

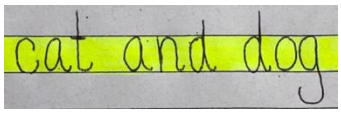
NHS Lothian - University Hospitals Division
Children and Young People's Occupational Therapy

Top Tips for Common Handwriting Challenges

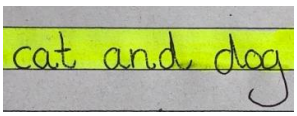
Once your child has learned how to form their letters, the next steps are learning how to make them all the same size, keeping words on the line, put spaces between them, putting the right amount of pressure through their pencil and knowing which way round letters go. Here are some top tips to try:

Letter size & keeping letters on the line

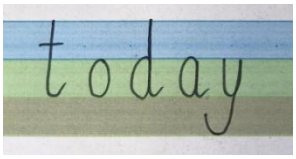
- Activities to practise include;
  - Write giant letters and tiny letters to understand the difference between big and small.
  - Have a look at a piece of writing and circle letters which are either too big or too small.
- Mark a line with a highlighter pen and try to keep your writing within the highlighted area.



or



- Use paper with thicker lines. You could also run a pen along a line to make the lines stand out.
- Red or coloured lined paper.
- Graph paper: try to either keep a letter in a square or keep your writing in a line.
- Raised lined paper: this helps you feel when your pencil has gone over the line.
- You could use different coloured lines to represent the 'sky', the 'grass' and the 'ground'. This can help children to understand where their letters should sit on the line.
  - Tall letters go up into the sky (b, d, f, h, k, l, t)
  - Some letters stay in the grass (a, c, e, i, m, n, o, r, s, u, v, w, x, z)
  - Long letters go down underground (g, j, p, q and y)



Helping with spaces between words

- Finger spaces: encourage your child to use the first finger of their non-writing hand as a guide.
- Ice lolly stick: use a clean stick between words – this is just the right amount of space to leave. If you don't have a stick, make one out of card.
- Graph paper: put one letter in each square and leave two squares between words.
- Show examples of poor spacing to show how important it is: e.g.; '***Th ecat sa tont hem at'.*** And then try to re-write the sentence with the correct spaces: e.g.; '***The cat sat on the mat'***.
- Encourage your child to start a new line if they're running out of space.

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Pressing too hard or too soft on the paper

- For both, it helps to warm up your hands before writing.

If your child presses too hard;

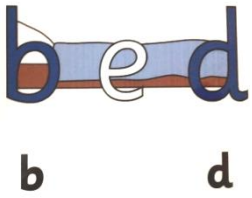
- A mechanical/propeller pencil can help to judge how hard you are pressing, too hard and the lead will break. See how far your child can draw a line across a page before this happens.
- Practise writing or drawing on different surfaces – e.g. on foil or greaseproof paper and try not to break through.

If your child presses too softly;

- Try a darker leaded pencil to help their writing show up better.
- Try a pen which lights up when you use the right amount of pressure.
- Practise writing with a piece of foil under the paper and try to make their writing come through onto the foil.

Reversing letters

- Encourage your child to check their work for errors.
- Having an alphabet line on their desk to refer to can be helpful.
- For commonly reversed letters such as 'b & 'd - visuals like the one shown in the picture can be helpful to have on their desk



- Use the sense of touch to help learn letter formations e.g. making shapes with your finger in shaving foam. See our 'Early Writing Skills- Shape Size Direction' advice sheet for more ideas.
- Teaching letters in groups or clusters can be helpful. See our 'Learning Letter Formations' advice sheet for more information.

Related Websites

- https://teachhandwriting.co.uk
- www.handwritinghelpforkids.com