

Helping at Home with Handwriting



Points About Handwriting

Parents often have specific worries about handwriting. It is not necessary to use any particular style of handwriting - if it is legible then it is alright. Writing reflects personality and some people have large writing and some have small. As long as it is the same throughout a piece of work, size is not that important providing that it fits within the lines.

It is not essential to join up all letters. It is quicker for most children if some of them are, but very few people join every letter. If a child struggles with forming joined letters correctly this can lead to confusion as to what the word says. Also problems in keeping up with class work can occur if the child struggles with speed whilst joining letters. In these cases printing is totally adequate, while joined handwriting can continue to be practised at home. However, for some children, particularly those with co-ordination difficulties, it may always be more legible for them to print rather than join letters up.

It needs to be emphasised to your child that if his/her writing is legible, then their ideas can be read and appreciated more. There will be many occasions when handwriting will be important, e.g. assessments, job applications, formal forms and letters etc. Equally, there will also be occasions when legibility is not such an issue e.g. shopping lists and first drafts of work.

If your child is left-handed, he/she should not have any more problems than a right-handed child. Check that the child is not hiding the work as soon as it is written. Can s/he position his/her hand up or down so that s/he can see what s/he has just written?

Some children write the stalks of all letters sloping first one way and then the other. This tends to look rather untidy. The reason is often that the child anchors his/her wrist and is stretching his/her fingers further and further along the lines. To avoid this s/he should move his/her hand a little at the end of writing each word. Good writing has all the stalks sloping the same way - forwards, backwards or straight up.

Pens with blue or black ink are usually required for school. Different types of pens will suit different pen grips and different styles of writing so experiment until you find the most comfortable and the most suitable for legible writing. Generally, whatever a child feels comfortable with will be best



Posture and grip

It is important that children sit up to write and use the non-writing hand to steady the page. A good pen grip is also important. A comfortable, gentle pen grip which allows plenty of control is best. Gripping the pen too tightly or too loosely will often lead to inconsistent neatness and sore hands. Holding the pen and using the tripod grip as shown in the picture below is beneficial, however by the age of 11 it is extremely difficult to change the pen grip that has developed. Holding the pen at a good point as the picture below demonstrates allows for best pen control, holding the pen too high or too low will affect pen control and therefore neatness.



Comfort

Pens with built in foam grips are available but a simple solution like an elastic band coiled round the area where the pen is gripped can offer a padded non-slip grip.

Ask your child to copy out a piece of work in their best handwriting. It does not have to be a long piece, 100 words are enough. When it is finished check for mistakes and look at the checklist below. Keep on practising - a few minutes a day will help. Compare your child's new tidy writing with an old piece. Praise the difference. Try not to worry. Practice usually makes perfect.

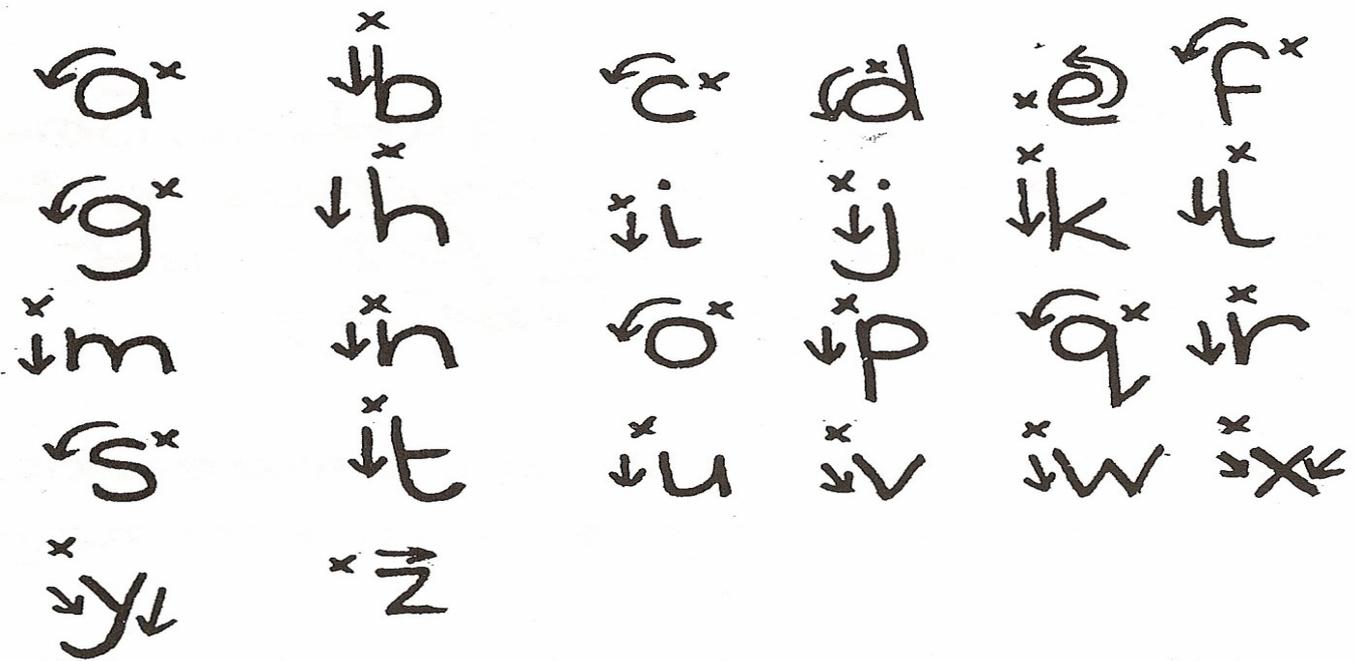
Checklist

You could help your child by encouraging him/her to write a rough draft of all major pieces of work, before s/he makes a neat copy. The following checklist can be used for guidance.

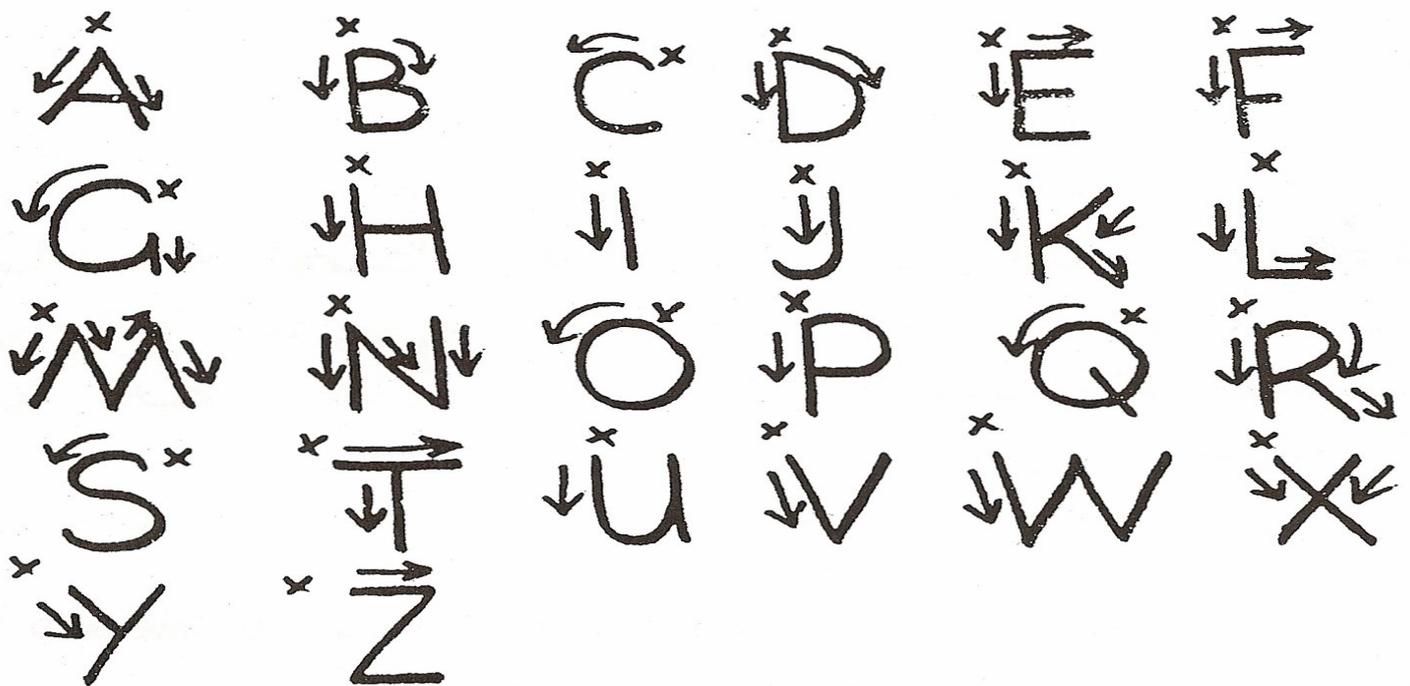
- Has s/he got a suitable pen?
- Is s/he sitting comfortably with a good light?
- Are his/her eyes about 25cms. from the paper and are the glasses on if they are needed?
- Is s/he holding the pen correctly?
- Is s/he moving the hand along the line often enough?
- Is s/he going the right way round each letter? See letter formation over the page
- Are the letters all the right size compared with each other?
- Do the tails of the letters go below the line when they should?
- Do the stalks of the letters go above the lines when they should?
- Does the writing slope in the same direction?
- Are all the letters the right shape? See chart over the page.
- Are there capital letters mixed in where you should only have small letters?
- Can other people read the writing?
- Does the child think that it is a good piece of writing? Is s/he proud of it?

Formation of Letters

It can help to show your child an efficient way of forming letters.



Capital letters are also called upper case letters.



* marks the spot where the letter is started.
Marks the direction which should be taken.