 8181, Monday to Friday, 9am-4.30pm.

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A list of sources is available on request

Activity sheet B

Attention strategies

This leaflet offers tips and advice for parents whose child is having difficulty concentrating.

Things to consider

Children can have difficulties paying attention for many different reasons. These may be related to problems with understanding a task or distractions within the environment.

Try the following

- Create a calming environment. Be mindful of keeping your voice calm and clear away things that are not needed, for example toys at the dinner table.
- Remove background noises, displays and other sources of potential distracting stimuli, for example turn off the television or phone, or sit facing a wall or away from lots of toys.
- Allow your child to complete a physical activity (such as jumping up and down on the bed or running around the garden) before starting a task that requires concentration.
- Allow your child to engage in some 'heavy work' (such as pushing a trolley, carrying a backpack, playing with Play-Doh® or activities involving pushing/pulling) before a table-top task. These activities give extra feedback to the child's joints and muscles which is calming for them.
- Provide your child with a specific time frame for completing each task. If necessary, use an egg timer or stopwatch as a visual reminder.
- Check that your child has listened to your instructions, and understands what to do, by asking them to repeat the instructions back.
- Use a motivator/reward as an incentive to completing or attempting an activity, for example 'first dressing, then toy'.
- Give lots of positive reinforcement when your child completes the task, as well as during the activity.

REWARD CHART						
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
★	★	★	★	★	★	
★	★	★	★	★		
★	★	★	★	★		
			★			

Some activities

- Secret Messages- whisper a message or word to your child and see if they can retell it. This is even more fun in a group, passing the message down a line.
- Listening to a story and making sound effects for something, for example rain/animals
- Copying rhythms and imitating faces
- Feely bag – guessing objects and textures without looking.

Contact us

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Activity sheet C

Picky eater

Many children are commonly described as ‘picky eaters’. This means that they are limited in the types of food they like to eat and avoid many different foods. Eating is a skill that children need to learn. This leaflet offers tips and advice to help parents encourage their child to explore different foods and textures.

Try the following

Before feeding:

- Washing hands and setting the table will help your child to understand that it’s time to eat.
- Limit distractions, for example by turning off the TV or tablet and removing toys. This can help your child learn more about food.
- Try to have meals and snacks at the same time each day.
- Include your child in food preparation, such as choosing the type of pasta, opening packets, stirring or chopping the food with a plastic knife (see page 9 Using Cutlery).

During feeding:

- Sit together and eat at the table. Your child will gradually learn by seeing you eating and engaging with the food you eat. They may want to copy you.
- A good sitting position at the table is important. Your child should be at the right height in relation to the table with their feet supported, for example with a stool under their feet. Check that the plate is in front of your child and is not likely to slip around; a placemat can help with this.
- Getting messy! Looking at foods, smelling it and touching it are all steps towards eating it. Introduce new foods gradually in this way so that your child can explore the food.
- Describe the food by how it looks, tastes and feels.
- Use positive language, for example, “We stay in our chairs at mealtime”, “Food stays on the table.” Use “You can” statements instead of questions such as “Can you?” Mealtimes should last approximately 20-30 minutes.
- Try to make mealtimes be relaxed and fun. When you are more relaxed at mealtimes your child is more likely to participate at mealtimes.
- Do not use food as a reward – do not encourage your child to eat certain food before getting their preferred food as a treat.
- Draw up a food chart of foods that your child likes and foods they can try that week

Contact us

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A list of sources is available on request

Activity sheet D

Getting dressed

This leaflet offers tips and advice for parents whose child is learning how to get dressed.

Things to consider

- Make sure your child is well supported; sitting on a small chair or stool can help, or sitting on the floor with their back against wall.
- Start by teaching your child to undress, as this is easier than dressing.
- Establish a routine, for example pants first, then t-shirt, then socks, and follow this in the same way each time. This helps with learning because it allows your child to predict the steps.
- Lay the clothes out in the order they are put on (the same way each time). Think about how the clothes are laid out, for example lay jumpers out with the bottom part nearest to the child and the neck furthest away.
- Talk your child through the order in which clothes are put on and taken off. For example, 'Now I am putting your right foot in, now I am putting your left leg in.'
- Choose easy clothing for your child to practise with. Larger sizes are usually easier than smaller. Big buttons, wider button holes, and labels or pictures on clothing may help them learn back to front.
- Let your child complete as many of the steps involved in dressing as they can.
- Don't rush when practising. For example, start with getting ready for bed in the evening rather than dressing for school in the morning.
- Reduce distractions – ideally a quiet room with the TV off.
- Adapt clothing to help your child cope at school, for example shoes with Velcro®, Velcro® on top buttons of shirts, elastic on shirt cuffs, elastic laces, toggles on coats or elastic waistbands.
- Encourage your child to use a mirror to check how they look, for example to see if their sweatshirt is pulled down at the back. Dressing in front of a mirror helps some children organise themselves while they are getting dressed.

Backward chaining

'Backward chaining' is a useful method that gives some children a sense of achievement when dressing. The idea is that your child completes the last part of the dressing task, so that they get the reward of completing the task. As their skills develop they can carry out more and more of the task until they can do it all.

For example – socks:

- Place the sock on your child's foot and encourage them to pull the sock up their leg.
- Next they pull the sock over their heel and up their leg.
- Then they pull the sock over their foot and heel and up their leg.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about play development, please contact the occupational therapy team at the Mary Sheridan Centre (Lambeth) or Sunshine House (Southwark), t: 020 3049 8181, Monday to Friday, 9am-4.30pm.

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Activity sheet E

Bottom wiping

This leaflet offers tips and advice for parents whose child is having difficulty with bottom wiping.

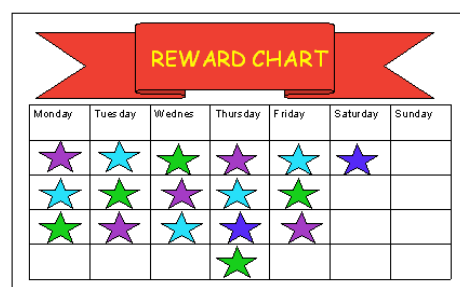
Things to consider

It is important to consider your child's independence with bottom wiping, particularly when they are approaching school age. Bottom wiping can take many months of practice for a child to achieve. Be patient with your child and encourage them to participate as much as possible.

Your child may find bottom wiping difficult as they have to reach and find their bottom without being able to see what they are doing. They may also have difficulties with using enough force when wiping, getting tissues and repeating the wiping action. Always make sure your child knows to wash their hands well after wiping their bottom.

Try the following

- Explain to your child why it is important for them to wipe their own bottom, for example, to stop a 'bad smell; or an 'itchy bottom'.
- Make sure that your child is seated on the potty/toilet with their feet supported either on the floor or on a box.
- Show your child what it is they need to do. This can be when they need to use the toilet or through pretend play, for example modelling on a doll.
- Talk through the steps involved with going to the toilet to help your child understand.
- Start by using wet wipes until your child is able to use tissue alone.
- Count out loud the number of sheets of tissue required, fold them over and reinforce wiping from front to back.
- Some children find it easier to get off the toilet to squat for wiping.
- If appropriate, use a mirror with the child to help them identify if they are clean.
- Play games such as placing water-based paint/shaving cream on the child's bottom during bath time and have them wipe this off with a light coloured flannel. Prompt the child to see if the flannel is clean; if not, teach them to wipe again. Watch out for skin rashes and stop if these appear.
- Place post-its on your child's lower back when they are sitting down and have them pull them off.
- Use reward charts/stickers each time the child successfully wipes. Praise all attempts.



Contact us

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Activity sheet F

Using cutlery

This leaflet offers tips and advice for parents whose child is having difficulty using cutlery at mealtimes.



Developmental Readiness

Consider your child's age and ability before deciding what you would like them to achieve. Use these developmental guidelines:

- At 18 months children start to use a spoon.
- At 18 to 23 months children start to hold the bowl steady with their other hand.
- At 2 ½ years children start to use a fork.
- At 3 years they may start to eat with a fork and a spoon.
- At 6 years children start to use a knife. They may not be able to confidently use a knife and fork together until the age of 7 or 8.

Things to consider

- A good sitting position at the table is important. Your child should be at the right height in relation to the table with their feet supported, for example with a stool under their feet. Check that the plate is in front of your child and is not likely to slip around; a placemat can help with this.
- Ensure the cutlery is the correct size for your child. Child-sized or cutlery with wider handles is easier to hold and use. A number of shops stock specialist cutlery for pre-schoolers
- Sit together and eat at the table. Your child will gradually learn by seeing you use your knife and fork successfully every day. They will want to copy you.

Try the following

- Try guiding your child's movements by placing your hands over theirs while using a spoon and/ or fork. This allows your child to feel the movement.
- If you would like to teach your child to stab the food with a fork ensure that they are holding the fork correctly. Teach them to point their index finger down the shaft of the fork. Teach them using playdough balls.
- If you would like to teach your child how to saw with a knife, show them how to point their index finger down the shaft. Teach them to saw playdough sausages in half, sawing backwards and forwards.
- It is easier to practise cutting with soft foods, such as fish fingers, egg, boiled potato, well-cooked vegetables. You could slice 'round' food (such as potatoes or sausages) in half to stop them rolling round the plate.
- If you think your child is ready to use a knife and fork together start by asking your child to try with just one item, then gradually increase the amount they do as their skill and confidence increases.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about play development, please contact the occupational therapy team at the Mary Sheridan Centre (Lambeth) or Sunshine House (Southwark), **t:** 020 3049 8181, Monday to Friday, 9am-4.30pm.

Activity sheet G

Pre-writing skills

This leaflet offers information for parents about the development of children's pre-writing skills. Pencil grasp and the ability to draw pre-writing shapes are just some of the skills a child needs before they can begin to write.

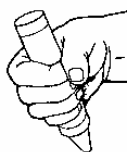
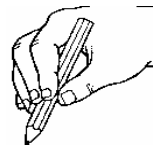

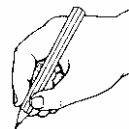
Young children need lots of opportunities to play with crayons, pencils, pens and paper. Give them opportunities to scribble and draw as much as you can. Make it playful, without expectations. Ask your children to tell you about the 'pictures' they have drawn.

Pencil grasp

Develops as a child grows up through a specific developmental sequence. Pencil grasp is important for pencil control and forming pre-writing shapes.

When children are little give them short pieces of crayon and chalk to draw with, this will encourage them to use the tips of their fingers, and help them to develop their pen grasp. You may need to supervise so that they don't put the pieces in their mouths.


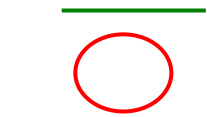

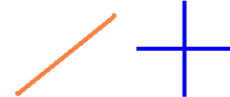

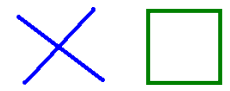


When your child nears 4 years of age and they are starting to develop a tripod grip (see table below) start teaching them how to hold the pen.

Grasp development			
1 – 1½ years Palmar Supinate Grasp		3½ – 4 years Static Tripod Grasp	
2 – 3 years Digital Pronate Grasp		4½ – 6 years Dynamic Tripod Grasp	

Pre-writing shapes

Children develop the ability to draw shapes, following a developmental sequence. Children are ready to start learning to write when their pictures represent something to them (for example, a scribble is a dog), they are able to copy diagonal lines and crosses and when they begin to understand that letters represent the sounds of language. Read frequently to your child and point out written words when you are out and about. Make it fun.

Have fun drawing different shapes together. Enjoy simple activity books together such as colouring, mazes and link the shape.

Age	Example	Age	Example
1 – 1½ years - Mouths pencil - Crinkles paper - Imitated/spontaneous scribble		2½– 3 years • Copies horizontal line and circles	
1½ – 2 years - Contained scribble - Scribble in vertical/horizontal/circular patterns - Imitates horizontal, vertical lines and circles - Copies vertical line		4 – 4½ years - Copies crosses and diagonal lines	
		4½ – 5 years - Copies squares and Xs	
		5 years 3 months - Copies triangle	

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about play development, please contact the occupational therapy team at the Mary Sheridan Centre (Lambeth) or Sunshine House (Southwark), t: 020 3049 8181, Monday to Friday, 9am-4.30pm.

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 A list of sources is available on request

Activity sheet H

Starting out with scissors

This leaflet offers tips and advice for parents whose child is starting to use scissors.

Why is it important?

- Cutting relies on the development of many skills, including hand strength and using both hands together.
- We learn to cut in the following sequence: cutting straight lines → cutting around corners → cutting circles → cutting complex shapes/curved lines.



Things to consider

- When your child is holding their scissors and cutting materials, the thumbs of both hands should point upwards. You can place a small sticker on the top of their thumbs, providing a visual cue to remind them which way is up.
- Make sure they are sitting comfortably with their feet supported.
- Remind your child to cut slowly, progressing from large to smaller movements. This can initially be done in an unskilled manner with more tearing than cutting.
- Cutting materials such as Play-Doh® or straws is an easier way to learn than cutting paper.
- Cutting exercises should always be supervised by an adult.



Try the following

- **Pick up games:** Use kitchen tongs or tweezers to pick up cotton wool or small toys and place them into a container. Start with large objects and progress to smaller objects that require more accurate movement. See how many objects you can move in one minute.
- **Happy hedgehog:** Cut straws and stick them into a ball of Play-Doh® shaped like a hedgehog. You may need to hold the straws to help your child cut them. Encourage your child to push the straws into the Play-Doh® and squeeze the Play-Doh® to make nose and feet.
- **Squeeze play:** Practise opening and closing hand action (squeezing) by using Play-Doh®, soft balls, water pistols or water spray bottles. Allow your child to squeeze using both hands, then one hand, then just between their thumb and two fingers.
- **Two-handed activities:** Opening jars, stabilising paper when drawing, pouring, holding a bowl and stirring, using a knife and fork, wind-up toys, lacing/threading.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about play development, please contact the occupational therapy team at the Mary Sheridan Centre (Lambeth) or Sunshine House (Southwark), t: 020 3049 8181, Monday to Friday, 9am-4.30pm.

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A list of sources is available on request

Activity sheet I

Ball skills

This leaflet offers tips and advice for parents whose child is having difficulty developing their ball skills.



Things to consider:

Ball skills help children develop body control and strength. By practising basic ball skills children can develop eye-hand coordination, eye-foot coordination, and control of their larger muscles.

Try the following:

- Burst bubbles by clapping hands together.
- Hit balloons in the air with a hand, a bat or a racket.
- Roll a ball back and forth to your child while sitting on the floor.
- Roll a ball in a straight line to hit a target. Move a little further away after each turn. Remember larger balls should be easier than smaller balls.
- Roll a ball to knock down homemade skittles, for example plastic bottles filled with dirt, sand or water.
- Bounce a ball on the ground with two hands and catch it.
- Throw a ball in the air and catch it as it comes back down.
- Throw and catch a ball with a partner.
- Throw a ball against a wall and catch it. Throw it in different ways, such as letting the ball bounce before hitting the wall, after hitting the wall, not letting it bounce.
- Throw a ball at a target on a wall or fence.
- Throw a ball into a target on the ground, for example a basket, box, bucket or hoop. If the activity is too difficult with a ball, try using a bean bag.
- Play swing ball.



Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about play development, please contact the occupational therapy team at the Mary Sheridan Centre (Lambeth) or Sunshine House (Southwark), [t: 020 3049 8181](tel:02030498181), Monday to Friday, 9am-4.30pm.

Record of activities completed

Children who are struggling with fewer than two everyday activities, but who do not meet the criteria listed on page 2 can still be referred to Occupational Therapy, provided you have implemented the advice from this pack for at least three months before making a referral. We ask that you record the child's progress in the table below and include this with your referral.

Please attach this form to a completed community services referral form. You can find it at: www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/community-occupational-therapy

We have followed the resource pack for months. We would now like to make a referral to occupational therapy.

..... continues to struggle with the following everyday activities:

Please fill in the table.

Observed difficulty	Activities/skills practiced	Observations/progress

Completed by Date

Contact us

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