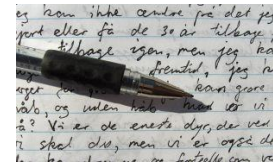


# Handwriting

Handwriting is a complex process involving many skills and performance components. Difficulties manifest themselves for a number of reasons and all areas need to be considered.

## General Advice

- Positioning on chair within class i.e. at the front of class and central if possible (directly opposite board if copying is required). Ensure the chair and desk height are appropriate where possible with feet flat on the floor.
- Many of these suggestions can be carried out with the whole class to prevent isolating the young person.
- If appropriate, develop keyboard skills and use a computer/ laptop where possible to type up projects, essays etc.
- Reduce the amount of copying: emphasise taking notes, using headings/main points only, use a highlighter pen, photocopy of notes from a lesson or for homework tasks or from another pupil (if felt appropriate). Summary of notes prepared by teacher or parents at home. Mind maps help organise and reduce the amount of handwriting required.
- Allow abbreviations if appropriate.
- Scribe: for lesson notes.
- Using phone to record lessons: to record essays, answers, homework etc to then be typed up.
- Time extensions: in exams, assignments etc.



## Preparation and Positioning

- Use of deep pressure activities prior to handwriting tasks/activity will help to build up muscle tone and prepare the body for work.
  - Weight bearing through hands and arms by sitting on hands.
  - Pushing self up off chair.
  - Stretches of fingers.
  - Pushing hands together / down on head.
- Posture: the individual should have their chair pulled into table with height of table and chair allowing for approximately 90 degree angles at hips and knees. Knees however should be slightly lower than hips.



- Encourage the use of non writing hand/arm to stabilise paper.
- Use a lever arch file to create a downward slope to rest paper on. This can improve posture and encourage stability for the wrist and forearm. It also changes the visual plane in which the work is viewed.
- Positioning of paper: use of masking tape for an outline on lever arch file or table can ensure good positioning of book or paper.
- Use of a dycem sheet to reduce slipping/movement of paper.

### Strategies for Planning Skills

- Use of a template for essay writing, mind maps or lines where the headings, date, title etc should be placed.
- Colour coding jotters and workbooks, can co-ordinate this with timetable.
- Use coloured pens/pencils for graph work and try using different coloured highlighter pens.
- Consistency e.g. for where equipment is kept.
- Use different coloured pens on smart board



### Strategies for Fine Motor Skills

- Allow enough space for wrist and forearm mobility on desk surface. Consider position in class and whether the young person is left or right handed.
- Consider writing tools (i.e. pencil grips).
- Pencil grips: try out different grips and pens e.g. triangular, moulded, elastic band on pencil etc.
- Pens: try out different pens: different weights, sizes, grips, Yoripen (useful for left-handed writers) etc.
- Increase awareness of amount of pressure required through the pencil e.g. use carbon paper to increase or decrease amount of pressure or try using a propelling lead pencil.
- The young person rolls small balls of bluetac between the thumb and index finger with wrist lying on the desk.
- If tiredness and fatigue are identified, allow the individual to change task or have a break e.g. to go an errand for the teacher. Movement can sometimes help to refocus attention. This can therefore also be used if the young person becomes excessively distractible or fidgety.



### Strategies for Visual Skills

- Spacing grids: these can be made up dependent on the individual and the size of spaces required. Use by placing behind lined or plain paper to provide a visual guide for sizing of letters and spacing. Spacing grids can be made to suit both plain and lined paper (see example below). (Laminating these sheets can make them last longer).
- Surfaces should give a clear background to writing and drawing. Reduce visual stimuli.
- Use of ruler to aid visual tracking.

### Strategies for Confidence and Motivation

- Emphasise quality not quantity: it is better to expect a small amount of good work, than looking towards large quantities of illegible handwriting that takes the individual considerable effort but provides no reward.
- Ensure self esteem is maintained / increased through success: often avoidance plays a big role with the young person experiencing these difficulties. Often it can feel that no matter how much effort is put into a task, it is never good enough, so can result in an expectancy to fail.
- If unable to read written work produced, use of a laptop/netbook should be considered.
- Be aware of fatigue and tolerance levels. Despite what looks like a poor piece of work, there may have been a lot of time and effort put in.

### Websites for Typing Skills

- BBC Dance Mat: Learn to touch type for beginners:  
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/zf2f9j6/articles/z3c6tfr>
- Touch Typing: learn to type and improve your typing:  
<http://www.doorwayonline.org.uk/texttype.html>
- How to Type: Learn to type and improve your typing:  
<https://www.how-to-type.com/>