



Children's Treatment Network

Building Brighter Futures Together

Posture and Positioning - Strategies for Kids

Why good body posture and positioning is important

- The core or center of our body acts as an anchor for us to freely move our arms and legs. If the core is not stable and supported during activities, printing, colouring, cutting and other table top activities may be impacted.
- Many kids with weak muscle strength use a lot more energy from their muscles to stay in an upright position. They can become very tired if they are not sitting in a supported setup. This use of extra energy can lead to a hard time focusing.
- When printing, children need to be able to use their thumb and fingers to move the pencil (active finger control). If their wrist is bent (flexed position), they will have more difficulty using a pencil for printing and coloring. When their wrist is slightly bent upwards (in an extended position), the child will have more success with pencil tasks.



What to look for when a child is sitting at a desk ready to work

- When choosing a chair for a child, the seat should be at a height that allows their feet to rest firmly on the floor. If this is not possible, provide a stool.
- Hips and legs should be well supported.
- Hips should be at the back of the chair.
- Desk height no more than 5 cm. above elbows.
- Elbow and forearm resting on the writing surface.
- Slight wrist extension (avoid bent wrist).
- Consider the proximity to teacher.





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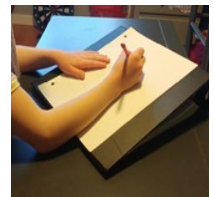
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What to look for when a child is seated on the floor:

- Circle time: The goal is to encourage participation, socialization and learning. More supportive positioning may be required for more difficult fine motor tasks.
- Cross-legged sitting is most typically encouraged however some children may not be able to achieve and/or maintain this position. Other positions may be better including long legged sitting, side sitting or kneeling.
- Consider the proximity to teacher.

Alternative workstation adaptations to support child's writing posture (if other furniture is not readily available)

- For wrists: 3" binders (or similar) or a slant board can be used to improve wrist position
- For feet: Foot support may be offered by a footstool, foam blocks, books or an empty basket, making sure the item will not slip.
- For back:
 - ◇ When possible, use a desk and chair where the height can be changed to fit the child.
 - ◇ Chairs with backrests and/or armrests may be required for children who struggle with upright posture and/or fatigue.
 - ◇ Use pillows to increase seat height/decrease seat depth.





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Alternative Seating

- This can be used as a way to position children who require more support or have decreased muscle strength and are not well supported in a regular classroom chair.
- It can also be used to help with self-regulation and attention (active seating).
- Alternative seating off the floor surface should be offered to children who have difficulty maintaining a seated position on the floor.
- Consider allowing the child to stand to work.
- Options should be selected based on the child's needs.

Floor seating options:

- Floor sitter, cube or corner chairs
- Sit against wall or use low stool against wall
- Wedge or inflatable cushions
- Floor rocker
- Bean bag chair

Active seating options:

- Wobble stool
- Yoga ball
- Wedge, inflatable or seat cushions
- Theraband around chair legs
- Standing desk
- Rocking chair



Strategies to Reduce Fatigue

When a child has limited central body/core stability and strength, this can lead to poor posture during seated tasks. The following strategies can be put in place to help reduce fatigue over time:

- Try movement activities daily in order to help your child build up core muscle stability. Movement breaks before and during lengthy writing tasks can also help to activate or 'wake up' core muscles in order to improve posture for participation and for muscle strengthening over time.
- Alternative active seating options can be used instead of a standard chair in order to keep core muscles activated during written tasks to maintain good posture.
- Use of a timer during seated or standing tasks to motivate children to complete tasks and work towards building endurance



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Movement Break Activities

The following activities can be completed as a movement break during lengthy seated tasks (writing, keyboaring, colouring, etc.) as a warm up or throughout the day to activate central body core muscles prior to seated tasks:

- March in place before sitting down.
- Wheelbarrow race – the child has their hands on the ground, while the caregiver holds their ankles in the air. The child must walk using their hands as the caregiver supports from behind. Don't let their tummy sag (caregiver may have to support at thighs if this happens).
- Push/pull activities (e.g. moving furniture, opening heavy doors, tug-of-war) or carrying large objects (grocery bags, laundry basket, boxes, stack of books).
- Play on the playground equipment (e.g. climbing, swinging, monkey bars)
- Fun spontaneous activities such as a dance party, Simon Says, scavenger hunt .
- Animal walks (e.g. bear, elephant, crab, snake, seal, frog)



References:

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