

## Handwriting

Acquiring the skill of handwriting is a highly complex process. It involves many years of whole-body development, structured teaching, and practicing of each step (National Handwriting Association, 2024)

Handwriting is complex and involves linguistic, cognitive, perceptual, and motor components to be used in an integrated manner.

Each school produces its handwriting policy which outlines the different stages of handwriting and the expected levels for each school year. Ask your school for more details.

### How can I support my child with their handwriting?

There are several ways that you can support your child. If you are concerned, please speak to the class teacher.

Practice the following activities while supervising your child.



## Getting Started

### Handwriting Warmups

Warmup touch receptors in the skin and joints to guide movements for smooth and coordinated handwriting.

- Spider game – Place tips of fingers together and bend and stretch fingers.
- Sing and stretch – Sing Incy Wincy Spider using arms and hands to make movements to the song to warm up fingers, hands, and shoulders.
- Push Palms together keeping forearms horizontal and close to the chest.
- Crocodile snaps - Place one arm straight above the head and one down to the side, and say, "*Ready, steady, and snap!*" Clap both hands above the head.



### Posture

A good base of support when handwriting is imperative and will improve focus and attention if your child sits in a comfortable, supported position at the table or desk.

- Feet should be flat on the floor
- Bottom and back supported
- If the chair is deep, put a cushion behind your child to give them more support
- Remind them to sit '*Feet flat, bottom back*' in the chair

Try singing to the  
tune of Frere Jacques.

*'Are you ready,  
are you ready?  
Bottom back,  
feet are flat,  
Hands up on the table,  
Head is in the middle,  
Sit up tall,  
Sit up tall.'*

### Pencil grasp

Once your child is old enough to hold a writing pencil, ensure a comfortable grip that allows control. Different methods may work best for your child, although the following guidance provides a good position.

- Pencil balanced against hand in the web space of fingers
- The wrist is slightly extended (bent upwards)
- The tip of the thumb and index finger is on the pencil with the index finger slightly flexed (bent)
- The side of the middle finger has the pencil resting on it at the level of the fingernail



### Paper position

- Paper on the same side of the body as the writing hand, slightly tilted towards the body.
- The child should stabilise the paper with their non-writing hand.
- Encourage your child to use their 'helping hand'.
- Ensure the forearm is supported on the table.

### Hand fatigue

- Have short hand breaks between long periods of writing. Move fingers and wrists to relieve the tension in the hand and wrist muscles.
- Trial different pencils that may be more comfortable. A wider pencil may be easier to hold and provide increased stability when writing to reduce strain on finger joints.



### Activity: Playdough finger warmups and strengthening to try at home

- Play with playdough - Squeeze the ball of playdoh in the palm of the hand.
- Roll the playdough into three balls and squeeze each ball one at a time between the fingers to strengthen muscles. Try not to let them roll away.
- Stick the three balls together to make a snowman - decorate with beads for the buttons and pipe cleaners for the arms.
- Make a pinch pot with half the playdough and fill it with tiny balls of playdoh (snowballs)
- Roll the playdough into a ball then place a palm over to flatten, push beads into the playdough then roll up into a ball. Use pinchy fingers to find the treasure and pick out the beads!



### Activity: Pencil Pressure

Sometimes, children place too little or too much pressure on the pencil when handwriting.

Suggested activities to practice placing the just right amount of pressure can include:

- **Practicing using propelling pencils and trying not to snap the lead.**
- **Use a mouse mat (soft side) underneath the paper, try not to make a hole!**
- **Use different surfaces and paper textures to encourage pressure awareness. Practice writing with chalk and chalkboard, a whiteboard, tracing paper and foil.**

