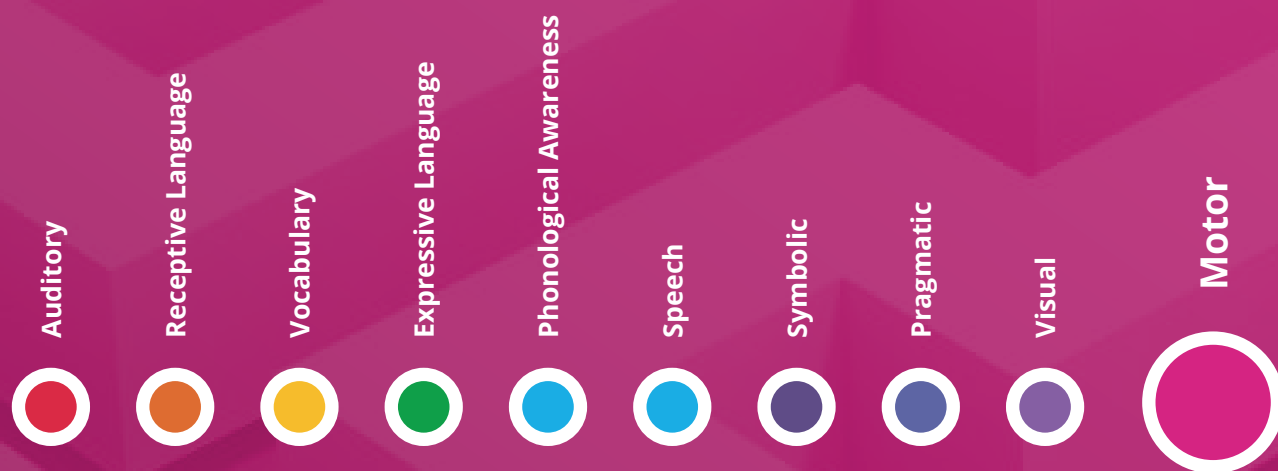


MOTOR SKILLS





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Launchpad For Literacy - Motor Skills
by Kirstie Page

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Contents

Motor Skills Handbook	5
- Overview	5
Defining Motor Skills	6
- Gross Motor Skills	6
- Fine Motor Skills	6
Gross Motor Skills for Writing	7
Fine Motor Skills and Other Skills for Writing	9
Launchpad for Literacy Skills Framework: Fine Motor	11
- Hand-Eye Co-ordination	11
- Manipulative Skills	11
- Finger-and-Hand Strength	11
- Left-to-Right Tracking	12
- Use Bilateral Movements	12
- Co-ordinate Gross and Fine Motor Movements	12
Implementing A Targeted, Systematic Skill-Based Approach	13
- Facilitating Motor Skills: A Systematic, Skill-Based Approach	13
Launchpad for Literacy: Fine Motor Skill Steps	14
Establishing My Level of Success with Gross Motor Skills	16
Establishing My Level of Success with Launchpad Fine Motor Skills	17
- Getting Started: Baseline Points	17
- Baseline Points: Making Links	19
- The Launchpad for Literacy Class Tracker	20
- Setting Next Steps and Facilitating Progress	21
- Identifying Skill Gaps and Specific, Developmental Concerns	22
Readiness for Literacy: Fine Motor Skills	23
Readiness for Literacy: Pulling the Skill Strands Together	24
Launchpad for Literacy Skill Steps	25

Motor Skills Handbook

The Motor Skills Handbook is part of the Launchpad for Literacy Package. It can be read from cover to cover independently or alongside the other Skill Handbooks. It sits alongside the Skill Step Guidance and other supporting documentation, available from the log-in area of the Launchpad for Literacy website.

Ideally it will be read alongside the 'Ethos & Implementation of the Approach' Handbook. This supplies information, rationale and benefits of a systematic, skill-based approach. It also provides an overview of implementing Launchpad for Literacy be it with an individual, a group of children, a class, a year group, a school stage or across the whole school.

Although the Motor Skills Handbook focuses on the fine motor skill strand from the Launchpad for Literacy Skills Framework, links are made to other, complementary skill strands which develop alongside and impact on each other. Wherever possible, a holistic approach to skill-based assessment and progression is promoted.

Launchpad for Literacy has been written from the child's point of view. 'I' refers to an individual child at a certain point in time and stage of development. 'You' refers to adults - practitioners, parents or carers. The decision to write Launchpad for Literacy in this way reflects the ethos of the approach and the need to look more closely at children's skills. By doing so, it enables you to think about what I can do and what I am ready to learn and what my next steps should be. Then, you can think about how you facilitate and create progression.

Launchpad for Literacy is written for all children. This systematic, skill-based approach is also highly valuable when identifying and supporting those with specific, developmental needs. ***Statements to particularly support the identification process will be highlighted in this way.***

Overview

Within the Motor Skills Handbook we will:

- discuss the rationale and procedures for implementing a systematic, skill-based approach to literacy preparation for fine motor skills.
- define motor skills.
- link motor skills and writing.
- look holistically, linking motor skills and activities to other skill strands.
- define the preconditional fine motor skills required for writing readiness.
- define the fine motor skill steps from Launchpad for Literacy, including the Baseline Point skill steps and those indicating 'readiness.'

Defining Motor Skills

The Launchpad for Literacy Skills Framework asks you to look for my level of success, and to facilitate and track my progress with motor skills that are essential for early writing readiness. Facilitating a strong, solid foundation of both fine and gross motor skills will ensure that I am ready for the greater demands of sustained writing as I get older and progress through school.

Although much of the focus for readiness for early writing will be on fine motor skills, it is essential that you consider my level of success with motor skills across two categories. These will be described in more detail below.

Gross Motor Skills

Gross motor skills involve large muscle activity in my arms, legs, feet or entire body. These allow me to learn how to walk, run, jump, climb, dance, hop and skip.

Gross motor skills are generally learned sooner in life and with greater ease than fine motor skills. I may find some gross motor skills such as catching or skipping with a rope, which involve complex planning and timing, tricky even as I get older. If I do, it is essential that you identify this, create opportunities for me to move on from my level of success and seek outside advice and support if required.

Fine Motor Skills

Fine motor skills involve small muscle movements, usually in my fingers. As I develop hand-eye co-ordination, I am able to direct my fingers, hands and wrists to perform more complex tasks. The development of my hand-eye co-ordination, therefore, allows me to develop better manipulative skills and to gain finger-and-hand strength.

In addition to readiness for writing, my fine motor skills will also underpin my self-help skills and allow me to control a range of materials and tools e.g. drawing with a crayon, manipulating playdough, using scissors, opening containers, turning pages or completing jigsaws. My ability to engage in this broad range of activities is essential for my other skill strands to progress.

Gross Motor Skills for Writing

Although my ability to write will, at the point of readiness, be defined by my fine motor skills, gross motor skills have an important role to play.

As I make marks, paint and draw I will:

- begin with gross motor movements, originating from the shoulder.
- move on to make marks using movements originating from the wrist.
- move on to make marks using movements originating from the fingers.
- later, sustained writing will require me to co-ordinate shoulder, wrist and finger movements as I write across the page and descend from one line to another.

Although it is important to make sure the tools you make available for mark-making are appropriate for my pencil grip and level of fine motor success (see next page,) you must also consider the opportunities you create in relation to my gross motor progression. When I am younger, ensure opportunities are developmentally appropriate. If I am older but have an earlier level of success, continuing to provide these opportunities to be inclusive. If I need to backtrack to develop earlier skill steps, are there enough opportunities for me to still make marks with large movements originating from the shoulder?

Opportunities for mark-making using movements originating from the shoulder might include:

- easel or wall-mounted painting, drawing and chalking.
- chalking on the floor, drawing on large pieces of paper on the floor or painting on large pieces of paper or plastic sheeting.

However, there may also be the need to ensure progression by moving on my skills for writing. If I am ready to make marks using finger movements are there enough opportunities for me to do so?

Opportunities to ensure I use movements originating from the fingers might sometimes include:

- reducing the size of the paper.
- nudging me to choose smaller pieces of paper or longer, thinner strips.
- providing table-top painting with small artist brushes in addition to easel painting.
- providing lots of little notebooks and post-its.
- using small chalkboards as well as wall-mounted chalkboard or floor chalking.

You will need a balanced approach as, at the same time as moving on with fine motor skills, my drawings are likely to become more detailed, possibly including more than one element and scenery. I will, therefore, still need access to larger pieces of paper in order to draw in this schematic way. These extended drawings will underpin storytelling and generating sequences of ideas and sentences.

In real terms, you will need to provide all of these opportunities simultaneously as my peers and I will be at a different level of success. You will need to monitor how I make marks and nudge me towards developmentally appropriate opportunities accordingly.

Alongside very early writing experiences, you will also want to create mark-making opportunities that mirror later writing movements without the demands of writing. These will allow me to practise moving from left-to-right across the page, coordinating shoulder, wrist and finger movements. These will also allow me to practise the descending movements I will need to make in addition to left-to-right tracking. These opportunities will need to be gently led/supported by you in order to achieve the desired outcomes.

Opportunities to prompt left-to-right and descending movements might include:

- painting or drawing the sea, creating waves from left-to-right across the page, then moving down the page from the horizon to the shore.
- decorating houses made from cardboard boxes, creating patterned wallpaper.
- writing in 'code' (pictures,) creating secret messages or recreating hieroglyphics.
- talking to me about and showing me sheet music, having examples with blank manuscript paper in the environment and encouraging me to create my own.

Fine Motor Skills and Other Skills for Writing

The link between mark-making and future writing is widely acknowledged in Early Years Curriculums. Mark-making encourages progression of my fine motor skills. Just as importantly, it creates opportunities for my creative skills to develop. From making marks, my drawing skills develop.

My creativity will be underpinned by the vocabulary, idea generation and symbolic skill strands of the Launchpad for Literacy Skills Framework. Ultimately, successful, independent writing will require me to use all of these skills simultaneously. Improving writing outcomes from the bottom-up will require you to facilitate a broad base of readiness across these skill strands.

To increase the likelihood that I engage successfully with mark-making and choose these activities, it is essential that you provide mark-making opportunities using tools that match my level of success with fine motor skills and my pencil grip. If not, I will find it difficult to manipulate the tool and to apply enough pressure in order to achieve a satisfactory outcome.

Without developmentally appropriate mark-making tools and opportunities, my interest in mark-making may be limited. I may even self-differentiate by not engaging with mark-making opportunities at all. Not only does this prevent my fine motor skills in relation to mark-making from progressing, it also means that I am not accessing:

- targeted language enrichment alongside mark-making to facilitate key vocabulary such as the directional concepts of 'up,' 'down,' 'round,' 'across,' etc.
- opportunities where creativity and ascribing meaning to marks is modelled.
- opportunities to generate ideas and symbolise these with marks/drawings.

When I am at an earlier stage of development, inclusive, developmentally appropriate mark-making opportunities mean that I should have access to:

- egg-shaped and chunky chalks.
- palm pens and chunky felt-tips.
- palm printers and chunky brushes for the paints.
- opportunities to make marks with my fingers in gloop (cornflour and water,) sand or paint.
- opportunities to make marks using different modalities outside using sticks in mud, make marks on frosty surfaces or to use real paint brushes with buckets of water.
- 'magical' resources such as a 'Aqua Draw' or a 'Super Scribbler.'

These tools and opportunities provide me with a greater level of manipulation and control. Using my fingers reduces the motor demand and increases the level of sensory feedback. The lower demand on my motor skills may allow me to explore sensations and early creative processes more easily. Multisensory mark-making and opportunities using different modalities may also capture my interest if I am a reluctant mark maker.

However, if my fine motor skills and pencil grip have reached a higher level of success, you will want to nudge me towards writing tools that are more appropriate for my grip. With that in mind you may want to create access to:

- high-interest pens which are not all 'girly.' Nudging me onto different tools as my grip improves should not always be a case of offering me a tool that is less interesting.
- writing shelves and tents.
- clipboards, writing belts and aprons (pockets for pencils and pads to make marks on the move.)

If I rarely engage in mark-making, despite these opportunities you will need to think about my levels of success with symbolic, idea generation and, possibly, receptive language skills. Mark-making aside, what are my play skills like? Do I pretend? What are my language skills like? Even if you still need to focus on my fine motor skills, additional skill gaps in these other areas means that progression towards full readiness will need to be much broader and more holistic.

As I get older and you ask me to carry out more adult-led writing tasks, it may come across that I do not 'like' writing. Although this might be the case, it is important to think about my general response to other adult-led tasks. Is it an issue specifically with writing tasks or do I have a deeper, more underlying need to follow my own agenda rather than yours? If this is the case, solutions will need to be found outside and alongside writing tasks in order to build other, underlying skills. It might become apparent that I have a deeper issue which simply manifests itself as one with writing.

Motor-based tasks and activities outside of writing create fantastic opportunities for you to observe my:

- capacity to filter out distraction and focus on a task.
- problem solving and planning skills during hands-on activities, allowing you to see these thought processes being played out even if I cannot tell you about them.
- turn-taking and asking others for help or a turn
- potentially, joint planning, collaboration and negotiation skills if I am constructing or creating alongside others.
- persistence and resilience even if the task is tricky, demonstrating key characteristics of an effective, independent learner.

Launchpad for Literacy Skills Framework: Fine Motor

The fine motor skill strand reads differently from the other skill strands in the Launchpad for Literacy Skills Framework. Most of the skill strands ask you to look for my level of success along a process of skill development. For many of the skills, this can be measured at discrete points of progress that must occur in a certain order.

Fine motor progress is different as simultaneously you are looking for progression with a few discrete skills. You will then need to consider how these skills can be used simultaneously, allowing me to make progress. This progress will be seen as I am able to engage in tasks of ever increasing complexity and motor demand.

For this reason, the skill steps for the fine motor skill strand appear to be very task specific. The tasks have been carefully selected to ensure progress with all aspects of fine motor development. This also gives you a wider motor 'radar,' preventing your focus from becoming too narrow too soon. Although mark-making is important, you must look for a wider range of motor readiness.

The fine motor skills you need to create opportunities to develop and that you need to consider my progress with are as follows.

Hand-Eye Co-ordination

Hand-eye co-ordination will be the first fine motor skill that needs to develop. Learning to direct my hand and fingers towards food, objects and resources, will allow me to hold and explore objects, textures, to move parts of objects or objects as a whole in order to develop manipulative skills and begin to gain finger-and-hand strength.

Over time, my hand-eye co-ordination will become more precise, enabling me to balance bricks, thread, and to pour with precision. Later still, in relation to literacy, hand-eye co-ordination will underpin my ability to form letters of uniform size, to cope with orientation, to dot 'j' and to cross 't.' etc.

Manipulative Skills

Manipulative skills enable me to use my fingers to make certain movements for a given purpose. This progresses from picking up objects, to using a pincer grip, to holding a container by a handle, to cutting and using a mark-making tool to scribble and then to make a specific, detailed drawing. Later, in relation to literacy, manipulative skills will allow me to hold a pencil, ideally with a tripod grip, to hold paper and to form letters.

Finger-and-Hand Strength

This is a crucial aspect of fine motor development which allows me to lift and carry, climb and hold on, fasten and unfasten containers and clothing and to sustain smaller, manipulative movements. I will, therefore, not be able to progress with cutting, drawing and writing without finger-and-hand strength. Later, finger-and-hand strength will enable me to develop stamina for and to maintain quality in sustained writing.

It could be argued that modern society, with Velcro, touch-screen technology and swiping, creates less opportunities for my finger-and-hand strength to develop. It also might not be

the first aspect of fine motor provision that springs to mind for practitioners. The Launchpad for Literacy Skills Framework encourages you to have this skill at the forefront of your mind and to ensure that I make progress in this area.

Left-to-Right Tracking

Left-to-right tracking is ingrained within your neurological pathways if you have grown up with western literacy experiences. It manifests in your motor and visual skills and is as fundamental for reading as it is for writing where you track text from left-to-right. It is essential that you facilitate this skill pattern with me.

Left-to-right tracking also underpins how I will count, write number problems and generally process the world around me. For example, if I am looking for a picture within a busy picture or finding a certain letter in a word search I will, more often than not, search in a left-to-right followed by a descending pattern. This descending pattern will also need to be understood and reinforced alongside and after left-to-right tracking is instilled.

Use Bilateral Movements

This is essential for both gross and fine motor movements and when I use both simultaneously. Using both sides of my body together indicates that I am using both sides of my brain simultaneously, The left side of the brain (my left hemisphere) controls movements on the right side of my body and my right hemisphere controls movements on the left. Increasingly these movements will become more synchronised. I will often need two hands in order to carry out tasks successfully, and often, over time my hands will need to be making different but complementary movements.

This complex, bilateral movement also indicates that my hemispheres are working together, particularly if the movements are cross-lateral, involving my hands and arms moving from one side of the body to the other. Bilateral movements can be encouraged right from the start by giving me objects to hold where I need to use both hands, giving smaller objects that I can pass from one hand to the other. If I am younger, make sure I spend some time on my front for 'tummy time.'

Through the early years I will, usually, begin to show dominance with one hand or another. Taking into consideration my emerging or decided dominance will need to be taken into consideration especially in relation to scissors, using cutlery and early writing tasks.

Co-ordinate Gross and Fine Motor Movements

Although, developmentally, gross and fine motor skills are separated, in reality they exist and work very much together. For this reason, we must consider gross motor skills in conjunction with fine motor.

Co-ordination of gross and fine motor skills is required for self-help skills such as putting on and fastening my own coat, for constructing with large boxes, bricks or planks and for early mark-making. Later, extended writing will require me to co-ordinate gross motor movements of the shoulder and arm with fine motor skills for letter and word formation as I write across and down the page. Without this, I may only write half-way across the page and descend in a narrowing triangular shape as I write only where I can reach.

Implementing A Targeted, Systematic Skill-Based Approach

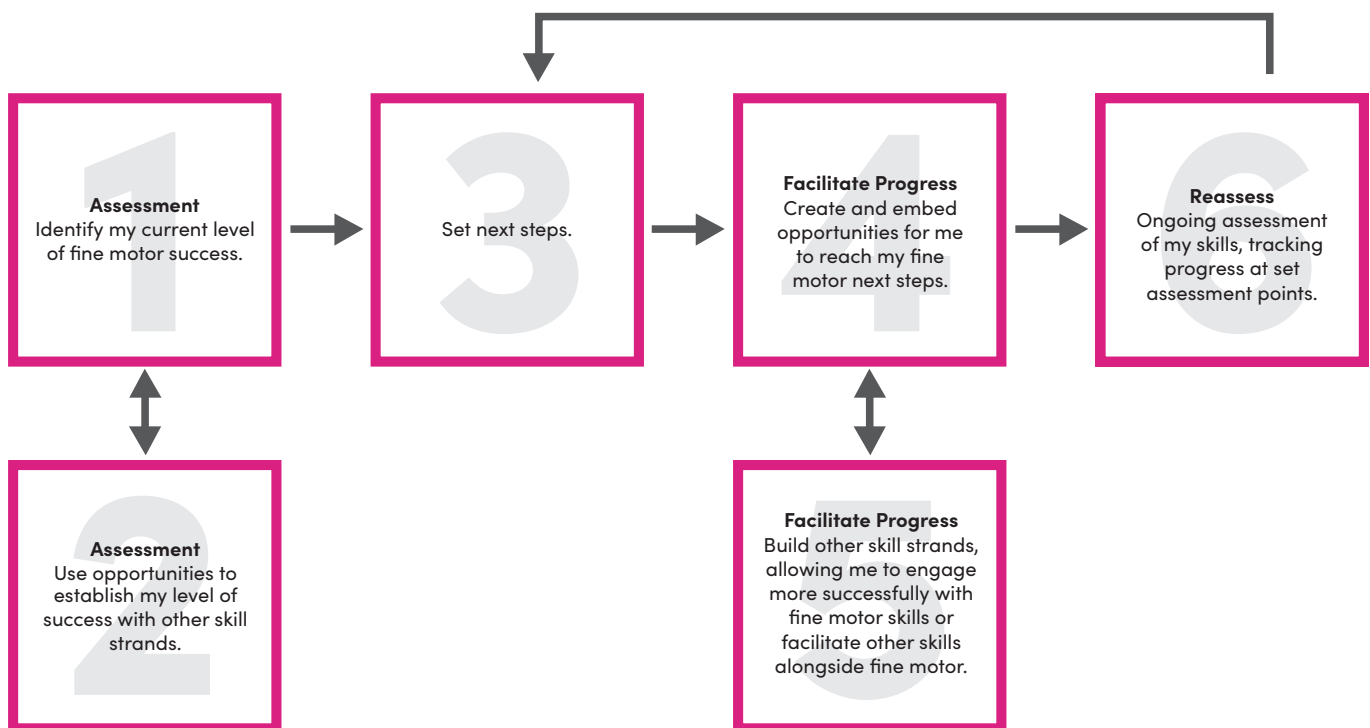
Early Years learning environments are usually rich in opportunities for me to develop fine motor skills. However, Launchpad for Literacy asks you to move on from 'rich' to becoming targeted and systematic, ensuring that all aspects of my fine motor skills progress.

You will develop all aspects of my fine motor skills by creating opportunities within the learning environment, by creating incidental drop-in opportunities and creating more planned, focussed opportunities.

In addition to creating generic opportunities, you will need to be mindful of my current level of success with motor skills, consciously 'nudging' me on to my next steps in a variety of ways. The process of progression must, therefore, begin with finding out my current level of success, embracing this as your starting point, focussing on what I can do, before systematically moving me on to my next step.

This process is depicted in the diagram below.

Facilitating Motor Skills: A Systematic, Skill-Based Approach



Launchpad for Literacy: Fine Motor Skill Steps

The Launchpad for Literacy skill steps for fine motor, unlike the other skill strands focuses on specific tasks. I will, obviously, develop and demonstrate my fine motor skills in many other ways. However, these 'snapshot' activities demonstrate my increasing ability to carry out tasks requiring a greater level of fine motor complexity and demand. The skill step activities and tasks require a balance of hand-eye co-ordination, manipulative skills, finger-and-hand strength and left-to-right tracking. Later, there is a focus on tasks and activities requiring bilateral movements and the co-ordination of gross and fine motor skills.

The skill steps are divided into stages of development, 'At First,' 'Systematic Preparation' and 'Moving On.' This will, usually, reflect my progression through the Early Years and beyond. However, by focussing on my current level of success and moving me on to my next steps your approach must be about my level of success, not my age or the year group I am in. If I am older but have an earlier level of success, you will need to backtrack to my next step in order to ensure progression. You cannot ignore my skill gap.

The skill steps and stages from the Launchpad for Literacy Skills Framework are:

Motor: Fine Motor	
I trace with detail.	>> M O V I N G O N >>
I coordinate shoulder, wrist and finger movements to write, moving across and down the page.	
I thread needles, sew big stitches and make pom-poms.	
I complete jigsaws with twenty pieces or more.	
I copy triangles, squares and other geometric shapes.	
I cut on a line continuously.	
I write one or two letters independently, usually ones from my name.	
I button and unbutton.	>> S Y S T E M A T I C P R E P A R A T I O N >>
I hold a pencil using a conventional grip.	
I copy the letters X, V, T, H and O.	
I track objects, pictures and text with my finger from left-to-right.	
I complete simple jigsaws that contain six to ten pieces.	
I draw a person on request with head, legs and body.	
I complete a sorting task using tweezers or tongs.	
I thread small beads or complete a threading card.	
I build structures with blocks, boxes or planks.	
I thread and screw nuts, bolts and washers.	
I paint and draw freely.	
I use scissors to cut out.	
I draw circles and can copy V, H and T.	
I draw a person on request with head and face, usually no body.	
I manipulate dough to make balls and snakes.	
I cut with scissors.	
I use two containers to pour and fill.	
I paint with wrist action, making dots.	
I hold a crayon and scribble freely.	>> A T F I R S T >>
I snip with scissors.	
I thread cotton reels or big beads.	
I make vertical, horizontal and circular marks.	
I build a tower of five or six bricks.	
I turn pages one-by-one.	
I pick up small items such as raisins or threads.	
I explore texture and moving parts.	

Establishing My Level of Success with Gross Motor Skills

Although the Launchpad for Literacy Skills framework requires you to establish my level of success with fine motor preconditional skills for literacy, you must also establish that you are focusing on these alongside my gross motor skills. It is important that both areas of motor development progress and any differences between fine and gross motor skills are identified and addressed. Specific developmental concerns must also be identified as soon as possible.

The table below is designed to help you become more aware of the interplay between my gross and fine motor skills and to make this process easier. It has been compiled from a range of sources including the good, old favourite 'Birth to Five Years' by Mary Sheridan and Catherine Lee.

Age/Stage	Gross Motor Skills	Fine Motor Skills
<p>At First</p> <p>By 3 Years</p>	<p>I run forwards and turn corners while pushing or pulling a large toy</p> <p>I jump with both feet together</p> <p>I stand momentarily on one foot</p> <p>I walk on tip toe, climb and swing</p> <p>I throw a ball</p> <p>I bend over easily without falling</p> <p>I climb stairs with alternate feet and descend putting two feet on one step</p> <p>I ride a tricycle or ride-on toy using pedals and turn wide corners</p>	<p>I turn pages one-by-one</p> <p>I build a tower of five or six bricks</p> <p>I make vertical, horizontal and circular marks</p> <p>I thread cotton reels or big beads</p> <p>I snip then cut with scissors</p> <p>I hold a crayon and scribble freely</p> <p>I paint with wrist action, making dots</p> <p>I use two containers to pour and fill</p> <p>I manipulate dough to make balls and snakes</p> <p>I draw a person on request with head & face, usually no body</p> <p><i>Phonological Awareness/Songs & Rhymes - I imitate closing fist and wiggling thumb with both hands</i></p> <p><i>Visual Discrimination and Memory - I complete form board puzzles with six pieces</i></p> <p><i>Visual Discrimination and Memory - I complete jigsaws with three or four pieces</i></p> <p><i>Self-help/ Snack Time - I carry a cup of water without spilling it</i></p>
<p>Systematic Preparation</p> <p>On Entry to School</p> <p>By 4 Years</p>	<p>I run around obstacles and turn sharp corners</p> <p>I move forwards and backwards with agility</p> <p>I run on tip toe</p> <p>I walk steadily on a line</p> <p>I balance on one foot for three to four seconds</p> <p>I hop a few paces on one foot</p> <p>I climb ladders and sturdy nets</p> <p>I kick a ball while running</p> <p>I throw a ball well</p> <p>I bounce a ball</p> <p>I catch a bounced ball most of the time</p> <p>I ride a tricycle skilfully</p> <p>I walk down stairs holding on, alternating feet</p>	<p>I use scissors to cut out</p> <p>I paint and draw freely</p> <p>I thread and screw nuts, bolts and washers</p> <p>I build structures with blocks, boxes or planks</p> <p>I thread small beads or complete a threading card</p> <p>I draw a person on request with head, legs and body</p> <p>I copy the letters X, V, T, H and O</p> <p>I hold a pencil using a conventional grip</p> <p>I button and unbutton</p> <p>I write one or two letters independently, usually ones from my name</p> <p><i>Phonological Awareness/Songs & Rhymes - I imitate spreading hand & bringing thumb to each finger in turn with both hands</i></p>
<p>Moving On</p> <p>By 5 Year</p>	<p>I walk backwards</p> <p>I jump forwards many times without falling</p> <p>I stand on one foot for ten seconds or longer</p> <p>I hop and skip on alternate feet</p> <p>I walk up and down stairs without help, alternating feet</p> <p>I turn somersaults</p> <p>I catch a ball fairly well</p> <p>I ride a scooter skilfully and ride a bicycle</p>	<p>I cut on a line continuously</p> <p>I copy triangles, squares and other geometric shapes</p> <p>I complete jigsaws with twenty pieces or more</p> <p>I thread needles, sew stitches and make pom-poms</p> <p>I coordinate shoulder, wrist and finger movements to write, moving across and down the page</p> <p>I trace with detail</p>

Establishing My Level of Success with Launchpad Fine Motor Skills

Getting Started: Baseline Points

It is essential that you establish my current level of success with fine motor skills. Without this, you cannot set next steps to systematically move me towards. You will also have no starting point against which to track and compare progress, measuring impact of your input.

Initially, the Launchpad for Literacy Skills Framework may seem daunting. With familiarity and use it simply becomes a common-sense mindset when thinking about my skills, my progress, possible skill gaps and readiness.

To help navigate and kickstart the initial process of establishing my current level of success, baseline points have been set. These may be used at the start of the school year or at any time when you begin to implement Launchpad for Literacy.

The baseline points have been set to give you an initial sweep to find out whether my level of success reflects that which would, ideally be expected for my age and educational stage. They have been set for **2 years +**, **3 years +**, **4 years +** and **5 years +** and are detailed below.

Motor: Fine Motor	
I trace with detail.	^
I coordinate shoulder, wrist and finger movements to write, moving across and down the page.	^
I thread needles, sew big stitches and make pom-poms.	^
I complete jigsaws with twenty pieces or more.	^
I copy triangles, squares and other geometric shapes.	^
I cut on a line continuously.	^
I write one or two letters independently, usually ones from my name.	^
I button and unbutton.	^
I hold a pencil using a conventional grip.	^
I copy the letters X, V, T, H and O.	^
I track objects, pictures and text with my finger from left-to-right.	^
I complete simple jigsaws that contain six to ten pieces.	^
I draw a person on request with head, legs and body.	^
I complete a sorting task using tweezers or tongs.	^
I thread small beads or complete a threading card.	^
I build structures with blocks, boxes or planks.	^
I thread and screw nuts, bolts and washers.	^
I paint and draw freely.	^
I use scissors to cut out.	^
I draw circles and can copy V, H and T.	^
I draw a person on request with head and face, usually no body.	^
I manipulate dough to make balls and snakes.	^
I cut with scissors.	^
I use two containers to pour and fill.	^
I paint with wrist action, making dots.	^
I hold a crayon and scribble freely.	^
I snip with scissors.	^
I thread cotton reels or big beads.	^
I make vertical, horizontal and circular marks.	^
I build a tower of five or six bricks.	^
I turn pages one-by-one.	^
I pick up small items such as raisins or threads.	^
I explore texture and moving parts.	^

A few skill steps have been selected for each baseline point. This allows you to look at all aspects of my fine motor skills. It also takes into consideration variation in ages across a year group which has a significant impact in the Early Years. Assessment of the fine motor skill strand mainly involves targeted observation with a few tasks such as drawing a person. You will likely 'know' a lot of this from your knowledge of my core skills and simply from watching me access the learning environment.

If, as you observe me, you realise that I can demonstrate all of the fine motor skill steps from the baseline, you will need to see what else I can do. What skill steps higher up the skill strand am I also demonstrating? This is my level of success and your starting point.

If, as you observe me, you realise that I am not able to demonstrate any of the desired skill steps from the baseline, backtrack and look at earlier skill steps lower down the skill strand. Find out what I can do and this is my level of success. From this point, the fact that I have not met the baseline targets does not matter. What matters is my next step. The baseline has served its purpose, acknowledging my skill gaps and my need to backtrack.

If, as you observe me, you may realise that I have demonstrated some but not all of the baseline skill steps and consolidating these is where you start.

Baseline Points: Making Links

As you judge my level of success with fine motor skills, think holistically as there are a multitude of opportunities for you to assess and judge levels of success with other skills. A few of these are detailed in the table below.

Fine Motor Task / Activity	Other Assessment Opportunities
<p>Drawing / mark-making and ascribing meaning to the marks I have made.</p>	<p>Symbolic: Do I ascribe meaning before, during or after making marks? Is this a creative process or an exploratory process I then ascribe meaning to?</p> <p>Vocabulary, Idea Generation: Do I generate my own ideas or wait for you to suggest things? If I do, do I generate a wide range of ideas or do I tend to generate the same or similar ones?</p> <p>Vocabulary: When I ascribe meaning, do I use specific or more general, non-specific vocabulary? Does this vary from topic to topic? What verbs, concepts and nouns do I use?</p> <p>Vocabulary, Concepts: Do I use comparative language? Sentences: When ascribing meaning, how do I use pronouns, past and future tenses? Do I extend what I say and talk out of the here-and-now?</p> <p>Speech: What sounds do I use? How do I say what I say?</p>
<p>Creative / Gluing and sticking</p>	<p>Vocabulary, Listening for Meaning: Can I select an object by function when you use the associated verb e.g. "Please can you pass me something to stick with." Can I select an object when an associated concept/attribute word is used e.g. "Please can you find me something soft/sparkly/etc."</p>
<p>Playdough</p>	<p>Vocabulary, Verbs: Do I understand verbs such as 'press' and 'pull?' Do I use specific or non-specific verbs to talk about what I am doing?</p>
<p>Building blocks</p>	<p>Pragmatic, Conversation & Group: If I am at earlier stages of development can I take turns to build a tower with you if you instil a "My turn, your turn" routine. Can I do this with a few other children in a small group. If I am constructing alongside the other children, how do we collaborate? How do I ask to join in or to have something passed? How do I deal with another child having the brick I need or if I have the brick another child needs?</p> <p>Visual, Visual Discrimination: If you hold up a brick can I find one the same by matching the colour? For a higher level of skill, can I find one of the same because I have discriminated the shape?</p>

Conversely, are my fine motor skills and my access to certain fine motor tasks affected by skill gaps with other skill strands. For example, do my visual discrimination skills underpin my ability to complete jigsaws or do my idea generation and symbolic skills give me the capacity to be creative and to 'get' drawing and making?

The Launchpad for Literacy Class Tracker

Your initial assessment findings should then be fed into the Launchpad for Literacy Class Tracker, giving you a starting point against which to compare and track progress. My skills should be reassessed periodically, feeding in findings into the Class Tracker. This quantitative process allows you to:

- check for progression.
- refine practice in light of assessment findings and progress.
- reset next steps for me as an individual, for groups and across the cohort.
- identify possible specific developmental needs as early as possible (see later.)

As you input the assessment findings assume that I have achieved earlier skill steps if I have demonstrated skill steps higher up the fine motor skill strand. This 'backfilling' is essential for the calculations relating to my starting point and progression. ***However, if I present with 'patchy' fine motor skills, perhaps caused by me not engaging with creative fine motor activities, 'backfill' with more caution.***

The Launchpad for Literacy Class Tracker will calculate the percentage of skill steps I have achieved. This percentage will be tracked over time at periodic assessment points. If I were to have a desired level of success at the different baseline point range with a firm foundation with earlier skill steps, my percentage and number of skills achieved are stated in the table below.

Motor: Fine Motor		
Age Group	Total Number of Fine Motor Skills Achieved	% of Fine Motor Skills Achieved
2+	3-5	9-15
3+	8-13	24-39
4+	21-28	64-85
5+	30-33	91-100

The Launchpad for Literacy Class Tracker also calculates the average percent of the cohort that have achieved a given skill step. It will also compare percentages of progression across gender and pupil premium information.

The Launchpad for Literacy Class Tracker, therefore, supports your decision making about individuals, groups of children and the needs across a cohort. It also quantifies the process of closing the gap, facilitating readiness and supporting those with additional needs.

Setting Next Steps and Facilitating Progress

You must create opportunities for my gross and fine motor skills to develop in order to create a solid foundation for literacy and life skills. To do this well, you must begin by identifying my level of success in both areas. This, fundamentally, allows you to set achievable and developmentally realistic next steps. This ethos underpins your systematic, developmental approach.

Next steps can be set from the Launchpad for Literacy Skills Framework, the Class Tracker or from the detailed skill step descriptions from the website. Where possible, next step setting and facilitation should be holistic, including:

- direct next skill steps, within the fine motor skill strand.
- indirect next steps, within other skill strands which enable my fine motor skills to develop further or can be readily facilitated alongside fine motor activities and tasks.

Creating opportunities to nudge my fine motor or other skills on to the next steps can be embedded in a number of ways. You will want to create opportunities in your:

- **learning environment.** Are there adequate opportunities to facilitate my progression on to my next steps? If so, you will need to make sure that I make the most of these opportunities in a systematic, targeted way. If there are not adequate opportunities, you may need to create additional ones, enabling me to backtrack to an earlier level of success.
- **interaction.** Alongside child-led learning opportunities, you will want to prompt and create an incidental opportunity, using **drop-ins** to nudge me towards my next steps. The more aware you are of my level of success, my next steps and the opportunities your learning environment, resources and routines offer in relation to motor skills the more successful you will be at embedding skill consolidation in this way.
- **specific, focus activities.** Although most of my motor skills will develop as I engage with the learning environment and our daily routines, you may also wish to plan specific, adult-led activities in relation to my next-steps. These may include action songs and rhymes, using finger puppets, marching to music or specific P.E. activities. These activities, in turn, may provide opportunities for me to develop auditory, rhythm, rhyme or conceptual understanding skills. Be mindful of these additional opportunities and plan holistically. For example, incorporate threading cotton reels into a sequential visual or auditory memory task. This will allow you to simultaneously facilitate my next steps with more than one skill strand at once.

Ideas for facilitating progress with fine motor skills, incorporating opportunities to nurture other skill strands, backtracking to earlier skills or setting next steps will be described in detail in the Skill Step Guidance.

Identifying Skill Gaps and Specific, Developmental Concerns

In addition to setting next steps, it will be very important to compare my current level of success with that which would be expected for my age. Where there is a mismatch, the Launchpad for Literacy Skills Framework allows you to see whether I have a significant or slight skill gap. If there is a skill gap, to begin with, it is difficult for you to judge whether this is the result of a lack of experience or whether I have a specific, developmental issue. How quickly I reach my next-steps and respond to the opportunities and support you provide will help you to make this judgement more clearly.

Providing developmentally appropriate opportunities should ensure that I make fairly rapid progress. Should progress not occur as expected, you will need to consider the possibility of a specific, developmental issue. It becomes much clearer to identify this through the process of assessing and tracking my progress using the Launchpad for Literacy Class Tracker. This will make referrals and discussions with other professionals more specific and productive.

It is important to remember that a lack of motor-based experiences can run alongside a developmental need. It may not be a simplistic, 'either-or' situation.

Readiness for Literacy: Fine Motor Skills

The readiness points for early writing are depicted in the 4+ baseline points. The desired skill steps are:

- I draw a person on request with head, legs and body.
- I complete simple jigsaws that contain six to ten pieces.
- I track objects, pictures and text with my finger from left-to-right.
- I copy the letters X, V, T, H and O.
- I hold a pencil using a conventional grip.
- I button and unbutton.
- I write one or two letters independently, usually ones from my name.
- I cut on a line continuously.

If I have strong skills with some fine motor aspects but have a lower level of success with another this very discrete skill gap will need to be addressed.

For example, if I still need backtracking with finger and hand strength you will need to ensure that I engage in lots of opportunities to develop this alongside early writing. In the meantime, you might want to offer me a pencil with a softer lead or allow me to carry out lots of writing on a whiteboard to reduce the friction of writing movement.

If I am at earlier levels of fine motor success with all of the skills this will need to be addressed within your provision, embedding appropriate opportunities into the environment and activities. You will also need to be very mindful of the writing demands you place on me when we move into literacy when I do not have the capacity yet to be successful.

Readiness for Literacy: Pulling the Skill Strands Together

When the time comes to judge readiness, it may be the case that I am ready from a fine motor skill point of view. At this point, you will need to scan across the Launchpad for Literacy Skills Framework or Class Tracker to ensure that I am also ready with the other skills that will underpin writing. These include:

- auditory and phonological skills to engage successfully with phonics.
- visual skills to underpin flashcard readiness and to remember what letters and words look like as I write them.
- language skills so that I understand, retell and tell my own stories.
- vocabulary, sentence and idea generation so that I can think of things to write about and convert them into specific vocabulary and sentences.
- pragmatic and projection skills so that, later, I can sequence a few ideas into an order that makes sense to a listener or reader, to write for different audiences and to create an effect or impact for the reader.

If I have skill gaps or, simply, need to continue to make progress in these areas, focussing on these other skill strands will have a significant impact on medium and longer-term writing outcomes. Even without skill gaps, early writing will need to focus on the language skills that will underpin later writing alongside teaching the mechanics or early encoding.

Launchpad for Literacy Skill Steps

The fine motor skill steps are detailed within the Skill Step Guidance on the Launchpad for Literacy website (www.launchpadforliteracy.co.uk). You need your customer number and password to access these and other supporting documents. Skill Step Guidance is usually broken down into:

- **Importance of this Skill Step:** Information on the importance of this skill step in relation to fine motor skill, other skill strands and early experiences.
- **Facilitating Progress:** Ideas to support progression through the learning environment, through interactions and within planned or incidental opportunities. Ideas to backtrack to this skill step as I get older may also be suggested. Links to home learning and support may also be made. Although the focus will be on fine motor development, links to skill steps from other skill strands will be described wherever possible.
- **Assessment of Progress:** Methods and considerations for assessment of the skill step, especially if progression involves a process that occurs over time.
- **Things to Consider:** Where progress is limited, developmental considerations from the fine motor or other skill strands are discussed. 'Flags' to alert you and to support the identification of possible specific developmental concerns are highlighted.
- **Preconditions:** The skill steps I need to have achieved to underpin this skill step. You will need to ensure these are in place and backtrack to these if they are not.
- **Next Steps: Direct:** Once I have demonstrated a level of success with this skill step, what would my next fine motor steps be?
- **Next Steps: Indirect:** Once I have demonstrated a level of success with this skill step, what would next steps be from other skill strands?



Launchpad for Literacy

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