



# WRITING STRATEGIES

## Pre-Handwriting Exercises

- Place fists in front with elbows bent, squeeze, fingers open and close, 10-15 times
- Extend arms straight out in front of body. Open/shut hands alternatively for 15 seconds.
- Arms above head, cross straight arms 10 times then put bottom arm over top hand and do 10 more
- Point arms straight down with palms up. Shoulder shrugs towards ears, release, 10-15 times.
- Bend elbows and fist hands in front of shoulders, extend arms in a throwing motion, 10-15 times
- Place arms in front of you, elbows slightly bent, four fingers right next to each other, thumbs open, turn both hands toward thumbs at wrist, turn and return to mid position (not towards little finger), 10 -15 times
- Hands hold opposite elbows, lift in a single motion over the head, return to waist and repeat, 10-15 times
- Hold hands open, touch thumb to each finger (i.e. pointer, middle, ring, pinkie) and back again, 10-15 times
- Hold arms straight in front of body. Make an X with thumbs, palms facing out, make small circles 10 times to the right, then 10 times to the left
- Open and shut hands
- Individual finger tap on the desk - start with thumb and go to pinky - reverse back to thumb. Alternate hands and repeat
- Spread open fingers and press fingers of opposite hands together firmly
- Spread open fingers and press palms of opposite hands together firmly
- Touch fingers of opposite hands individually
- Walk index and middle fingers forwards and backwards on desk
- Rest forearms on desk and turn palms up and down, both hands together - do 10 times (palm up then down counts as 1 time)
- Itsy Bitsy Spider
- Where Is Thumbkins?



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## Letter Spacing Exercises

- Draw colored line or highlight space between words in a sentence that student has to copy to give him/her a visual cue
- Use the following items to leave spaces between words: eraser, triangle pencil grip, sticky strip of post-it note, shiny penny, Popsicle stick, and finger.
- Highlight right margin if child crams words on right side of paper rather than dropping down to next line
- Highlight both margins (left one green and right one red) or use Wikki Stix for the child to bump the margins with his or her pencil. and have a clear start/stop
- Place dots between words with a pencil, then erase the dots
- Have the child edit their own work to look for spaces between the words.
- Wikki Stix over letters written on index cards. Can also form letters out of Wikki Stix, putty, with body, etc
- Write letters on index card with black marker. Make a green dot with marker as starting point and red dot as stopping point for letter
- Provide modeling on the formation of letters and numbers slowly, several times, and encourage/demonstrate a top to bottom approach
- Model formation of letters/numbers slowly several times using verbal cues
- Trace over large letters/numbers (color changer markers are good for this). Tracing can also be done with finger on dry erase board to "erase" your letter or on chalkboard using different colored chalk
- Finger.draw letter/number in different materials (cornmeal on tray, salt on black construction paper, fingerprint, sand, etc.) Watch for correct formation
- Make a dot or use a small sticker for a starting point and have child practice letter formation him/herself. Letters/numbers do not always have to be done at the table using pencil/paper
- Use verbal cue "strength spaces" between letters and "meatball spaces" between words.
- Practice letters in groups of similar strokes such as:
  - **c a g d q o s** ( all start with c shapes first and are done with one continuous stroke )
  - **ilt**
  - **r n m b h p** ( all start with downward stroke first, then re-trace back up)
  - **v w k z x y** ( diagonal letters )
  - **j e f u** ( miscellaneous letters )



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## Too Little Pressure

### Pencil Grasp Exercises

- Make a weighted pencil by using nuts of different sizes with rubber bands to keep in place or purchase weighted pencils
- Practice with a wax pencil
- Place a sheet of sandpaper under the sheet they are coloring. Stabilize everything with a clipboard
- Take turns with a vibrating pen
- Use markers, ball point pens, and erasable pens
- Roller ball pens and thicker lead pencils
- Try small wrist weight or hand weights (to give more sensory input to muscles and joints).
- Try short pencils or crayons, which promote a better grasp
- Try a number 1 pencil which has softer lead and requires less force to produce a darker result
- Try Color Slicks - their purpose is to produce more vivid colors without the need for as much pressure
- Wrap a rubber band around the pencil about one inch up from where the point begins and have the child place their fingers on the rubber band to reduce slippage
- Use a vertical surface such as chalkboard, or slant board part of the day. The chalkboard remains the BEST surface for learning to write
- Try having the child "cross out" text by doing dark scribbling
- Use pencil grips
- Have the child color over a picture



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## Trouble with Writing

**Problem:** Child writes with an open hand or fingers straight.

**Solution:** Have the child hold a small ball or sponge, piece of crumbled tissue or a marble in the last two fingers while they write.

**Problem:** Poor Paper Placement

**Solution:** Put a tape line on the desk to give them a visual cue for lining up the bottom of their paper. For right handed writers the paper should tilt left and vice versa.

**Problem:** Poor Posture

**Solution:** Make sure the child is appropriately positioned at their desk when writing, with feet flat on the ground and their bottom all the way back in their seat so the back of the chair can support them.

**Problem:** Child's writing movement comes from their entire arm when they write.

**Solution:**

- Make sure the child's desk height is appropriate.
- Have the child lay on the floor to write.
- Have the child write on a vertical chalkboard or stable easel
- Practice fine motor and manipulative activities.

**Problem:** Child tends to lie on desk when writing

**Solution:** Use a slant board or hard 3-ring binder for keyboarding and writing activities.

**Problem:** Child has a difficult time copying from the board

**Solution:** Make sure the child's vision is not the issue. Have a copy of the information on the desk.

**Problem:** Child has difficulty writing letters from memory

**Solution:** Place an alphabet strip and number strip at the top of the desk

**Problem:** Child isn't writing on the lines

**Solution:**

- Try using the following: Adapted paper, 3 lined paper with bottom half highlighted, and papers with a darkened baseline.
- Use a green line on the left to start and a red line on the right to stop.



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## Trouble with Writing

**Problem:** Poor Pencil Grasp

**Solution:**

- Try an adaptive grip to help position the child's fingers
- Place dots on pencil for finger placement
- Use golf pencils/ 2"-3" broken pencils for tripod grasp
- Hold small object under ring and pinky.
- Provide a 3 ring binder as a slanted surface to write on

**Problem:** Child reverses letters and numbers.

**Solution:**

- Give the child visual cues for left right orientation (place a sticker at the top left hand corner of their paper and desk)
- Focus on correcting one reversal at a time instead of all of them at once
- Use HWT method of small chalkboard with boundaries and beginning under smiley face (placed in top left-hand corner of board frame)
- Develop consistent use of left to right direction using a variety of media (verbal prompts)

**Problem:** Child holds pencil too close or too far from the tip

**Solution:**

Put a reminder where the paint stops. - either a small rubber band or draw a ring in permanent marker

**Problem:** Child does not space between words.

**Solution:**

- Exaggerate the spaces by putting nothing between words
- Use an underline between words to mark the empty space. (Ex. See\_\_Spot\_\_Run)
- Place a small bingo marker or a sticker between the words
- Use improvised spacers: Popsicle sticks, fingers, small Post\_It Strips
- Use graph paper
- Use verbal prompts - "Spaghetti spacer for letters, meatball spacer for words."

**Problem:** Child has difficult time manipulating a large or regular size pencil.

**Solution:**

Use golf-size pencils, since they are more in proportion to a child's hand

**Problem:** Child isn't forming letters correctly.

**Solution:**

- Use a visual model, daily practice sheets, and verbal cues
- Rainbow Writing - Trace with different colors
- Use Wikki Stix over letters and index cards
- Write one letter per index card
- Make a green dot for starting point, arrows for direction