



Yewtree Primary School
Guidance for teaching handwriting

Updated June 2021

Handwriting

There should be regular timetabled slots for handwriting to be taught to ensure that children build up their handwriting skills every day. This will then be embedded across the curriculum.

The aim of teaching handwriting is to make the physical process of writing enjoyable so that the children can see themselves as 'writers'. Handwriting is taught using mnemonics to help children visualise the letter or join before they write it down. *Handwriting needs to be practised under the guidance of a teacher so that bad habits are not developed.*

It is important to ensure that the children are sat in a handwriting position. This should include:

- Feet flat on the floor
- Bottom at the back of the chair
- Body one fist from the table
- Shoulders down and relaxed
- Back leaning forward slightly
- Left/right hand holding the paper
- Left/right hand ready in tripod grip

In the early stages of teaching writing, in the Foundation Stage, children may benefit from not sitting formally at a table and instead laying on their tummy, using larger movements/materials etc. while their muscles are developing.

There are four handwriting stages. Teachers will use their knowledge of the children and progression through to stages to identify when children are ready to move on to the next stage.

Stage 0 (Nursery – Reception Spring term)

Children will focus on developing their gross motor skills and refining their fine motor skills. They will be encouraged to explore the outdoor area and develop their body strength. They will also explore large scale mark making/patterns. They will learn to write their name as a starting point.

Stage 1 (Reception – Year 1 end of Spring 1)

Taught alongside the RWI scheme while the children are reading red, green, purple, pink and orange storybooks. This stage is split into 2 sections.

Stage 1a: Children practise correct letter formation.

Stage 1b: Children learn where to place the letters on the writing line.

Stage 2 (Year 1 Spring 2 – Year 2 end of Spring 2)

This stage is taught alongside the RWI scheme while the children are reading yellow, blue and grey storybooks. This is the precursor to joined up handwriting.

Stage 3 (Year 2 summer term – fluent cursive writing)

In this stage children will learn two basic joins: the arm join (diagonal) and the washing line join (horizontal) and two variables for each join.

Handwriting stage 1a: Letter formation

Children learn correct letter formation using the same picture mnemonics they have already learnt in their RWI speed sounds lessons. These are taught in handwriting groups:

- 'Around' letters: **c, a, o, d, g, q**
- 'Down' robot letters: **b, p, k, h, m, n, r,**
- 'Down' ladder letters: **l, t, j, i, u, y**
- 'Curly' letters: **e, f, s**
- 'Zig-zag' letters: **v, w, z, x**

During this stage it is advised that the children write on plain paper.

Below is an example lesson format at this stage:

Demonstrate

1. TOL as you use your mental checklist to write the letter – in this case- g
 - Start at her hair bobble on top of her head
 - Round face
 - Back to bobble
 - Very straight hair
 - Round curl to finish

Repeat this a few times using MTYT

2. Ask the children to TTYP to say the mental checklist
3. Take feedback
4. Ask 2 partners to tell you how to write the letter

Repeat a couple of times until they can say the mental checklist to each other.

Practice

1. Check that the children are sitting in the handwriting position.
2. Rub out the picture and any letters from the board – the children must not copy.
3. Ask the children to write one letter, slowly and carefully (do not ask them to draw the handwriting picture)
4. Model again how you repeat writing the letter, getting a bit quicker each time.
5. Go round the room praising what you see so others can hear.

Review

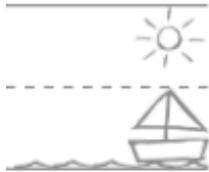
1. Write the letter on the board and make one error, drawing on children's common errors (informed by AfL).
2. Ask the children to TTYP to find your 'two best bits' and 'one to fix'
3. Rewrite the letter perfectly using their feedback.
4. Ask the children to practise again.

The following day, choose a new focus letter and review one or two previously taught letters. (Do not write the checklist on the board, the children will learn the picture of the letter). There is further guidance saved on the staff drive – curriculum – English long term planning – handwriting – guidance 1a

Handwriting stage 1b: Relative size of letters

Once the children can form the letters correctly, they learn how to place the letters on the line. Picture mnemonics help children to visualise size and placement.

- Some small letters are called 'boat letters': a, c, e, l, m, n, o, r, s, u, v, w, x, z.
- Letters that are written below the line are called 'water letters': g, j, p, q, y.
- Tall letters are called 'sun letters': b, d, h, k, l, t, f.



Children should now write on wide lined paper.

Explain that:

- Some letters are the same size as the boat and called 'boat letters'
- Some letters go below the water line and are called 'water letters'
- Some letters are as tall as the sun and are called 'sun' letters

Below is an example lesson format for this stage teaching the word and:

Demonstrate

1. Draw the sun, boat and water pictures in the correct position on the line (see above)
- Show the children where to start letter a – level at the top of the boat, Recall the checklist for a as you write the letter.
- Show the children where to start the letter n – level with the top of the boat. Use the checklist for n as you write the letter.
- Show the children where to start d – level with the top of the boat. Use the checklist for d as you write the letter.
2. Ask the children to TTYP: Which size is each letter? (choose from boat, water or sun)
3. Take feedback

Practice

1. Check that the children are still sitting in the handwriting position.
2. Rub out the word from the board.
3. Ask the children to write each letter, slowly and carefully.
4. Model again how you repeat writing the word, getting a bit quicker each time.
5. Go round the room praising what you see so others can hear.

Review

1. Write the word on the board and make one error, drawing on children's common errors (informed by AfL).
2. Ask the children to TTYP to find you 'two best bits' then ask them to find 'one to fix'.
3. Rewrite the word perfectly, correcting using children's feedback.
4. Ask the children to practise again.

5. Now ask them to find 'two best bits' and 'one to fix' in each other's work.

The following day, choose a new focus letter and review one or two previously taught letters. (Do not write the checklist on the board, the children will learn the picture of the letter). There is further guidance saved on the [staff drive – curriculum – English long term planning – handwriting – guidance 1b](#)

Handwriting Stage 2

Explain that they are going to use new characters to help them develop a style of writing that will become joined up writing. New pictures will help them to visualise new shapes. (See handwriting stage 2 on the Oxford owl).

Introduce the formation family: six sisters, two uncles and their two pets.

The six sisters – Annie, Dina, Gabi, Olivia, Carina and Queenie – all look the same. Their mother tells them that they must all have a different haircut so people can tell them apart!

The uncles – Uncle Umberto and Uncle Yaseen – look just like the sisters, except they are bald on the top of their heads.

The family have dog and a bunny whose faces are very similar too, but they have long ears.

Below is a sample lesson plan. Ensure that the letters are taught in the order they are stated in the guidance.

Demonstrate

1. TOL as you use your mental checklist to write the letter d.
 - Start at her hair bobble on the top of her head
 - All the way over the top of her head
 - Curve down her face
 - Round chin
 - Join the chin by her ear
 - Up to the bobble
 - Straight tall spiky hair – up and down
 - Curve at the line and draw a small flick (not curvy)

Repeat a few times using MTYT

2. Ask the children to TTYP to say the mental checklist
3. Take feedback
4. Ask 2 partners to tell you how to write the letter d

Repeat a couple more times until the children can say the mental checklist to each other.

Practice

1. Use the handwriting signal to check that the children are still sitting in position
2. Rub out the picture and any words on the board
3. Ask the children to write one letter, slowly and carefully (do not ask them to draw the handwriting picture)
4. Model again how you repeat writing the letter, getting a bit quicker each time.
5. Go round the room praising what you see so others can hear.

Review

1. Write the letter on the board and make one error, drawing on the children's common errors.
2. Ask the children to TYP and find your two 'best bits' and 'one to fix'
3. Rewrite the letter perfectly, correcting using children's feedback.
4. Ask the children to practise again.
5. Ask them to find two 'best bits' and 'one to fix' in each other's work.

The next day focus on one new letter and review one or two previously taught letters. There is further guidance saved on the [staff drive – curriculum – English long term planning – handwriting – guidance stage 2.](#)

Handwriting Stage 3.

Explain to the children that there are two basic joins:

- The arm join (diagonal)
- The washing line join (horizontal)

The arm join has three variations:

- Arm to boat 
- Arm to sun 
- Arm to sister 

The washing line join has three variations:

- Washing line to boat 
- Washing line to sun 
- Washing line to sister 

There is further guidance saved on the staff drive – curriculum – English long term planning – handwriting – guidance stage 3

Below is an example lesson plan:

Demonstrate

1. Demonstrate how to write the letters.



- TOL about where to start a – level with the top of the boat. Recall the checklist for Annie as you write the letter.
- TOL as you write the join – not too spiky, not too round, not too squeezed, not too spaced.
- TOL as you write i. Recall the checklist for i.
- Ask the children to TTYP: what size is each letter? (Boat, sun, water) What is good about your join?
- Take feedback.

Practice

1. Use the handwriting signal to check that the children are still sitting in the handwriting position.
2. Rub out the joined letters from the board.
3. Ask the children to write each letter and the join, slowly and carefully.
4. Model again how you repeat writing the letters and join, getting a bit quicker each time.
5. Go round the room praising what you see.

Review

1. Write the letters and join on the board and make one error, drawing on the children's common errors.
2. Ask the children to TTYP to find the 'two best bits' then ask them to TTYP and find 'one to fix'.
3. Rewrite the letters and join perfectly, correcting using children's feedback.
4. Ask the children to practise again.
5. Now ask them to find 'two best bits' and 'one to fix' in each other's work.