Some activities can be used to help fine motor development and promote and improve hand grasp skills for writing. Nothing is more motivating to a student than toys, games and play. The activities chosen should be experienced as fun. The student should focus on the activities rather than on consciously “working” on a skill.

Muscle Tone
Muscle tone and joint stability in the trunk, shoulders, wrists, and hands are important for hand skill development.

1. Working in the vertical position helps strengthen the whole arm which is an important foundation skill for writing.
   a. Try drawing on a wall mounted chalkboard.
   b. Use an easel for drawing.
   c. Draw on the bathtub wall with soap foam or shaving cream.
   d. Draw letters or numbers in the air with a flashlight.
   e. Some commercial toys can be used on the vertical. Examples include: Magnadoodle, Light Bright, Sparkle Light, Battleship.

2. Heavy work activities develop arm muscles. Try some of the following:
   a. Push ups, pull ups.
   b. Hand stands/wheelbarrow.
   c. Crab walk.
   d. Swing on a trapeze/monkey bars/ a climbing ladder.
   e. Forearm weightbearing during TV watching/reading.

Small muscles of the hand
The hand muscles (intrinsic muscles) are vital for skilled movement, speed and an efficient functional grasp. As the hand develops, the thumb side becomes more skilled in precision while the other side, the power side, becomes stronger. This is vital for developing a functional writing grasp and general hand dexterity. Try some of the following:

1. Snap fingers, spin a top.
2. Mold, roll or play with clay/playdoh/silly putty.
3. Use a squirting or spray bottle to water plants, clean windows or tables, or spray water on chalk drawings on a chalkboard or the ground.
4. Play games with cards, coins, chips, or pegs to manipulate.
5. Work on stringing/lacing activities; lacing cards, lace projects or sewing.
6. Use tweezers. Good games include OPERATION, BED BUGS.
7. Use a hole puncher for art projects.
8. Rotate hand as in opening a jar lid or turning a door knob.
9. Practice dressing skills with buttons, zippers, snaps. Play dress up or dress dolls.
10. Using scissors and holding them correctly (in the “thumbs up” position) helps strengthen pencil grasp muscles. Try cutting heavy paper or card stock (such as junk mail) which is easier initially than regular paper. Cutting anything with more resistance (such as plastic straws) is also easier.
11. Such games as Jacks, Pick Up sticks, Marbles all help develop hand skills as well as eye-hand coordination.