
Colmore Junior School HANDWRITING TEACHING OVERVIEW

Year 3- Year 6



HANDWRITING TEACHING OVERVIEW: Y3 - Y6

This document sets out a sequential and cumulative handwriting progression from Year 3 to Year 6, with opportunities for frequent review embedded throughout. It outlines a week-by-week focus for teaching and provides suggestions for adaptations to support pupils with differing needs. Further reading and links to more detailed advice can be found at the end of the document. The progression aligns with the [National Curriculum](#), the [writing framework](#) and guidance from the [National Handwriting Association](#) (see below).



Good Practice for Handwriting

Prepare... for P checks



National Handwriting Association
Promoting good practice





The 'P checks' are used to support the *process* of handwriting and cover **Posture, Pencil grasp, Paper position and Pressure and fluency.**

Posture

Poor posture can be a root cause of common handwriting difficulties such as pain or fatigue and will present as a reluctance to write, poor presentation or legibility, slow writing speed and reduced output.

POSTURE GUIDELINES

- Feet flat on the floor or on a wide based raised surface
 - Knees at a right angle with 2-fingers space behind the knee to avoid compression
 - Sit on the chair so hips are positioned at approximately 90° with the back supported
 - Sit approximately a fist-distance away from the table
- AND
- Table height adjusted so that forearms rest on the top without leaning forward (too low) or raising the shoulders/arms (too high)
 - Surface - clean, smooth and uncluttered

Tip



Establishing good habits of posture and position early is really helpful. Correcting bad habits later is much more difficult.

ALTERNATIVE FURNITURE

Adaptive equipment is available for those that struggle with underlying stability, gross and fine motor skills.

If standing desks are used they should also be an appropriate height.

A writing slope can help with wrist position and posture. The chair height needs to be higher.

TABLE AND CHAIR HEIGHT

If the table is at the correct height the forearm is supported, making it easier to control the movement.

Too High: children may raise their shoulders inducing greater fatigue.

Too Low: children may slump forwards and increase strain on the trunk, neck, arm, wrist and fingers making it more difficult to make controlled precise movements.

Too Far: children will slump forwards if their chair is set too far back from the table, regardless of chair and table height.

Tips



Exchanging furniture with another class can accommodate children who are taller or shorter than their classmates.

At times swop a chair for a ball to sit on or try an air-filled or a wedge cushion. Check the height is correct.





Children and adults can be seen to use a wide range of different pencil grasps, often because they have not learnt differently or as compensation for postural instability elsewhere. An inefficient pen/cil grasp can cause discomfort, impacting motivation, fluency and legibility and create difficulty in sustaining speed.

1

Before children are asked to write, it is important that they are developmentally ready to do so. The teacher will be able to assess when a child has developed the essential skills.

In Early Years, most children will manage pre-writing tasks only, which are designed to introduce the basic movements and 'feel' required for writing. Asking a child to hold a pen or pencil and write before they are developmentally ready can create difficulties.

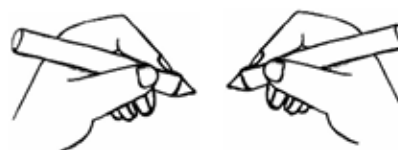
2

Introducing an effective pencil grasp, when appropriate, is beneficial for developing fast, efficient, legible handwriting in the longer term.

A **dynamic tripod grasp**, with the pencil held between thumb and index finger with the middle finger supporting is considered optimal as it provides stability, but allows the precise movements needed to form letters. To be effective, this grasp must be supported by a stable wrist resting on the writing surface and positioned below the writing line.

PENCIL GRASP GUIDELINES:

- Check the child is developmentally ready before asking them to write.
- A dynamic tripod pencil grasp is the most efficient and is expected by end of Year 1.
- Address an inappropriate grasp in the early learning stages and later if it is causing discomfort or impacting speed.
- Consider corrective action using adaptive grips or specialist writing tools, but always trial several options to find the most appropriate.
- Encourage a 2 cm gap between finger tip and pencil point – and slightly greater for left-handers.



3

Changing a writing grasp can be challenging for an older child and should only be attempted if there is discomfort or other difficulty.

(See *Tips for Teaching – Writing Crip* from www.nha-handwriting.org.uk for more detail)

4

There is a wide range of specialist pencils, pens and adaptive grips available to purchase.

However, focusing on the writing tool alone will not solve handwriting difficulty – take care when recommending specialist pens and pencils and trial several options as what helps one writer may cause greater discomfort for another.

See NHA booklet '*NHA TOOLS*' (available soon from www.nha-handwriting.org.uk) for more details

5

When developing handwriting skills, the child needs to see the pencil nib to monitor their writing. This is more difficult for left-handers.

Holding the pencil too close or too far from the tip or holding too tightly can cause tension and thereby difficulties with handwriting.



Correct paper position is vitally important during the early years of handwriting development as bad practice can lead to compensatory strategies, such as a hooked-wrist in left-handers, that are difficult to remedy in later years.

TILT

When writing, the wrist and hand will naturally step along a path across the paper, but at an angle to the body. The writing paper should ideally be positioned so that the hand follows this natural path. For a right hander the top left corner of the paper is angled down to the left.

For a left-hander, the opposite is best, having the top right corner angled down to the right.



PAPER GUIDELINES:

- Tilt and offset the paper according to the writing hand.
- Move the paper up or down to facilitate a comfortable reach and keep it in place with the non-writing hand.
- Consider glare from paper and overhead lighting.
- Consider a specialist vision assessment if visual stress continues.

LIGHT ON THE PAPER

TOO LITTLE

Make sure that the children's work is well lit - sometimes there is a dark corner of a classroom where lighting levels are low

TOO MUCH

Direct sunlight tends to reflect brightly off white writing paper

Eyes have to work hard to compensate for fluctuating light levels. It is better to try to keep light levels as constant as possible. Artificial light or window blinds can be effective as can writing on coloured, rather than white paper.

OFFSET

The paper should not be directly in front of the child but slightly offset, to the right for a right hander and to the left for a left hander.

NON-WRITING HAND

Encourage the use of the non-writing hand to stabilise the paper. (This enables the writing hand to move freely and also balances the body). Encourage writers to move the paper and adjust the position of the holding hand as writing progresses down the page.

VISUAL STRESS

Ocular motor (eye movement) difficulties tend to be fatiguing, especially when having to be focussed on an extended writing task. If a child rubs their eyes frequently or complains of headaches when writing, it can be a sign of visual acuity or ocular motor difficulties. An eye test will detect visual acuity difficulties, but other factors can make the eyes work harder than they need to, causing fatigue.

The teacher will be able to identify the best measures for each child, but ocular motor difficulties should not be ignored, as left unaddressed will tend to demotivate children to writing regardless of lighting levels.



The act of writing should leave a clear trace on the paper, neither too faint nor too dark, and flow along the line rhythmically.

Tip



The shape of the writing tool and the way it is held impact the amount of pressure exerted onto the paper. Trialling a range of pens, pencils and grips can be a good place to start.

LIGHT PRESSURE INDICATORS

- Faint, shaky script
- The fingers are often more extended at the joints and higher up the pencil

HEAVY PRESSURE INDICATORS

- Marks that go through to the next page
- Raised ridges on the back of the paper that can be felt with the fingertips
- Red marks on the skin because of contact with the pen
- White knuckles

SUGGESTIONS TO HELP

- Use carbon paper underneath layers of writing paper and challenge the student to aim for: p2 - copy, p3 - shadow, p4 - invisible.
- Use a 2H pencil for increased sensory feedback so there is less need for hard pressure.
- Use a mechanical pencil (0.5mm) that will break under heavy pressure.
- Use a B/2B pencil or a pen to improve the visibility of writing for those who have light pressure.

- Use light up pens: the light is activated to correct light pressure and deactivated to correct heavy pressure.
- Use a lead pencil to shade in a picture using light, medium and dark grey. Discuss how different amounts of pressure alter the shade.
- Write on a single sheet of paper when at a desk or table. A firm surface can limit the amount of pressure the child can use.

EARLY WRITERS

When learning to write, pencil pressure is likely to vary depending on the demands of the task and stage of development. Most children will learn through experience how much pressure they should exert through the pencil onto paper.

PRESSURE GUIDELINES:

- The just-right pressure eases writing across the page, which is important for fluency and reducing the risk of pain during handwriting.
- Use teaching tools such as carbon paper, mechanical pencils, 'light-up' and 'squiggle' pens to demonstrate appropriate pressure.
- Try some gross and fine motor warm ups before and during the handwriting task. Actions which include squeezing and deep pressure, resistance and/or vibration will increase body awareness.
- Check that posture/issues with postural control are not the causative factor here.

FLUENCY

- Write to rhythms / beats of music
- Pattern repeated letters and encourage flowing movements
- Think of skating / gliding on the paper
- Use gel crayons or pastels to increase ease of flow when patterning at a larger scale and on bigger blank paper



Shape, Space, Size, Sitting, Stringing, Slant, Speed, Style Useful as:

- 1 A **GUIDE TO TEACHING** handwriting and a **CURRICULUM RESOURCE** showing development of handwriting skills in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and the National Curriculum (NC) KS1 & 2.
- 2 An **ASSESSMENT TOOL**: a checklist for quick evaluation of handwriting by a student or teacher (see p 3)

Part 1 'S' Factors as a GUIDE TO TEACHING handwriting

1 Shape

EYFS: Reception
NC: KS1

Once a child is ready to write, the first important task is to learn how to form the letters correctly - best taught as a motor skill. (This will save many problems at later stages.)

Children learn best by:

- 1 Watching the letters being made and hearing a simple patter.
- 2 Making the letters themselves in developmentally appropriate ways using just fingers - sand, paint, sandpaper, air-writing etc. - before pencils.

Letters can be put into groups or teams according to the movement needed to make them. When children learn to write a new letter, the 'lead' letter of its team will help them to start.

The 'l' team

l i u t y j

The 'c' team

c a d g q o e s f

The 'r' team

r n m h b k p

The 'zig-zag' team

z x v w y k

N.B.

These letters have exit flicks to support joining but **no entry strokes** which complicate the basic letter shapes and use diagonal lines that many young children find difficult at this stage.

A basic lower case alphabet in letter formation families

2 Space

NC: KS1

Children need to understand that spaces need to be left between words so they can be easily read.

Gradually, they need to learn to leave an appropriately-sized space - about the size of 1 or 2 letter 'o's. Lolly sticks make good spacers for beginner writers, followed by coffee stirrers if necessary later. These work much better than the traditional finger-spacing. (Fingers grow bigger while writing becomes smaller so are ineffective when the child is older. Finger spacing is also difficult for left-handers to use).

3 Sitting on the line

Once children are secure in forming letters correctly they need to know where to position them in relation to the base line.

The plan is hot.

Mum has a wig.

I hid the map.

Writing on a single base-line

4

Size

NC: KS1

... and also to their relative sizes:

Small/halfway letters/x-height letters e.g. a, e, o, s

Tall letters/letters with ascenders e.g. h, l, b, k (plus all capitals)

Tailed letters/letters with descenders e.g. p, g, y, j

A visual image helps children understand the 3 levels. Suggestions are:

- sky/grass or forest/underground
- head/body/legs

While children are learning about size it is helpful to use paper marked with a base-line and a second line above for the tops of a, e, s, o etc. The tall letters and tails are written at about twice that size.

(This is preferable to traditional 'tram-line' paper with 4 lines that encourages over-long ascenders and descenders).

l u c a o e s r n m v w x z

l t d f b h k

j y g f a p A B C D

Beginner writers, especially, need widely spaced lines to avoid cramping letters and all children need some flexibility in line spacing rather than 'one size fits all'.

5

Stringing together

NC: KS1 & KS2

Basic joins.

These can be taught in a series of lessons with plenty of practice:

- Diagonal (up the hill join) to 'l' team letters, both tall and short e.g.
- Horizontal (washing line join) to both tall and short letters from o, v, w e.g.
- Joins to 'c' team letters e.g.

c u i l

o u w h

u c n d

Practice is more fun making patterns from digraphs using felt tipped pens. (See *Tips for Teaching: Patterns* for ideas)

The NC expectation for Years 3 & 4 is that pupils will be 'using joined hand-writing throughout their independent writing'. This will encourage joined writing to become automatic. Note: cursive/joined writing can have some breaks - usually after j, y, g, x, z. (See *Style* below)

Joined or cursive writing is the next step towards fluency.

The NC states that children 'should be taught a joined style as soon as they can form letters securely with the correct orientation' and 'understand which letters, when adjacent to each other, are best left unjoined.'

6

Slant

NC: KS 2

A consistent slant helps the appearance of handwriting.

A slightly forward slant is a natural movement for right-handers and helps to improve fluency and speed. (See 'Slant' in Part 2)

7

Speed

NC: Y5+

Students in KS2 & 3 need to be able to write legibly and quickly.

Students need help in understanding that increasing speed changes writing: it can improve rhythm and fluency but can cause illegibility if allowed out of control. It will help students if they are encouraged to gradually build up the speed of legible writing by repeating words, then phrases, sentences & paragraphs in short regular periods of practice. (See *Tips for Teaching: Speeding up*)

8

Style

NC: Y5+

Students should be encouraged to develop a style of writing that works for them.

Students can consider changes to their writing style that could increase speed and/or fluency, e.g.

- Adding loops to g, y, j and possibly f to increase speed and flow.
- Consider if there are any joins that do not flow well and would be better left unjoined.
- Be aware that different qualities and speeds of writing are required for different tasks: personal notes, exams, course work, job applications - and adapt accordingly.

N.B. They should also be aware of occasions when an unjoined style is appropriate: for labeling diagrams/data, e-mail addresses etc. and be able to use capital letters for form-filling.

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. When she had reached the

These children are developing personal styles

Year 3- Developing a Joined, Fluent Style (accuracy before speed)		
	Autumn One	Universal strategies for all children including additional adaptations for support
1	P Checks: Posture, Pencil, Paper, Pressure S Factors: Shape, Space, Size, Sitting, Stringing (i.e. joining). Encourage children to self-assess against the S Factors regularly	Highlight or draw line in a bold colour so it is easier for the child to see, and get them to 'sit' the following letters on a line: d, c, e, i, m, n, o, r, s, u, v, w, x. Continue to teach and secure letter formation skills, with regular checks to monitor progress, alongside writing learning throughout the year, until they are secure.
2	<i>Straight Letters i l t u</i>	
3	<i>2o'clocks c a d g q s</i>	
4	<i>Tunnel Letters n m h b p</i>	
5	<i>Top Joiners o r v w</i>	
6	<i>Square Letters x z</i> <i>Odd Letters f k j y e</i>	
	Autumn Two	Universal strategies for all children including additional adaptations for support
1	Number formation	Joined handwriting should not be taught until pupils can form individual letters correctly and consistently. Continue to teach and secure letter formation skills, with regular checks to monitor progress, until they are secure.
2	Diagonal joins ai, ac, an, am, ch, sh, th, ck	
3	Horizontal joins oo, oa, oe, wi, wa, re, ve, se al, cl, fl, sl	
4	Diagonal joins to ascenders	
5	Horizontal joins to ascenders and ladder letters wh, ti, hi, li, di, ri, ni	
6	Joins to descenders ag, eg, ig, ay, oi, ey	
	Spring One	Universal strategies for all children including additional adaptations for support
1	Break letters - letters that do not join – adapt according to your school handwriting policy. b, p, g, j, q, x, y, z (f)	Use lolly sticks and then coffee stirrers (narrower space) to support making spaces - more accurate than fingers. Use a visual image – this might have 3 levels, such as, "sky, grass, earth". If using three levels, explain these e.g. 'sky zone – ascenders stretch up'; 'grass zone – main body of letters'; 'earth zone – descenders drop down'. Alternatively, just use two lines – a baseline to sit the letters on and one additional line to mark the tops of small letters as a line to support sizing of letters. Support children to with estimating the relative height of ascenders and descenders in relation to this line, understanding that
2	Letters evenly sized	
3	Consistent spacing between letters and words.	
4	Downstrokes are parallel Downstrokes are equidistant	

5	Ascenders and descenders do not collide.	these typically extend to approximately twice the height of a small letter.
6	More complex multi-letter joins str, spr, thr	
	Spring Two	Universal strategies for all children including additional adaptations for support
1	ing, ong, ung	Use a visual image – this might have 3 levels, such as, “sky, grass, earth”. If using three levels, explain these e.g. ‘sky zone – ascenders stretch up’; ‘grass zone – main body of letters’; ‘earth zone – descenders drop down’. Alternatively, just use two lines – a baseline to sit the letters on and one additional line to mark the tops of small letters as a line to support sizing of letters. Support children to with estimating the relative height of ascenders and descenders in relation to this line, understanding that these typically extend to approximately twice the height of a small letter.
2	Forming descenders and ascenders accurately	
3	Number formation	
4	Diagonal to join to a small letter: ci	
5	Diagonal to join to a tall letter: mb	
6	Correct height: : ti, it	
	Summer One	Universal strategies for all children including additional adaptations for support
1	Joining to and from the letter l, including ly	Use child’s targeted spelling to model joins. Ensure child is able to decode the ‘H Brothers’ as GPCs before teaching the join.
2	Forming s correctly when joining: es, as	
3	ie - linked to plural spelling pattern	
4	ed - linked to past tense spelling pattern	
5	‘H Brothers’: sh, ch, th, wh ph	
6	Capital letters	
	Summer Two	Universal strategies for all children including additional adaptations for support
1	Silent sisters : kn, gn, wr	Ensure children are securely reading each digraph and trigraph before practising the join.
2	Phonics phase 3 digraphs and trigraphs: ck, ff, ll, igh	
3	ss, ai, ee, oa, oo, ow, oi	
4	ur, er, or, ar, ear, air, ure	
5	Capital letters	
6	Common initial blends: st, sl, cl, cr, fr, fl, br, bl	

Year 4- Fluency, Control and Stamina

	Autumn One	Universal strategies for all children including additional adaptations for support
1	P Checks: Posture, Pencil, Paper, Pressure S Factors: Shape, Space, Size, Sitting, Stringing (i.e. joining) and Speed. Encourage children to self-assess against the S Factors regularly	Use a visual image – this might have 3 levels, such as, “sky, grass, earth”. If using three levels, explain these e.g. ‘sky zone – ascenders stretch up’; ‘grass zone – main body of letters’; ‘earth zone – descenders drop down’. Alternatively, just use two lines – a baseline to sit the letters on and one additional line to mark the tops of small letters as a line to support sizing of letters. Support children to with estimating the relative height of ascenders and descenders in relation to this line, understanding that these typically extend to approximately twice the height of a small letter. Use lolly sticks and then coffee stirrers to support making spaces - more accurate than fingers.
2	Baseline sits on the line. Ascenders and descenders of correct size and placement.	Highlight or draw a line in a bold colour so it is easier for the child to see, and get them to 'sit' the following letters on a line: a, c, e, i, m, n, o, r, s, u, v, w, x. Continue to teach and secure letter formation skills, with regular checks to monitor progress, alongside writing learning throughout the year, until they are secure.
3	Number formation	
4	Diagonal joins ai, ac, an, am, ch, sh, th, ck	Joined handwriting should not be taught until pupils can form individual letters correctly and consistently. Continue to teach and secure letter formation skills, with regular checks to monitor progress, until they are secure.
5	Horizontal joins oo, oa, oe, wi, wa, re, ve, se	
6	Diagonal joins to ascenders al, cl, fl, sl	
	Autumn Two	Universal strategies for all children including additional adaptations for support
1	Horizontal joins to ascenders wh, ti, hi, li, di, ri, ni	Pattern work: horizontal strokes followed by upward strokes — — — “Straight across... then climb the tall letter.”
2	Joins to descenders ag, eg, ig, ay, oi, ey	
3	Capital letters	
4	Practise joining most common rimes: ain, -an, -ap, -aw, -ay	Ensure child is able to pronounce the rime before learning the joins.
5	-ail, -ake, -ale, -all, -ank, -at, ate	
6	-eat, -ell, -ice, -ick, -ide, -ight,	

	Spring One	Universal strategies for all children including additional adaptations for support
1	ill, -in, -ine, -ing, -ink, -ip, -it	Consider making 's' a break letter if a child is struggling.
2	-ock, -oke, -op, -ore, -ot	
3	-uck, -ug, -ump, -unk	
4	Joining to and from the s: -ash, -est	
5	Phase 5 digraphs: ay, ie, ea, ir, ue, aw, wh, ph, ew, au	
6	Joining to and from o: ou, oy, oe	
	Spring Two	Universal strategies for all children including additional adaptations for support
1	Days of the week	Ensure child is able to decode the trigraphs before teaching the join.
2	Months of the year	
3	Phase 5 trigraphs: ure – as in pure, cure, sure tch – as in match, fetch, notch	
4	Suffixes: - tion, -sion, -ssion, -cian	
5	Suffixes: -ing, -ed, -er, -est, -y, -ment, -ness, -ful, -less	
6	Prefixes: un-, dis-, mis-, in-	
	Summer One	Universal strategies for all children including additional adaptations for support
1	Contractions: use of apostrophe can't, didn't, hasn't, couldn't, it's, 'll	Clear instructions and modelling: small, shaped like a tiny diagonal stroke or curve, not a large floating comma.
2	The letter y placed in a word anywhere but the end: myth, gym, Egypt, pyramid, mystery	
3	More suffixes: -ous, -ly	
4	More prefixes: im-, ir-, re-, sub-, inter-, super-, anti-, auto-	
5	Common exception words (see word list below Year 4 guidance)	
6	Common exception words	

	Summer Two	Universal strategies for all children including additional adaptations for support
1	Develop writing stamina for extended pieces.	
2	Reinforce the correct size and height of letters relative to each other.	Use a visual image – this might have 3 levels, such as, “sky, grass, earth”. If using three levels, explain these e.g. ‘sky zone – ascenders stretch up’; ‘grass zone – main body of letters’; ‘earth zone – descenders drop down’. Alternatively, just use two lines – a baseline to sit the letters on and one additional line to mark the tops of small letters as a line to support sizing of letters. Support children to with estimating the relative height of ascenders and descenders in relation to this line, understanding that these typically extend to approximately twice the height of a small letter.
3	Ensure letters with ascenders and descenders are formed correctly and in proportion.	
4	Develop strategies for editing without rewriting entire sections	Leave alternate lines for editing.
5	Introduce strategies for writing neatly at speed	Use a timer for motivation. Children try to improve on their own time taken. Prioritise legibility over speed.
6	Self-evaluation using S Factors: sitting, size, shape, spacing, slant, stringing (i.e. joining) and speed.	Reduce number of S Factors according to child’s strengths and needs.

Years 3 and 4 common exception words for additional practice

accident(ally)	disappear	interest	pressure
actual(ly)	early	island	probably
address	earth	knowledge	promise
answer	eight/eighth	learn	purpose
appear	enough	length	quarter
arrive	exercise	library	question
believe	experience	material	recent
bicycle	experiment	medicine	regular
breath	extreme	mention	reign
breathe	famous	minute	remember
build	favourite	natural	sentence
busy/business	February	naughty	separate
calendar	forward(s)	notice	special
caught	fruit	occasion(ally)	straight
centre	grammar	often	strange
century	group	opposite	strength
certain	guard	ordinary	suppose
circle	guide	particular	surprise
complete	heard	peculiar	therefore
consider	heart	perhaps	though/although
continue	height	popular	thought
decide	history	position	through
describe	imagine	possess(ion)	various
different	increase	possible	weight
difficult	important	potatoes	woman/women

Self-evaluation for Year 5 children at the start of the school year

Part 2 'S' Factors as a CHECKLIST FOR QUICK EVALUATION of handwriting by a student or teacher (see also Part 1)

Notes

This is an effective way of giving older students (Y5+) the knowledge of elements of good handwriting and so enable them to make improvements in their own writing.

A good way to begin is for the students to write a few lines or a pangram (a sentence that contains all 26 letters) e.g.

The five boxing wizards jump quickly.

Test

The students look carefully at their writing, and consider each 'S' factor in turn by answering the question. They give themselves a grade for each 'S' Factor separately.

Action

The students, with the guidance of the teacher, might:

- Repeat the sentence, trying to improve their score for that particular 'S'.
- Set up some practice activities, perhaps repeating a word or phrase to improve the 'S' that needs attention. To be effective, these are best practised in short, frequent sessions.
- Gradually use the improvement in regular school writing. See also *Tips For Teaching: Helping the Older Student*

Sitting
on the line

Q Do all the letters 'sit' on the writing line?

Notes

This is a good 'S' to start with as it is simple for students to understand and many can improve their performance fairly easily. Success can boost confidence and facilitate tackling perhaps more challenging questions.

~~Improvements and roads were~~ A large fawn jumped quickly

This boy improved his writing immediately when he concentrated on sitting the letters on the line.

Size

Q1 Are the letters written at the correct size and position?

Notes (see the 'Size' section in Part 1)

Many children who understand the rules write particular letters too large or small; common faults being k and s written too large and letters at the end of a word written too small.

Test

Draw a line along the top of the small letters to show the evenness of size:

captured and there canoe went on

Q2 Is the writing a suitable size?

Notes

Some children write minutely small, some write too large for the space so the ascenders and descenders of the letters touch the writing above and below and become less legible. Most students, given encouragement and flexible resources, e.g. paper with different line spacing, can develop an acceptable size.

The five boxing wizards jump quickly A large fawn jumped quickly over
buses. In school we have maths, French and

This was written by the same boy on the same type of paper after encouragement to write smaller.

Space

Q1 Are letters spaced evenly without bumping together?

Notes Letters that touch each other are difficult to read (see below). Irregularly spaced writing does not look good.

I'm so glad I found you
I'm not gonna leave you

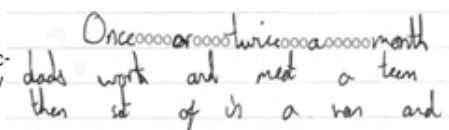
Space cont, Q2 Is the space between words consistent?

Notes

Too little or too much space between words can make reading more difficult. A simple rule that works for any age and both left and right-handed writers is to leave enough space for 1 or 2 letter 'o' s between words.

Test

Children can test the evenness and size of their spacing by using a contrasting colour to draw in as many o's as will fit between words. (see right)



Shape

Q Are all the letters legible and formed correctly?

Notes

As writing matures some letters can lose their legibility e.g. a, g, d, o are not closed

Test

Students sometimes find it easier to spot illegible letters in someone else's writing - perhaps anonymously.

Action

Work out the ideal way to form the difficult letter, then practise it in strings - dddd - and then in words, before attempting to use the new forms in normal work.

Stringing together

Q Are most of the letters joined?

Notes

It is helpful for a student to become confident in writing in a simple joined style before making any adaptations. (see 'Stringing' and 'Style' in Part 1)

Action

Writing patterns made from single letters or pairs of joined letters can be effective ways of practising.

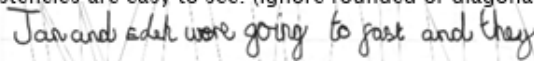


Slant

Q Is the writing slanting/sloping in a consistent direction?

Test

Use a coloured pen to make all the down lines longer so inconsistencies are easy to see. (Ignore rounded or diagonal letters)



Action

Practise writing small words using letters l, h, b, i, u, y: hill, little etc. and concentrate on parallel down strokes.

Speed

Q Is the writing fast enough for the student's needs?

Notes

Trying to speed up poor writing can create real problems. It is therefore advisable to address the first six 'S' Factors and achieve as high as standard as possible before attempting to speed up the writing. (see 'Speed' in Part 1)

Test

Students can time themselves for 1 or 2 minutes or longer when writing words or phrases.

Action

Increasing the speed of functional, legible writing requires regular practice. (See 'Speed' in Part 1)
Other ideas can be found in *Tips for Teaching: Speeding Up*.

Style

Q Is the writing consistent and fluent? (See Style in Part 1)

Other *Tips for Teaching* that might be of use: 'P' Checks, Above Year 4, Basic Steps, Speeding Up, Helping the Older Student, Patterns

Revised by Gwen Dornan From *Tips for Teaching: 'S' Rules* and articles in *Handwriting Today*, the journal of the National Handwriting Association, by members of the Association.

Year 5- Efficient, Legible and Adaptable Handwriting

	Autumn One	Universal strategies for all children including additional adaptations for support
1	P Checks: Posture, Pencil, Paper, Pressure. S Factors: Shape, Space, Size, Sitting, Stringing (joining), Slant and Speed. Encourage children to self-assess against the S Factors regularly	Use lolly sticks and then coffee stirrers to support making spaces - more accurate than fingers. Use a visual image – this might have 3 levels, such as, "sky, grass, earth". If using three levels, explain these e.g. 'sky zone – ascenders stretch up'; 'grass zone – main body of letters'; 'earth zone – descenders drop down'. Alternatively, just use two lines – a baseline to sit the letters on and one additional line to mark the tops of small letters as a line to support sizing of letters. Support children to with estimating the relative height of ascenders and descenders in relation to this line, understanding that these typically extend to approximately twice the height of a small letter.
2	Baseline sits on the line. Ascenders and descenders of correct size and placement.	Continue to teach and secure letter formation skills, with regular checks to monitor progress, alongside writing learning throughout the year, until they are secure. Highlight or draw a line in a bold colour so it is easier for the child to see, and get them to 'sit' the following letters on a line: a, c, e, i, m, n, o, r, s, u, v, w, x.
3	Number formation	
4	Diagonal joins ai, ac, an, am, ch, sh, th, ck	Joined handwriting should not be taught until pupils can form individual letters correctly and consistently. Continue to teach and secure letter formation skills, with regular checks to monitor progress, until they are secure.
5	Horizontal joins oo, oa, oe, wi, wa, re, ve, se	
6	Diagonal joins to ascenders al, cl, fl, sl	
	Autumn Two	Universal strategies for all children including additional adaptations for support
1	Horizontal joins to ascenders or ladder letters wh, ti, hi, li, di, ri, ni	See Year 4, tracking further back into previous year groups as necessary.
2	Joins to descenders: ag, eg, ig, ay, oi, ey	
3	Joining to and from the s: - ash, -est	Consider making tricky joining letters break letters if a child is struggling.
4	Joining to and from the o	
5	Joining from the r	
6	Joining to and from the f	

	Spring One	Universal strategies for all children including additional adaptations for support
1	Joining to the e	See Year 4, tracking further back into previous year groups as necessary.
2	Capital letters	
3	-cious	
4	-tious	
5	-cial	
6	-able, -ible, -ably, -ibly	
	Spring Two	Universal strategies for all children including additional adaptations for support
1	Letter formation review - letter families	See Year 4, tracking further back into previous year groups as necessary.
2	Letter formation review - letter families	
3	More silent sisters: doubt, island, lamb, solemn, thistle, knight	
4	-ough-	
5	Dictation to develop speed and fluency	Reduce number of words or extend time given.
6	Dictation to develop speed and fluency	
	Summer One	Universal strategies for all children including additional adaptations for support
1	Dictation focus: baseline sits on the line	Reduce number of words or extend time given. Provide a talking-tin or similar for child to work with.
2	Dictation focus: ascenders and descenders parallel and of correct size, placement	
3	Dictation focus: speed and fluency	
4	Printing for clarity: when not to join	
5	Dictation focus: speed and fluency	
6	Introducing a right-leaning slant- add to S Factors	May be more difficult for left-handers - leave optional
	Summer Two	Universal strategies for all children including additional adaptations for support
	Discrete practice of handwriting for speed, fluency and legibility. Model when neatest handwriting is needed and less accurate writing is acceptable (notes, for example)	See Year 4, tracking further back into previous year groups as necessary.

Year 6- Mastery and Independence	
Autumn One	Universal strategies for all children including additional adaptations for support
Focus: Review using the evaluation check used at the start of Year 5 (see above) P Checks: Posture, Pencil, Paper, Pressure S Factors: Shape, Space, Size, Sitting, Stringing (i.e. joining), Slant, Style and Speed Encourage children to self-assess against the S Factors regularly Review all joins Right-leaning slant	Continue to teach and secure letter formation skills, with regular checks to monitor progress, alongside writing learning throughout the year, until they are secure. Use lolly sticks and then coffee stirrers to support making spaces - more accurate than fingers. Use a visual image – this might have 3 levels, such as, “sky, grass, earth”. If using three levels, explain these e.g. ‘sky zone – ascenders stretch up’; ‘grass zone – main body of letters’; ‘earth zone – descenders drop down’. Alternatively, just use two lines – a baseline to sit the letters on and one additional line to mark the tops of small letters as a line to support sizing of letters. Support children to with estimating the relative height of ascenders and descenders in relation to this line, understanding that these typically extend to approximately twice the height of a small letter. Highlight or draw a line in a bold colour so it is easier for the child to see, and get them to 'sit' the following letters on a line: a, , e, , , , , r, s, , v, , x Track back to LKS2/ KS1 if necessary.
Autumn Two	Universal strategies for all children including additional adaptations for support
Focus: Best presentation and own style Developing own style whilst remaining joined, to improve fluency, speed and legibility. Add style to S Factors. Note-taking skills Dictation to develop fluency and speed	It is important for a child to write fluently and quickly in a simply joined style before making any adaptations. For note-taking, provide subtitles or a writing frame. Reduce the number of words or extend time given.
Spring One	Universal strategies for all children including additional adaptations for support
Focus: Labelling Labelling maps, diagrams, tables and charts- which letter style and which implement? Note-taking skills Dictation to develop fluency and speed	For note-taking, provide subtitles or a writing frame. For dictation, reduce the number of words or extend time given.
Spring Two	Universal strategies for all children including additional adaptations for support
Focus: Tricky joins Note-taking skills Dictation to develop fluency and speed	For note-taking, provide subtitles or a writing frame. For dictation, reduce the number of words or extend time given.
Summer One	Universal strategies for all children including additional adaptations for support
Focus: Which letters don't we join?	For note-taking, provide subtitles or a writing frame.

Note-taking skills Dictation to develop fluency and speed	For dictation, reduce the number of words or extend time given.
Summer Two	Universal strategies for all children including additional adaptations for support
Focus: Identified by teacher according to Assessment for Learning Note-taking skills Dictation to develop fluency and speed	For note-taking, provide subtitles or a writing frame. For dictation, reduce the number of words or extend time given.

Glossary	
<i>Straight Letters</i>	<i>i l t u</i>
<i>2o'clocks</i>	<i>c a d g q s</i>
<i>Tunnel Letters</i>	<i>n m h b p</i>
<i>Top Joiners</i>	<i>o r v w</i>
<i>Square Letters</i>	<i>x z</i>
<i>Odd Letters</i>	<i>f k j y e</i>
Descender	The part of a lowercase letter that goes below the writing line (the baseline).
Ascender	The part of a lowercase letter that extends above the main body of the letter.
Dictation	Pupils listen to spoken words, phrases, or sentences and then write them down accurately and at an appropriate, developing pace.
Baseline	The part of a letter that sits on the line.
Tripod grip	Writing utensil between thumb and forefinger, side of middle finger completing the tripod.
Preferred hand	A preferred hand is the hand a person naturally chooses to use for writing and most fine-motor tasks. It is the hand that feels most comfortable, controlled, and efficient for handwriting. Most children begin to show a preferred hand between ages 4–6, though some take longer.
Pressure	Writing should leave a clear trace on the paper, neither too faint nor too dark, and flow along the line rhythmically.
Starting point	Where to put your pencil to begin forming the letter.
P Checks	Posture, Pencil grasp, Paper position and Pressure.
S Factors	Shape, Space, Size, Sitting, Stringing, Slant, Speed and Style - an easy way to remember important aspects of handwriting.

Be *a* Handwriting Hero!

Do you know your letter families?

Straight Letters

i l t u

2 o'clocks

c a d g q s

Tunnel Letters

n m h b p

Top Joiners

o r v w

Square Letters

x z

Odd Letters

f k j y e

Can you write these alphabet sentences with accurate joins?

The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dogs.

The five boxing wizards jumped quickly.

Straight Letters

i l t u

i l t u

2 o'clocks

c a d g q s

c a d g q s

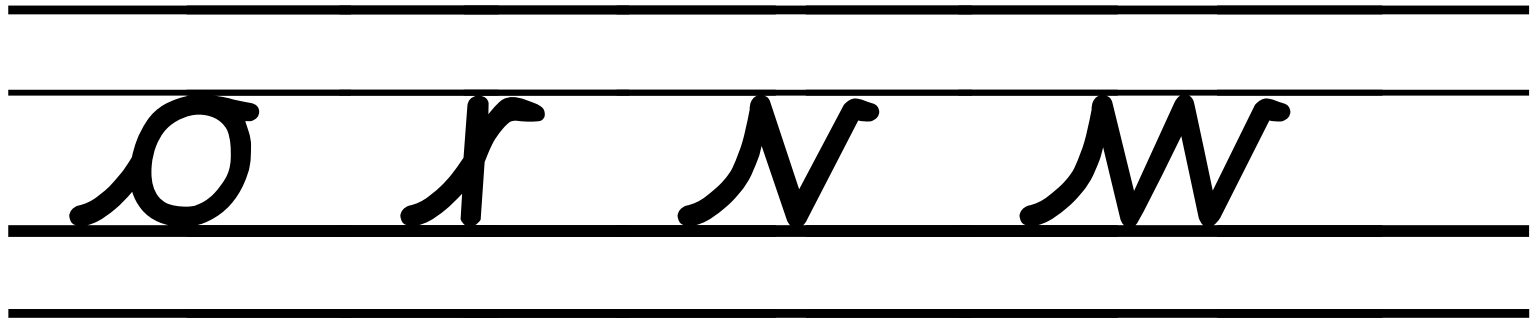
Tunnel Letters

n m h b p

n m h b p

Top Joiners

o r n w



Square Letters

x z

x z

Odd Letters

f k j y e

f k j y e

