DOMINANCE RETRAINING PROGRAMME

This is an 8-week programme, which serves as a guideline for the rehabilitation of patients who have lost the function of their dominant arm.

Each week is laid out on a separate page and can be combined if time is limited. Each week also has a section of writing exercises, which can be printed out and given as a home-programme if necessary.

Activities can be adapted or replaced by other similar level tasks to suit the patient’s abilities or preferences.
WEEK 1

A. GROSS MOTOR EXERCISES

• Catch a ball or bean bag with the non-dominant hand
• Playing basketball, throwing, bouncing and catching with the hand
• Balloon Volleyball
• Following large shapes with hand drawn on a blackboard, white board or large sheet of paper
• Approximately 10 min or more should be spent on 1 or more of these activities. Activities can be substituted by similar level activities to the discretion of the OT and dependent on the patient’s preferences and abilities.

B. ACTIVITIES OF DAILY LIVING

• Eating tasks (bring food to the mouth using fingers, fork or spoon). Plate rim can be provided.
• Stirring food in a pot (pot holder can be provided)
• Washing of face and body (can provide a washing mitten)
• Drying of own body, face and hands (can provide a towel drying aid).

C. PENMANSHIP

• Provide a writing splint as illustrated on Addendum A if necessary
• Encourage writer not to attach the paper to the table, but rather to practice writing with the paper free
• Ensure the writer is relaxed and understands that the aim is free-flowing handwriting
• In this early stage. Discourage any attempt to write actual letters or words! (This results in development of bad writing habits)
• Use a felt-tip pen as much as possible while learning
• Ensure the page is sufficiently slanted, pen grasp is correct and that the writer does not hold hand cramped over the page.
EXERCISES

1. Piles of horizontal lines. Do not remove your pen from the paper.

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2. This is the same as exercise 1 – but do shorter lines.

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3. Alternate piles of underswing and overswing lines. Don’t lift the pen.

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WEEK 2

A. GROSS MOTOR EXERCISES

- Carpet bowls
- “Jukskei”
- Ringboard
- Fingerboard
- Scrunch paper with non-dominant hand and throw it through a hoop or into a basket.

B. ACTIVITIES OF DAILY LIVING

Teach various 1-handed dressing techniques (Do not attempt buttons, belts or laces at this stage).

C. PENMANSHIP

1. Alternate ovals of underswing and overswing

2. Ovals, with horizontal lines in them. Do them complete, one at a time (i.e.DON’T do first all the ovals, then the lines)
WEEK 3

A. GROSS MOTOR EXERCISES

- Playing solitaire using large grasps
- Gross motor objects in the Moberg Pick Up Test can be timed and practised
- Bat and Ball
- Tenpin bowling with a tennis ball
- Various putty exercises requiring 2-point pinch, 3 point pinch, opposition, finger extension, rolling small balls or snakes.

B. ACTIVITIES OF DAILY LIVING

- Practice doing and undoing buttons, zips, belts and shoe laces (one handed techniques can be taught or assistive devices provided)
- For females, bra straps can be practised.

C. PENMANSHIP

1. Don’t try to do these too neatly; they should give you some idea as to how your writing will slant. Note which angle is the easiest for you.

2. Do these in groups of ten until they begin to look uniform. As many row as you wish.
WEEK 4

A. GROSS MOTOR EXERCISES

- Table Tennis
- Popping bubble wrap between thumb and index fingers
- Hold ruler between thumb and index fingers, let it drop and catch it again between the same 2 fingers before it hits the ground
- Spinning coins or a spinning top.

B. ACTIVITIES OF DAILY LIVING

- Practise washing, drying and holding dishes of various different shapes, sizes and weights
- Mopping and sweeping.

C. PENMANSHIP

1. A combination of vertical lines, and ovals. First two lines – do ovals first, then fill in the vertical lines. Do them completely, one at a time. Next two lines do the vertical first, then surround them with an oval. Again, do them completely one at a time.

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2. Do two rows of an alternate verticals ovals.

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WEEK 5

A. **GROSS MOTOR EXERCISES**

- Playing solitaire with pins and other fine pieces
- Practise fine motor objects in Moberg Pick Up Test while being timed.

B. **ACTIVITIES OF DAILY LIVING**

- Cutting soft food with blunt knife (Can provide chopping board if necessary)
- Making easy meals (e.g. sandwiches, coffee)

C. **PENMANSHIP**

1. Write alternate oval and slant exercises, in word-long groups.

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2. This is a smaller version of the last exercise, except the ovals/slants are about one-third the height. This exercise will be helpful for work with lower case letters, and in achieving more exact pen control.

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WEEK 6

A. **GROSS MOTOR EXERCISES**

- Darts
- Dot to Dot using a crayon or other thick pen. (Grade size of dots, distances and directions according to writer’s abilities)

B. **ACTIVITIES OF DAILY LIVING**

- Peeling, chopping, grating
- Making more complex meals

C. **PENMANSHIP**

1. Figure eights, written in alternate horizontal and vertical positions provide a somewhat relaxing exercise, while helping to develop greater skill.
   
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2. Start at the line with a loose overhand curve and continue to wind the line into a spiral – to add precision to pen-work.
   
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WEEK 7

A. GROSS MOTOR EXERCISES

- “Finger fun”
- “Tiddliwinks”
- Nine hole peg test (while being timed)
- “Tipsy Towers/Jenga”
- Elastics stretched over a grid of nails to make certain pictures.

B. ACTIVITIES OF DAILY LIVING

- Hair Care
- Brushing Teeth

C. PENMANSHIP

1. A continuous line made up of overhand and underhand curves, will give practice in pen movements that are basic to a number of letters.
2. Do one line or more, of each of the following:

a) --------------------------------------------- (this is for the letters:  )
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b) --------------------------------------------- (this is for the letters:  )
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c) --------------------------------------------- (this is for the letters:  )
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d) --------------------------------------------- (this is for the letters:  )
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e) --------------------------------------------- (this is for the letters:  )
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f) --------------------------------------------- (this is for the letters:  )
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g) --------------------------------------------- (this is for the letters:  )
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A. **GROSS MOTOR EXERCISES**

- “Pick-Up-Sticks”
- Hold coins in hand, drop them 1 by 1, while holding the rest in the hand still.

B. **ACTIVITIES OF DAILY LIVING**

- For men: shaving (practice using soap or cream but no blade)
- Nail care.

C. **PENMANSHIP**

The following sentences provide excellent early writing practice. This is because they contain every letter in the alphabet.
Write each of the following sentences three times:

a) The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

b) What did the squadron of Jap Zero flyers conquer during those extensive operations behind thick could formations?

Compiled by Groote Schuur Hospital, Occupational Therapy Department 2008
ADDENDUM A

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