

## PRINTING & WRITING SKILLS

If the student's printing or handwriting is absent or just emerging, please refer to the pre-printing / handwriting package.

As many as 10% of students encounter handwriting difficulties which impact upon their ability to learn. If remediation techniques are employed early, the student is at decreased risk for persistent learning problems.

Components to handwriting which must be considered prior to printing or handwriting are: **sitting posture, proper paper placement and pencil grasp.**

### (1) SITTING

Most work will be completed at a desk or table. Encourage the student to sit optimally following the 90-90-90 rule ... hips, knees, ankles at 90° (or as close as possible) to the floor. The hips should be at the back of the chair; use a stool or books under the student's feet if they dangle. Correct desk height at or within two inches of the student's elbow when his/her arms are hanging at his/her sides.



Ask yourself:

Is my student seated in a steady, stable position?

Is my student sitting up as straight as possible?

Is my student leaning to one side?

Are my student's feet touching the floor?

### (2) PAPER PLACEMENT

Paper should be positioned directly in front of the student at not more than a 45° angle with the upper right corner higher for right handed students and upper left corner higher for left handed. The non-dominant hand should be used to anchor the paper. If handedness has not been determined, encourage the student to use the hand with a stronger pencil grasp, better letter and shaper formation and the hand preferred for throwing objects. Switching of hands is common until late grade one in some children, but should not be encouraged.

### **(3) PENCIL GRASP**

Should a standard grasp be encouraged? Consider altering a pencil grasp only if the grasp is inefficient and substantially affects writing ability. The adapted tripod, lateral tripod and adapted quadropod grasps are variations that are acceptable.

The critical key to an efficient grasp is maintaining a web space and providing stability to the fingers and wrist.

Verbal reminders to change a pencil grasp are rarely effective. Aside from encouraging and facilitating the student to attempt altering his/her inefficient grasp, the teacher can provide stetro grips, built up or chubby pens/pencils, pens with free flowing ink, or short writing utensils that allow only a fine pincer grasp. The following adaptations may be helpful (see attached resource list).

## SUGGESTIONS TO FACILITATE PRINTING AND HANDWRITING

**WHAT TO DO IF** your student is experiencing difficulty in:

<p><b>(1) Pencil / Utensil Grasp and Control</b>          This may be due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- decreased strength</li> <li>- decreased fine motor coordination</li> <li>- joint or ligament laxity in the hands</li> <li>- poor positioning / posture</li> <li>- immature development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- experiment with larger AND smaller sized pencils / pens, etc.</li> <li>- have child try an adapted tripod grasp (see “pencil grasp”)</li> <li>- do hand strengthening activities:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• rolling, kneading, poking playdough / clay</li> <li>• spraying with a trigger bottle</li> <li>• using a hole punch</li> <li>• tug-of-war</li> <li>• holding ropes while swinging</li> <li>• using various tools: hammer, screwdriver, etc.</li> <li>• using tongs/tweezers to pick up various objects</li> <li>• play bean bag or ball toss</li> </ul> </li> <li>- also see “positioning”</li> </ul>
<p><b>(2) Letter Formation</b>          This may due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- immature development</li> <li>- decreased visual spatial ability</li> <li>- decreased motor planning</li> <li>- decreased attention / concentration</li> <li>- poor pencil control</li> <li>- poor memory</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- try manipulation and strengthening tasks rather than pen and paper to start</li> <li>- use cut-out letter forms that have been cut in ½’s as puzzles</li> <li>- make letters in the air with paper towel roll or streamer “wands”</li> <li>- progress from the easier to form letters such as <b>H, I, O, U &amp; T</b> then move to those that involve forming circles and diagonals. Start with:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>↓ UPPER CASE PRINTING</li> <li>↓ lower case printing</li> <li>↓</li> <li>↓</li> </ul> </li> <li>- make large letters on the chalkboard using whole arm movements then smaller movements</li> <li>- use stencils</li> <li>- make letters with pipe cleaners and trace the forms with fingers</li> <li>- provide child with examples of letters and ask him/her to compare his/her work with them (ie. alphabet strips)</li> <li>- <u>demonstrate</u> the sequence of the letter formation in steps “start here and go straight down to the line” etc.</li> <li>- be consistent with how letters are formed (see letter formation sheets)</li> </ul>

<p><b>(3) Size and Spacing</b>  This may be due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- aforementioned difficulties</li> <li>- poor eye tracking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- try smaller lined paper or paper with visual cues ie. green for where to start, red for where to stop, coloured lines, or without the centre broken line (see sheets provided)</li> <li>- practice with lines on the blackboard</li> <li>- use “one finger space” or a popsicle stick, tongue depressor to help align space between words</li> <li>- use a finger or ruler on the page to maintain place</li> <li>- self-evaluation: have child critique his/her own writing – he/she may not recognize the discrepancies</li> <li>- use hand over hand guidance</li> <li>- demonstrate first and have child <u>imitate</u> the movements and strategies</li> <li>- begin with near point copying then progress to blackboard copying</li> <li>- use eye tracking activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- balloon games – balloon volleyball</li> <li>- suspended ball games</li> <li>- yo-yo</li> <li>- itsy bitsy spider</li> <li>- find the hidden object</li> <li>- I Spy</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>(4) Letter Reversal</b>  This may be due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- visual-perceptual problems</li> <li>- decreased motor planning</li> <li>- poor memory</li> <li>- poor eye tracking</li> <li>- dyslexia</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- use an alphabet strip on the student’s desk</li> <li>- provide hand over hand guidance</li> <li>- practice forming frequently reversed capital letters on the top left hand corner of the page (ie.)</li> <li>- use stencils</li> <li>- compare words starting with reversed letters (ie. bay - day)</li> <li>- near point copying then blackboard</li> <li>- use verbal cues (ie. “b” is a bat and a ball)</li> <li>- use a keyboard (computer or typewriter) for some written work</li> </ul>

**NOTE:**

**\*\*Try to keep writing sessions short for those experiencing difficulty.\*\***