

Advice sheet

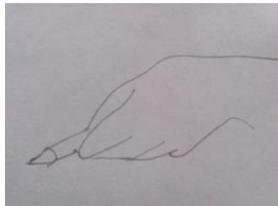
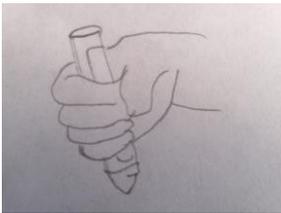
Handwriting

A number of underlying skills are required to develop the skills of well-formed legible handwriting; the following areas will help your child to develop these skill areas.

Developing an effective pencil grip

The initial stage of developing pencil grasp is a fist grip with thumb upwards. As the child develops and refines their finger movements, they may progress to holding the marker with thumb and fingers towards paper and finally to a tripod grasp.

Moving to a tripod grasp is the biggest switch developmentally in the progression of pencil grasp; it is common to see frequent switching back and forth between different grasps.



Activities to develop an effective pencil grasp – these help to develop hand dexterity and strength.

- Find small hidden objects in putty/play dough by digging fingers in and pulling out.
- Clothes pegs – use to pick up objects and transfer from one place to another.
- Wind-up toys.
- Pop bubble wrap between index finger and thumb.
- Use eyedropper to drop water on targets or make a picture with dye.
- Small squirting water toys.
- Place small items in small pots for child to retrieve, e.g. raisins.
- Screw up pieces of tissue paper into small balls and flick – have a competition and see who can flick the furthest.
- Pick up small objects with tweezers using index finger and thumb.

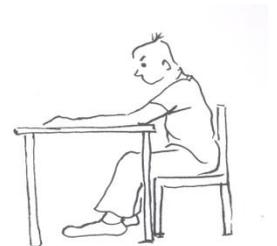
Strategies to help develop an effective pencil grasp

- Use short stubs of crayon/chalks/pencil. Use thicker chunky pencils for younger children.
- Trial a pencil grip designed to encourage a tripod grasp, many different suppliers and types are available on the internet.
- Show and describe to your child how to hold a pencil correctly.

Seating

Why it is important: good sitting posture will provide the child maximum stability and maximise hand function in order for a child to successfully complete table top activities.

- A child should be seated in a chair with their hips, knees and ankles at 90 degrees, their bottom back in the chair and feet are placed flat on the floor in front of them. A box or footrest could be used to support the feet if the child's feet cannot reach the floor.
- When seated the height of the table should be 5cm above their elbow when placed alongside the torso.
- A child's chair should be pulled in so that their tummy is approximately 2.5cms away from the table edge.

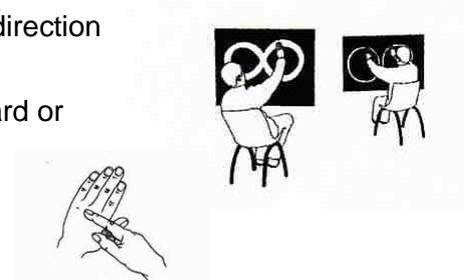
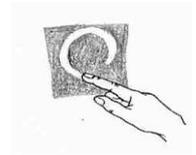
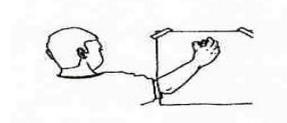


Letter Formation

These activities have been put together to practice and improve letter formation skills, thereby helping handwriting skills. The activities can be done in any order. They should ideally be carried out about 3 times a week for about 10 – 15 minutes.



- Write letters in the air using a rolled up magazine or newspaper as a writing wand. Write each letter three times verbalising the direction and sequence of the strokes (i.e. Up, down and around) and saying the name and sound of the letter.
- Use a variety of colours to draw over and over a particular letter to make a rainbow letter. (An adult may need to draw the letter first so that the child traces over it). Preferably do this activity when standing with the paper/chalkboard secured vertically at shoulder height.
- Encourage the child to use index finger of their preferred hand (writing hand) to write letters in sand, finger paint, cornflower or shaving foam.
- Encourage the child to roll putty or playdough into long, thin sausages and use these to form different letters. Use the index finger of the child's preferred hand to press the playdough letters down going in the direction of the correct formation of the letter.
- With eyes closed, child to draw a letter three times on a chalkboard or piece of paper using the correct formation.
- Ask the child to identify letters drawn on their back or hand and then write that letter using the correct formation.



Other Suggestions

- Draw using crayons, chalk, pencil and pens to get a variety of tactile experiences.
- Try writing on different coloured or textured paper
- Try using scented or sparkly pens to make the activity seem more interesting or motivating
- Write on paper with a piece of sandpaper under it.

For Older Students

At secondary school, the quality of the actual handwriting becomes secondary to the content of the work. Also, the ability to complete tasks within a set time frame (particularly during tests and exams) becomes increasingly important. It may be beneficial to discuss the following options with your school:

- Access to a keyboard or PC (e.g. for completion of homework, assignments and perhaps even a laptop for use during class). Computer software for teaching touch-typing is commercially available.
- Use a Dictaphone (to record lessons and to write up later when time may be less restricted).
- Be given extra time for completion of tests, assignments, homework.
- Be given a scribe during exams/tests.
- Sometimes borrow and photocopy notes from a classmate or the teacher to eliminate the need for writing at certain times.
- Be given hand-outs to fill in, to minimise the amount of writing and/or copying from the blackboard.