

Nectar's Brain Boosts for Dysgraphia and Writing Struggles

Complete these activities daily to build the underlying cognitive skills needed for learning and developing writing skills.

1. Inductive & Deductive Reasoning

Activity 1: Pattern Rule Detective

Write a sequence or pattern and have the child figure out the rule.

Example:

2, 4, 8, 16, ____

Triangle, Square, Triangle, Square, ____

Ask:

- “What rule do you think the pattern is following?”
- “How do you know?”

Then have the child create a pattern for the parent to solve.

Why it helps:

Writing requires organizing ideas logically and understanding structure. Pattern reasoning strengthens this type of thinking.

Activity 2: Odd One Out

Write or say four items. One does not belong.

Example:

pen – pencil – marker – banana

Ask the child:

- “Which one doesn’t belong?”
- “Why?”

Allow more than one answer if the reasoning makes sense.

Why it helps:

Encourages flexible thinking and categorization, which supports organizing written ideas.

2. Visual Processing

Activity 1: Shape Copy Challenge

Draw a simple geometric design made of lines and shapes.
Have the child copy it as accurately as possible.

Start simple:

- square with a line inside
- triangle above a rectangle

Gradually increase complexity.

Ask:

- “Which shape was hardest to copy?”

Why it helps:

Strengthens visual–spatial awareness needed for letter formation and spacing.

Activity 2: Mind Movie (Visualizing a Story)

Tell your child a short descriptive scene and ask them to picture it in their mind like a movie.

Example:

“Imagine a red canoe floating on a quiet lake. The water is very still. There are tall pine trees all around the lake, and a small wooden dock on the shore.”

After a few seconds, ask the child questions such as:

- What color was the canoe?

- What kinds of trees were around the lake?
- Was the water moving or still?
- What was on the shore?

You can also ask them to **describe the picture they saw in their mind** or draw it afterward.

For older children, ask them to **add details to the mental scene**, such as weather, sounds, or additional objects.

Why it helps:

This activity strengthens the ability to create and hold visual images in the mind. Strong visual imagery helps children organize ideas before writing and supports descriptive writing.

3. Auditory Processing (Phonological Awareness)

Activity 1: Sound Swap

Say a word and ask the child to change one sound.

Example:

“Say **cat**. Now change the /c/ to /h/. What word do you get?”

Examples:

cat → hat

map → mop

pan → pen

Why it helps:

Strengthens awareness of sounds in words, which supports spelling and written language.

Activity 2: Tap the Sounds

Say a simple word.

Have the child tap once for each sound they hear.

Example:

dog → 3 taps

ship → 3 taps
frog → 4 taps

You can use:

- fingers
- blocks
- coins

Why it helps:

Helps children break words into individual sounds, an important step for spelling and writing.

4. Working Memory

Activity 1: Word Order Challenge

Say a short list of words. The child must **repeat the words and then put them in alphabetical order.**

Example:

Parent says:
dog – apple – car

Child says:
apple – car – dog

Start with **3 words**, then increase to **4 or 5 words** for older children.

For younger children, you can instead ask them to put the words in a different order, such as:

- **shortest word to longest word**
- **animal → object → food**

Why it helps:

This activity strengthens the ability to **hold information in mind while mentally reorganizing it**, which is a key skill needed for planning sentences and organizing ideas during writing.

Activity 2: Sentence Builder

Say three unrelated words and ask the child to repeat the words **in the same order** and then create a sentence that uses all three.

Example:

- dog – bicycle – rain

Child might say:

“The dog ran next to my bicycle when it started to rain.”

Start with **2–3 words** for younger children and increase to **4–5 words** for older children.

You can also ask the child to repeat the words again **after making the sentence**.

Why it helps:

This activity requires the child to hold several pieces of information in mind while manipulating them, which strengthens the working memory needed for organizing ideas during writing.

5. Long-Term Memory

Activity 1: Story Chain Recall

Start a simple story with one sentence. The child repeats the sentence and then adds the next part of the story.

Example:

Parent:

“A boy found a mysterious key in the forest.”

Child repeats the sentence and adds:

“A boy found a mysterious key in the forest, and he wondered what it opened.”

Parent repeats both sentences and adds another part.

Continue for several rounds.

For younger children, keep the story short. For older children, let the story grow longer.

Why it helps:

This activity strengthens long-term memory by requiring the child to **store previous information and retrieve it repeatedly**. It also strengthens narrative structure, which supports written storytelling.

Activity 2: Memory Drawing

Show the child a picture for about **20–30 seconds**. The picture should contain several objects or details.

Examples:

- a park scene
- a kitchen
- a playground

Then remove the picture and ask the child to **draw as many details as they can remember**.

Afterward, show the picture again and compare:

- What did they remember?
- What did they miss?

You can gradually increase difficulty by using pictures with more details.

Why it helps:

This strengthens long-term visual memory and the ability to **encode and retrieve detailed information**, which supports planning written descriptions and recalling spelling patterns.

6. Processing Speed

Activity 1: Symbol Match Race

Create a simple **symbol key** at the top of a page.

Example:

Symbol Letter

★	A
○	B
▲	C
■	D

Below the key, write a row of symbols:

★ ▲ ○ ■ ★ ○ ▲ ■ ○ ★ ▲

Ask the child to **write the correct letter under each symbol as quickly as possible** using the key.

Set a **30–60 second timer** and see how many they complete correctly.

You can make it harder by:

- adding more symbols
- using numbers instead of letters
- increasing the length of the row

Why it helps:

This activity strengthens the brain's ability to **process visual information quickly, use a reference key, and respond rapidly**, which supports efficient written work and note-taking.

Activity 2: Beat the Clock – Everyday Tasks

Choose a small everyday task and challenge the child to complete it **accurately but quickly**.

Examples:

- write the alphabet
- put numbers 1–20 in order on paper
- stack 10 coins into a tower
- deal a deck of cards into two piles

Time how long it takes.

Encourage the child to try again later and see if they can **beat their previous time while still being accurate**.

Why it helps:

This activity strengthens **mental efficiency and response speed**, which helps children work through writing tasks more quickly and with less frustration.

Writing Workouts to Improve Writing Content

1. Writing Conventions (*spelling, grammar, punctuation, mechanics*)

Activity 1: Sentence Fix-It

Write a short sentence with a few intentional errors and have the child be the “editor.”

Example:

my dog likes to run fast he runs every day

Child corrects:

- capitalization
- punctuation
- spelling

Parents can gradually increase difficulty.

Why it helps:

It strengthens awareness of spelling, punctuation, and grammar rules without requiring long writing tasks.

Activity 2: Build the Sentence

Give the child a set of words on small slips of paper or use magnetic words.

Example:

the / brown / dog / ran / quickly

Ask the child to:

- arrange the sentence correctly
- rewrite it properly
- add punctuation

You can extend it by asking them to **expand the sentence**.

Example:

The brown dog ran quickly through the yard.

Why it helps:

It reinforces sentence structure and grammar while reducing cognitive load.

2. The Writing Process (*planning → organizing → drafting → revising*)

Activity 1: Talk It, Plan It, Write It

Use a simple 3-step process:

1. **Talk** – child verbally explains the idea
2. **Plan** – parent writes 3 bullet points
3. **Write** – child writes 2–3 sentences

Example topic:

- My favorite animal
- A fun day I had

Why it helps:

Separates thinking from writing, which reduces working memory overload.

Activity 2: Picture to Paragraph

Show a picture (magazine, photo, or online image).

Ask three questions:

- What do you see?
- What might be happening?
- What might happen next?

Have the child turn the answers into **3–4 sentences**.

Why it helps:

It provides a built-in idea generator so students don't struggle with what to write.

3. Writing Composition *(expressing ideas clearly and logically)***Activity 1:** Expand the Sentence

Start with a basic sentence:

The dog ran.

Ask the child to expand it by answering questions:

- Which dog?
- Where did it run?
- Why did it run?

Example result:

The big brown dog ran across the park to catch the ball.

Why it helps:

Teaches students how to **add detail and build stronger sentences.**

Activity 2: Tell Me More

After a child writes a sentence, the parent asks:

- Why?
- How?
- Can you give an example?

Example:

Child writes:

I like soccer.

Parent prompts:

- Why do you like soccer?
- When do you play?

Child expands:

I like soccer because I enjoy running and scoring goals with my friends.

Why it helps:

Encourages deeper thinking and richer writing.