

Helping Handwriting at Home

Guide for Parents for Primary Aged Pupils Years 1-6

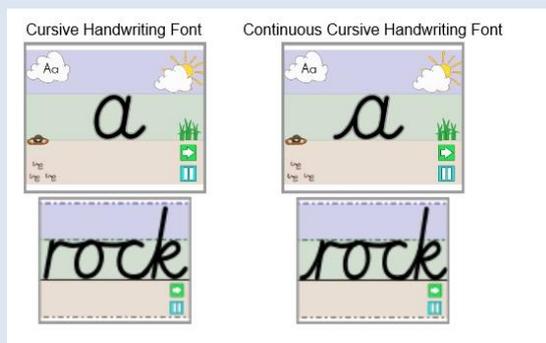
Physical & Medical Team

Supporting handwriting at home doesn't have to involve worksheets!

This guide is aimed at parents to support handwriting at home and should be used in conjunction with advice from school.

School scripts

Most schools teach 'cursive' script. Make sure you practice the same script at home- often there are differences in letters k, x and z.



www.teachhandwriting.co.uk

Tip: Check whether your child's school has subscribed to an online handwriting scheme; some have access for parents at home.

Whatever the script, main goals are:

- Fluent (being able to write with smooth movements)
- Legible (easy to read)
- Good speed

Keys to success:

- **Be positive** about your child's handwriting. They may be sensitive about it and it may take lots of practice before big improvements are seen.
- **Be patient.** It can be difficult to unlearn bad habits. Encourage your child to self-assess and identify what is working well.
- Keep activities **fun and short** to keep your child interested.

You can also think about games/ activities that develop hand skills such as Meccano, operation, jacks, Playdoh, Connect 4 or craft activities that you can do together to help.

Don't worry, a structured programme doesn't work for every family. For more ideas see the online activities in the fine motor/ pre- writing section of this guide. Sports and outdoor games are also important in developing gross motor skills needed for handwriting.

Where to start?

First, make sure your child is sitting well:

- Make sure the **table and chair is not too big**; if feet dangle put something underneath so feet can be flat.
- Make sure the **table is at the right height**. If it is too high their shoulders will be raised and tense.



<https://www.team4kids.com>

Tip: Some children find writing easier with a pen or soft pencil (2B rather than HB) as there is less friction on the paper so writing can be more fluid. Try your child with a range of pens/ pencils to see what they prefer.

Setting up a handwriting programme at home

Tip: We suggest practice 3-5 times a week for around **10/15 minutes**.

If you are starting a handwriting session at home, break it into 4 sections. Take your time to try each section until you are happy to add them together in this order:

warm up → **fine motor/ pre-writing patterns** → **handwriting practice** → **evaluate**.

1. Warm up

Start with some hand activities as a warm up. This only needs to take a couple of minutes.

Alternative activities found here: <https://www.teachhandwriting.co.uk/handwriting-warm-up-exercises.html>

Hand activities

- Hand turning: Place hands palm down on the table. Turn the left hand palm up. Now turn the right hand palm up at the same time as the left hand palm down. Keep turning, speeding up until the rhythm breaks down.
- Clenched fist: Both hands on the table, one clenched, one stretched out. Swap clenching and stretching building up rhythm and pace. Try and do this in one fluid motion rather than moving each hand in turn.
- Finger loops: Touching each finger-tip in turn with the tip of the thumb.
- Drumming fingers: Using the table top, tap each digit in order, then reverse order. One hand followed by the other, then reverse.
- Tie up fingers; Put an elastic band around two fingers then wriggle it off with the fingers of the same hand.
- Hands flat on the table – lift each finger in turn repeat with other hand.
- One hand at a time, ask the pupil to wriggle fingers individually, trying to keep the other digits as still as possible.
- Flicking paper – scrunch strips of paper into a ball – make a goal mouth with 2 bricks so that the paper can be flicked with the thumb and each finger in turn into the goal.
- One hand at a time, rotate thumb clockwise around first fingers, second etc.

2. Fine motor Pre- writing activities

Spend around 5 minutes on these activities

Shape – Pre writing patterns

- Copy pattern combining push and pull



- Copy pattern looping in a diagonal direction



- Copy anticlockwise circular pattern



- Copy pattern combining clockwise and anticlockwise movement



- Copy zig zag pattern



<https://nha-handwriting.org.uk/shop/handwriting-patterns-playbook/> Free to download

<https://www.teachhandwriting.co.uk/pre-handwriting-patterns.html> Free to download

<https://www.nhsggc.org.uk/kids/resources/information-packs/in-hand-manipulation-programme/>
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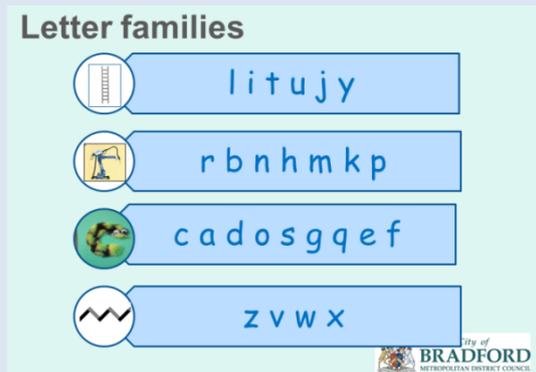
Other ideas include dot-to-dot, mazes, scissor activities, playdoh, lego. For more ideas for fine and gross motor activities to help <https://www.teachhandwriting.co.uk/gross-and-fine-motor-skills-games.html>

3. Handwriting Practice

Spend around 7 minutes on these activities

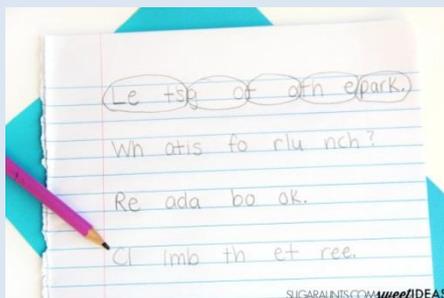
Tip: Don't try and work on everything at once. Choose from the following:

- ❖ **Shape** - are the letters formed correctly? There are letter families that group letters of a similar shape together:



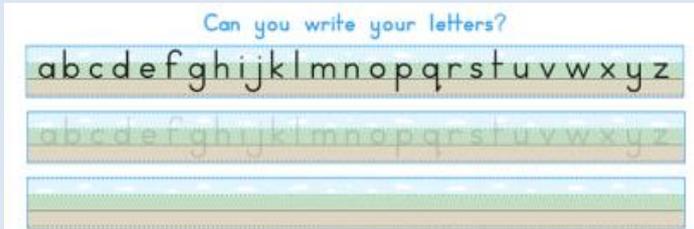
Ask your child to write each letter in the family. Check whether it is formed correctly- if not make a note of letters to focus on. Practice the formation in the air, on a partner's back, using paint, crayons, chalks, download a handwriting app to practice using a tablet (and stylus if you have one)

- ❖ **Space** - are the letters in words too close together or too far apart? Are words squashed together or separated well? As fingers come in different sizes often a lolly stick spacer is better than a finger space. For older children a coffee stirrer may be a better size. Write a sentence, look at the spaces between letters and words. Use a stick spacer to write the sentence again with better spaces between words. Use a highlighter to show the spaces between words trying to make them a consistent size. Use an ink pad to stamp a small finger between each word to demonstrate even spacing. Write a sentence with confused spacing. Encourage the child to circle the correct spacing and then re write the sentence in the correct way.



- ❖ **Sitting** and **Size** - are each letters the right size or do sizes vary? Do letters 'sit' on the line or drift above or below the line when your child writes? Go through the alphabet and identify which letters sit on the line (grass), which fall below the line (underground) and which are the tall letters (sky). It is helpful when writing at home to use lined paper to help keep the letters straight and keep the size consistent. Try different sizes of lines, start wide and then reduce the size. If blank paper is used, rule some lines in pencil first before starting to write.

Using lined paper that is separated into 3 bands (often sky, grass and underground) can help keep the letters on the line and the right size.



<https://www.twinkl.co.uk/resource/au-l-174-can-you-write-your-letters-worksheet-ground-sky-grass-cursive>

For older children use a highlighter to show where the main body of the letters should go.

- ❖ **Stringing** (joined up writing) Only look at stringing (joining) when letter shape, size and space are consistent and letters can sit on the line. Look at your child's writing. Are joined up letters joined in the right way? Look at the different types of joins. More information about types of joins and free worksheets can be found here <https://www.teachhandwriting.co.uk/letter-animations-worksheets.html>

4. Evaluate

Spend a couple of minutes to talk through the session. Ask your child to talk about what went well and use this time to give specific praise about the parts of their writing that have improved. What are you going to work on next time? What parts did they enjoy?

Handwriting can take some time to change but by focusing on improving one element at a time it will be easier to see small improvements.

Tip: Handwriting practice does not always have to be about worksheets. Make sure your child has lots of opportunities for outdoor play and sports as well, particularly activities that develop the arm and shoulder muscles such as swimming, racket sports and playground equipment.

Tip: Extra advice for left handed writers <https://www.nhsggc.org.uk/kids/resources/ot-activityinformation-sheets/handwriting-advice-for-left-handers/>

Alternatives to handwriting

Handwriting is a skill most children will be able to acquire, however some children will continue to find handwriting difficult despite handwriting programmes. Word processing can be used alongside handwriting with many children successfully learning to touch type. Speak to your child's school if you feel they would benefit from using computers as an alternative to handwriting as this may be an option.