

HANDWRITING

A CHILD NEEDS TO HAVE SOME BASIC SKILLS TO BE ABLE TO WRITE:

1. Copy shapes, letters and numbers
2. Recognise letters, remember what letters look like and be able to tell the difference between similar letters i.e. b and d
3. Good trunk and shoulder stability to give a stable base when completing written work
4. Sufficient hand strength and dexterity to hold and control a pencil

THESE SKILLS CAN BE DEVELOPED BY A VARIETY OF ACTIVITIES SUCH AS:

- Trunk and shoulder strength – playground games involving climbing, crawling, hopping, jumping, balance and ball games
- Hand strength and dexterity – playdough, ripping paper, threading games, duplo, lego
- Copying and recognizing shapes – jigsaw puzzles, spot the difference games, memory games, aquadraw, copying shapes on chalkboards, in sand, water painting on slabs

OTHER THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Position and posture – Good posture will make handwriting easier. Children should sit with feet flat on floor/or resting on step, with elbows resting comfortably on table/desk and with an upright posture. Some children may require aids/equipment to help achieve the correct posture such as an angled writing board, wedge cushion or foot support.
- Lighting – Lighting should be appropriate for task.
- Writing Tools – Trial a variety of different pencils/pencil grips to ensure the child finds the correct one to ensure a good functional grasp of the pencil. There are lots of different types available such as chunky/triangular pencils, Rocket, mechanical pencils with various lead types. Pencil grips come in various shapes, sizes and textures.
- Paper Position – In general paper should be positioned on the right hand side for right handed people and the left side for left handers.
- Pressure – This is the ability to create the right amount of pressure whilst writing. Some children use too much pressure which can cause pain and fatigue in the hands and can increase the time taken to write. If pencil pressure is too light it can be difficult to read. Carrying out some hand exercises prior to completing handwriting tasks, using pencils with different type of lead i.e. HB, 2B and writing with light up pencils, writing on carbon paper etc.

MULTI- SENSORY APPROACH

Using a multisensory teaching approach means helping a child to learn through more than one of the senses.

Visual- Provide students with a visual model for letter formation. Sequence the steps of the letter formation and use arrows to signal direction. Provide visual cues, in the form of words or pictures.

Kinesthetic- One way to develop motor memory is through body movement and hands-on activities. Guide students in sky writing or imaginary writing of letters. Use large wood or felt pieces to build letters. Provide students with an opportunity to learn letter formations with their bodies before picking up a pencil.

Auditory- Teach handwriting skills through song or rhyme. Use simple terms to describe the letter formations. Use the same language/terms consistently and make connections to previously taught skills.

Tactile- Provide students with hands-on materials to explore letter formation. Use paper with elevated lines, sand trays to practice writing letters, and clay to practice forming letters

The following is a list of multi sensory activities; please feel free to add in your own!

1. Reinforce letters by talking through the formation and encourage the child to do so.
2. Sprinkle e.g. dry sand, lentils, talc, flour on a tray and encourage the child to form the letter using the correct formational pattern.
3. As 2 but use shaving foam, steamed up glass in shower/cars.
4. As 2 & 3 but use a stick or pencil to complete the letters
5. Complete large letter formations using big arm movements on the vertical blackboard.
6. Do the letters in the air using big arm movements.
7. Place paper on top of sandpaper, corrugated paper etc, to give it increased texture and feedback and complete the letter formation.
8. As 5 but directly on top of sandpaper, textured paper/card.
9. Roll out play dough into a snake and use it to make the letter formation.
10. Encourage the child to 'feel' the letter by tracing over it with their fingers.
11. Use e.g. ropes, ribbon etc and make letter formations on the ground.
12. Draw letters outdoors on slabs etc using chalk or a paintbrush dipped in water.
13. Use 'wikki stix' or Benderoos to make the letter formations.
14. On large sheets of paper use paint do a variety of different sized letters. You can use brushes or finger paint.

- Start with thick chalk on a blackboard or pavement, practicing shapes, letters and drawing. If the chalk is short he won't be able to use his whole hand to hold it
- Encourage holding the writing instrument close to the point (using coloured tape or a pencil grip may help as a visual guide of where to place fingers)
- Encourage child to hold a feather/small object in their palm with ring and little finger. This will then free up their middle, index fingers and thumb to grasp a crayon, piece of chalk etc.
- Try with thick, short pencils or crayons on paper on a easel or pinned to a wall, drawing large and then gradually reduce size as accuracy improves, try letters and drawing patterns and pictures
- Magna Doodle or etch-a-sketch
- Pencil rubbings on paper over leaves, lino, pavement, carpet etc, using a crayon on its side