

Handwriting Hints and Tips

Why is handwriting important?

Every day we use handwriting: writing a birthday card, taking notes in a lesson, filling in a form, all require handwriting to be clear and fairly quick. Our handwriting is on show to those around us and may be used to make judgements about us. So, it's an important skill to have.

There are lots of reasons why you may find handwriting difficult. It may be that you are struggling with:

- Legibility (you or other people can't read what you've written)
- Neatness (your handwriting is messy or irregular)
- Comfort (it's uncomfortable or painful to write)
- Pressure (you may be pressing too hard or not hard enough)
- Speed (you may write too slowly or too fast)
- Enjoyment (you give up easily or don't want to write)

Handwriting takes practise, like learning how to ride a bike or play the piano.

You should:

Practise often for small amounts of time, for example 15 minutes every day

Train your fingers to be more flexible, by doing activities such as cutting and tearing paper, kneading, colouring or sewing.



Try doing some finger exercises -

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r2tBH_XyeJc

The things to remember when you're writing are:

- Be as neat as you can
- Take care with placement and size of letters
- Be aware of s-p-a-c-i-n-g of your letters - you can do this by putting a finger space between each word

Are you holding your pen correctly?

Many people have unusual ways of holding their pen. The 'dynamic tripod pencil grasp' (illustrated below) is recommended to use if you struggle with handwriting. It can help you produce neat and effortless handwriting.

This is what the dynamic tripod pencil grasp looks like.



How to do it:

1. Pinch the pen (not too hard!) between the thumb and forefinger.
2. Rest the middle finger behind the shaft of the pen: it acts like a shelf for the pen to rest on.
3. The ring finger and little finger should curl into the palm of the hand.
4. The space formed by the thumb and forefinger (the thumb web space) should be round and open.
5. The wrist should be resting on the paper, and below the writing line.
6. The end of the pen should point towards your body - not forwards, sideways or straight up.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IM_dia8QGr0

Are you using the right pen for you?

It's important to try lots of different types of pen to see which ones you prefer to write with. There are a number of different grips you can use with your pen to make it more comfortable to hold.



There are biro, fountain pens, pens with thick and thin nibs, angled pens and pencils, gel grips, foam grips...



A special ergonomic pen or pencil could help to make writing easier.

Children should be provided with a variety of writing implements, and most will independently choose the tool that best suits their needs. Here's a few examples.

EASYoriginal pen, STABILO - The pen has indentations for correct finger placement and there are right and left handed versions with erasable blue ink and a non-slip grip zone.



Handhugger handwriting pen, Berol - It has a triangular barrel which provides three points of contact to encourage use of the dynamic tripod grip, and to reduce fatigue.



EASYgraph pencil, STABILO - Available in right and left handed versions, these HB pencils have a triangular design and a non-slip grip to encourage a good hand position.



My First Handwriter, Nexus, - These triangular non-smudge pens have three surfaces to encourage a dynamic tripod grip. The fineliner type nib provides some sensory feedback through the texture of the nib on the paper.

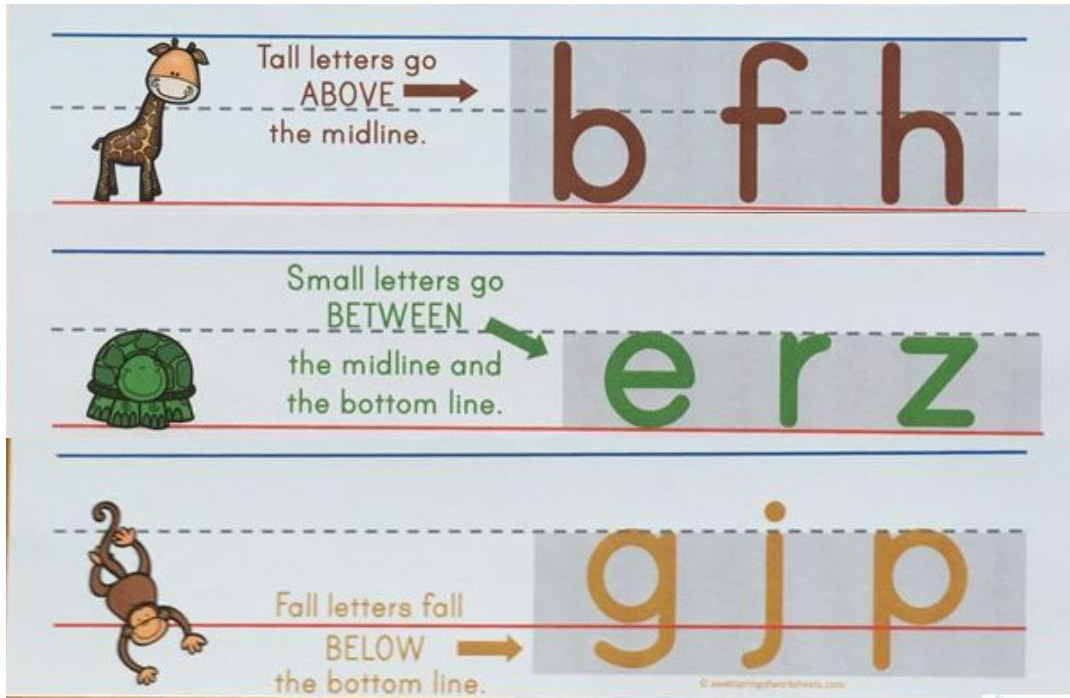


Are you forming your letters correctly?

Make sure your letters are sitting on the base line and are in proportion to each other.

There are different types of letters:

- short letters (a, c, o)
- fall letters (j, y, g) need to 'fall' below the baseline
- tall letters (t, l, k) go up higher than normal letters

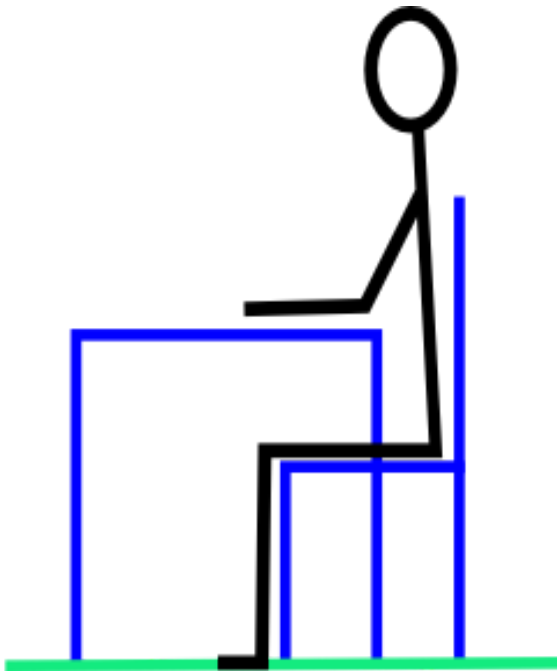


Here are all the letters in the alphabet categorised into short, tall and fall letters.



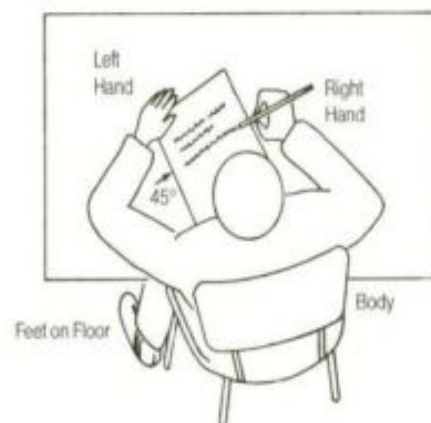
Are you sitting correctly?

People sit differently and find different positions comfortable, but try this way and see if that helps the quality of your handwriting.



- Tummy away from table
- Back leaning slightly forward
- Chair well under table
- Bottom back into the chair
- Feet flat on the floor
- Thighs fully supported and knees bent at 90 degrees
- Table height half that of the writer
- Chair height a third of that of the writer

The basic rule is that the desktop should be at elbow height. Students should be able to sit right back in their chair with knees bending back at right angles and feet flat on the floor. Their positioning should follow this:



**Left-handers should position themselves the opposite way.*

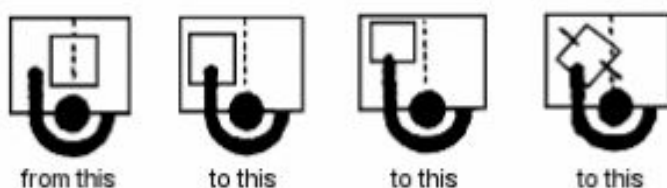
Are you left-handed?

Sometimes students who are left-handed can find handwriting difficult. Having to push the pen across the page towards their body can be awkward for them. Changing their body, paper or hand position for writing, their pen hold or changing the equipment they use can help them achieve a fast, fluent writing style.

Left handers use a different movement when they write. It's important that you can see what you're writing, so holding the pen or pencil slightly higher up the shaft. It may also be helpful to use harder pencils such as H or 2H or fast-drying pens to avoid smudging. A smooth pointed pen, for example, ballpoint pens should be used, rather than a fountain pen.

If you're a left hander, try tilting your paper towards your right, like this:

Figure 1: Correct positioning of paper for left-handed writer



- Place the paper alongside your child on the left.
- Push the paper away from them slightly.
- Turn the paper so the top is angled to the right towards the table.

Writing on a sloping surface can be useful. You can buy sloping writing surfaces or perhaps use a ring binder turned sideways.

This allows freer movement and for the writing to be more vertical. Your hand is in a more comfortable position below the writing, making it easier for you to see what you're writing and avoid smudging.



Attached are two useful website links to support you at home:

<http://www.lefthandedchildren.org/>

<http://www.anythingleft-handed.co.uk/>