

## Kindergarten October Part 1

### Observe that pencil-grip

Your child is probably learning to print her name.

It may be that she already has this ability. She may have been coloring and "writing" for some time, and if so she may be holding the pencil incorrectly...out of habit!

It's important to catch this bad habit early and correct it, because an immature grip will contribute to problems in writing later on. She will be able to write but her speed will suffer and her hand may cramp.

Ask her to write her name for you and observe carefully. The pencil should rest against the outermost joint of the middle finger. The thumb and forefinger should not overlay, but lightly hold the pencil in place against its resting place.

The "little" and "ring" fingers touch each other, are slightly bent inward toward the palm, and serve as "slides" to enable the hand to move smoothly.

Most of all, her hand should not become a fist. An important developmental milestone for a kindergarten child is that she holds a pencil in the same way an adult grasps a crayon.

What should you do if her grip is wrong?

Try putting a ball of clay on her pencil. This will relax her grip so that she can't make a fist.

What is the best size for the ball of clay?

Experiment to find what is comfortable. For your first trial, try one-half of a stick. (Plasticene clay usually is packaged like butter—four sticks to a box.)

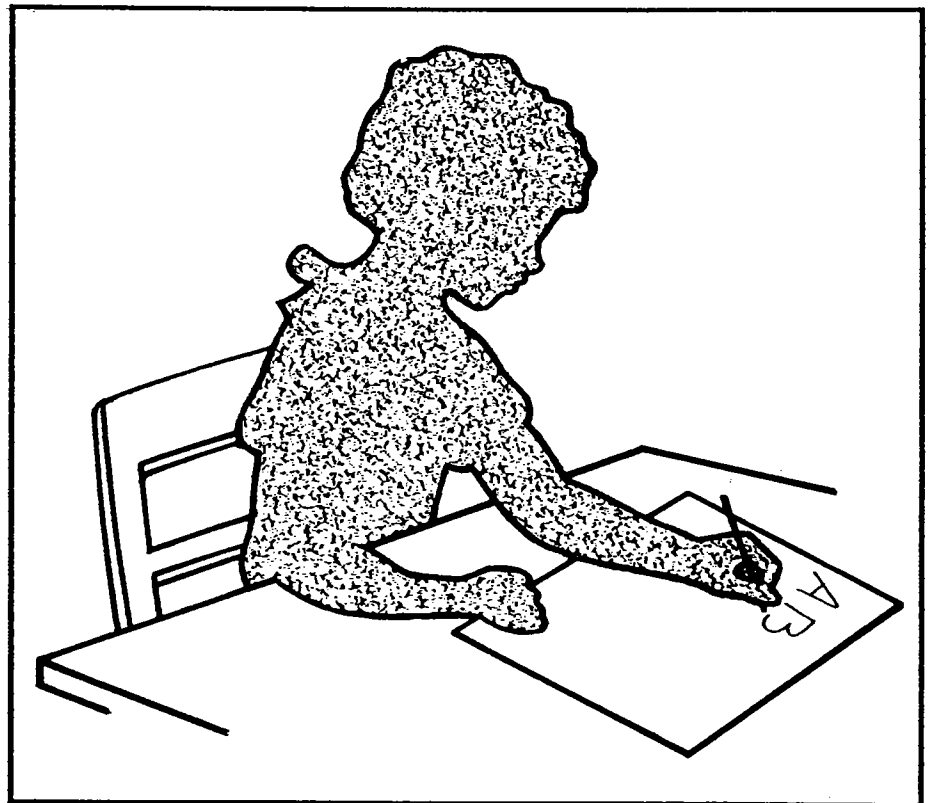
Your kindergarten child won't want to use this solution at school. It's not that she's in-

secure; it's just that it's not handy.

### Watch for fatigue

Watch for fatigue. In five-year-olds fatigue can be expected after each 10 to 14 days during the first 4 or 5 months of school.

This is not a stress-induced condition—it is physiologically induced and boys are affected more than girls. Long naptimes over the weekend are in order.



*"The mightiest works are accomplished by those who have kept their ability to dream great dreams."*

*—Walter Bowie*

## Kindergarten October Part 2

### I want it! I need it!

There is nothing your kindergarten child likes better than to be read to.

If he becomes tense because of a disruption in his routine (having house guests, going to a birthday party, going out of town) then being read to will calm him down.

Being read to is also very important to academic success because it enriches his language. The language we hear is easier to "decode" if we know about it—the words go together to make sense.

### So go with it!

Some kindergarten children will show great interest in letters, words, and numbers. Some will show less.

If your child wants to experiment with learning to read and shows curiosity, go with it.

Just be sure you are not pushing. Our faces and tones of voice tell our children when we are pleased and when we are disappointed. If we don't monitor ourselves, we could make reading a negative, bad-feelings experience.

### How to start

Get comfortable in a "routine" reading place, side-by-side.

If he shows a right-hand preference, let him sit on your left. He holds the left side of the book; you hold the right side.

### Now do this

(1) Pointing your finger directly under the word you are saying, move your finger under the line of print smoothly, making sure that your voice and your finger are synchronized.

At the end of a line, sweep smoothly back to the beginning of the next line.

Continue, using your best "acting" talent. Tell him that doing it this way makes it possible for him to look at what you are saying as well as to listen.

### Now add this

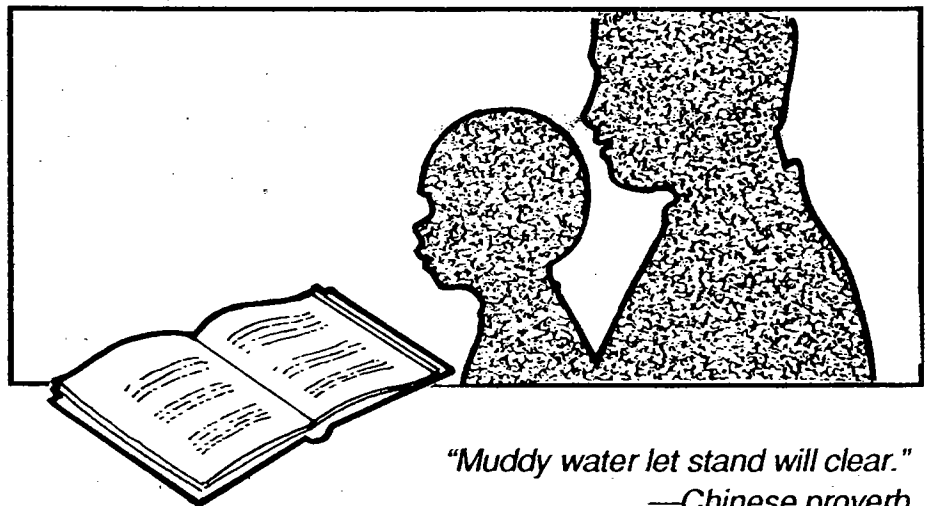
(2) The next step: Holding his right forefinger, move his finger instead of yours under the line of print, again making sure that where his finger is pointing is the same as what you are saying. Reduce your rate of speed, but maintain your "acting" talent with your voice.

### Now add this

(3) He will love this next addition: Tell him to listen, look, and just say what you say. Slow down as needed.

If he's truly ready, curious and eager, he will probably go for this. Don't quiz him on "what's this word?"

If he is ready, he will pick up quite a few words on his own.



*"Muddy water let stand will clear."  
—Chinese proverb*

## Kindergarten October Part 3

### Doing what comes naturally

Since your kindergarten child wants routine, likes to complete a task, and has a new ability to inhibit a "bad" (her word) impulse—most of the time—why not capitalize on these attributes?

If you and she set a specific time for writing and another specific time for reading, these times will become a part of her beloved routine and she will conform to the schedule.

She is copying her name at school; she is interested in letters, words, and numbers. She counts anything around her that's countable—her raisins, pop bottles, cans, acorns, ducks.

She must count any group (or set) of things that contain more than three, the "numberness" she perceives at a glance. You can use her present attributes to enhance her new interests.

Get out the pencil and practice writing. Then after 15 or 20 minutes go on to her nightly bath and tooth-brushing time.

After the bath break, get cozy for "reading-together" time.

You may be noticing that although your kindergarten child can sustain interest for

15 to 20 minutes, she writes in "fits and starts." That's her nature right now. She has "bursts of energy." She may start, stop, dawdle, start again, stop, dawdle a bit, and so on. But she will want to finish the task. That's her nature also.

### The 'eyes' have it

Can you say "Aye" to the following question?

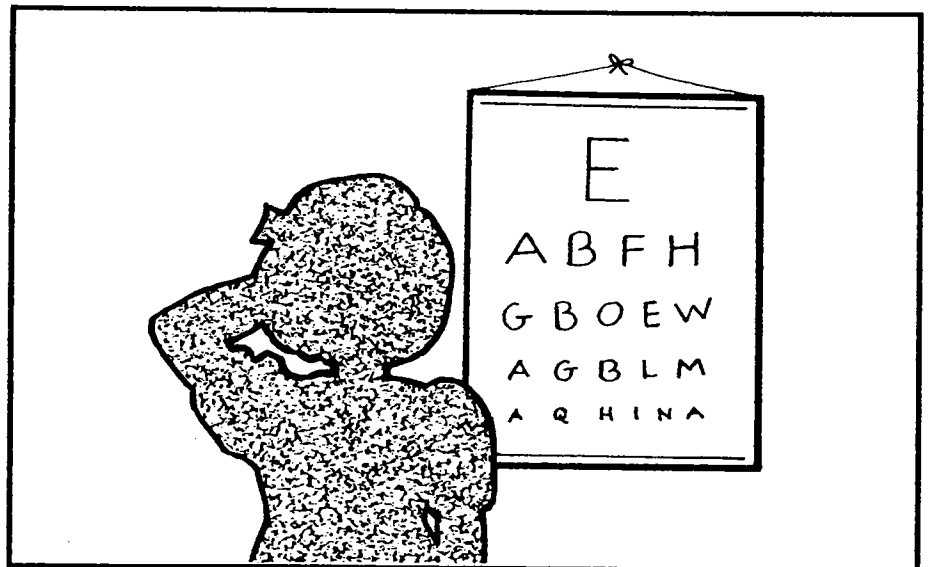
Did your child have a visual examination before entering kindergarten?

If the answer is 'yes' and even if the report was 'OK,' watch her writing posture to prevent a cluster of habits that will weaken, or even prevent, binocularity (using the two eyes together at the same time).

These "no-no's" are strong signals of bad habits:

- Turning the head from side-to-side during continuous writing.
- Keeping the head turned to more than a slight tilt and keeping it at that angle.
- At intervals, laying the head down on the non-writing arm.

Next week: What to do if you see these bad habits.



*"Discoveries are often made by not following instructions; by going off the main road; by trying the untried."*

—Frank Tyger

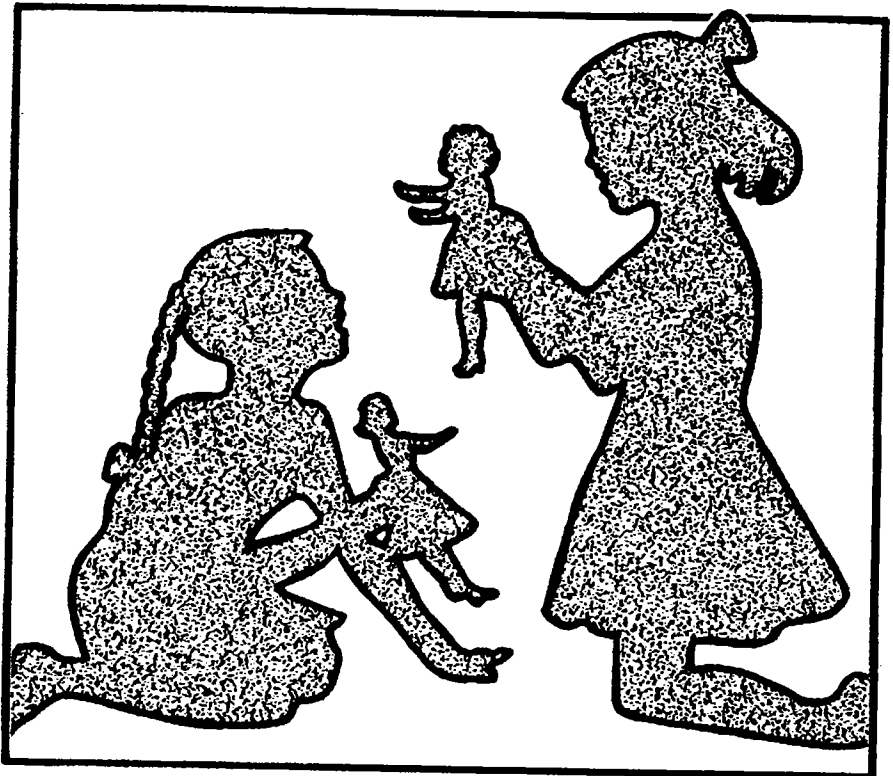
## Grade 1 Week 6

### Play times

Your child may play well alone, but wants—and needs—someone to play with. Who? The best playmate is someone her own age or older. First graders tend to tease and boss younger children, especially siblings. One-half hour inside play is maximum before bedlam sets in; outdoor play is better sustained. Two-somes at play are the rule, but small groups will become desirable before the end of the year.

### Letter reversals

Don't be alarmed if early attempts at copying letters and words show reversals or letters out of order in a word. If your child has selected a hand that she uses consistently for writing or eating, and if she has selected a foot she uses consistently for kicking a ball or stone, she will become consistently correct in letter placement in time.



### Praise the child!

She feels everything she does deserves praise—and there is no time when praise is more welcome and more helpful. A first grader can never get enough of it—and it won't spoil her. If she gets enough praise now, she won't need it so much later on.

### Fueling the body

A first grader seems like a perpetual motion machine. She needs a snack to "refuel" after school before going out to play. A quiet time of TV before supper should also help restore emotional calm.



*"Children need love, especially when they don't deserve it."  
—Anonymous—*

## Grade 1 Week 7

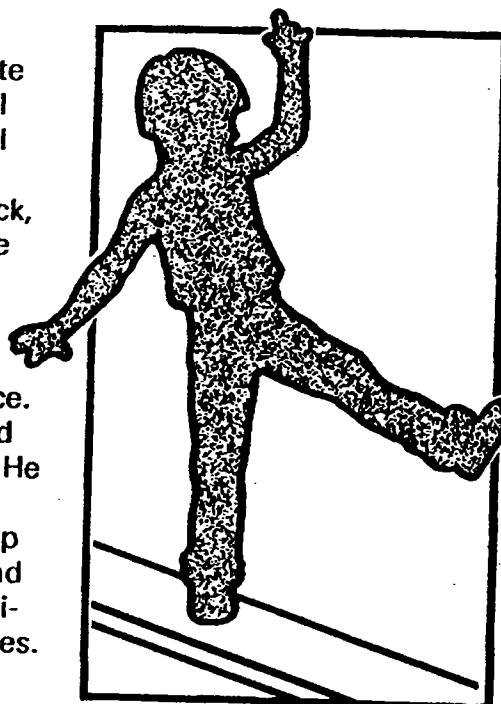
### The terrible transition

Your child appears to be Dr. Jekyll/Mr. Hyde! One minute he will say, "I love you." The next minute he will shout, "I hate you! I wish you were dead!" Relax, tomorrow he will outgrow it. It's all part of the "terrible transition" and will disappear if not reinforced by nagging or attention. A quick, loving hug at such times will be a more effective response than a lecture or punishment.



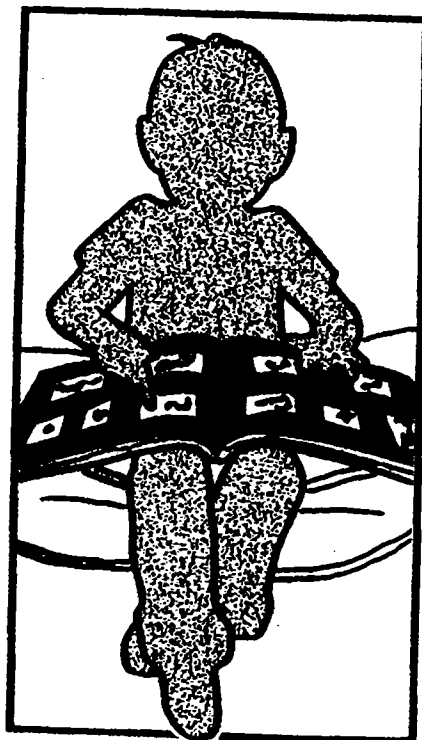
### A balancing act

A first grader enjoys testing his sense of balance. He hurries, flings arms and legs, trips, and falls often. He seems compelled to walk along curbs, lines, and atop fences. Let him practice and improve his balancing abilities but only on low surfaces. Otherwise he may break some bones if he falls.



### Fight or flight?

At play time, a first grader can either be "king of the mountain" or a "wee timorous mousie." He may play rough, threaten to go home, quarrel, call names, push, pull hair, kick, and fight when things are not going his way. However, some children this age cannot play rough and are terrified by physical combat. Fear not, the "wee timorous mousie" will be ready for combat by the third grade, and the self-appointed "king of the mountain" will be ready to share the throne in another year. Lectures and scolding will only aggravate either condition at this time.



### Past, present, and future

Your child is beginning to explore time. He understands what "yesterday, today, and tomorrow" mean. Through stories about himself and his parents as babies, he begins to perceive the vastness of the past. He also gets some idea of the future through the sequence of family birthdays and holidays. But remember, your first grader really has not the faintest idea yet about the duration of time. You're expecting too much when you give permission for a visit to a neighbor and say, "But stay only a few minutes."

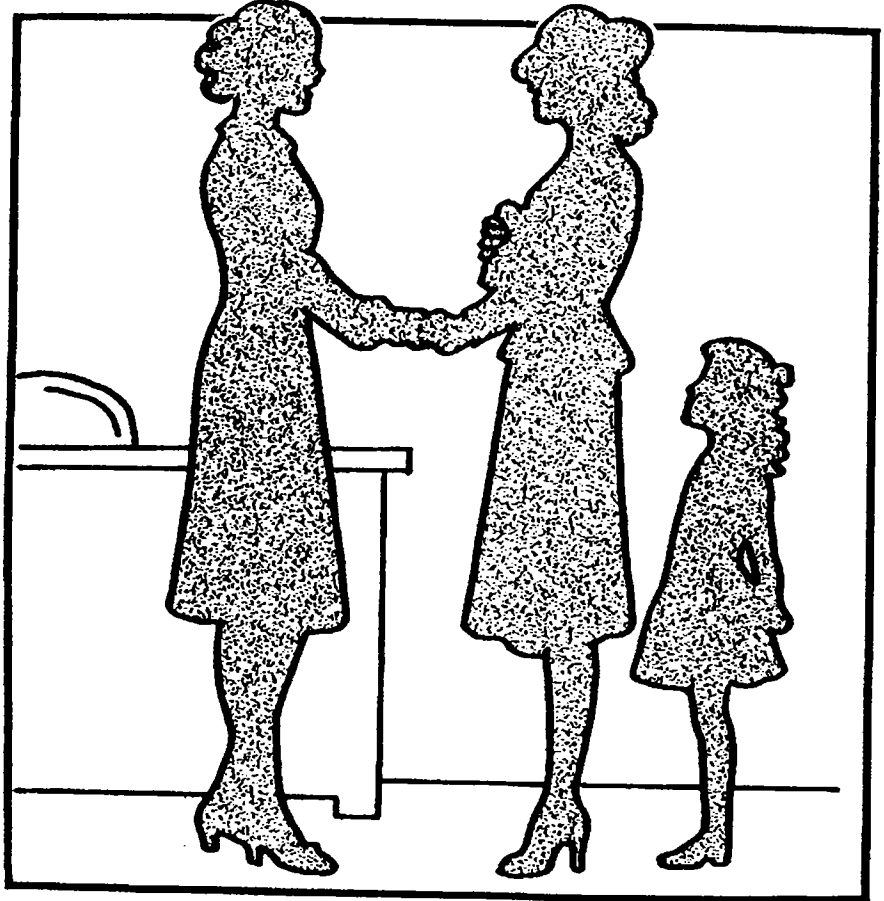
*"Before I married I six theories about bringing up children.  
Now I have six children and no theories."*

*—Lord Rochester—*

## Grade 1 Week 8

### Parent-teacher relations

It's the end of the first grading period. Your child wants her teacher and her parents to know and like each other. Take advantage of this attitude to arrange a conference with the teacher. He or she will have much to share with you about how to help your first grader make the adjustment to peers, school work, and the long school day. Schedule your meeting for after school. Visits during school hours resulting in mysterious conversations in the corner between parent and teacher can produce some real anxiety and fear in the student, although parent/teacher interviews by phone usually pose no problem.



### Real and imagined fears

Your child has fears. After the Halloween party at school, she may dramatically act out what witches and ghosts do. The fearful, excited tone in her voice gives away the fact that she lets her imagination re-ignite her dread. Now is the time to read stories about friendly ghosts, dress up in costumes, and dramatize until such fears are gone. One day she will shiver with pleasure at ghost stories instead of shivering with dread.

### Safety first

At this age, your child is becoming more independent. He can do more things that put him at risk for injury. Here are some safety tips to keep in mind.

- **Fire Safety**—Make an escape plan in case of fire in your home. Your fire department can tell you how. Teach your child what to do when the smoke alarm rings. Practice what you and he would do if you had a fire.
- **Street Safety**—Never let your child play near the street. Take him to the park or playground. Begin to teach him safe street habits. Teach him to stop at the curb. Then look to the left, to the right, and back to the left again.
- **Bike Safety**—Protect your child from bad head injuries or death. Make sure your child always wears a helmet when he rides. Never let him ride in the street.

*"There are only two lasting bequests we can give our children. One is roots, the other wings."  
—Hodding Carter—*

