

Handwriting Coffee Morning

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Laura Jerrard and Saadia

Qamar-Ali

Background to Handwriting

Handwriting is a complex skill to learn and it requires:

- Postural stability
- Established dominant hand
- Development of the small intrinsic muscles of the hand
- Good hand –eye coordination
- Ability to hold a pencil in a useful writing position
- Ability to form pre-writing strokes
- Understand the use of printed language
- Visual perception skills (understanding what is being seen)
- A satisfactory level of attention, cognitive skills and co-operation
- Sensory Awareness (touch, vision)

Hand Dominance

- Hand preference begins to emerge at about 2 years and established hand dominance by 4-5 years of age
- Using pencil consistently in dominant hand (consistent practice of letter formations)
- Stabilizing paper with non dominant hand
- Ambidextrous children still have a dominant hand but this may change from task to task ie right-handed for cutting, left-handed for writing

Development of Pencil Grasp [\(Erhardt, 1994\)](#)

- Palmar grasp (up to 2 yrs)
- Digital pronate grasp (2-3 yrs)
- Static tripod grasp (3-4 yrs)
- Dynamic tripod grasp (from 4 yrs +)



Palmar Supinate
(12-18 months)



Distal Pronate
(24-36 months)



Static Tripod
(3.6- 4 years)



Dynamic Tripod
(4.6 - 6 years)

(Erhardt, 1982)

Motor Skills

Motor skills are movements and actions of the muscles. Typically they are categorised into two groups :

- Gross motor skills – involved in the movement of the arms, legs and other large body parts and movements. They participate in actions such as running, crawling and swimming.
- Fine motor skills – involved in smaller movements that occur in the wrists, hands, fingers, feet and toes. They participate in smaller actions such as picking up with thumb and finger, writing carefully, even blinking!
- These two motor skills work together to provide co-ordination.

Gross Motor Skills In Handwriting

- Refers to the postural control that is required for writing. Efficient control of the larger muscle groups in the neck, shoulder and trunk is necessary to maintain stability in order for the fingers and hands to move to complete the handwriting task.
- As children develop, control and stability begins at the trunk, progressing to the elbow, wrist and finally the hand.
- With normal development, fine motor skills are developed from gross motor skills.

Gross Motor Suggestions for Handwriting Skills

Gross motor activities that will improve postural control and muscle strength are beneficial when it comes to developing handwriting skills:

- Hanging activities – practice monkey bars, chins ups, pull ups or swing from the tree limbs to increase the muscle strength in the shoulder girdle muscles.
- Climbing activities – climb the ladders and ropes on the playground.
- Pushing and pulling activities – pull a heavy wagon or push a child on a swing. Weight bearing activities through the arms – animal walks, wheelbarrow walking, crawling, and push ups/planks all help to increase muscle strength and improve coactivation of the shoulder and postural muscles.
- Yoga Poses - provide muscle strengthening and postural control
- Large art projects – hang some paper on a wall or use an easel. Children can reach up, left and right while painting.
- Jumping jacks, jumping rope, hand clapping games, etc all require extensive motor planning and coordination skills. Crawl to a scooter board, lay on your tummy and pull yourself along a line and wheelbarrow walk to the

Fine Motor Skills in Handwriting

Fine motor skills are essential for performing everyday skills like self-care tasks (eg, opening lunch boxes, cleaning teeth, using cutlery) and academic skills (eg, pencil skills of drawing, writing and colouring, as well as cutting and pasting).

Fine Motor Skills Suggestions for Handwriting

- Playing with construction toys
- Threading
- Cooking
- Playdough
- Puzzles
- Using buttons and zips
- Using key boards



























Hand –eye coordination activities:

- Tracing / Dot-to-dot / Colouring / Scissor work
- Stencils / templates / copying geometric designs
- Lacing
- Water control
- Pegs and tongs

Nelson Handwriting Scheme

- As a school we use the Nelson scheme in a broad manner. This is a cursive script **without** lead-ins but with joining flicks being introduced from Reception onwards to prepare the children for joining up once they are in Year 2.
- Pencil grip is really important as once a poor grip is established it is hard to adjust it. Nursery have introduced the Nip Flip Grip method (model this).
- Read Write Inc letters have a saying to remind children how to form a letter (see sheet). For example 'd' "Around the dinosaur's bottom, up his tall neck and down to his toes".

Rhymes for letter formation – taken from Read Write Inc.

<p>a</p>  <p>Around the apple and down the leaf.</p>	<p>b</p>  <p>Down the laces to the heel and around the toe.</p>	<p>c</p>  <p> Curl around the caterpillar.</p>	<p>d</p>  <p>Around the dinosaurs bottom, up his tall neck & down to his toes.</p>	<p>e</p>  <p>Lift off the top and scoop out the egg.</p>	<p>f</p>  <p>Down the stem and draw the leaves.</p>
<p>g</p>  <p>Around the girls face, down her hair and give her a curl.</p>	<p>h</p>  <p>Down the head, to his hooves and over his back.</p>	<p>i</p>  <p>Down the body and dot for the head.</p>	<p>j</p>  <p>Down his body, curl, dot for his head.</p>	<p>k</p>  <p>Down the kangaroo's body tail and leg.</p>	<p>l</p>  <p>Down the long leg.</p>
<p>m</p>  <p>Down Maisie, mountain, mountain.</p>	<p>n</p>  <p>Down Nobby and over his net.</p>	<p>o</p>  <p>All around the orange.</p>	<p>p</p>  <p>Down the pirates plait and around his face.</p>	<p>qu</p>  <p>Round her head, up past her earring, down her hair, and flick.</p>	<p>r</p>  <p>Down the robots back and curl over his arm.</p>
<p>s</p>  <p>Slither down the snake.</p>	<p>t</p>  <p>Down the tower, across the tower.</p>	<p>u</p>  <p>Down and under, up to the top and draw the puddle.</p>	<p>v</p>  <p>Down a wing, up a wing.</p>	<p>w</p>  <p>Down, up, down, up.</p>	<p>x</p>  <p>Down the arm and leg, repeat the other side.</p>
<p>y</p>  <p>Down a horn, up a horn and under head.</p>	<p>z</p>  <p>Zig-zag-zig.</p>				

Transferring skills into general exercise books

- Many children have beautiful handwriting in handwriting books but find this difficult to transfer into other exercise books. Once they are more confident in using cursive script we are encouraging teachers to work on transferring these skills by repeating the lessons but into normal exercise books.
- We also need to remind children of the expectation that all handwriting should be joined in all subjects from year 3 onwards.

Upper and Lower case Letters – pre-joining

EYFS have phonic phrases to help the children to remember how to correctly form letters. (Maisie Mountain Mountain). All numbers and letters either start at the top or the middle NEVER at the bottom.

- See formation of lower case letters on handwriting paper.
- See formation of upper case letters on handwriting paper.
- See formation of numbers on handwriting paper.
- (Next Slide – show A3 sheet as well)

ā b c d e f g h i j k l m

n o p q r s t u v w x y z

A B C D E F G H I J K L M

N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

Cursive Script

Letters are sorted into 4 sets.

- Set 1: a c d e h l k l m n s t u – 12 letters with exit flicks plus 's'
- Set 2: a c d e g l j m n o p q r s u v w x y – 19 letters which start at the top of the x-height
- Set 3: b f h k l t – 6 letters which start at the top of the ascender
- Set 4: f o r v w – 5 letters which finish at the top of the x-height
- **Break letters:** b g j p q x y z – 8 letters after which no join is made. Joins are not made to or from the letter 'z'.

The Joins – Order for Introduction

(not always strictly followed)

- The first join – set 1 to set 2
 - The second join – set 1 to set 3
 - The third join – set 4 to set 2
 - The fourth join – set 4 to set 3
 - Then introduce the break letters
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- Handwriting **MUST** be modelled so that children can hear you talk through the placement, join and flow of the letters.

Handwriting Tools

- Pencils – sizes in different key stages
- Accessories for children with specific needs
- Pens
- KS1 and KS2 handwriting books

- Any questions?