

9 Hand Writing Best Practices

These few tips are the result of experimentation and over 20 years of teaching experience. Scruffy presentation, while not an out and out essential to life success, can usually be improved with some fairly easy (some would say obvious!), but consistently applied rules.

① Sharp Pencil

Poor handwriters are very often happy to use blunt pencils or damaged pens. The fibre-tipped or ball-pens favoured by most schools are cheap and easily damaged, forcing the child to tilt the pen upright to make a mark. Your child should get into the habit of checking this before writing.

② Sitting Position

The child's body should be upright and sitting back into a chair, and the desk should be straight in front of him/her at a comfortable height. Some children work even better on a desk with a slight incline. Wedges can be purchased for this. Poorer handwriters tend to sit on the edge of the chair, leaning to the sides at various angles.

③ Correct Finger Grip

This can be difficult to correct. A quick internet search for 'pencil grips' will result in rubber 'widgets' that can be fitted over a pencil to encourage a correct grip. They are inexpensive. An incorrect grip can force the child to cover their writing (especially true of some left-handers), which will then force them to lean their head and body over at increasingly awkward angles.

④ Spare hand Steadying the Paper

Poor handwriters rarely do this, causing the paper to move around and of course the presentation then suffers.

⑨ Keep Elbow In

The elbow of the writing hand should be next to the waist, not pointing outwards.

⑤ Straight Wrist

Some children bend their wrist over and write 'round the back' - almost approaching the writing from the behind line they're writing on. The wrist should be straight.

⑥ Eye Focused on Pencil tip

Reminds the children where they should be looking as they write. Another version of "keep your eye on the ball"!

⑦ THIS IS A TEST Use Correct Letter Sizes

One of the most commonly complained-about aspects of handwriting from teachers is 'inconsistent letter sizes'. Using lined paper with an extra line drawn across the middle will help enormously with this (freely available over the web). Another tip is to use a highlighter pen to highlight the bottom half of the line. Children then need to be shown which letters reach to the top, and which reach to the middle.

⑧ Form Letters Correctly

It's fairly quick and easy to assess which letters are formed incorrectly, then practise correct formation. This is important because it becomes almost impossible to move onto cursive writing unless letters are 'finished' at the correct point.

