

Grade 1 Week 25

Writing skills

Are you concerned with your child's printing? When she hands you a slightly-rumpled, much-erased paper with letters crooked and spaced unevenly, you may think she should be doing better by this time of year.

Before you give a lecture on neatness, you should know that sloppy printing is not unusual at this time. She will tell you that she does not like to copy from the board. She may say, "I hate writing, especially from the board. It makes my hand hurt. It takes too long." Teachers confirm that most children do not like writing.

There is a good physical reason for this. At this age, children's vision is still not entirely developed. A first grader is just becoming able to see the words on the board at a distance, then see them on paper without losing her place.

As the ability to focus back and forth from distance to close work gets better, your child will be able to give more attention to the formation and placement of letters. Now, however, she is under stress just "keeping her place." Toward the end of school, if there has not been a significant improvement, then begin to search for underlying reasons.

Pilot to co-pilot

Have you noticed that your child's understanding of space and distance is expanding? She probably has made comments on the way to the library, for example, that show she knows where she is. She may say, "We're almost there. I know because there's the water tower."

She is interested now not only in specific places but in the relationship between home and other special places like the shopping center, the park, the church, and the school.

Even with this growing awareness, your youngster sometimes has a vague fear of becoming lost if she does not stay on a specific route from one place to another.

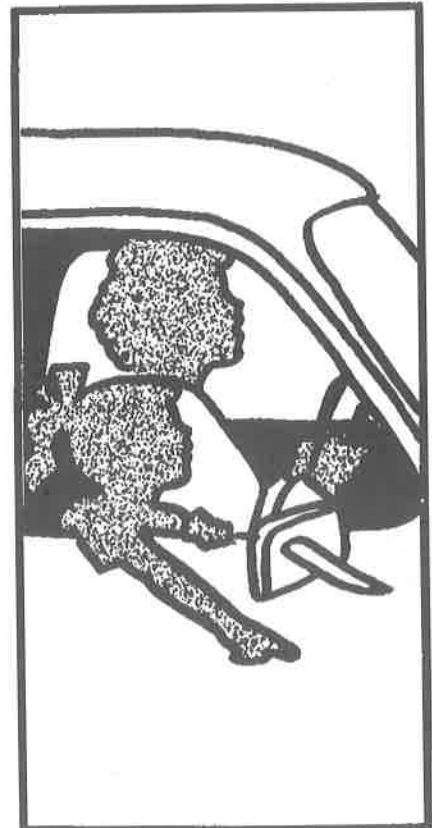
You can help her over this fear by reinforcing the usual routes and then changing them slightly. Play these games:

- Let your child be "navigator." You are pilot. Pilot to navigator: "Tell me where to turn at the next intersection. We are going to pick up the cleaning."

- "We are going to the store a new way today. Watch closely. We will be going by the Dairy Queen. First one to see it has Magic Seeing Eyes!"

- "Tell me where to turn to take us home if we leave the library by this street instead of the usual one."

Such games not only help the development of space orientation but they also turn a sometimes discontented, tired, and whining child into an alert observer. Try it! And remember, whenever you're in a car, to buckle your seat belt and your child's seat belt, too.



"The great end of education is to discipline, rather than to furnish the mind, to train it to the use of its own powers, rather than fill it with the accumulations of others."

—Tyrone Edwards—