Build Writing Muscles with a Water Relay

Does your child have trouble holding a pencil? Is writing his name an excruciating task? For many young writers, it is.

While your first instinct may be to have him sit down and practice writing more letters, it's weak muscles, as much as practice, that's causing the problem. Children who have difficulty with letter formation often choose not to write because it's just too tiresome. Giving your child lots of opportunities to build muscle control will make it easier on him when it's time to put pencil to paper. Looking for a fun way to make it interesting? This water relay helps build the hand muscles necessary for good penmanship. And it's pure hot-weather fun!

What You Need:

- 2 medium sized plastic containers similar in size
- 2 sponges
- Pitcher of water

What To Do:

1. Set Up Outside: Each player needs a plastic container and a sponge. Place a pitcher full of water between the two players. You can use regular tap water, or add a few drops of food coloring, for a splash of color.
2. Demonstrate: Show your child how to immerse the sponge in the pitcher of water, then run to his container, place the sponge over it, and squeeze until all the water is out. Explain that the point of the game is to run back and forth between pitcher and container, filling up the sponge and then squeezing it out, so you can fill your container to the top before your opponent does.
3. Go! It's time to play. Get all players to their marks and shout for them to begin. The person who fills their container first is the winner!

This activity may seem like pure hot weather fun, but it gives your child the opportunity to work on what teachers call "fine motor skills"-- the small muscles in the hands that make writing possible. Plus, it's just plain fun!

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