

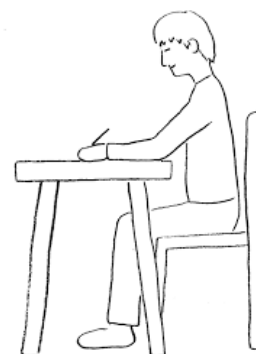
Handwriting

Children may experience difficulties with handwriting due to many factors including sitting in a poor position, poor pencil grip, lack of fine motor control and difficulties with their visual perception. Below are ideas that may help your child. Remember it is better to do short successful practice daily.

Sitting Position

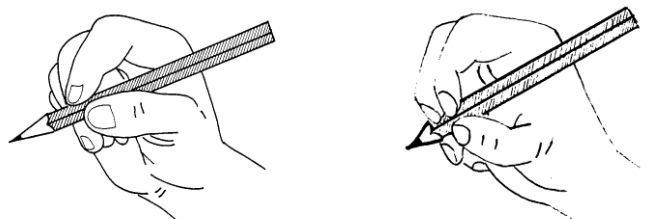
A child needs to be sitting in a comfortable position with a good stable base. To encourage good posture and concentration ideally:

- A child should be sitting on a chair, which allows them to have their feet flat on the floor and their bottom should be right back in the seat.
- Knees and hips need should be bent to approximately 90 degrees.
- Their forearm should rest comfortably on the desk.
- The head should be a reasonable distance from the paper
- The paper should be placed on the same side of the body as the writing hand



Pencil Grip

A **tripod pencil grasp** is considered to be the most efficient grasp for handwriting activities. Three fingers (index, thumb and middle fingers) are placed about 1.5-2cm from point for a right-hander, and 2.5-3cm for a left-hander (to increase visibility of the writing). The wrist and the little finger side of the hand always needs to be resting on the table, in order to facilitate control of finger movements.



Activities to help to develop pencil grasp/promote tripod grasp:

- Play dough activities e.g. rolling/pinching/poking/squeezing etc.
- Tearing paper into small pieces using the skill fingers to roll them into small balls and use these balls for collage creations.
- Games such as 'Operation' or 'Bed Bugs' where tweezers are used to pick up small objects

- Sorting out small/tiny objects into colours, shapes and sizes.
- Any pegboard activities where small pegs must be pushed into or pulled out of pegboards.
- Keyboard activities
- Games such as 'pick up sticks' using just the skill fingers to pick up objects.
- Threading or sewing activities/ games using small beads.
- Make a chain using paper clips
- Making paper aeroplanes and other origami activities
- Finger painting activities using just the skill fingers
- Drawing games and activities using various writing instruments on various surfaces encourage movement at the skill fingers – not from the shoulder, elbow or wrist.
- Use adapted writing utensils e.g. crayons – triangle shaped / ball shaped/ very short etc



Letter Formation

Close supervision is essential during letter formation practise to avoid the child practising and memorising mistakes.

Activities to support developing letter formation:

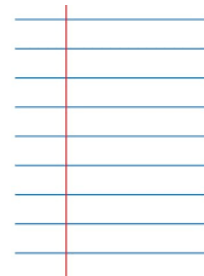
- Making letters with playdough or pipe cleaners and asking the child to then trace the letters with their fingers
- Dots to indicate where to start forming a letter.
- Arrows showing the correct directions for letter formation.
- Letter prompt cards on the child's desk or a letter poster that the child can see easily for reference during the activities.
- Tracing activities
- Use large arm movements to form letters in the air
- Drawing letters at an upright surface with:
 - Water and paint brush on a concrete area or brick wall.
 - Pavement chalk on concrete.
 - Whiteboard marker on a whiteboard.
 - Pencils or crayons on paper.
 - Paint and paintbrushes at an easel.
 - Paint on large sheets of paper attached to a wall or fence.



Word spacing and alignment

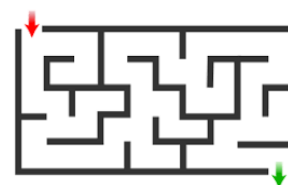
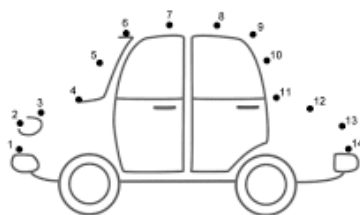
Strategies to help children space and align words effectively:

- Initially it may be necessary to have the child leave exaggerated spaces between words. Once they are in the habit of leaving spaces, they can be encouraged to reduce the size of these.
- Use a lolly stick / emery board to place after each word to assist with spacing
- Make a space bar; a piece of cardboard (coloured in attractively if desired) as shown, to use between words.
- Try writing on squared paper and leaving out 1 square between each word.
- After completing work, ask child to highlight the over/under spaced words and letters
- Use coloured writing lines to emphasise correct positioning
- Ask child to imagine a letter e.g. an 'o' between each word
- Use visual imagery of placement of letters on the line e.g. cat
 - head between top 2 lines
 - body between the bottom 2 lines
 - tail hanging below
- Mark a margin at the left-hand side in a bold colour or place starting points at the left margin to indicate where each line of writing should start. If a child has difficulties, knowing when to start a new line, also put a mark on the right-hand side of the paper to indicate when they need to start a new line.



Pencil Control and Fluency

- Complete simple mazes. Encourage your child to trace the maze with their finger first to learn the correct pathway.
- Tracing activities using shapes and patterns
- Dot-to-dots
- Drawing along roads (start with wide lines)
- Drawing around other people's hands or body and then colour in and decorate
- Colouring pictures
- Draw continuous simple patterns e.g. sea waves, clouds and ladybirds etc. Encourage your child to keep their wrist on the table while drawing round and round.



Useful websites to find extra resources:

<https://www.activityvillage.co.uk/>

<https://www.dltk-kids.com/>

<https://www.twinkl.co.uk/>

<https://www.coloring.ws/coloring.html>

<https://www.justcolor.net/kids/>

<http://www.childdevelopment.ca/SchoolAgeTherapy/SchoolAgeTherapyClassResources.aspx>

where people can access further information, resources and support.

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Please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) if you require this leaflet in a different format, or would like to feedback your experience of the hospital.

Email ruh-tr.pals@nhs.net or telephone 01225 825656.

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