

Improving Handwriting

Use a multisensory approach to teaching handwriting and letter formation, such as providing verbal prompts (e.g. *Peggy Leggo*), using tactile media to practice forming letters (e.g. sand tray, play dough), and practice on a larger scale (e.g. on a whiteboard, A3 paper).


A variety of strategies can be used for a short period to assist with improving aspects of handwriting and letter formation. Ensure that only one aspect of handwriting skills are focussed on at one time to avoid confusion (i.e. letter formation or letter spacing, not both at once).

- Spacing Words: Use one “finger space” between each word (see below), or students can use graph paper, redi-space paper, or finger spacers (available through Occupational Therapy supply stores).

The cat ran

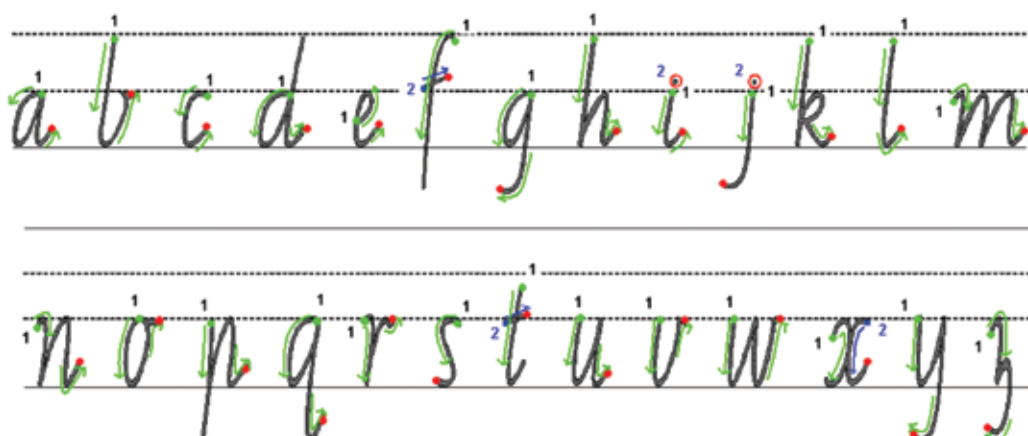


- Practice letter formation on a piece of paper (or whiteboard etc) that is divided into 4 squares. Follow the multisensory routine below:

 <i>Trace the letter</i>	 <i>Copy the letter</i>	1) Trace 2) Copy 3) Write from memory 4) Write with eyes closed
<i>Cover the top half and write the letter from memory</i>	<i>Write the letter with your eyes closed</i>	

- Use paper with dotted thirds or halves, larger line spacing, or coloured cue lines to encourage consistent letter height. Paper with dotted thirds and various line spacing can be purchased or can be created on the computer.
- Tactile paper with raised lines may also be useful, and can be purchased through Occupational Therapy supply stores).

How to form letters correctly in Victorian Modern Cursive:



KEY
● Start point 1
● Start point 2
● End point

Sitting Posture

Poor sitting posture such as slouching over the table, can lead to back and neck problems.

- Sit in a comfortable chair, with elbows resting at right angles on the desk, feet flat on the floor and back straight.
- Writing on a sloped surface can help to encourage an appropriate sitting posture.

Encouraging an Appropriate Tripod Pencil Grasp

An appropriate pencil grasp is important to ensure maximal pencil control, handwriting fluency, and speed. There should be one finger space between the taper of the pencil and the fingertips. Experiment with a range of pencil holders or writing instruments.

- For children up to Year 3 or 4, a range of pencil grips can be used to encourage the correct formation of the fingers holding the pencil. These are available from DSF and educational supply stores.



- For older students, there are a range of ergonomic pens available e.g. *Stabilo Easy Ergo* pens and pencils.
- For students with double jointedness, a Monks grasp may be appropriate which can be encouraged using 'Twist 'n' Write' pens or pencils, or PenAgain.
- Triangle shaped pencils, thicker pencils, or pencils with rubber dots (e.g. Grip 2001) may also help with pencil grasp and pencil pressure.
- Using hair bands knotted together can encourage wrist extension, correct position of pencil in the webspace, and a tripod grasp of the pencil.
 - > Two hair bands are knotted together.
 - > Band One goes around the wrist.
 - > Band Two goes from the wrist to the pencil to hold it at the correct 45-degree angle to the page.
- *The Handiwriter* (pictured right) may be used for more severe pencil grasp difficulties.



For professional assessment and therapy targeting pencil grasp and handwriting, an Occupational Therapist should be consulted.

Some of this information was provided by Jo Glover, Occupational Therapist.