



States of Guernsey  
Children and Family  
Community Services

Children's Occupational Therapy

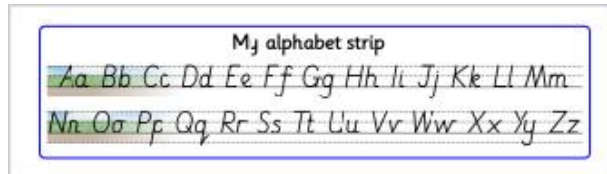
# Handwriting Advice



## Writing on Lines

Below are some strategies for encouraging writing on the line:

- Darken the lines to increase awareness of them.
- Highlight the bottom half of the line. Instruct the child to 'stay in the yellow' (or whatever colour was used) for all the small letters, tall letters start at the top line and descending letters dive down below the line.
- Create a raised bottom line by using PVA glue and encourage 'bumping' the line.
- Use clear colour changing pens on the base line, and then write with a colour. When the colour changes you know you are properly touching the bottom line.
- Try the sky grass earth paper or something similar with 3 coloured parts to the line.



- On lined paper, in the left margin draw a simple house: the roof (a triangle) is within the top half of the line, the house is a square within the bottom half, below the house is the basement. Tall letters start in the roof, short letters are inside the house and descending letters go down to the basement. Other ideas include a lizard or a cat with a head, body and tail to emphasise the 3 parts of the letter.

## Spacing

- Teach finger spaces between words or make your own finger spacer by decorating an ice lolly stick.
- Place a dot with a stamp marker or highlighter after each word as a spacer, or to make a small dot with the pencil and later erase the dots.
- Try graph paper and write one letter in each box with one box in between words (depending on the size of the squares)
- To increase awareness, challenge the children to read sentences that do not have spaces in between words and ask them to indicate where spaces should be.

## Letter and Number Reversals

- Lower case letter reversals are commonly seen with the letters b/d, p/q/g, w/m, j, s and z.
- For b/d, 'make your bed' by forming 2 thumbs up, touching knuckles together. The left hand forms a 'b', the right hand forms a 'd'.

For letter recognition, read through a story and circle all of the 'b's and 'd's





## Letter Families

It can sometimes be easier to teach the letters by family. Each family is made up of letters with similar movements and directions:

- Stick family – i, l, t, f, x, z
- Curvy family – v, u, w, y, j
- Clockwise family – b, h, p, k, n, m, r
- Anti-clockwise Family – a, d, q, g, o, c, e, s

All letters have a starting point and a direction. Discuss these as you learn each letter (i.e. it starts at the top and goes down first).

**Aa Bb Cc**  
**Dd Ee Ff**

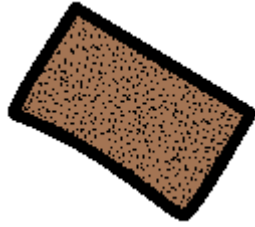


## Multi-Sensory Activities

Using a multi-sensory approach helps to maximise mastery and retention of skills and caters for different learning styles. Try some of the ideas below!

- Write in different textures on a tray including shaving cream, gloop (corn flour and water), cheap cake mix, rice, lentils
- Use a vibrating or weighted pen
- Use colour changing markers. The first marker writes the letter (reinforce the starting position) then write over it using the white 'changing' marker
- Make letters out of play dough/clay/putty
- Chalk board writing - use the 'WET, DRY, TRY' technique. First write the letter with chalk. Use a small piece of damp sponge to go over the chalk letter (wet), then use a dry cloth/tissue/cotton ball to dry over the damp letter line (dry)...then try it again!





- Back writing - with a partner, write on each other's back. Ask 'what letter am I writing?'.
- Create large masking tape letters on the floor, and race their cars around the 'letter road'
- Use colour cues to reinforce the starting position (green light) and stopping position (red light) of letters
- Sandpaper writing - write over sandpaper (with pencil and paper or finger) to provide greater resistance and feedback
- Wall/window writing - writing on vertical or angled (raised) surfaces prevents direction confusion (since "down" is literally 'down' and "up" is literally 'up')
- Large air writing (using big arm movements). Perform with eyes open and closed
- Bend Wikki Stix or pipe cleaners into the letter shapes



## **Pressing too hard when writing**

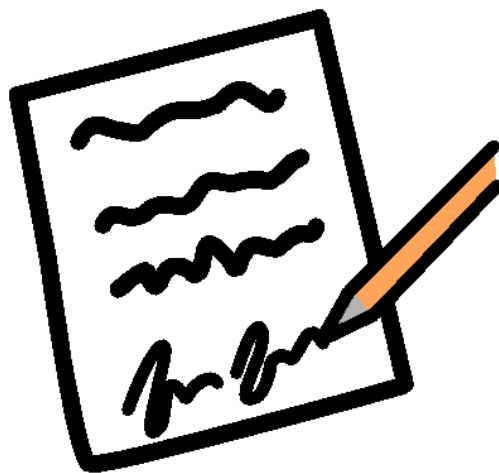
### **Try some of these activities for proprioceptive input:**

- Hand exercises are a great way to "wake up" the hands before a handwriting task.
- Encourage the child to squeeze their hand into a fist as tight as he can. Then relax and stretch the hand and fingers. Repeat the exercise several times. Practice holding the pencil with the same type of tight and relaxed exercises Practice writing on tissue paper. A very light hand is needed to prevent tears. Discuss the amount of pressure needed for writing on the tissue paper.

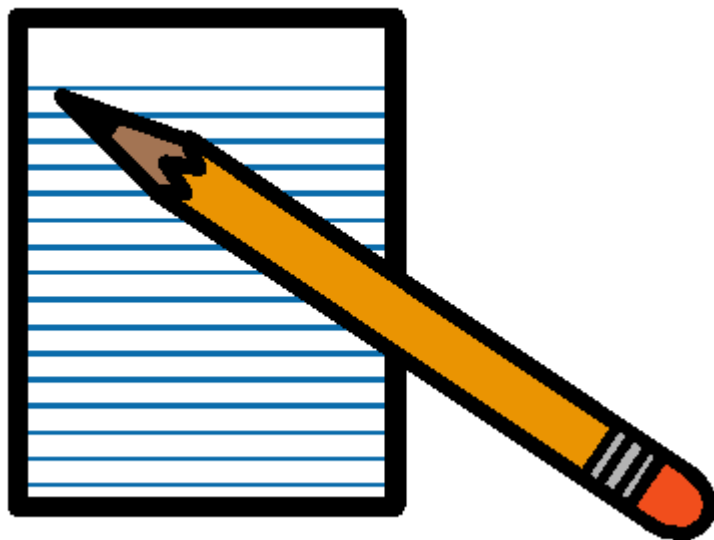




- Provide terms for the way they write. Encourage "just right" writing and not "too hard" or "too soft" marks.
- Practice letter formation and pencil pressure by lacing a sheet of paper over a foam computer mouse pad. If pressing too hard, the pencil point will poke through the paper.
- Use two sheets of carbon paper to help the child monitor their own pressure. The handwriting should only appear on the first sheet of carbon paper.



- Practice handwriting by placing a sheet of paper over a piece of sandpaper. The resistance of the sandpaper is great heavy work for small muscles of the hand.
- A vibrating pen provides sensory feedback to the fingers and hand and helps to keep children focused on the task.
- Practice Ghost Writing: Encourage the child to write very lightly on paper and then erase the words without leaving any marks. The adult can try to read the words after they've been erased. If the words are not able to be read, the writer wins the game.
- Write with a mechanical pencil: The lead will break if too much pressure is applied. Children can learn to monitor the amount of pressure used and it will provide feedback on modulation of pressure. A pencil with .7mm lead is better to start with for heavy writers.



- Older children can write with a liquid gel pen for fluid handwriting tasks. The gel ink will provide feedback when gobs of ink are dispensed when writing too hard.
- Use a lead pencil to colour in a small picture, using light grey, medium grey, and dark grey. Talk about how using different amounts of pressure changes the shade of grey.
- Instead of writing on a notebook, pull a single sheet from the pages and place on a hard table or desk surface. The firm surface will help limit the amount of pressure exerted by the child on the pencil tip. You can also slip a clipboard between pages of a notebook to provide that hard surface, if the individual sheets must remain in a notebook as a whole.

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