

How to help your child with handwriting

Handwriting involves more than just our hands! There are four main areas that children need to develop to be ready for handwriting:

- 1. **Gross motor control:** the big movements our bodies make*
- 2. **Fine motor control:** the movements of arm, hand and fingers*
- 3. **Visual control:** making sure hand and eye movements are working well together*
- 4. **Spatial control:** moving confidently with an awareness of direction (left/ right/ side to side) and plane (side to side/ up/ down)*

Here are some activities you can do at home to develop these areas:

- Play with a ball (kick, catch, throw and bounce it)*
- Play with hoops and frisbees*
- Play on climbing frames*
- Play with large building kits or build with cardboard boxes*
- Enjoy finger rhymes*
- Join making and modelling activities e.g. cutting, sticking, moulding, cooking, sewing and threading using a range of materials e.g. dough, clay, wood and fabric*
- Experiment with a range of tools and equipment e.g. pens, pencils, crayons, felt tips, scissors, hole punch and tweezers*
- Play with jigsaw puzzles and board games*
- Try painting, colouring and drawing on different sizes of paper*
- Do household jobs e.g. mixing ingredients, using a dustpan and brush, digging and planting in the garden or in pots*



Learning to write letters in school

It's important to learn to form letters correctly, but we start by exploring patterns and basic letter shapes:

- Dots
- Straight lines and crosses
- Circles
- Curves, loops and waves
- Joined straight lines and angled patterns
- Eights and spirals

You can explore these at home by making patterns using paint, water, sand, flour or just by making imaginary patterns in the air! All this will help your child when they come to pick up a pencil to write later. Don't worry too much at this stage about which hand your child seems to prefer for handwriting or other tasks.

Once children are using pencils or similar equipment to write, it's helpful for them to learn to hold these correctly using a thumb and two fingers grip (see photo below). A comfortable grip helps children to write fluently as they become more confident.

We teach letter formation using the Penpals handwriting scheme where the letters are grouped into four families that are formed in a similar way (see additional information).

When children are ready to learn to write letters, you can ask them these questions:

- Where do we start that letter? (this helps them to form the letter correctly)
- Is it a short letter? (a, c, e, i, m, n, o, r, s, u, v, w, x, z)
- Does it have an ascender (tall stick)? (b, d, f, h, k, l, t)
- Does it have a descender (tail under the line)? (f, g, j, p, q, y)

Don't forget to only use capital letters for names and encourage children to form the letters in their name correctly too, as this is one of the most important words to write!

