abc

Handwriting
in the South Australian
Curriculum
2nd Edition

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Government of South Australia

Department of Education and
Children's Services

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This book and the companion parent brochure can be
downloaded from: **www.sacsa.sa.edu.au**

This resource replaces the previous departmental publication *Handwriting: South Australian Modern Cursive* (Education Department of South Australia, 1983).

The fundamental questions asked during the preparation of this resource were: 'Is handwriting still important?', 'Where does it fit in the curriculum?', 'How should students learn handwriting?' and 'Is the South Australian font still appropriate?'.

It was decided that as the South Australian font developed for *Handwriting: South Australian Modern Cursive* is still being taught in most South Australian schools it should be retained. This font, like many others of its time, was designed to suit a range of writing implements and continues to meet the needs of writers.

In addressing the first question, it was acknowledged that there has been a huge growth in computer use, particularly in the past ten years and, concomitantly, a growth in the use of word-processors to produce written texts. Increasingly, students will be expected to develop and use keyboard skills. However, students still need to be able to write by hand in many aspects of their everyday lives and will continue to need to do so. As Alston and Taylor point out '… attention to basic handwriting skills, both for the early stages of handwriting development and during changes in demands through school life, is essential if the complex skill of writing for general purposes is to develop' (1987, p 67).

It is unquestionably the responsibility of schools to provide students with the opportunity to develop handwriting skills. This is clearly evident in the South Australian Curriculum, Standards and Accountability (SACSA) Framework. These skills are developed typically in the Early Years and Primary Years. However, students also need to be given the chance to develop a legible and fluent handwriting style of their own which more often than not occurs in the Middle Years.

In providing guidance in teaching students to write by hand, this resource acknowledges that students come to our classrooms with different knowledge about letter formation and at various stages of developing their handwriting skills. Some will need intervention, some will need more practice than others and all will, at one time or another, require explicit teaching. It is important that schools develop a whole-school approach to the development of handwriting skills, but at the same time recognise that handwriting is simply one tool that permits communication.

The resource has also been written with preschool educators in mind. Learners in preschools frequently show an interest in writing. This resource provides ideas for those educators working with children before they reach school.

Handwriting in the South Australian curriculum locates handwriting in the curriculum, provides ideas for preschool and school educators, and advocates a whole-school approach to teaching handwriting. I commend this document to you as another resource to support the learning of all children and students in our preschools and schools.

Chris Robinson
Chief Executive,
Department of Education and Children's Services

foreword

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introduction

Communication is an important skill for full and active participation in society. Handwriting is one aspect of communication. The explicit teaching of handwriting fits within a learner-centred constructivist approach as described by the *South Australian Curriculum, Standards and Accountability (SACSA) Framework* (DETE 2001). The emphases are on holism, learners making connections across Learning Areas and a seamless transition from one stage of education to the next. Educators play a crucial role in teaching handwriting. There is, in addition, a link between learning to write letters and learning the sounds and names of letters and, therefore, learning to read as well as write.

For the purpose of this resource, the term 'handwriting' refers to the technique and style used by learners to communicate in handwritten text.

The term 'writing' refers to the construction of texts. It encompasses both the writing process and the means for recording the message. Some texts may be handwritten. Handwriting is a tool in the same way that a word-processor is a tool. Learners who use technologies such as computers to communicate are also writers. Handwriting is, however, unique. It is an important recognisable aspect of each individual.

Handwriting is not an easily acquired skill. Jones and Christensen (1999) say that the ability to generate written text requires the execution of a complex array of cognitive and metacognitive skills. Because of this, successful writers must be able to write letters and words automatically. Learners need a lot of practice in order to enable their handwriting to become automatic. In recording their ideas, thoughts and feelings, learners need a relaxed technique and style of handwriting that they can produce with confidence and sustain for increasingly longer periods of time. By practising the technique and using appropriate materials, developing writers gain the confidence and ability to produce a legible style that will help them to communicate through writing.

Handwriting is a complex skill which is closely linked to the development of a number of other skills such as visual acuity, visual perception, and coordinated use of sensory and motor systems. Children develop these skills at different times and in different ways. While some might require intervention from a trained professional such as an occupational therapist, most will learn handwriting skills as a result of strategies employed by their teacher who makes handwriting a purposeful activity and provides regular opportunities for practice.

'handwriting is, however, unique. It is an important recognisable aspect of each individual'

A whole-school approach

To maximise the opportunities for learners to develop handwriting skills, it is important that all schools should have a whole-school approach to the teaching of handwriting.

Handwriting in the South Australian curriculum provides a framework of core concepts and a guide to the development of handwriting skills from the early years to the middle years of education.

Implementation of a whole-school approach to handwriting needs to be coordinated and planned in order that staff become familiar with *Handwriting in the South Australian curriculum* and have access to appropriate professional development, and to ensure that time is allocated each year to writing and/or reviewing the whole-school approach. Opportunities for staff sharing and mentoring should also be developed, both in staff meetings and teaching team situations. The involvement of an occupational therapist in workshops could also be helpful.

It is important that the preschool or school community is informed about how the site will develop handwriting skills and how parents/caregivers, in particular, can assist their children to acquire these. This can be achieved through articles in newsletters, class newsletters, letters to parents/caregivers and information to the governing council. A brochure for parents/caregivers is a companion document to this resource and is available from: <http://www.sacsa.sa.edu.au>.

Intended audience

This resource is designed to help all educators, including preschool educators, support learners to develop skills in handwriting. It will help them understand the reasons for adopting the South Australian handwriting style and the benefits it provides for learners. It outlines possible areas for consideration when implementing the style in educational settings and provides detailed information regarding handwriting technique and style.

This resource, therefore, is intended for educators who:

- are introducing handwriting to learners who have not yet developed their handwriting skills

- are further developing the handwriting skills of their learners

- are helping English as a Second Language (ESL) learners to change from a writing system in another language or alphabet

- have learners whose current handwriting style is illegible or causing difficulty, and for whom intervention is required

- are working with children in settings prior to school.

Handwriting within the curriculum

The term 'writing' is used in the SACSA Framework across all Learning Areas, in the Early Years Band and across the Developmental Learning Outcomes. The development of handwriting skills is linked to learner well-being and the Essential Learnings, particularly Identity and Communication.

As learners work towards the following Developmental Learning Outcomes from birth to age 5 they will be developing skills which will support them to handwrite.

SACSA Framework's Early Years Band Age 3 to Age 5 Developmental Learning Outcomes		
Children are effective communicators • Demonstrates an understanding that symbols are a powerful means of communication and that ideas, thoughts and concepts can be represented through them • Represents and records thoughts using creative processes	**Children develop a range of physical competencies** • Combines gross and fine motor skills with increasing coordination • Uses physical skills for exploring creative media and creative expression • Actively explores, investigates and represents their environments, using tools, equipment and media with increasing physical skills • Moves confidently in space and performs different movement patterns with growing spatial awareness	**Children develop a sense of being connected with others and their worlds** • Understands the functions and uses of symbols and has an awareness of the relationships between oral, written and visual representations

(Adapted from SACSA Framework, DETE 2001)

When learners enter school they are provided with opportunities to compose texts to meet the following English Learning Outcomes. Handwriting is one strategy that they use to create texts. In doing so, they are providing evidence of reaching the handwriting

Outcomes for the strategies strand (1.12–3.12) highlighted below. For more information about what this might look like in the classroom, see the SACSA Companion Document Series: *R–10 English teaching resource*, pages 29 and 49 (DECS 2004).

English R–Year 8 overview

Early Years Band Scope Key Ideas	Standard 1 Outcomes	Standard 2 Outcomes	Standard 3 Outcomes	Standard 4 Outcomes
Children recognise some of the purposes and advantages of writing as they express feelings, ideas, information and imagination within written texts. T•C•KC1•KC2 Children produce written texts, drawing on the support of proficient writers as required. They identify and talk about some basic features of written and visual images. T•C•KC1•KC2 Children share ideas and feelings as they experiment with strategies for planning, composing and reviewing their own writing. They draw on strategies for spelling high frequency and common sight words and for attempting to spell unfamiliar words. Id•T•C•KC2•KC3•KC6	**1.4** Composes a range of texts that include topics of personal interest and some related ideas, and that can be understood by others. T•C•KC2 **1.8** Experiments with aspects of language when planning and composing a range of texts about familiar experience. Id•C•KC3•KC6 **1.12** Experiments with strategies for planning, composing and reviewing own written texts and for attempting to spell unfamiliar words. Id•T•C•KC3	**2.4** Composes a range of texts that include interrelated ideas and information about familiar topics and shows an awareness of different audiences, purposes and contexts. T•C•KC2 **2.8** Uses aspects of language when planning and composing a range of well-structured texts about familiar and new experience. Id•T•C•KC3 **2.12** Uses strategies for planning, composing and reviewing own texts and for consistently making informed attempts at spelling. Id•T•C•KC3	**3.4** Composes a range of texts that include ideas and information about familiar and some unfamiliar topics and applies an understanding of audience, purpose and context. Id•T•C•KC2 **3.8** Selects and uses a variety of language aspects when planning and composing a range of well-structured fiction, factual and media texts about familiar, new and possible experience. Id•T•C•KC3 **3.12** Selects and uses a variety of strategies for planning, composing and reviewing own written texts and for consistently spelling most common words accurately. T•C•KC3	**4.4** Composes a range of texts that include detailed information and explore different perspectives about a range of issues and adjusts texts for particular audiences, purposes and contexts. Id•C•KC2 **4.8** Controls and adjusts most aspects of language when planning and composing an extensive range of written and multimedia texts on different themes and issues. T•C•KC3•KC7 **4.12** Uses, compares and adjusts multiple strategies for planning, composing and reviewing written texts. T•C•KC3

Students will also be given the opportunity to work towards Learning Outcomes in health and physical education and in arts, which will support the development of their motor skills essential for handwriting. Learning Outcome 1.1 in health and physical education, for example, reads 'Demonstrates self-awareness and confidence in coordination and control of movement skills for widening involvement in physical activities in different settings', while Learning Outcome 1.1. in arts reads 'Confidently uses play and imagination to create/re-create arts works within each arts form'.

References in the SACSA Framework to handwriting include that learners in the Early Years:

- experiment with symbols and print in early writing experiences to produce a range of imaginative, fiction and factual texts such as letters, lists, e-mails, recounts, narratives, rhymes and simple descriptions. [KC6] (From the introduction to the texts and contexts strand, Early Years Band: R–2—English, page 133)

- experiment with and practise printing, in joint and independent situations, recognising that writing has many purposes and uses. [Id] [C] [KC6] (From the introduction to the texts and contexts strand, Early Years Band: R–2—English, page 133).

When comprehending and composing texts, children may focus on different aspects of the language to:

- analyse features of written communication (eg punctuation, spelling, handwriting, layout). (From the introduction to the language strand, Early Years Band: R–2—English, page 140)

- recognise the ways letters, common letter patterns and the structure of sentences are used to make meaning, and attempt to include these features in their own written texts. (From the introduction to the language strand, Early Years Band: R–2—English, page 141).

To communicate effectively with their audiences, learners:

- control aspects such as writing top to bottom, left to right, leaving spaces between words, and use correct word order and known words and phrases. (From the introduction to the language strand, Early Years Band: R–2—English, page 141)

- understand grammar as 'building blocks' of meaning construction in written texts (eg identifying and using punctuation marks such as capital letters, full stops, question marks and exclamation marks). [T] [C] [KC1] (From the introduction to the strategies strand, Early Years Band: R–2—English, page 146)

- use consistent size, shape and space when handwriting a published piece. (From the strategies Key Idea, Early Years Band: R–2—English, page 154).

These handwriting references in the SACSA Framework embed the learning of handwriting within the Framework.

Guiding principles

Handwriting and learner achievement

Stevens in *Hands up!* (2004) describes how learners who experience difficulty with handwriting may become discouraged and feel unmotivated to attempt written tasks. This may then affect their overall achievement. Learners who need to pay considerable attention to the mechanical requirements of writing may have difficulty with higher-order writing processes, such as planning the structure and content of their written work (Amundson & Weil 1996).

Handwriting and self-esteem

Stevens (2004) also points out that illegible handwriting has been found to have secondary effects on self-esteem (Penso 1993; Malloy-Miller et al 1995; Bailey, cited in Amundson & Weil 1996). A child may view his or her handwriting as a constant visual reminder of inadequacy at school, and may lose the interest and desire to produce written work (Pasterniki, cited in Amundson & Weil 1996).

The guiding principles for teaching and learning that assist handwriting are that handwriting:

*   serves the writing process by allowing the writer to represent and communicate meaning

*   is a physical skill which depends upon individual development, appropriate instruction and modelling

*   is valued as an art and a form of personal expression.

Educators should be aware of the following implications of these guiding principles (Cann 1996):

*   How children learn dictates all teaching decisions.

*   Learners should be encouraged to develop a legible, fluent handwriting style to enable them to record and communicate information, ideas and thoughts.

*   Writing models should be offered for learners, and they should be offered opportunities to experiment with various implements and media, to practise letter formation and styles and to identify purposes for writing.

*   Through interactive writing, learners can be engaged in creating written text and be encouraged to share the writing experience.

*   Handwriting should be taught as a skill that relies on habituated physical action. Teaching should be appropriate to the learner's stage of development.

*   Value is added to learners' writing when educators appreciate the beauty of the form and acknowledge the skill and effort of the writer.

developmental stages of learning

Early Years Birth-Age 5

Understanding the developmental stages of writing assists educators to monitor learners' growth as writers, identify appropriate teaching focuses, and select teaching approaches to meet different learning needs. The following section describes some of the likely handwriting skills and understanding needed by learners at differing stages of their writing development.

The developmental stages of writing are not to be viewed as discrete, sequential stages. Learners will demonstrate a range of behaviour, attitudes and skills depending on the complexity of the writing task and the degree of support provided.

Educators will need to be aware of possible disparities between the development of some learners' handwriting skills and their ability to compose a text. Some learners may be able to create texts that are well beyond their ability to write by hand. To help avoid frustration, specific handwriting tasks appropriate to their physical abilities can be planned while learners' composing abilities are recognised. Additional methods of recording their writing, such as scribing or using a computer or tape recorder, can be considered.

Other learners may develop proficient handwriting skills yet require additional support with the composing aspects of writing.

Hill (2006) describes learning to write or to represent language in written symbols as involving learning to use a writing tool, to hold it properly and to create letters, words and sentences to convey meaning to others.

Emergent drawing and writing skills are crucial in the development of handwriting. Children will make marks on paper from an early age and call it 'their writing'. Marie Clay describes their repetitive squiggles or attempts at adult writing as the 'recurring principle' (Hill 2006, p 281).

Hand—eye coordination is important in the development of handwriting. Young children should be supported in the development of their hand—eye coordination, balance, spatial awareness and fine and gross motor skills.

Children's early ability to grasp and manipulate writing tools will vary depending on their experiences and level of development. When they feel confident they will experiment using a range of grips as they use different tools to make 'marks on paper'. If very young children are forced to hold a writing tool with the correct grip before they are developmentally able to do so, their interest and motivation to engage in the writing process can be impaired.

Experiences that support the development of these handwriting skills include moulding and squeezing materials such as dough and clay, finger painting, finger plays and clapping games, music and movement, pasting, paper tearing, cutting, construction toys, putting together and pulling apart toys and building blocks, jigsaws, finger puppets, ball games, balancing games, climbing, crawling and negotiating obstacle courses.

Children's early drawings and paintings are associated with the need to represent and experiment with different tools and writing surfaces. Their projections of ideas through drawing and writing processes demonstrate their understanding, thoughts and feelings. As educators scribe for children, opportunities are created to model, promote and explore the processes and purposes of handwriting. Young children experiment with and imitate scribbles, shapes, lines, patterns, figures and letter and numeral shapes.
They enjoy writing signs and messages related to their play, drawing and writing to represent and make meaning. Children will begin to write by imitating what the adults they see are writing and how they are writing and will produce their own shopping lists, notes, telephone numbers and other messages relevant to their everyday context.

Hill (2006) refers to the 'sign principle' that develops when children realise that letters and symbols stand for something. Children begin to understand that the drawing of a car represents a car, but that the word 'car' has none of the actual features of a car.

Hill (2006) also refers to the 'linear principle' which is about directionality – young children learn that English is written from left to right in lines that go across the page. Children learn that the same letter can be written in different ways, such as upper case and lower case. They will develop interest in and experiment with other forms of writing such as Chinese calligraphy and music notes.

Young children need a range of quality materials to experiment with and time and support to practise their emerging handwriting skills. Access to a wide range of books and written texts from different cultures supports their understanding of drawing and writing for different purposes.

Hill (2006, pp 283–286) proposes the following developmental model that represents stages in young children's writing:
• Beginning writing
• Early emergent writing
• Emergent writing
• Early writing
• Transitional writing
• Extending writing.

The first four stages, which are applicable to the birth to age 5 group, are described below. It is important to remember that children will progress through the different stages at different rates and ages, depending on their experiences and developmental abilities.

1. Beginning writing
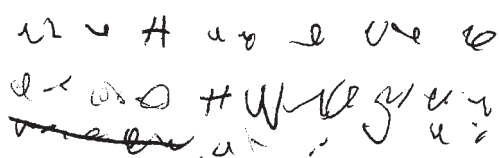
This stage is where young children use drawings to represent and communicate a message while 'reading out' their narrative relating to the drawing. The writing can occur as different shapes or in scribble-like lines that may follow a left to right pattern. As children engage with the writing process, they are exploring the process they have observed adults engaging in.

2. Early emergent writing

In this stage, children begin to explore the use of symbols (both drawings and letters) to represent words. The child may draw a picture and then write below some of the letters that represent that picture. By doing this, the child demonstrates an understanding of directionality and placement of the picture and understands the concept of a written word as a separate entity.

3. Emergent writing

In this stage, children begin to create more letter-like shapes, with spaces between the letters. Children may begin to use sequences of letters such as those in their own name, and repeat each letter several times as they refine the way that letters are made.

4. Early writing

In this stage, children continue to create or invent spellings of words. Differences between capitals and lower case become apparent. Spacing between words becomes more consistent. As they continue to explore their understanding of the concepts of written language, they enjoy copying letters, words and sentences.

Early Years R-2

Educators of beginning and emergent writers learning to recognise, form and name letters and numerals emphasise the purposes of legible handwriting. They focus explicitly on handwriting in their teaching programs, including specific lessons on correct letter and numeral formation, posture, paper placement, seated position and pencil grip.

Depending on learners' needs and their developmental stages, educators focus on particular aspects of handwriting to support:
- the purpose of legible writing
- the ability to differentiate between drawing and writing
- an understanding that writing can represent thoughts, ideas, messages and speech
- the development of fine motor coordination
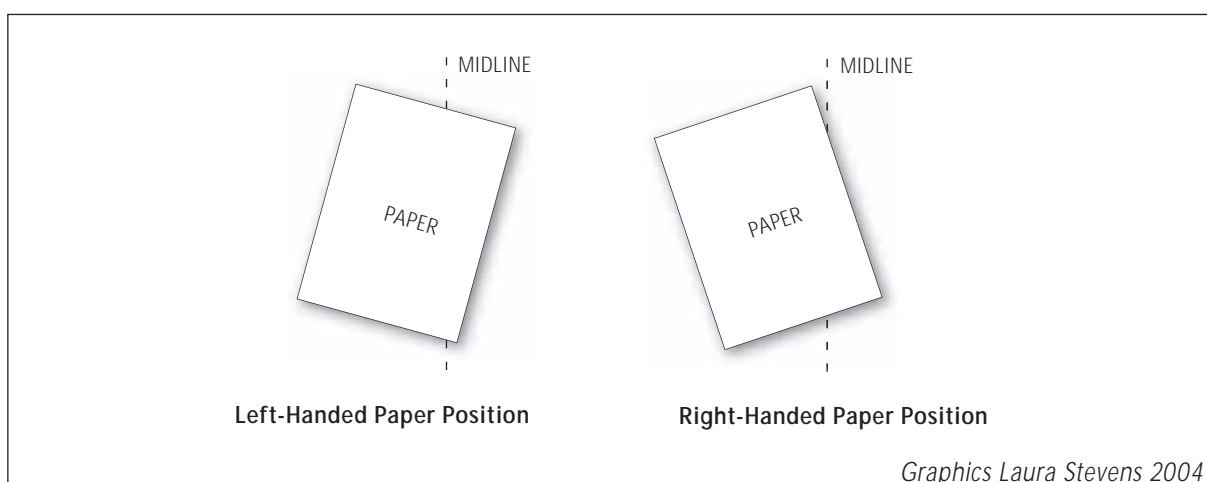- a writing-hand preference

- awareness of the terms and concepts relating to written and printed material—spaces, words, letters, direction
- letter formation (see Appendix 1)
    - starting and finishing points, and direction and number of strokes
    - slope, size, shape, proportion, placement and spacing of letters
    - letter links (hooks and kicks) if appropriate
    - the equal-size relationship of heads (ascenders), bodies and tails (descenders)
- numeral formation
- appropriate pencil grip
- paper placement and hand, arm and sitting positions (relating to left-handers and right-handers)
- a visual memory of letter shapes
- movements that form the basis of later automatic processes in handwriting
- the ability to identify and correctly form lower-case and upper-case letters.

MIDLINE

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MIDLINE

PAPER

Left-Handed Paper Position

Right-Handed Paper Position

Graphics Laura Stevens 2004

Learning to write is a physically and mentally demanding activity. Educators can help beginning and emergent writers by using warm-up activities to prepare learners physically, and the 'language experience' approach to create links between spoken and written language.

Crocodile snaps

Desk p...

Air-tra-
controlle...

Pia...

Pencil Olympics

Warm-up activities

The warm-up activities described below are based on the work of Laura Stevens, occupational therapist, in *Hands up!* (2004), a description of a handwriting project for Torrensville Primary School.

Finger warm-ups

Put on imaginary writing gloves: Pull on the 'gloves', applying firm pressure to the fingers and back and palm of each hand. This exercise provides proprioceptive and tactile feedback and prepares the muscles for movement.

Spider push-ups: Place finger tips together and bend and straighten the fingers while pushing the finger tips against each other.

Pencil Olympics: Twirl the pencil like a baton, spinning it both horizontally and vertically.

Inchworm: Using a tripod grip, move the fingers along the pencil from one end to the other. Do not use the other hand to hold or support the pencil.

Piano: Drum the fingers on the desk as if playing a piano. Ensure each finger tip touches the desk.

Shoulder warm-ups

Shoulder warm-ups prepare the arm for writing and may help to release tension in the neck and shoulders.

Shoulder shrugs: Shrug shoulders forwards, then backwards.

Crocodile snaps: Start with one arm straight above the head and the other extended down one side of the body, then snap the hands together meeting above the head, like a crocodile snapping its jaws. Repeat with reversal of arm positions.

Air-traffic controller: Start with the elbows bent and the hands in a fist in front of each shoulder. Then straighten the elbows, moving one arm out to the front of the body and the other arm to the side of the body. Alternate the movements.

Butterflies: Begin with arms extended straight in front of the body. Link the thumbs to make an 'x' and turn the palms to face out. Using the shoulders to move, make small circles with the hands, moving the hands to the left and right in unison (the fingers lie side by side and are not moving—the movement is coming from the shoulders).

Chair push-ups: Begin by sitting up straight in the chair with hands gripping the sides of the chair, thumbs facing forwards and fingers pressing against the underside of the chair. Using the strength in the arms, push the bottom up from the chair. The feet should come up from the floor.

Desk push-ups: Start with hands flat on the desk, with the tips of the thumbs and index fingers facing each other to create a triangle. Bend the elbows to bring the nose towards the triangle and then push up with the arms to straighten the elbows again.

Spider push-ups

'It important to "warm-up" for the well-being of the students'

Language experience

Learners' experiences can be used to create links between spoken and written language. The 'language experience' strategy creates opportunities to use learners' experiences and their oral language as a basis for constructing a written text. Learners are encouraged to take an active role in the writing of texts and reading them back.

Learners' early attempts might include making marks on a page to represent their thoughts and drawing to assist in focusing thoughts and expressing themselves—these activities act as a bridge to writing. The educator assists by recording the learner's thoughts on paper. This provides an opportunity to talk about the sentences, words and letters as the learner watches.

Learners can be involved in tracing or copying the text the educator has written for them. As learners begin to identify individual letters and undertake their own writing, letter formation in handwriting can begin to receive more emphasis. Educators monitor learners' progress by watching them copy the writing.

Small-group sessions, conducted at chairs and tables, enable close observation of handwriting movements and provide optimal conditions for learners to write.

Language experience is an ideal context for the teaching of:

*   letter names, the sounds they can represent and their correct formation—starting points, direction, finishing points and number of strokes

*   key concepts such as words, sentences, spaces, lines and the head, body and tail (of letters)

*   pencil grip

*   paper placement and hand, arm and sitting positions.

Primary Years 3-5

Handwriting lessons continue to be important through these years. Learners need time to consolidate and to move from print to cursive writing. They are working to:

- understand the terms and concepts relating to written and printed material—spaces, words, letters, chunks of letters and directionality

- identify and form correctly the 26 lower-case and upper-case letters

- develop automaticity with letter patterns that appear regularly in English

- develop sufficient legibility and fluency to enable them to focus on the message, form and purpose of the writing

- develop further an understanding of the purposes of legible writing.

Once basic letter shapes and letter sequences have become 'automatic' to the point of legibility and fluency, learners can be shown how the letter shapes that they have learned initially may be joined. Learners are ready to join letters when they:

- can form correctly the 26 lower-case letters to write words, using an efficient pen grip

- show consistent use of slope, size, spacing and letter alignment

- show signs of trying to join the letters together

- have developed an understanding of common letter patterns.

To avoid the development of inappropriate linking techniques, the teaching of linking ought to begin as soon as the learner displays these characteristics, and usually this will occur around the beginning of Year 3. The kicks and hooks (strokes that form the exit from the letter) are the precursors to linking and are usually introduced towards the end of Year 2.

Many teachers introduce the exits (kicks and hooks) at the same time that they introduce the linking of letters.

Fingers should be positioned 3cm from the tip.
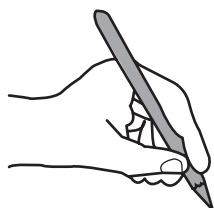
Fingers should be positioned 1.5cm from the tip.

Left-Handed Pencil Position   **Right-Handed Pencil Position**

Middle Years 6–9

Once learners have a well-developed standard form, usually during the middle years of schooling, they may be encouraged to personalise their handwriting.

They may build on the basic style and adapt it to suit their writing purposes. Learners at this stage may be:

- developing a personalised style which is legible, fluent, durable and aesthetically pleasing

- using efficient deviations from the model form, if appropriate

- using embellishments and alternative styles for different purposes, if appropriate

- experimenting with different writing instruments, surfaces and styles, and to note the effects of writing with speed

- practising note-taking at speed with telephone messages, recorded interviews, broadcasts and short lectures

- developing and/or practising speed loops.

Alternative styles

In the Middle Years, learners can be introduced to alternative styles of handwriting which use the same technique as South Australian Modern Cursive, such as Italic, Copperplate and Looped Cursive (see Appendix 3).

If learners are given the opportunity to experiment with alternative styles, they may develop a preference for a particular style or certain characteristics of a style, and incorporate them into their personal style. Awareness of alternative styles can be developed if the educator provides:

- samples of handwriting through the ages, which trace the development of letter shapes

- collections of adult handwriting samples

- Italic, Copperplate and Looped Cursive alphabet cards, copy books or worksheets

- collections of the different pens used for handwriting (eg italic pens, split-nib pens, fountain pens and feather quills). Early handwriting styles have more character when the appropriate materials are used.

When learners experiment with alternative styles, they need to look critically at their handwriting, paying particular attention to legibility and to the maintenance of an easy, relaxed technique.

Once learners are joining the letters correctly, it may be appropriate to introduce the use of speed loops. The purpose of speed loops is to connect letters by the quickest possible means. Speed loops are generally used to join letters that have heads or tails.

The development of speed loops can be seen as a natural extension of a writer's style, although not all writers find their use effective.

Speed loops can be introduced to learners:

- when linking techniques are established

- if the learner demonstrates an interest in speed-looping.

The following example using Victorian Modern Cursive comes from *The teaching of handwriting* (Department of Education and Training 2002).

Signatures

At this time, attention can be given to the development of legible signatures. Learners usually enjoy experimenting with signatures and using them whenever possible. Teachers need to introduce various activities to enable learners to develop an understanding of the legal, commercial and social implications of signing their names.

abcdefghijklmn

opqurstuvwxyz

quiet black yellow

through joke life

(Chart reproduced from The teaching of handwriting, *Revised Edition, with the permission of the State of Victoria, Department of Education & Training. Copyright is vested in the State of Victoria—Department of Education and Training)*

a handwriting program

Planning for handwriting

When writing, learners are encouraged to move flexibly through the recursive aspects of the writing process – planning, composing, recording, revising and publishing – to communicate their ideas, knowledge, information and feelings.

Writing enables communication through the recording of messages. By using the conventions of written language, the writer records ideas and messages in a text that can be read by others. Recording involves learners in handwriting and keyboarding while using their knowledge of writing conventions including:

- spelling
- grammar
- punctuation.

Learners bring their own knowledge and experiences about handwriting and its value to the educational setting but they need further explicit experiences that will enable them to develop understanding about the knowledge, attitudes and skills and abilities involved in developing their handwriting.

Knowledge

Learners will become aware that:

- print conveys a message

- handwriting is one of a number of skills used in the writing process

- various handwriting styles can be produced with similar techniques

- the purpose and audience for writing influence the style and layout used

- pen lifts have specific functions

- letters can be described using such terms as bodies, heads and tails.

Attitudes

Learners will be supported to develop:

- a positive attitude towards themselves and their handwriting

- the desire to experiment with various handwriting styles, and to develop a personal style

- a willingness to accept responsibility for their own written material.

Skills and abilities

Learners will develop:

- hand–eye coordination

- fine motor control

- correct letter shapes by following the suggested sequence of movement

- consistent size, slope, spacing, proportion and alignment of letters

- appropriate use of pen lifts

- a relaxed technique

- legible handwriting, even at speed

- strategies to assess their own technique and style.

Handwriting skills

Handwriting skills, like other aspects of the writing process, develop over time. With demonstration and opportunities for practice, and with application in meaningful contexts, handwriting movement patterns are established and reinforced, becoming 'automatic' processes within the learner's control.

Letter formation

Teaching correct letter formation (see Appendix 1) involves providing learners with opportunities to talk about the names and features of letters and the sounds they represent. This enhances letter recognition in texts, on computer keyboards and in the environment. When learners practise forming letters they develop a visual and motor memory of their important features. Looking at the letters and undertaking the movement of writing then helps learners see and feel how each letter is formed, fixing the letter in the learner's visual memory for future identification and reproduction.

Introducing the letters in Reception

There are several different approaches to the teaching of letter formation in the reception year, and each has its own merit.

Graphological approach

The graphological approach (see Appendix 2a) is based on the hand and finger movements used to form the letters. It is particularly helpful for learners with poor fine motor skills or who need extra practice to develop automaticity of correct letter formation. It may be that all of the clockwise letters are not introduced together but in two or more 'groups', interspersed with groups of letters that require a different basic movement. Possible groupings for this method are:

The anti-clockwise letters: adgq ceos uy f

The 'stick' letters: litj

The clockwise letters: mnr hbp

The diagonal letters: kvwxz

These groupings are particularly useful for the revision of letter formation in the following years, even if it is not used as a sequence for the introduction of the letters. If the similarities of movement are pointed out, the learners are able to develop a metacognitive awareness of letter formation that can support their practices of letter writing.

Phonological approach

This approach ensures that similar looking and sounding letters are taught well apart and so it helps beginning readers and writers to avoid confusions over grapho–phonological (letter–sound) correspondence. The Carnine Order (Carnine et al 2004) sets out a very effective sequence for this approach, although it includes upper-case as well as lower-case letters. If the upper-case letters (which begin to be included between the lower-case letters 'y' and 'x') are removed from the order, the sequence of the lower-case letters is as follows:

a	m	t	s	i	f	d	r	o	g
l	h	u	c	b	n	k	v	e	w
j	p	y	-	-	-	-	x	q	z

This can be a useful reviewing sequence for a learner who is experiencing difficulties in developing letter–sound correspondence and correct letter formation.

Named after the researcher who developed it, the Carnine Order is based on four guidelines:
1. Introduce initially only the most common sound for a letter.
2. Separate letters that are visually or auditorily similar.
3. Introduce more useful letters before less useful letters.
4. Introduce lower-case (small) letters before upper-case (capital) letters.

The complete sequence can be seen below:

An integrated or thematic approach

Many educators choose to integrate learning across several areas of the curriculum in order to provide rich learning experiences and also to help manage an over-crowded curriculum. Such an approach can be a very interesting and valuable experience for learners. The starting point for such integrated teaching and learning may come from any area of the curriculum.

For many learners, the sequence in which they are introduced to the sounds and the written formation of the letters will not affect their learning. For some, the sequence of instruction can affect their learning significantly. For the benefit of such learners, it may be that for their initial learning of grapho–phonological correspondence and letter formation the themes are best selected so that the Carnine Order is followed: the themes or integration are developed from the letter sequence rather than from some other area of the curriculum.

For further information refer to *Direct instruction reading* by Carnine et al (2004).

Carnine Order

amtsifdroglhucbnkvewjpyTLMFDINAREHGBxqzJQY

Note that only those letters that differ in upper case are considered to need a special introduction.

Create a handwriting program

Cursive or 'joined' writing

Learning about common sequences of letters in written English and the learning of joined handwriting to increase writing speed are complementary processes. Once learners have been taught the basic linking techniques, they can be continually encouraged to write words by clustering or chunking learned sequences of letters in a fluent handwriting movement. (See Appendix 2c for foundation script letters and numerals, and Appendix 2d for letters with links.)

As learners develop understanding of the nature of English spelling, they can be encouraged to look at the internal structure of words and to write words using the most logical and appropriate linking techniques. When learners practise linking, only legitimate sequences of two or three letters should be used. The act of linking letters provides visual and kinaesthetic feedback needed for correct spelling.

Similarly, by forming numerals effectively, learners' ability to record numbers automatically in a legible way will be enhanced.

The creation of a handwriting program will involve educators in:

- establishing aims

- organising the timetable and resources

- deciding on techniques and styles

- placing handwriting in context (to select appropriate teaching strategies)

- assessing learners' handwriting and progress

- using appropriate assessment techniques

- evaluating the program.

Educators also need to become familiar with a meta-language that they can use with colleagues and learners.

Establishing aims

The handwriting program should guide learners to develop a handwriting technique that enables them to produce a legible and fluent personal style.

The handwriting program should, therefore, include the following elements:

- instruction in handwriting technique and style

- practice in developing technique and experimentation with various handwriting styles

- practice in correct posture and paper placement

- opportunities for learners to develop the ability to assess and monitor their handwriting progress

- opportunities for learners to develop the necessary knowledge, attitudes and skills and abilities to enable them to produce the style with confidence.
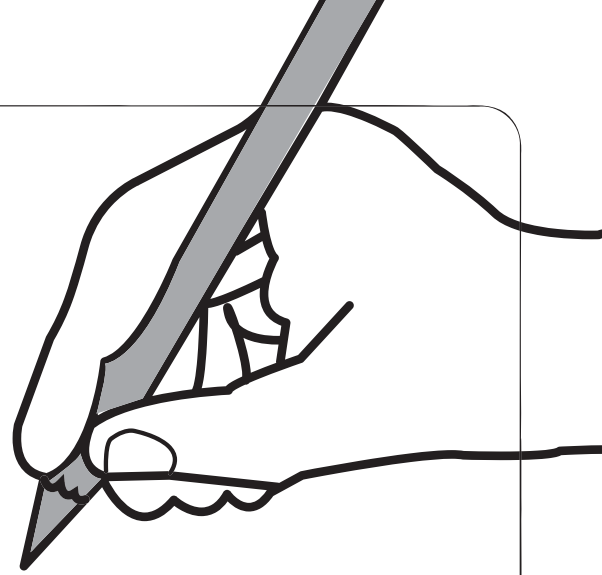
Organising the timetable and resources

Focused teaching of handwriting is most effective when educators provide dynamic handwriting demonstrations, forming the letters in front of learners. This provides correct models for learners. Handwriting, however, has no purpose unless it is used for the development of authentic texts within the handwriting program.

In addition, educators can consistently use and display models of handwriting and take advantage of the many opportunities throughout the school day for reinforcing handwriting skills. Learners need explicit opportunities to learn and practise effective letter formation. Short, focused sessions are more effective than long sessions designed to cover many aspects of the process.

Therefore, timetabling for handwriting should include:

- explicit teaching time within modelled, shared and guided writing practices

- whole-class writing time

- small-group writing time

- independent writing time.

Educators should provide a range of learning experiences and resources. Experience in using a range of writing implements and surfaces will help learners understand the effectiveness of various publishing formats for different purposes and audiences. Details of such resources are available in Appendix 6.

Deciding on techniques and styles

'Technique' refers to the hold of the handwriting instrument, the position of the paper and body, and the actual handwriting movement. 'Style' refers to the manner in which letters (or numerals) are formed and linked together to make words (or numbers).

Suggested methods for holding the pencil
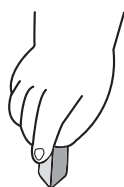
One of the most important decisions affecting the success of a handwriting program is the extent to which learners are taught and encouraged to develop basic techniques.
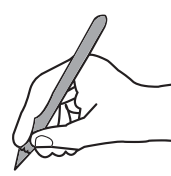
The tripod grip (see illustration) is the preferred grip but there may be developmental stages as learners move towards its achievement.
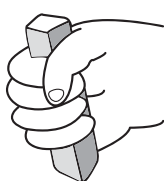
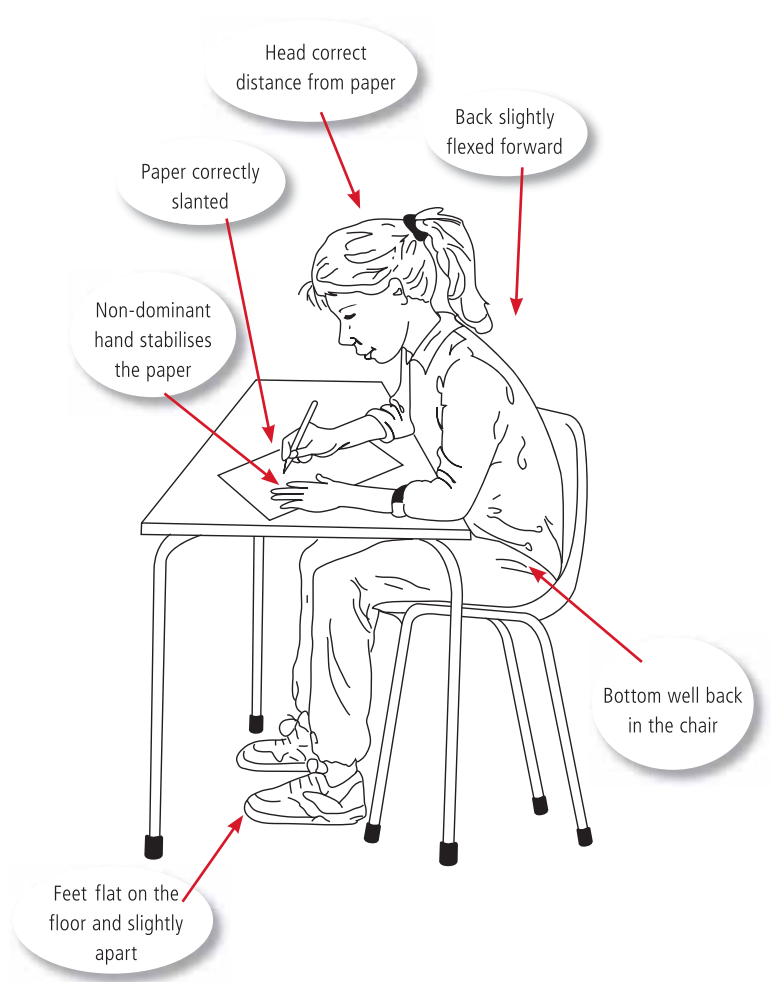| Palmar Grasp	Incomplete tripods	Tripod Grip

Explicit instruction of handwriting movements

The handwriting movement is a combined finger, hand and arm movement. The arm should be supported lightly by the forearm and the little finger. This allows the writing hand to move smoothly across the page. Avoid a fixed forearm. The fingers will flex slightly in moving to form the letter shapes. The hand will move smoothly ahead of the point of contact between instrument and paper.

Writers should hold the writing instrument so that fingers are up to 3cm from the end. Left-handers should hold the writing instrument further back from the point so that they can see what is being written. Paper position is also important. (For left-handers, see Frequently Asked Questions p 39.)

Patterning of letter shapes can aid the development of a relaxed handwriting movement. (Finger, hand and arm movements in the air or using a whiteboard, blackboard or large pieces of paper enable learners to relax and 'warm-up' before a handwriting task.) Experimentation with repetitive scribble and letter patterns can also assist developing learners to gain a sense of fluency of movement. When educators are using letter-shape patterns during instruction on linking techniques, it is preferable to simulate a word by writing about three to five shapes and then lifting the instrument. It is unrealistic to insist on long lines of continuously linked letters.

As handwriting tasks lengthen, learners should be encouraged to use natural pauses as an opportunity to relax the instrument hold. Tapping the forefinger lightly on the instrument or freely rotating the wrist helps to relax the hand. Such exercises will be particularly valuable when learners are writing at a greater speed.

Head correct distance from paper

Back slightly flexed forward

Paper correctly slanted

Non-dominant hand stabilises the paper

Bottom well back in the chair

Feet flat on the floor and slightly apart

Sitting Position for Handwriting

Formation of letters

The formation of letters involves starting and finishing places, direction of movement and number of strokes per letter (see Appendix 1). These are important aspects if linking, fluency and speed are to develop with ease. An oval body shape is recommended with a 2 o'clock starting position for all anti-clockwise ovals.

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

Size

Letter shapes should be in proportion. Within letters, the heads, bodies and tails should be of equal proportions. This means letters will maintain relativity in both width and height to each other. The overall size of writing will depend upon the purpose of the writing and the size of the surface being used. Larger letter shapes help in the establishment and maintenance of combined finger–hand–arm movements in handwriting. Small letter shapes, less than 2mm, may be the result of a tense pen hold and will make the task of identifying incorrect letter shape formation more difficult.

Slope

A slight slope to the right is the outcome of a well-developed cursive technique for learners who are using a relaxed finger–hand–arm movement (see Appendix 1). Slope should be consistent for each individual. However, a variation of 5 to 15 degrees in the slope to the left or right of vertical is acceptable between individuals.

Spacing

Consistent spacing enhances the legibility and appearance of handwriting. Spacing within words, between words, between lines of writing, and the use of blank space on the page should be highlighted to learners.

Alignment
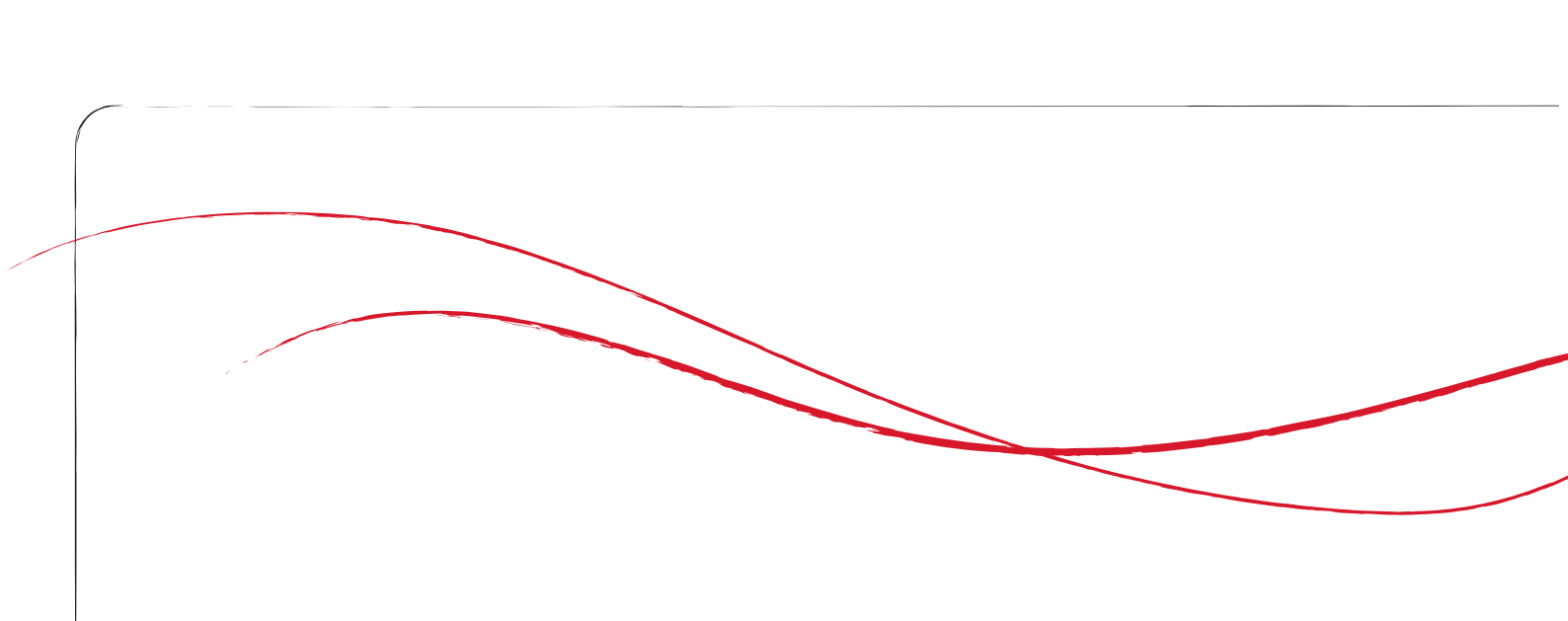
The visual pattern of words becomes more consistent when hooks, kicks, descending letters and ascending letters are positioned accurately in relation to each other.

Cursive style

The correct stroke sequence for each letter should be learned in order to develop a legible, consistent cursive style.

The differences between the beginners' alphabet and cursive formation are apparent in the letter f and in the exits of adhiklmnortuv and w.

When cursive formation is being taught, two points should be considered:

- special attention will be required for letters with exits

- more attention will be required in the spacing of letters.

The linking aspect of handwriting may become apparent to some learners before they have been given instruction in how to link letters because of the simplicity of the cursive alphabet shapes.

Linking

When encouraged to develop a flowing, cursive handwriting technique, learners may naturally begin to link groups of letters. However, teaching will be necessary to avoid the development of awkward links (see Appendix 2d).

The introduction of links should not be a slow and laborious process because letter shapes themselves do not change. There should not be any deliberate drawing of lines between letters. When learners have developed a good handwriting technique, whole groups of links may be introduced concurrently, as the letter shapes are already quite familiar.

There are specific rules related to linking, detailed below:

- There is no link from upper-case letters to lower-case letters.

- The correct starting place and direction of movement for each letter shape are the bases for the development of links.

- The links are the outcome of a flowing handwriting movement rather than deliberately drawn connections between letters in a word.

- Any distortion caused to letter shapes through linking should be discouraged.

- Small groups of letters should be practised rather than individual letters as this is more likely to simulate the movements required for continuous writing.

- Letters that link to the following letter should link directly from the end of the letter to the beginning of the next letter.

- The position at which the letter finishes is important to linking.

- Some letters do not link to other letters. These are $g\,j\,x\,y$ and z.

- The point at which the exit links to the following letter should be no higher than the exit of o.

- There is no link from an s if you link to it, for example, $glasses$.

- Do not link to f or z.

When linking is introduced to learners, they may need to practise:

- developing the exits before linking to the letters adhiklmnt and u

- developing the hook on orv and w

- linking directly to other letters

- linking two letters at a time, or writing short words containing direct links

- not dotting the i or crossing the t until the end of words.

Direct links need to be considered and practised during handwriting instruction. These links should be only those that occur in the English language because the teaching of handwriting should support the development of correct spelling. However, there is no specific order for introducing linking of the letters of the alphabet.

Pen lifts

Pen lifts occur in handwriting even though the writer may not be aware of them. These natural pauses relax the hand and help avoid illegibility. Individuals develop pen lifts to suit their personal style and technique. They will occur at various intervals within words, but not always before the same letter.

Learners should be discouraged from making a pen lift during the formation of an individual letter, other than where specifically indicated. As learners increase the speed at which they write, they will develop pen lifts naturally.

Educators should be aware of the functions of pen lifts and encourage learners to use them where necessary. Learners struggling to write long words using continuous links should be shown where pen lifts could be incorporated in order to relax the hand. However, educators who observe learners making frequent pen lifts should look at the technique and stroke sequence used by them to find out why it is happening.

Speed of handwriting

When words are written at considerable speed, legibility can deteriorate due to incorrect handwriting technique or poorly established letter and link formations. Learners can be encouraged to recognise the effects that speed has on their style and be given time to practise handwriting in situations such as brainstorming, where speed is necessary.

Handwriting in context

The following teaching ideas provide a range of strategies for providing learners with the opportunity to practise handwriting and to develop their skills. Educators will use a range of strategies in cohesive handwriting programs that cater for the needs of the individual learners.

Explicit teaching

'There is a clear link between effective teaching and explicit teaching' and Edwards-Grove (1999) makes the point that explicit teaching actually promotes a shift towards 'learning-centred' programs of literacy by letting the learners in on the big secret of what specific learning is going on.

Explicit teaching requires clearly structured and focused teaching and learning. Explicit teaching of handwriting involves explanation, demonstration and practice of the skill of handwriting. This skill can then be applied or used in contexts across the curriculum. Most letters are formed with one continuous stroke, so the rhythm that is important for cursive writing can be used from the beginning of learning to print. The print letters are slanted, as are the cursive letters, and so the print form of the letters is not unlearned but rather built upon when cursive writing is introduced.

Explicit teaching can help to prevent poor handwriting by clearly indicating the relationships between letters and the relationship of each letter to the writing base line (the line on which the bodies of the letters sit). Introduction of the letters in groups according to their patterns of formation ensures that letters such as b and d would be introduced at different times and related to different letter groups. This can limit confusion about letter formation and reduce the incidence of letter reversals.

Lesson focus

In the explicit teaching of handwriting, each lesson should have a clear and simple focus (eg the correct formation of a single letter, revision of a group of letters such as those requiring clockwise movements, the introduction of a particular aspect of linking such as hooks, or the practice of linking letters in commonly found patterns). Letters should be taught in groups depending on their movement patterns. The similarities and differences should be stated clearly as this reduces the amount of new information to be learned as each new letter or type of linking is introduced (refer to Graphological Approach page 18 and see Appendix 2a).

The anti-clockwise letters:	adgq ceos uy f
The 'stick' letters:	litj
The clockwise letters:	mnr hbp
The diagonal letters:	kvwxz
Hook links from:	ovwr
Diagonal links from:	abcdehiklmnpstu
No link from:	gjxyz
Not linked:	Capital letters, z
May be 'dropped in':	oacdgs

Explanation

Clear and unambiguous descriptions of the letter shape, components, starting point, movement and finishing point should be given. The use of a metalanguage helps to clarify such explanations.

Demonstration

When using demonstration it is important to:

- have all materials prepared

- ensure all learners can see

- give an overview

- present at a suitable pace

- go through step by step

- 'think aloud' while demonstrating

- re-demonstrate particular points if necessary

- keep the demonstration short

(adapted from Whitton et al 2004, pp 130–131).

Demonstration shows what is to be done and can also motivate learners to be interested in their handwriting. The educator may demonstrate step by step, with the learners completing their practice step by step. The demonstration may include 'air writing' with finger and/or pencil as well as writing with an implement on board or paper, as rehearsal of the movement pattern with an associated verbal rehearsal helps to reinforce the movement patterns of the letter(s) or joining process.

Practice

Individual practice should follow the demonstration. The desired goal is automaticity of handwriting so that attention may be focused on the message when handwriting is applied in contexts across the curriculum.

Whole-class modelled and shared writing

During modelled and shared writing, the educator provides a strong handwriting model, articulating the process involved, describing letter formation and demonstrating handwriting as part of the integrated and recursive nature of the writing process.

Educators are preparing learners to write their own texts through demonstrating the construction of a text, using specific terms to describe the strategies used—including handwriting techniques.

While the whole-class focus on writing provides an ideal opportunity for educators to demonstrate legible and fluent handwriting and verbalise parts of the process as they do so, it is recognised that writing on a large board or piece of paper does not always demonstrate ideal paper placement or hand, arm and sitting positions. Therefore, educators should be explicit about the differences between writing on a large vertical surface and the more desirable 'paper and pen, sitting at a table' position when conducting a shared or modelled writing session.

Interactive writing and joint construction

During interactive writing (often used in the R–2 years), the educator and learners jointly compose a large-print text, sharing responsibility for the recording at various points in the writing. The learners record words that they know how to write, and the educator engages learners in problem solving and recording words that provide challenges and opportunities for new learning.

Interactive writing helps learners understand how to write and spell in an interactive way. It is a form of shared writing in which the educator scaffolds not only the craft of writing but also the process, by sharing the pen with learners. Before they write, they compose a message together. During the writing of the message, they share the pen as the words are written. Then they re-read the message together. Interactive writing and joint construction provides opportunities for learners to practise aspects of handwriting collaboratively.

Before writing, educators:

• have an authentic reason for writing

• use learners' words

• repeat the message out loud

• clap, snap or count words.

During the writing of a message, educators:

• ask learners to say words clearly before writing them

• link words to names and/or to known words

• comment on known words, focusing on aspects of handwriting (eg letter formation, size, slope and style)

• re-read the sentence

• engage in handwriting that helps learners see how handwriting works.

After the writing of a message, educators:

• guide learners to read and point to the message

• display the message for learners to re-read

• comment on aspects of handwriting

• use the writing for extension if appropriate.

Small-group and individual writing

Small teaching groups create opportunities for specific handwriting instruction as learners are engaged in authentic writing tasks. Individuals or small groups sitting with an educator have the best opportunity to imitate the way the educator holds the pen and to observe where to start forming letters, in which direction to move, where to finish and how many strokes are made.

Frequent explicit demonstrations, with groups and individual learners, of letter formation, linking techniques, pen grip, paper placement and hand, arm and sitting positions assist learners to learn to write effectively.

Developing writers need repeated demonstrations showing how letters and links are formed. Demonstrations of the required movement (where to start, which direction to move and where to complete the movement, and linking techniques) are most effective when accompanied by an oral explanation.

Guided writing

During this small-group teaching approach, the educator facilitates, guides, responds to and extends learners' thinking as they write individual texts. Guided writing provides opportunities for conversations with individual learners within a guided writing group on their attempts to incorporate demonstrated handwriting skills into their independent writing. Guided writing groups are generally based on similar developmental needs. This is best done sitting at tables rather than in a small group on the floor.

Independent writing with roving conferences

During this time, the educator moves among learners, interacting with them through brief teaching conversations. These roving conferences prompt learners to reflect on their writing and consider the various options open to them, so developing their understanding of the writing process further.

Roving conferences involve the educator making teaching points by addressing how the message has been recorded. This individual teaching at the point of need may simply include reminders about some aspect of handwriting, such as forming a letter or linking letters correctly, using adequate spacing between words, or using the tripod grip.

As learners are seated on chairs at tables, roving conferences are ideal for reinforcing correct paper placement and hand, arm and sitting positions.

Roving conferences provide opportunities for educators to observe how well learners integrate aspects of the writing process. They can give immediate feedback on aspects that require improvement and can monitor writing development—including handwriting techniques. For example, the educator may comment on one or two handwriting issues, possibly asking the learner to identify a reversed letter (using an alphabet card for reference if necessary) or clarifying the starting point and formation of a letter formed incorrectly.

Sharing time

At the conclusion of a writing activity, learners can come together for sharing time. This is an opportunity for them to reflect on, discuss and celebrate their learning. Effective use of handwriting skills within authentic writing contexts can be highlighted during this time.

Assessing learners' handwriting and progress

Assessment of handwriting should be done over a period of time and in a variety of different ways (see Assessment Techniques page 32).

Learners will demonstrate a range of behaviour, attitudes and skills depending on the complexity of the writing task and the degree of support provided. To identify starting points for specific teaching and to monitor progress, educators should assess learners' handwriting in terms of the following qualities:

*   legibility—formation, spacing, shape, size and slope

*   aesthetic appeal

*   speed and fluency.

These can be assessed both formally – approximately every eight to ten weeks depending on the needs of the learners – and informally during regular activities.

Legibility

Skills and behaviour

Assessable skills and behaviour include:

*   preparation for writing
        correct pencil grip
        appropriate seated position
        correct paper position

*   consistently formed letters with correct
        starting points
        position on line
        direction of writing
        spacing
        shape
        size
        slope

*   speed and ease of writing (for older learners).

Quality of letter formation

Assessment of letter formation includes consideration of:

*   the starting position

*   the direction of movement

*   the completion of letters as well as the links, where appropriate.

Consistency of handwriting

Assessment of consistency includes consideration of:

- spacing

    Are the words spaced evenly or are they over-spaced or too compact?
    Is the spacing between letters consistent and appropriate?

- shape

    Are similarly formed letters and letter families consistent in shape—particularly on the bodies of letters?

- size

    Are the letters—particularly the bodies of letters—consistent in size?

- slope

    Is there uniformity in the slope of the writing? Are letters upright, or sloping 10–20 degrees to the right?

Aesthetic appeal

The aesthetic appeal of handwriting is largely determined by its legibility. Educators can consider:

- Can it be read easily and quickly?

- Is it attractive and pleasing to view?

Educators can also look at letter structure and quality:

- How consistent is the balance between the head (ascender) and the tail (descender)?

- Has the writing been formed using appropriate pen pressure?

- Is there excessive rotation in letter forms, linking and looping?

Presentation and format also contribute to the attractiveness of the writing. Where appropriate, educators can consider how learners are using conventions such as:

- ruling margins

- headings

- dating work

- layout on the page.

The model of a handwriting observation guide on pages 33–37 may be adapted for use by educators in their particular setting.

Speed and fluency

Fluent writers who have acquired the necessary skills and are developing an automatic handwriting style can be assessed in terms of the speed of their handwriting in an authentic context. Learners could be given a few minutes to familiarise themselves with some information they need to write, say a message for their parents/caregivers, and then allowed a few minutes to write it. This could take place on a regular basis – for example, monthly.

Ongoing
Observation

Peer
Assessment

Conferencing

Product
Analysis

Assessment techniques

The following assessment techniques could be used to assess learners' handwriting.

Ongoing observation

Ongoing observation and anecdotal records can be undertaken and maintained by the educator. An example in practice is using an observation guide (see the examples on pages 33–37).

Peer assessment

Learners can also observe others' skills and behaviour. Learners are asked, for example, to 'Check your partner's pencil grip' and 'Check your partner's seating position'.

Product analysis

Educators can use a checklist to assess handwriting or learners could use rubrics to self-assess. Rubrics should be developed in negotiation with learners. For example, learners are given the opportunity to achieve the goal of a 'Pen Licence' by monitoring their progress and booking time to discuss this with the educator.

Conferencing

Conferencing with individuals can take place during explicit modelled handwriting and other written tasks. Using self-assessment, learners check and identify their progress in their skills and behaviour before the conference. Learners could:

- underline their best letters and/or words in a line of handwriting and explain their choice

- compare their letter formation to display charts in the classroom.

Handwriting Observation Guide

Birth – Age 5

The journey of handwriting includes the young child's ability to manipulate tools and to understand that symbols are a powerful means of communication. The development of physical skills and competencies are crucial to the young child's ability to engage in handwriting activity.

CODE

B	Beginning
C	Consolidating
E	Established
N	Not yet covered

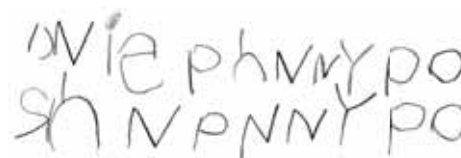| Physical Development and Competencies	Code	Comments
Learners move confidently in space and perform different movement patterns with growing spatial awareness. Observe the following: Vision/tracking objects Coordination of both hands Crossing the midline		
Learners actively explore, investigate and represent their environments, using tools, equipment and media with increasing physical skills. Observe the following: Finger/hand/muscle strength Hand/eye coordination Hand preferences Hand grasp		
Handwriting		
Scribble phase: Learners: • Experiment to make marks on a surface • Scribble randomly • Scribble using wavy lines; left to right/ top to bottom • Write in scribble with the child pretending to 'write' using a range of tools		
Beginning Writing: Learners: • Understand that signs and symbols tell a message • Draw familiar objects with some features • Recognise that marks can be made using a range of tools • Produce marks to represent written symbols • Copy adults engaged in writing • Represent different shapes elaborating on their earlier scribble		

Handwriting Observation Guide

Birth – Age 5

Handwriting	Code	Comments
Early emergent writing: Learners: • Write some letter-like forms • Make scribble containing both drawing and writing • Begin to understand directionality • Copy some letters • Explore the use of symbols to represent words • Represent and record thoughts and understandings using drawing and letters		
Emergent writing: Learners: • Create more letter-like shapes • Begin to use space between letters • Understand the connections between oral and written representation		
Early writing: Learners: • Differentiate between upper- and lower-case letters • Write some words using invented spelling • Use space between letters and words more consistently • Copy environmental print with some accurate letter forms • Attempt to write their own name		

Handwriting Observation Guide

Reception – Year 2

Name	Year level	Date

Hand preference	L	R

Code	✔ Correct	● Not yet evident

General handwriting skills	Code	Comments
Sitting position/posture		
Pencil grip		
Paper placement		
Uses spacing appropriately		
Correct orientation		

Lower-case letter formation

Anti-clockwise letters	a	d	g	q	c	e	o	s	u	y	f	Comments
Formation:												
Starting place												
Direction												
Shape												
Finishing place												
Size (consistent and in proportion)												

Stick letters	l	i	t	j	
Formation:					
Starting place					
Direction					
Shape					
Finishing place					
Size (consistent and in proportion)					

Clockwise letters	m	n	r	h	p	b	
Formation:							
Starting place							
Direction							
Shape							
Finishing place							
Size (consistent and in proportion)							

Diagonal letters	k	v	w	x	z	
Formation:						
Starting place						
Direction						
Shape						
Finishing place						
Size (consistent and in proportion)						

Upper-case letters

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z

Numerals

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

Handwriting Observation Guide

Year 3 +

Name	Year level		Date
Hand preference	L	R	

Code   ✔ Correct   ● Not yet evident

General handwriting skills	Code	Comments
Sitting position/posture		
Pencil grip		
Paper placement		
Uses spacing appropriately		
Writes on lines		

Lower-case letter formation

Anti-clockwise letters	a	d	g	q	c	e	o	s	u	y	f	Comments
Formation:												
Starting place												
Direction												
Shape												
Finishing place												
Size												
Slope												
Kicks												
Hooks												
Link and fluency												

Stick letters	l	i	t	J								
Formation:												
Starting place												
Direction												
Shape												
Finishing place												
Size												
Slope												
Kicks												
Hooks												
Link and fluency												

Clockwise letters	m	n	r	h	p	b						
Formation:												
Starting place												
Direction												
Shape												
Finishing place												
Size												
Slope												
Kicks												
Hooks												
Link and fluency												

Diagonal letters	k	v	w	x	z							
Formation:												
Starting place												
Direction												
Shape												
Finishing place												
Size												
Slope												
Kicks												
Hooks												
Link and fluency												

Upper-case letters

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z

Numerals

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

Handwriting : Whole Class Audit

Date _____

Name	Hand preference	Sitting position/posture	Pencil grip	Paper placement	Upper-case letters formation, slope, size, spacing	Numerals 0 – 9	Links and fluency	Anti-clockwise letters formation, slope, size, spacing	Clockwise letters formation, slope, size, spacing	Diagonal letters formation, slope, size, spacing	Stick letters formation, slope, size, spacing	Comments
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Checklist Code ☐   ☐   ☐

The checklist may be used for a whole class audit of handwriting skills. Where students demonstrate lack of proficiency in one or more areas it may be useful to refer to the observation guides in the preceding pages.

Evaluating the program

Evaluation of the whole-school handwriting program will identify staff competency and areas for improvement.

A whole-school approach to teaching, learning and evaluation is the most effective way to plan and implement curriculum. Each educator can then plan programs for each learner, making sure that there are ways of checking a range of behaviour, attitudes and skills depending on development, year level and complexity of tasks.

The following questions may be used to guide the evaluation of the quality and effectiveness of the site's handwriting program:

- Is there a site policy on the development of handwriting? For example, is the year level for introducing links or for encouraging learners to use cursive for all writing clearly identified?

- Is there general acceptance by educators about the types of writing implements and writing paper that are best used at different stages of handwriting development?

- Is the teaching of letter formation and linking related to hand movements required for letter formation?

- Are learners provided with desks and chairs of correct height?

- Do educators use a common metalanguage when talking with learners about handwriting?

- Do educators provide learners with models of effective handwriting?

- What access do parents/caregivers have to information about their child's progress in handwriting? How is this reported?

- What resources are available at the site for the teaching and learning of handwriting?

- Are resources available and accessible to educators?

- How is information collected for evaluation of the handwriting program?

- Do learners have an audience for their handwriting?

- Do educators focus on handwriting in curriculum areas other than English?

- Is there a support structure established for learners with difficulties in handwriting?

frequently asked questions

The most frequently asked questions are listed below. Detailed answers are provided in the following pages and in other parts of the book as indicated.

1. What is the best handwriting grip? (See also page 21.)

2. What if a learner has a persistently incorrect grip?

3. What is the best handwriting position? (See also page 22.)

4. How can I support a learner with the layout of his or her work?

5. How do I help a learner with incorrect posture? (See also page 22.)

6. How do I support left-handers?

7. I'm a left-handed teacher teaching right-handed learners. What should I do?

8. How do I support a visually impaired learner to write?

9. What should I do if a learner is writing sideways, backwards, etc?

10. One of my learners is having difficulty handwriting. What might the problem be?

11. How can I help a learner having difficulty with pre-writing basic shapes?

12. One of my learners has trouble forming the shapes of letters. What should I do?

13. A learner is slow in handwriting. What should I do?

14. A learner has trouble positioning letters on the line. What should I do?

15. One of my learners exerts too much pressure on the implement. What do you suggest?

16. One of my learners produces faint/shaky handwriting and does not exert enough pressure. What do you suggest?

17. A learner's cursive writing is hard to read. What do you suggest?

18. What if a learner's handwriting is compressed?

19. Do children and students need to learn keyboard skills? (See also Appendix 5.)

20. A learner continues to struggle with handwriting despite my intervention. Where can I get additional support?

21. At what stage should learners be able to write their own name?
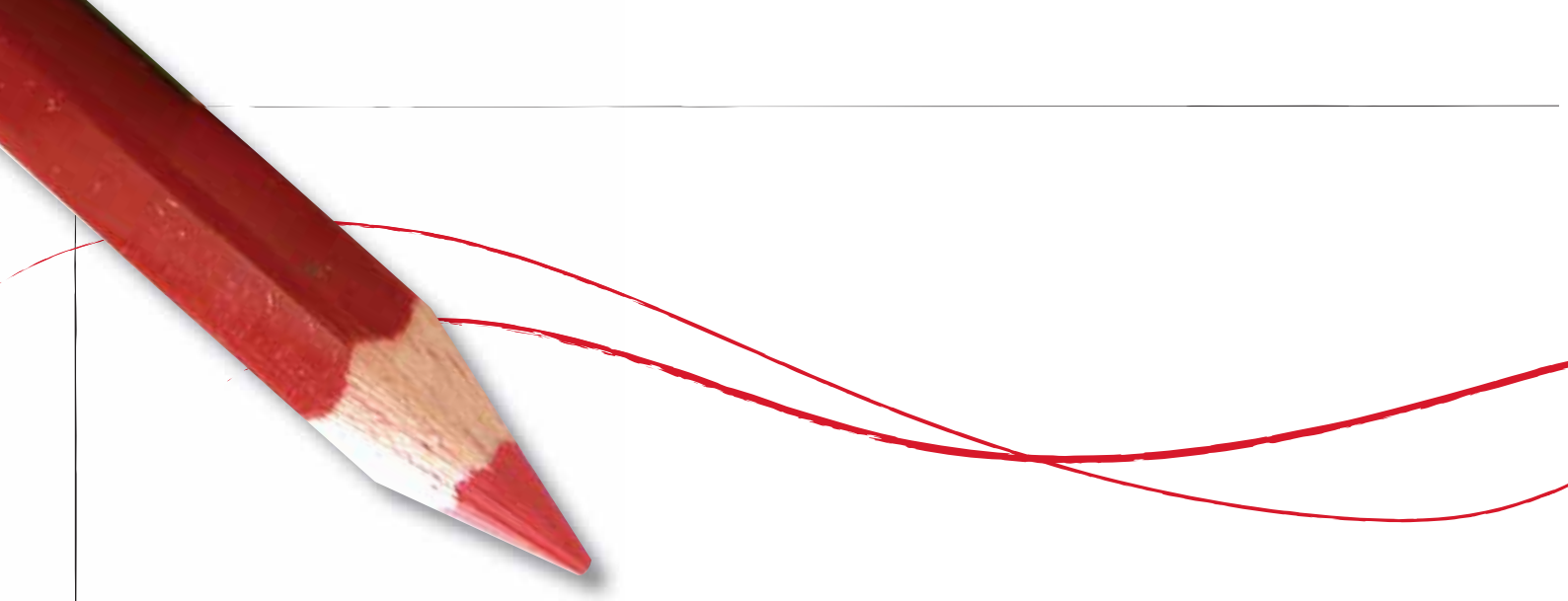
1 **What is the best handwriting grip?**

- The writing instrument is held gently so that the index finger can flex slightly.
- Pressure on the handwriting instrument and consistent tension in the fingers or hand may cause fatigue and cramp, preventing fluent handwriting.
- The instrument rests on the side of the top joint of the middle finger, with the thumb resting on the side of the instrument and the forefinger resting on top (ie the tripod grip).
- A small space should be visible between the thumb and forefinger.
- The fingers should not be placed too closely to the writing tip because tension will develop.
- The angle of the instrument to the paper should be about 45 degrees.
- A steep angle will also lead to greater tension.
- Some left-handers will hold the writing instrument further back from the point so that they can see what is being written.

2 **What if a learner has a persistently incorrect grip?**

- Use coloured markers on the barrel of the writing tool to indicate the relative position of the finger and thumb.
- Put a triangular implement grip on the writing tool, ensuring that a part of the grip is visible between the index finger and thumb.
- Provide the learner with triangular pencils, both coloured and lead pencils.
- Focus on one or two aspects of the grip at a time. For example, say 'Your thumb must be on the pencil' or 'Your pencil must point towards your right shoulder' (only for right-handers) or 'Your pointer finger should point to the tip of the pencil'.

3 **What is the best handwriting position?**

- The paper and body position should be comfortable for the writer, so that the writer may write with ease for long periods.
- The paper should be placed so that its base is at right angles to the forearm of the writing hand, and the body should have comfortably balanced support so that body weight does not rest on the writing arm.
- Tension in the eyes, neck, wrist, shoulders or back indicates an uncomfortable paper and/or body position, which will interfere with the optimum handwriting movement and cause fatigue.

4 How can I support a learner with the layout of his or her work?

The collection and examination of different layouts will help learners improve their own layout techniques. Learners will come to understand that:

- a planned layout can increase both the legibility and the attractiveness of the finished product
- different-sized paper and instruments require different layout techniques
- the time used to prepare a rough layout is well spent when it enhances the finished product
- the number of words per line influences the appearance of the page
- a line with too many words tends to tire the eye of the reader
- the use of wide margins emphasises the importance of the writing which they surround.

5 How do I help a learner with incorrect posture?

- Reinforce posture by setting a time limit and expecting the correct posture to be maintained during that time. Start with a short time and gradually extend it. Congratulate the learner on achieving the correct posture for the given time.
- Ensure the chair is not too close to the table.
- Organise for a check of the learner's vision, if appropriate.

6 How do I support left-handers?

- Find a left-handed educator or parent/caregiver who writes well using the appropriate grip and movements as an assistant for the left-handers in the class. He or she can show the correct hold.
- Seat the left-hander to the left of a right-handed child so that their elbows do not bump each other.
- Check that the light comes from their right-hand side so they are not writing in their own shadow.
- Use a lower writing surface (lower the desk or have the learner sit higher).
- So the writing is not obscured, ask the learner to hold the implement at least 3cm (a rubber band can mark the spot) from the tip, or use a commercial triangular implement grip placed far enough up the barrel that the learner can see around his or her hand.
- Position the paper to the left of the midline of the body for a comfortable writing position.
- Use a fibre-tip pen or softer pencil (eg 2B, 4B or 6B) which causes less 'digging' into the paper.
- Allow learners to experiment with crossbar links (eg t and f (a right-to-left line is often easier for left- handers)) and letters that change direction (eg f and s) until they find something that suits.

7 **I'm a left-handed teacher teaching right-handed learners. What should I do?**

- Depending on the age of the learners, you could discuss what is similar and different about the way you hold a pen and the way they hold theirs.
- You might also talk to them about how you as a left-hander must position your hand and the paper in order to see what you are writing and how this is different for right-handed writers.
- Find a right-handed educator or parent/caregiver who writes well using the appropriate grip and movements as an assistant for the right-handers in the class. He or she can show the correct hold.

8 **How do I support a visually impaired learner to write?**

It is most important that there is good contrast between the writing implement and the writing medium. Learners can use felt-tipped pens and the paper should not be shiny. It is also important to provide additional time for practice. For older learners, you could use dark line stationery. Learners with a visual impairment may also need to be closer to their work and will require good lighting. They could also benefit from having a sloping desktop. For further information contact the South Australian School for Vision Impaired, 1B Duncan Avenue, Park Holme 5043, phone (08) 8277 5255.

9 **What should I do if a learner is writing sideways, backwards, etc?**

This is usually a normal part of development and does not need remediation. However, if this is all that the learner does, you can sit down and model writing for them, or show them examples of writing in books, or encourage them to look at their own name. If the learner persists it might be necessary to seek help from the Learning Difficulties Support team in the Department of Education and Children's Services, or from a guidance officer through the referral process. The Specific Learning Difficulties Association of South Australia (SPELD) also provides advice with regard to handwriting difficulties.

10 One of my learners is having difficulty handwriting. What might be the problem?

Consider which foundation skills the learner may be having difficulties with in developing his or her handwriting skills. The problem may be in any one or combination of the following five areas.

Vision
In order to write, you need the ability to sustain clear binocular vision at near point.

Postural control
In order to write, you need the ability to:
- hold your body up against gravity
- make coordinated trunk, shoulder, forearm and wrist movements
- sit in a chair
- make subtle adjustments to these movements
- plan the motor patterns you make with your whole body.

Visual skills
In order to write, you need the ability to:
- track visually from top to bottom, left to right, and diagonally
- remember the form and shape of different objects
- recognise similarities between shapes
- recognise differences between shapes
- pick out important information from a busy background
- remember sequences of visual information
- look at and focus on the different aspects of the work.

Fine motor skills
In order to write, you need the ability to:
- use one hand as a leader, and the other to support the page
- hold a pencil
- start drawing in the correct place for individual letters
- stop drawing in the correct place for individual letters
- change direction when drawing
- plan how big the letter will be, and where to start it in relation to other letters and lines on the page.

Visual–motor skills
Visual–motor skills are the ability to look at something, interpret it and respond with a motor action. This is an essential skill for learning how to form letters, copy letters, and interpret what you have written.

In order to write, you need the ability to:
- copy a series of geometric shapes (including pre-writing shapes and their combinations) in order to go on to write letters
- control the pencil to form line and shape combinations automatically
  - *starting and stopping drawing lines in the right places*
  - *combining lines in the correct sequence to form a letter*
  - *drawing lines in the correct size.*

11 **How can I help a learner having difficulty with pre-writing basic shapes?**

- Determine which pre-writing basic shapes the learner can copy and the ones the learner cannot. Consider whether this will affect the learner's ability to form particular letters accurately.
- Try different ways of teaching the shapes that the learner finds difficult (eg copying, tracing, painting, pencil and paper approaches, making the shapes, games, worksheets).
- Try different activities that involve controlling the pencil, such as mazes, colouring-in, and tracing activities. These can be practised in different ways (eg at the table with pencil and paper, drawing on whiteboards or blackboards, with paint, as part of construction).
- Try using different writing tools (such as pencils, crayons, felt-tipped pens and paint).
- Consider the size and shape of the pencil (the thicker a pencil the easier it is to grasp and control) and different density of the tips (softer leads can be easier to colour with, harder leads can look neater).
- Consider a binocular vision assessment.

12 One of my learners has trouble forming the shapes of letters. What should I do?

Consider the learner's ability to consistently and accurately form the letters (shape, size, way they write the letter each time).
- Formation of letters can be taught relative to the different shapes. Always reinforce the starting place, and encourage learners to form letters the same way each time.
- Try using rhythm, words, mnemonic devices or counting to help make the pattern of forming the letters more automatic. Examples are:
  > When forming the letter o 'you go backwards around the moon and then land on Earth'.
  > When forming the letter j 'drop down the line and remember the fishing hook'.

  Other ways of helping are provided below.
- Organise for a check of the learner's binocular vision, if appropriate.
- Provide a whiteboard marker and laminated sheet (see Appendix 2e).

Anti-clockwise and clockwise letters

Backwards around … and then …

a	a stick
d	an up stick and down
g	a down stick with a hook
c	stop quickly
o	stop when you meet
q	a down stick with a flick
b	An up stick with an oval
p	A down stick with an oval
e	Straight across, a hat and a tail
s	Around, hook and down
u	Down, around, up and down

Stick letters

f	A little around and down
hmnr	Start at the top and bounce
ijlt	Start at the top and down

Diagonal letters

k	Down (the straight road) and kick
v	Down and up
w	Down and up and down and up
x	Slash across and again
z	Straight across, down and across

13 A learner is slow in handwriting. What should I do?

If the learner writes more slowly than expected, consider the following:

- What happens to the quality and speed of writing when the learner is told to write quickly? Does he or she write more quickly or at the same speed? Does the writing change in size, or become more inconsistently spaced on the line? Does the learner tire more quickly?
- What happens when the learner perceives the need to write neatly? Does he or she write more slowly? Does the quality really change?
- For how many minutes can the learner write? At what point does the learner get tired? Does that match your expectations of his or her year level?
- Does the learner's speed of writing change when he or she is copying, or writing from memory, or being creative?
- Does the learner write more neatly at different times in the day (eg in the morning when less fatigued)?

Then use the following strategies:

(1) Consider strategies in the classroom to reduce the amount of writing required by the learner:

- Could he or she receive a worksheet rather than having to copy the information?
- Could he or she use another way of recording the information other than writing (eg computer, tape recorder, scribe with another learner in the group, oral presentation)?
- Could time frames be extended to allow additional time for writing?
- Can written work be set when the learner is less fatigued (eg in the morning, or after breaks)?

(2) Confirm that the learner is aware of the quality and speed of writing required.

- Does he or she know which work (eg copying) needs to be written quickly?
- Does the learner know in which lessons he or she needs to write neatly?

(3) Include 'pauses' in the writing tasks.

- Can breaks be included during handwriting?
- Try having learners put their pencils down and shake and stretch their hands, stand up, and stretch their arms and necks. Does this alter the quality and duration of their writing?

14 A learner has trouble positioning letters on the line. What should I do?

Consider the learner's ability to position letters accurately on the line.
- Do the letters sit too far above the line, or below the line?
- Are 'tails' on letters positioned under the line?
- Are there adequate spaces between letters within the words?
- Are letters drawn the same size within words?
- Are capital letters taller than lower-case ones?

Then use the following strategies:
- Try using visual cues to organise letter positions:
  - provide a framework to describe where the letter must go
  - provide a grid for each letter to be placed inside the square
  - give a grid example (marking the position on the line, below the line, above the line)
  - use different colours on a grid to remind where the letter goes.
- Consider a binocular vision assessment.

15 One of my learners exerts too much pressure on the implement. What do you suggest?

- Use a softer implement, such as a fibre-tip pen or a 4B or 6B pencil.
- Practise patterns and put on music for rhythms.
- Ask the learner to concentrate on relaxing the fingers.
- Check that the learner's pencil grip is not too close to the tip.

16 One of my learners produces faint/shaky writing and does not exert enough pressure. What do you suggest?

- Use a softer implement, such as a fibre-tipped pen or a 4B or 6B pencil.
- Practise patterns with light and dark lines in them.
- Discuss with learners why they need to 'press harder'.
- Consider activities such as clay moulding to develop fine motor skills.

17 A learner's cursive writing is hard to read. What do you suggest?

- Practise the alphabet, concentrating on making letters as a series of parallel downstrokes.
- Use patterns to emphasise a downward rhythm.
- Use a slope card.

18 What if a learner's handwriting is compressed?

- Improve coordination of the fingers and arm by practising finger movement for implement rotation and moving the forearm across the page.
- Practise exaggeration of spacing to encourage fluency.
- Practise links, especially hard-to-link letters and dropping in, emphasising pen lifts.

19 Do children and students need to learn keyboard skills?

- Keyboard skills are a crucial skill to learn. For learners, communication through a keyboard will be a fundamental and growing necessity in order to take their place in society. All learners need to experiment with a keyboard, enjoy it, become familiar with it and learn the functions of the keys. All learners need to develop and practise their typing skills.
- For some learners, using a keyboard will be their only form of communication. The development of keyboard skills in those learners who are unable to write by hand is a priority for educators. It enables learners to communicate on an equitable basis.

20 A learner continues to struggle with handwriting despite my intervention. Where can I get additional support?

Some learners with particular difficulties might require more specialised help than a teacher is able to provide. You can call upon support of groups such as:
- Learning Improvement and Support Services (LISS) within the Department of Education and Children's Services
- occupational therapists, who often work in Community Health Offices in the various regions
- the Special Education Resources Unit (SERU).

21 At what stage should learners be able to write their own name?

Learners will always develop at different rates. However, most show an interest in writing symbols and letters between four-and-a-half and five years of age. It is important that learners have developed the necessary fine motor skills to enable them to manipulate writing tools.

appendix 1

Formation of letters

The following pages contain charts that explain the formation of letters and numerals in the South Australian style of handwriting.

Key information
A dot illustrates the starting point. An arrow indicates the direction to follow when writing the letter or numeral. A cross represents the end point.

In cases where a letter or numeral contains two or more individual strokes (where the pencil/pen must leave the page) numbers indicate which stroke is to be written first, second and so forth.

●——→ Starting point followed by direction

✖ Finishing point

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

A a a B b
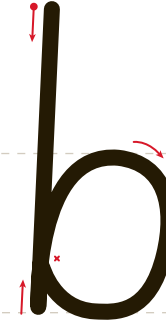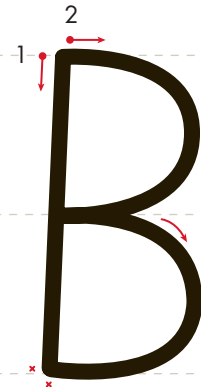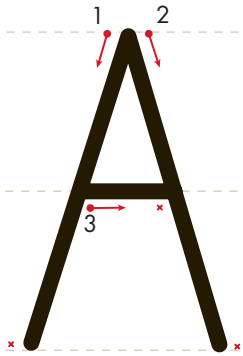
No Change

UPPER-CASE

Three Movements
- Two diagonal strokes followed by a horizontal bar at height of a lower-case 'o'.

Note
- Commence at the top. Height of the bar.

LOWER-CASE

One Movement
- An oval completed by a downstroke.
- Commence at the 2 o'clock position.

Note
- Not joining the oval causes illegibility.

NOT

a

LINKED

One Movement
- An oval completed by a downstroke and a kick.

Note
- Correct starting point, and development of exit point.

UPPER-CASE

Two Movements
- A downward stroke.
- Two outward swings.

Note
- The outward swings are equal.
- The outward swings start and end with horizontal strokes.

LOWER-CASE

One Movement
- A downward stroke twice the height of a lower-case 'o', completed by an oval.

Note
- Emphasise the starting point to minimise reversal.
- Practise starting and completion points.

LINKED

Note

NOT b or b

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

C c

No Change

D d d
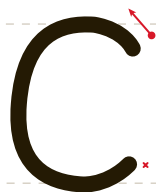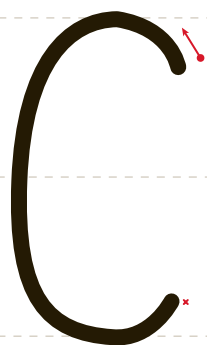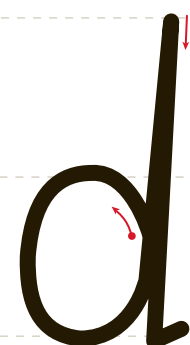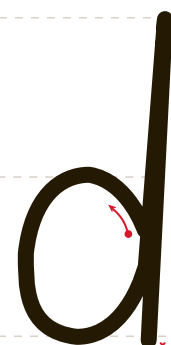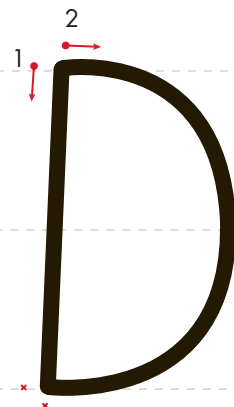
UPPER-CASE

One Movement
- A segment of an oval.
- Commence at the 2 o'clock position.

Note
- Remember the beginning and ending points conform to the slope.

LOWER-CASE

One Movement
- A segment of an oval.
- Commence at the 2 o'clock position.

LINKED

Note
- Lengthens for exit.

UPPER-CASE

Two Movements
- A downstroke.
- A horizontal line, a segment of an oval, a horizontal line.

Note
- Avoid squashing due to omission of horizontal strokes.

LOWER-CASE

One Movement
- An oval completed by a downstroke twice the height of a lower-case 'o'.

Note
- Not joining the oval causes illegibility.
- Failure to retrace causes illegibility.

NOT d

LINKED

One Movement
- An oval completed by a downstroke twice the height of a lower-case 'o' with a kick.

Note
- May develop a pen lift before downstroke (it then becomes two movements).

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
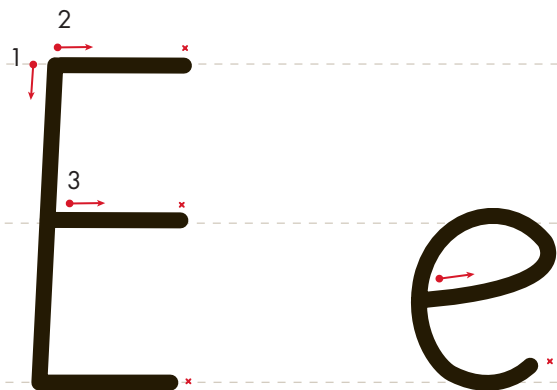
No Change
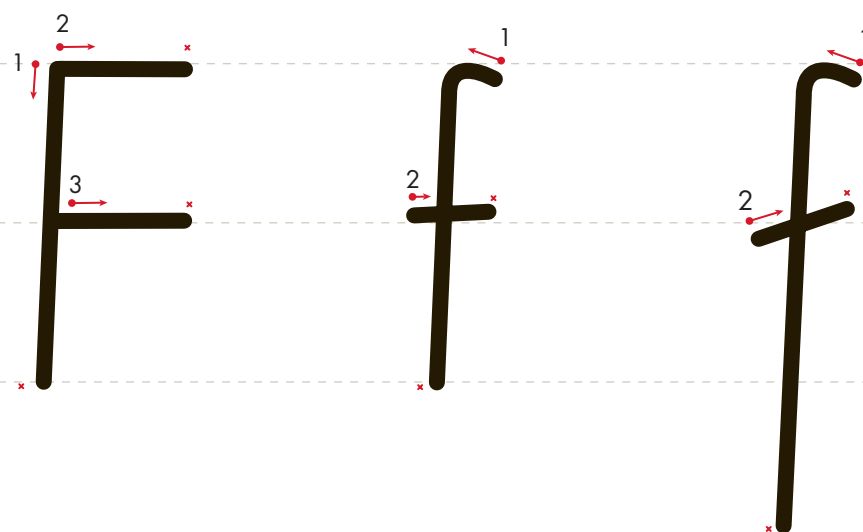
UPPER-CASE

Three Movements
- A downward stroke and horizontal bar.
- Top and central horizontal bars.

Note
- Continuous movement for first section.
- The three bars are of equal length.
- The middle bar is at the height of a lower-case 'o'.

LOWER-CASE

One Movement
- A slanted upstroke completed by a segment of an oval.

Note
- Failure to join oval segment to initial stroke causes illegibility.

NOT

LINKED

Note
- Lengthens for exit.

UPPER-CASE

Three Movements
- A downstroke.
- Top horizontal bar.
- Central horizontal bar.

Note
- The two bars are of equal length.
- Central bar is at height of lower-case 'o'.

LOWER-CASE

Two Movements
- An oval segment completed by a downstroke.
- A horizontal bar.

Note

NOT

LINKED

Two Movements
- An oval segment completed by a lengthened downstroke.
- A sloping bar.

Note
- Bar becomes exit.
- Link the cross bar for double f.

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
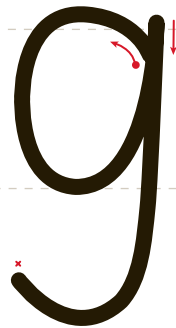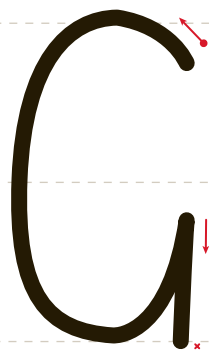
No Change
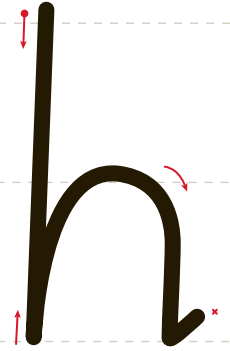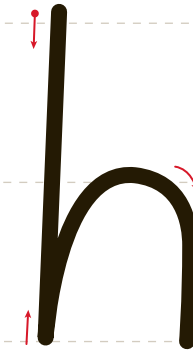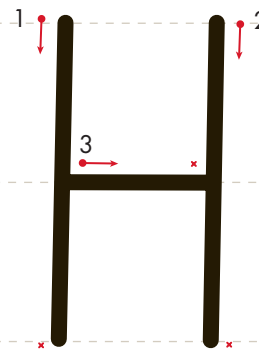
UPPER-CASE

One Movement
- A segment of an oval followed by a downstroke.

Note
- The short downstroke conforms to the slight diagonal slope.

LOWER-CASE

One Movement
- An oval completed by a downstroke and a hook.

Note
- Lower case 'o' fits into the hook.
- The downstroke must be consistent with the slope.

NOT g g g

LINKED

Note
- Do not link from the hook.

UPPER-CASE

Three Movements
- Two downward strokes.
- A central horizontal bar.

Note
- The two sides are equal.

LOWER-CASE

One Movement
- A downward stroke twice the height of a lower-case 'o', completed by an arch.

Note
- Too much retracing results in a rounded style.
- Confusion with 'n' if downstroke is too short.

NOT h h

LINKED

One Movement
- A downward stroke twice the height of a lower-case 'o', followed by an arch and ended with a kick.

Note
- Exit is a kick.

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
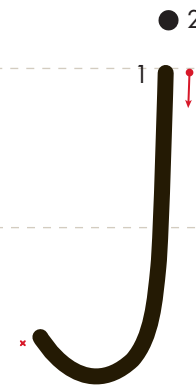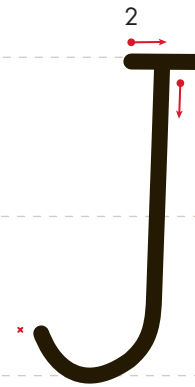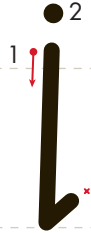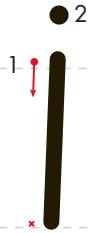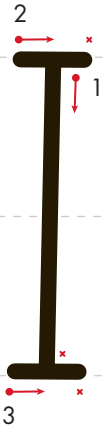
No Change

UPPER-CASE

Three Movements
• A downstroke.
• Two separate horizontal serifs.

Note
• Addition of serifs avoids confusion with lower case 'l'.
• Serifs may be removed as children get quicker.

LOWER-CASE

Two Movements
• A downstroke.
• A dot directly above the downstroke.

Note
• Dot at same height as top of 't'.

NOT t i

LINKED

Two Movements
• A downstroke.
• A dot directly above the downstroke followed by a kick.

Note
• Exit is a kick.

UPPER-CASE

Two Movements
• A downstroke with a hook.
• A serif.

Note
• Serifs may be removed as children get quicker.

LOWER-CASE

Two Movements
• A downstroke with a hook.
• A dot directly above the downstroke.

Note
• Finished letter is twice the height of a lower-case 'o'.
• Pay attention to the starting point at a word's beginning.

NOT

jam   Jam

LINKED

Note
• Does not link to the following letter.

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
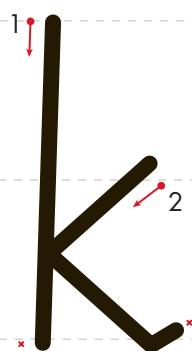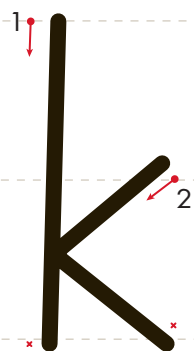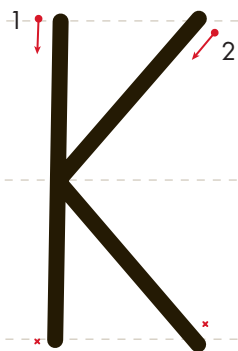
UPPER-CASE

Two Movements
- A downward stroke.
- An arrowhead.

Note
- The arrowhead intersects the downstroke at the height of a lower-case 'o'.
- Note where the arrowhead begins.

NOT

LOWER-CASE

Two Movements
- A downward stroke twice the height of a lower-case 'o'.
- An arrowhead.

Note
- Arrowhead begins at height of lower-case 'o'.
- The arrowhead should remain sharp to be distinguishable.

NOT

LINKED

Two Movements
- A downward stroke twice the height of a lower-case 'o'.
- An arrowhead with a kick.

Note
- Exit is a kick.

UPPER-CASE

One Movement
- A downstroke with a horizontal base.

Note
- Pen stays on paper until completion of letter.

LOWER-CASE

One Movement
- A downstroke twice the height of a lower-case 'o'.

LINKED

One Movement
- A downstroke twice the height of a lower case 'o' followed by a kick.

Note

NOT

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

M m m **N n n**
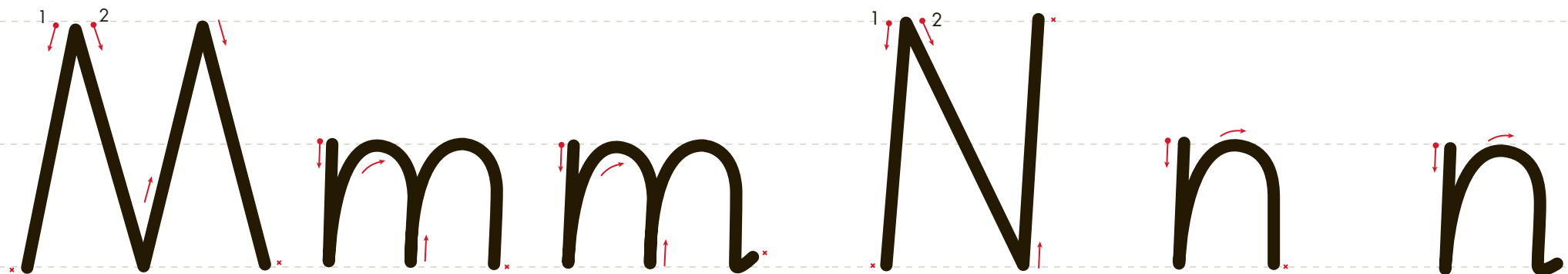
UPPER-CASE

Two Movements
- A downstroke.
- Three diagonal strokes.

Note
- Both sections are equal in size and width.
- The two top points are level.
- The three base points are level.

LOWER-CASE

One Movement
- A downstroke completed with two arches.

Note
- Pen lift inhibits fluency.
- Failure to retrace leads to illegibility.
- Emphasise regular size and movement.

NOT

m or m

LINKED

One Movement
- A downstroke completed with two arches and a kick at the end.

UPPER-CASE

Two Movements
- A downward stroke.
- Two diagonal strokes commencing at the top of the downstroke.

Note
- Outside strokes are equal and parallel.

NOT

N

LOWER-CASE

One Movement
- A downstroke completed by an arch.

Note
- Top of arch is a segment of a circle.
- Sprawl must not be too wide.

NOT

n

LINKED

One Movement
- A downstroke followed by an arch and ended with a kick.

Note
- Take notice of where the downstroke should begin.

NOT

h

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

O o o P p
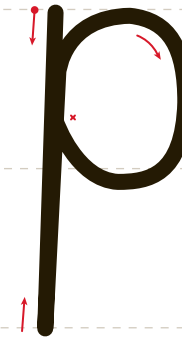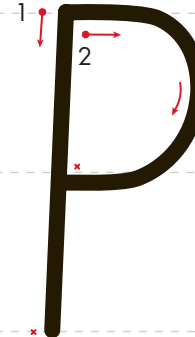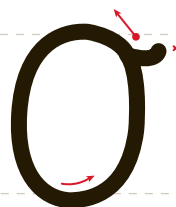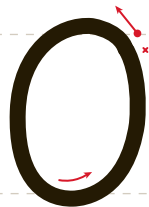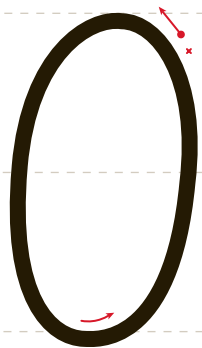
No Change

UPPER-CASE

One Movement
- An oval commenced at the 2 o'clock position.

Note
- The 2 o'clock starting position promotes the oval shape and slope.

LOWER-CASE

One Movement
- An oval commenced at the 2 o'clock position and continued in an anti-clockwise direction.

Note
- Correct anti-clockwise movement can be reinforced through games, stirring etc.

LINKED

One Movement
- An anti-clockwise oval commenced at the 2 o'clock position and ending with a hook.

Note
- Exit may develop at speed.

UPPER-CASE

Two Movements
- A downstroke.
- An outward swing.

Note
- The outward swing commences and ends with a horizontal stroke.

LOWER-CASE

One Movement
- A downstroke twice the height of a lower-case 'o', completed by a clockwise oval.

Note
- Emphasise starting point to minimise reversals.
- One continuous movement to aid fluency.

LINKED

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
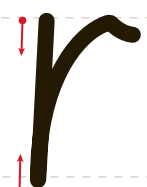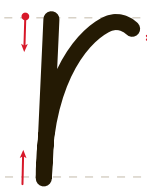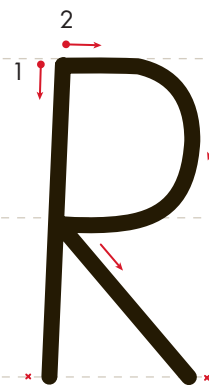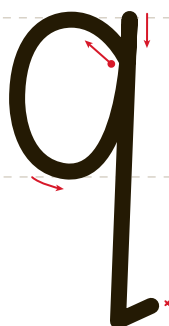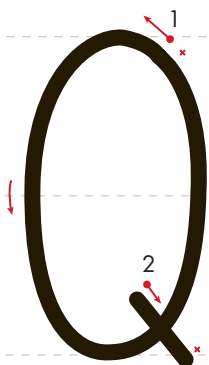
UPPER-CASE

Two Movements
- An oval.
- A short angled downstroke.

Note
- The 2 o'clock starting position promotes the oval shape and slope.

LOWER-CASE

One Movement
- An oval, a downstroke twice the size of a lower-case 'o' and a kick.

Note
- Not joining the oval causes illegibility.
- Emphasie one movement to avoid reversal.

NOT *q*

LINKED

One Movement
- An oval, a downstroke twice the size of a lower-case 'o' and a kick.

UPPER-CASE

Two Movements
- A downstroke.
- An outward swing and an angled downstroke.

Note
- The outward swing commences and ends with a horizontal stroke.

NOT *R R*

LOWER-CASE

One Movement
- A downstroke completed by a rounded arrowhead.

Note
- Sprawled and no retracing leads to illegibility.

NOT *r r*

LINKED

One Movement
- A downstroke completed by a rounded arrowhead and a slight hook.

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

S s

No Change

T t t
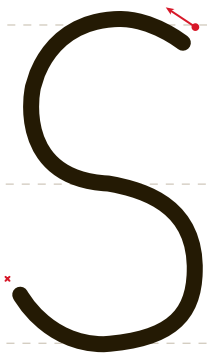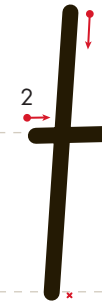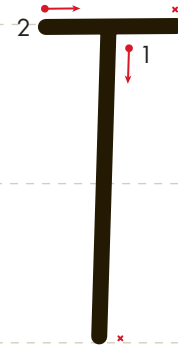
UPPER-CASE

One Movement
- Commences at 2 o'clock and curves anti-clockwise to 10 o'clock, curve and cross down to 4 o'clock, curve clockwise to complete ending at 8 o'clock position.

Note
- Emphasise starting point.
- Letter fits inside an oval.

LOWER-CASE

One Movement
- Commences at 2 o'clock and curves anti-clockwise to 10 o'clock, curve and cross down to 4 o'clock, curve clockwise to complete ending at 8 o'clock position.

Note
- Emphasise starting point.
- Letter fits inside an oval.

LINKED

Note
- If you link to an 's' you don't link from it.

UPPER-CASE

Two Movements
- A downstroke.
- A horizontal bar.

LOWER-CASE

Two Movements
- A downstroke 3/4 the height of tall letters.
- A horizontal bar, height of a lower-case 'o'.

LINKED

Two Movements
- A downstroke 3/4 the height of tall letters.
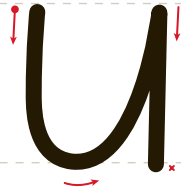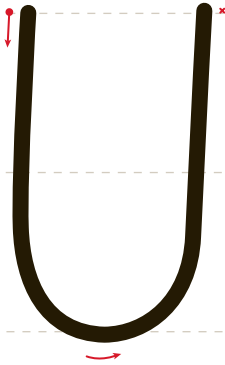- A horizontal bar, height of a lower-case 'o' followed by a kick.

Note

NOT t

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
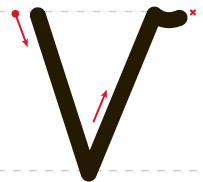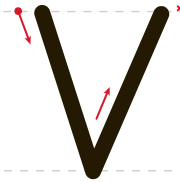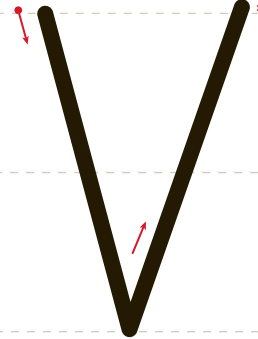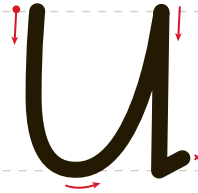
UPPER-CASE

One Movement
- An inverted arch commenced with a downstroke.

Note
- Base is a segment of an oval.
- Sides are parallel and level at the top.

LOWER-CASE

One Movement
- An inverted arch completed with a downstroke.

Note
- No retracing leads to incorrect formation.

NOT u

LINKED

One Movement
- An inverted arch completed with a downstroke and a kick.

UPPER-CASE

One Movement
- Two diagonal strokes.

Note
- The first stroke appears more upright.

LOWER-CASE

One Movement
- Two diagonal strokes.

Note
- One motion, no lifting of writing tool.

LINKED

One Movement
- Two diagonal strokes finished with a hook.

Note

NOT v

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
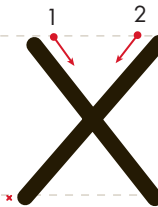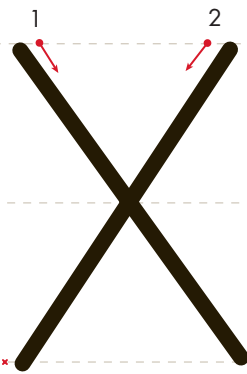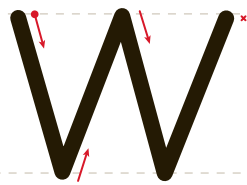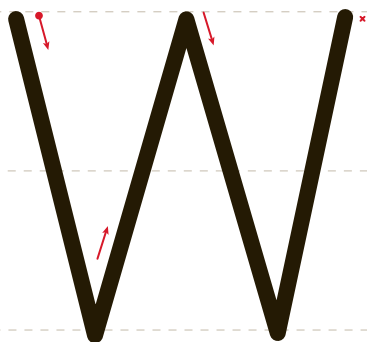
No Change

UPPER-CASE

One Movement
- Four diagonal strokes commencing with a downstroke.

Note
- No lifting of writing tool.
- The two base points are where the direction changes.
- Three top points are level.

LOWER-CASE

One Movement
- Four diagonal strokes commencing with a downstroke.

Note
- Sprawling may cause illegibility.

NOT

LINKED

Two Movements
- A downstroke 3/4 the height of tall letters.
- A horizontal bar, height of a lower-case 'o' followed by a hook.

Note

NOT

UPPER-CASE

Two Movements
- Crossed diagonals starting at the top.

Note
- The top points are level.
- The base points are level.
- Intersection of diagonals occurs at height of lower-case 'x'.

LOWER-CASE

Two Movements
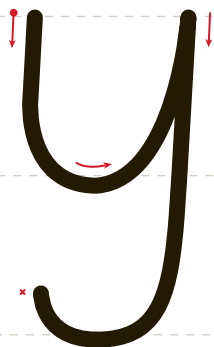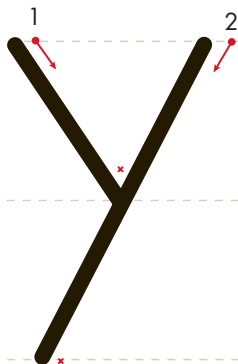- Crossed diagonals starting at the top.

Note

NOT

LINKED

Note
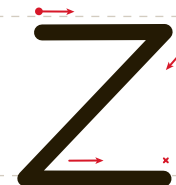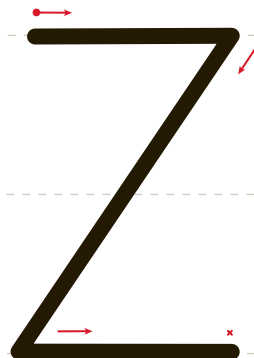- Does not link to other letters.

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

No Change

No Change

UPPER-CASE

Two Movements
- A short diagonal downstroke.
- A long diagonal downstroke.

Note
- The short downstroke meets the midpoint of the long downstroke at the height of a lower-case 'o'.

LOWER-CASE

One Movement
- An inverted arch and a downstroke with a hook twice the size of a lower-case 'o'.

Note
- A lower-case 'o' fits into the hook.

LINKED

Note
- Does not link to other letters.

UPPER-CASE

One Movement
- A horizontal bar, a diagonal downstroke and a horizontal bar.

Note
- The horizontal bars are of equal length.

LOWER-CASE

One Movement
- A horizontal bar, a diagonal downstroke and a horizontal bar.

Note
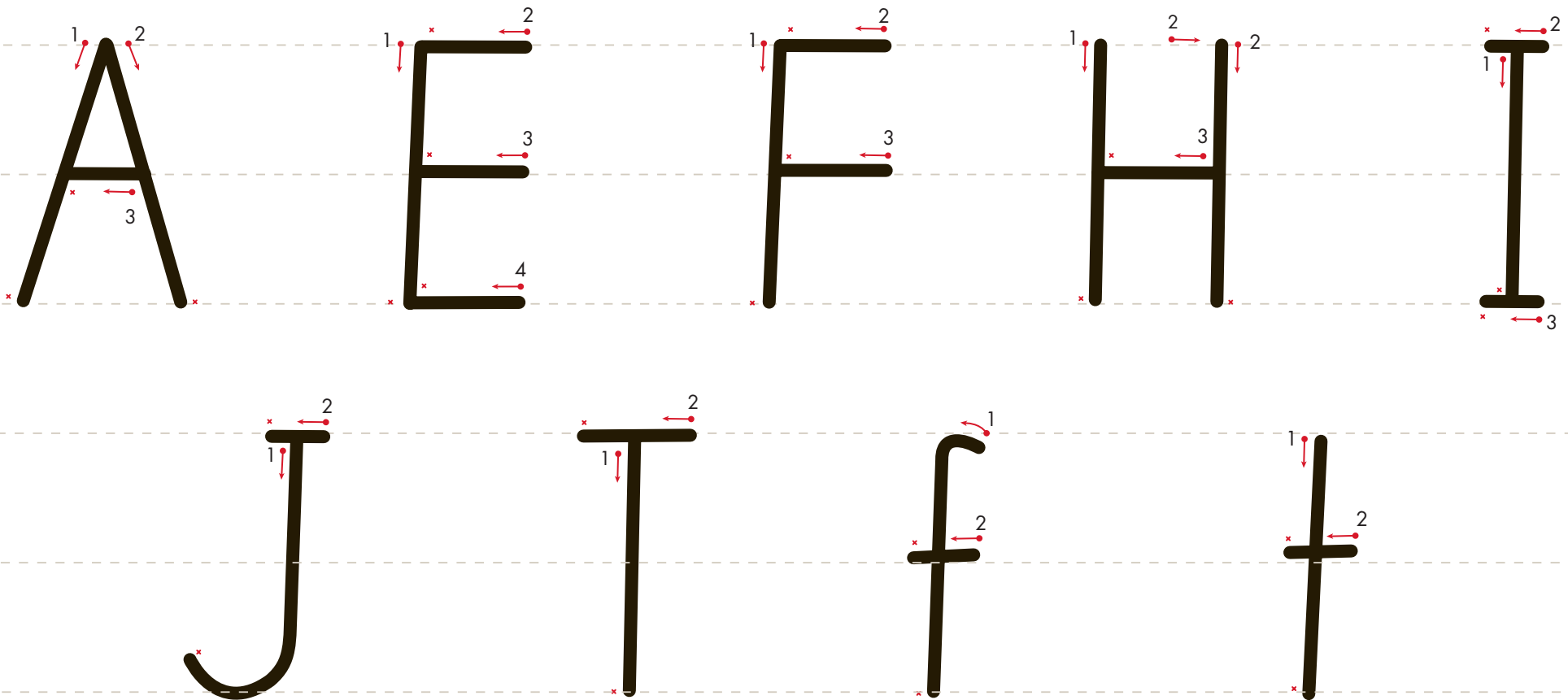- Points should be sharp.

NOT z

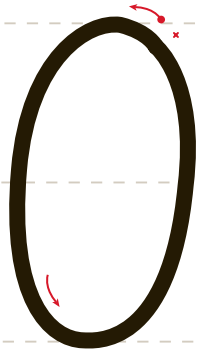### LINKED

Note
- Does not link to or from other letters.

LEFT- HANDED LETTERS

Left-handed writers often find it easier to use right-to-left (away from the body) horizontal lines in the following letters.

NUMERALS

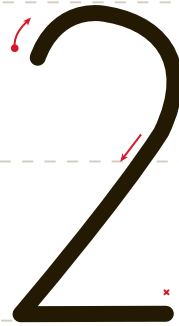**One Movement**
- An oval commenced at the 2 o'clock position.

Note
- All numerals are at a height of a lowercase 't'.
- All numerals have a slight right hand slope.

One Movement
- A down stroke.

One Movement
- An oval segment, a diagonal and horizontal line commenced at the 10 o'clock position.

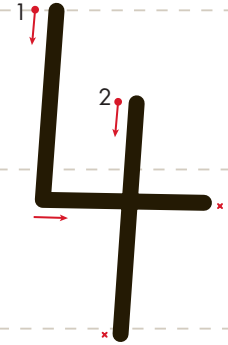**Note**
- Emphasise correct slope.
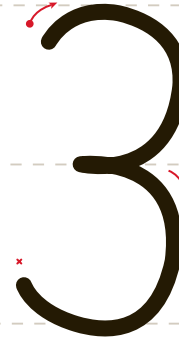
One Movement
- An oval segment, two diagonal curves, and an oval segment commenced at the 10 o'clock position.

Note
- Emphasise correct slope.

Two Movements
- A downstroke and a horizontal bar.
- A downstroke which bisects the horizontal bar.

Note
- Emphasise correct slope.

NOT 4

NUMERALS

5 6 7 8 9
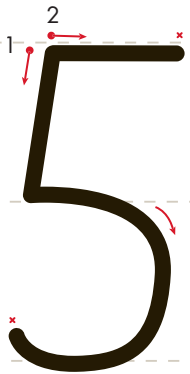
Two Movements
- A downstroke and an oval segment.
- A horizontal bar.

Note
- Emphasise correct starting point to prevent breakdown at speed.

NOT 5
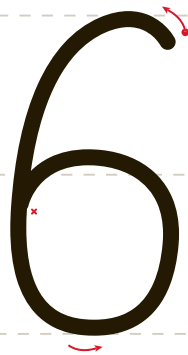
One Movement
- A segment of an oval, a curved downstroke and an oval.

Note
- Start at the 2 o'clock position.

One Movement
- A horizontal bar and a diagonal downstroke.

Note
- Horizontal bar is the same width as a lower-case 'o'.
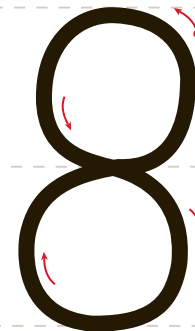
One Movement
- A oval segment and diagonal curve followed by another oval segment and diagonal curve.

Note
- Emphasise starting point.
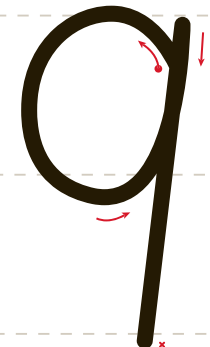
One Movement
- An oval and a downstroke commenced at the 2 o'clock position.

appendix 2

Charts

The following charts are for copying and displaying.

APPENDIX 2A – GRAPHOLOGICAL APPROACH

ANTI-CLOCKWISE LETTERS
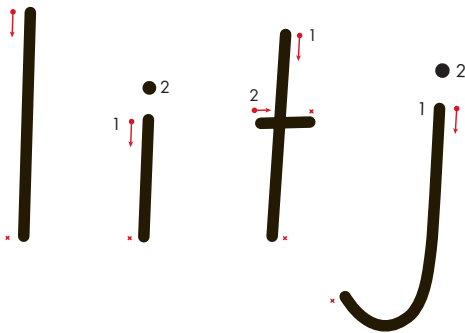
a d g q
c e o s u y f

THE STICK LETTERS

l i t j

THE CLOCKWISE LETTERS

m n r h b p

THE DIAGONAL LETTERS

k v w x z

A B C D E F

G H I J K L

M N O P Q R

S T U V W X

Y Z
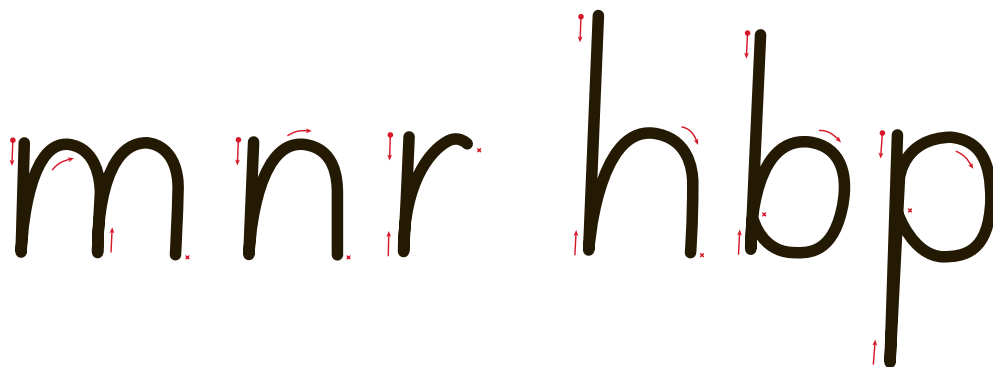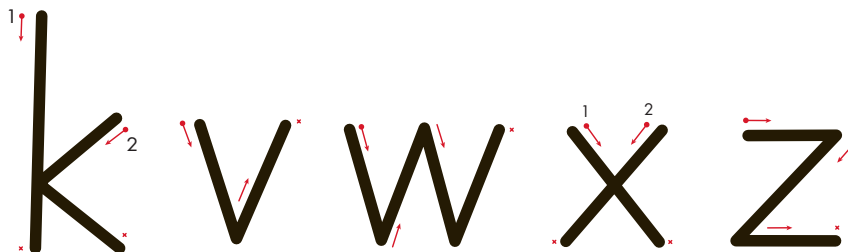
All capital letters start at the **TOP**.

APPENDIX 2C - FOUNDATION SCRIPT LETTERS AND NUMERALS

a b c d e f g h i
j k l m n o p q
r s t u v w x y z

0 1 2 3 4
5 6 7 8 9

a c b d e

f g h i j

k l m n o

p q r s t u

v w x y z

Hooks from

o v w r

on   vase   went   ran

Diagonal links from

i u e m n q l k t a

in under many quiet like kite ant

Letters that are hard to link from

p b s

pencil bread salt

APPENDIX 2E - LETTERS FOR LAMINATING
(use whiteboard markers for practising)

a b c d e f g

h i j k l m n

o p q r s t

u v w x y z

APPENDIX 2F - SITTING POSITION FOR HANDWRITING

Head correct distance from paper

Back slightly flexed forward

Paper correctly slanted

Non-dominant hand stabilises the paper

Bottom well back in the chair

Feet flat on the floor and slightly apart
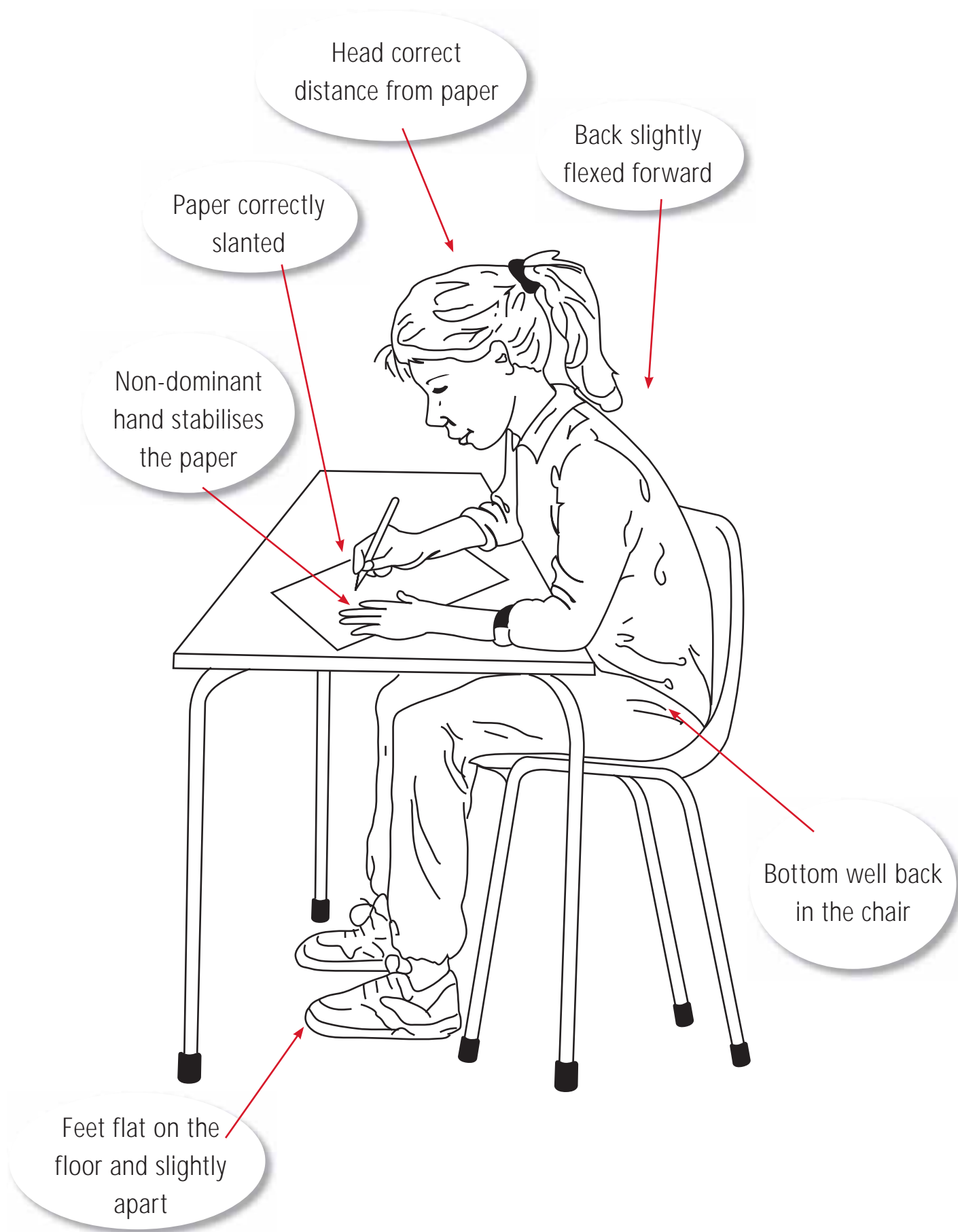
appendix 3

History of handwriting styles in South Australia

Handwriting developments

Modern handwriting styles taught in schools are simplified styles of handwriting. They are based on learners' early writing behaviour which indicates that their natural movements are oval-shaped and sloped rather than round and upright.

Traditional handwriting styles such as Italic rely heavily on special instruments for their reproduction. Current readily available handwriting instruments have created a need to adopt a style that is easily produced.

There has been an international move towards the simplification of handwriting styles taught in schools. This resulted from better understanding of the development of handwriting skills.

South Australian Modern Cursive was developed in keeping with international handwriting trends and the existing styles of handwriting in this state. At various times in South Australian schools, learners were taught Print Script in their first years at school and then, in the middle years, the traditional Copperplate, which was modified in 1967 to become Looped Cursive. Styles such as Simple Modern Hand (Scotland) and Leliman's Cursive (USA) developed from Italic.

South Australian Modern Cursive has maintained as much character as possible of the styles that were taught in schools. It employs the same technique as Copperplate and Looped Cursive, with the letter shapes retaining certain characteristics of Print Script and Looped Cursive. (For example, *a* begins at 2 o'clock, rather than at 1 o'clock.)

handwriting

Copperplate
Copperplate is a traditional handwriting style of the 18th century, adopted in South Australian government schools and used until the middle of the 20th century. It is written with a flexible nib for variation in stroke thickness.

handwriting

Looped Cursive
A less embellished version of Copperplate gradually developed to follow the print script beginners' style in South Australian primary schools. It is no longer necessarily written with a flexible nib and ink.

handwriting

'Ball and stick' Print Script
Print Script uses an alphabet of simple elements, easily learned and read by beginners. It was adopted in South Australia in the early 20th century. Print Script uses round upright shapes.

handwriting

Linked Script
Introduced in the UK in the 1930s by Marion Richardson and others, Linked Script was tested in South Australia in the 1950s but not adopted by government schools. It is a cursive style using the same letter shapes and technique as 'ball and stick' Print Script.

handwriting

Italic
A traditional handwriting style of the 16th century, Italic was adopted by some independent schools in South Australia in the middle of the 20th century. It is written with a chiselled nib.

handwriting

Simple Modern Hand
Introduced in Glasgow, Scotland about 1960, Simple Modern Hand used simple letter shapes formed with the traditional handwriting technique in both script and cursive forms. It is not far removed from the Italic alphabet but is written with any handwriting instrument.

handwriting

handwriting

South Australian Modern Cursive and Print
This is one of many efficient styles developed throughout the world since the 1960s. It uses simple letter shapes formed with traditional handwriting technique in both script and cursive forms. It is not far removed from the Looped Cursive and Copperplate styles but is written with any handwriting instrument.

The advantages of using South Australian Modern Cursive and Print are that:
* learners use a handwriting style based on their natural movements and scribblings
* the transition from script to cursive occurs without the re-learning of basic letter shapes
* linking is a natural development
* learners acquire a relaxed technique, which helps to develop speed and to maintain legibility
* personal styles can be developed easily
* the style is produced using readily available instruments.

appendix 4

Other languages

English as a Second Language learners may already be familiar with a writing system in another language or alphabet. Understanding how learners' first language scripts differ from English will help educators to understand which convention of English can cause confusion to learners as they learn to read and write in English. Opportunities for learners to talk about similarities and differences between writing systems will help raise the awareness of all learners about how writing works across languages.

There are four main writing systems:

- Alphabetic writing systems break words down into their component consonant and vowel sounds, and represent those sounds using letters. Some languages use ways that are very regular; others, such as English, are less regular.

- Syllabic writing systems use basic units that correspond to syllables; for example, Khmer.

- Consonantal writing systems, such as Farsi, represent consonants and not vowels.

- Logographic (or ideographic) writing systems, such as Chinese, use symbols or characters to represent whole words or components of words, rather than their phonetic components.

Some languages combine elements from more than one system, such as the Japanese Kanji.

Writing systems differ in a range of ways including:

- the kinds of symbols used

- the relationship between symbols and speech

- the directionality of script on the page

- the directionality of turning pages in a book

- use of punctuation

- use of diacritical marks, such as accents, which provide additional information about the sounds in the word

- conventions for writing numbers

- conventions for indicating direct speech.

The following examples are of writing systems familiar to some students attending South Australian schools. The passage which has been translated in each case is:

In South Australian schools, students can expect to learn to handwrite in the English language. English is written in the Latin alphabetic script from left to right. Pages turn from right to left.

Languages

Amharic		
በደቡብ ኣውስትራልያ ትምህርት ቤቶች፡ ተማሪዎች፡ በእንግሊዝኛ ቋንቋ፡ በእጅ ለመጻፍ ለመማር ማስብ ይችላሉ። እንግሊዝኛ በላቲናዊ ፊደሎች ጽሑፍ፡ ከግራ ወደ ቀኝ ይጻፋል። ገጾት ከቀኝ ወደ ግራ ይገለበጣሉ።		
Used in: • Ethiopia • Eritrea • countries where the language is spoken because of migration.	**System and direction of writing:** • Ge'ez alphabet • syllabic (abugida) • written from left to right.	**Other conventions:** • uses punctuation • no capital letters • spaces between words.

Arabic		
بإمكان الطلاب في مدارس جنوب أستراليا أن يتوقعوا أنهم سيتعلمون الكتابة باللغة الإنكليزية. تُكتب الإنكليزية بالحروف الأبجدية اللاتينية ويكون إتجاه الخط من اليسار إلى اليمين، ويتمّ تقليب الصفحات من اليمين إلى اليسار.		
Used in: • Middle East • North Africa • Arabian Peninsula • countries where the language is spoken because of migration • used widely as a lingua franca; that is, as a medium among speakers of other languages.	**System and direction of writing:** • consonantal • written from right to left; pages turn left to right and students may handle English books 'backwards' • numerals in Arabic are not identical to the 'Arabic figures' used in English; numerals from 11 to 99 are read right to left, beyond that from left to right.	**Other conventions:** • letters often change according to their position in a word – initial, medial, final or isolated • texts consist mainly of consonants, only long vowels are written, short ones are omitted • uses diacritics • punctuation similar to English but no capital letters • spaces between words.

Chinese

在南澳州上學的孩子都要學會英文的書寫。英文是由拉丁字母構成的文字：文字的書寫方法是從左至右，閱讀時從右往左翻閱。

Used in:	System and direction of writing:	Other conventions:
• China • Taiwan • Singapore and other South East Asian countries • countries where the language is spoken because of migration.	• logographic • traditionally top to bottom of page, in columns from right to left, but now predominantly horizontally from left to right • the order of the strokes that make up each character is important.	• each character has a meaning and represents a word or part of a word • punctuation is used • no spaces between words • a complex form of characters and a simplified form are used • Chinese can be written in Latin script ('Pinyin'), but Chinese writers do not use this extensively • Arabic figures are used • characters are used traditionally when writing numbers in words.

Note: There is one system of writing but many different Chinese dialects or varieties. Because of the logographic writing system, speakers of different Chinese dialects can communicate with each other with ease in the written form.

Farsi

در استرالیای جنوبی انتظار می‌رود تا دانش آموزان به زبان انگلیسی بنویسند. زبان انگلیسی از سمت چپ به راست و با حروف لاتین نوشته می‌شود. صفحات را از راست به چپ برگ می‌زنند.

Used in:	System and direction of writing:	Other conventions:
• Iran • Afghanistan • countries where the language is spoken because of migration.	• consonantal • written from right to left; pages turn left to right, and students may handle English books 'backwards' • numerals in Arabic are not identical to the 'Arabic figures' used in English; numerals from 11 to 99 are read right to left, beyond that from left to right.	• uses Arabic script with four extra letters in the alphabet • does not use diacritics. (Also see notes for Arabic.)

Japanese

南オーストラリア州の学校では，生徒は英語を手で書けるよう学習していきます。
英語は、ラテン文字のアルファベットを使って左から右に書きます。右から左へと
ページをめくります。

Used in:	System and direction of writing:	Other conventions:
• Japan • countries where the language is spoken because of migration.	• combination of scripts: syllabic and logographic • traditionally top to bottom of page, in columns from right to left, but now predominantly horizontally from left to right • the order of the strokes that make up each character is important.	• punctuation is used but no capital letters • no spaces between words • Arabic figures are used predominantly.

Khmer (language of Cambodia)

នៅក្នុងសាលារៀនរដ្ឋអូស្ត្រាលីខាងត្បូង សិស្សអាចរៀនសរសេរអក្សរដោយដៃជាភាសាអង់គ្លេស។ ភាសា
អង់គ្លេសសរសេរជាទំរង់អក្សរឡ្បាតាំង ចាប់ពីខាងឆ្វេងទៅស្តាំ។ ទំព័រសៀវភៅបើកពីស្តាំទៅឆ្វេង។

Used in:	System and direction of writing:	Other conventions:
• Cambodia • Thailand • Vietnam • countries where the language is spoken because of migration.	• syllabic • written from left to right.	• no word spaces but spaces occur at points roughly equivalent to pauses in speech—this makes the Khmer script appear like an extremely long sentence joined together without breaks.

Kurdish

Used in:	System and direction of writing:	Other conventions:
• Turkey • Iraq • Iran • Syria • Armenia • Lebanon • countries where the language is spoken because of migration.	• The Kurdish language uses three different writing systems. In Iran and Iraq it is written using a modified version of the Arabic alphabet (and more recently sometimes with Latin alphabet in Iraqi Kurdistan). In Turkey and Syria, it is written using the Latin alphabet. Kurdish in the former USSR uses a modified Cyrillic alphabet. • Numerals in Arabic are not identical to the 'Arabic figures' used in English; numerals from 11 to 99 are read right to left, beyond that from left to right.	• letters often change according to their position in a word—initial, medial, final or isolated • texts consist mainly of consonants, only long vowels are written, short ones are omitted • uses diacritics • punctuation similar to English but no capital letters.

Serbian

У јужно-аустралијским школама ученици треба да науче рукопис енглеског језика. Енглески се пише латиницом са леве на десну страну. Странице се окрећу са десне на леву страну.

Used in:	System and direction of writing:	Other conventions:
• Serbia • countries of former Yugoslavia • surrounding countries • countries where the language is spoken because of migration.	• uses the Cyrillic alphabet, though differs from the Russian script • written from left to right.	• uses capitals and punctuation similar to English • spaces between words.

Note: In former Yugoslavia, political sensitivities are acute around the issue of language. The language used to be called Serbo-Croatian, with varying opinions over whether this constituted two distinct languages or one language with two variants (one with a Cyrillic and one with a Latin alphabet). Writers of Serbian could be familiar with the Latin alphabet.

Vietnamese

Trong các trường học tại Tiểu Bang Nam Úc học sinh có thể phải học viết chữ Anh Ngữ. Anh Ngữ được viết bằng mẫu tự La Tinh từ bên trái sang bên mặt. Các trang sách được lật từ bên mặt sang bên trái.

Used in:	System and direction of writing:	Other conventions:
• Vietnam • Cambodia • Laos • countries where the language is spoken because of migration.	• alphabetic (Latin) – name of script is Quôc ngu; it omits 'f', 'j', 'w', and 'z' and contains seven additional letters not found in English that are designated by diacritics • written from left to right.	• uses diacritics to show the six tones • uses capital letters • punctuation similar to English.

Numbers and fractions

In many languages, numbers have some different conventions, for example:

- Ten thousand is written as 10.000 rather than 10,000 or 10 000 as in English.

- Decimals in many languages will be written 3,14 rather than the English convention of 3.14. This can cause confusion in mathematics; even some translated maths or science text books can include non-English conventions.

- Handwritten numbers can also cause difficulties, particularly with 1 and 7—the 1 in many languages can have an exaggerated upper lip and may be confused with a 7, and a 7 is often written with a stroke horizontally across the downstroke.

3/4
1/2

appendix 5

Keyboard skills

Keyboard skills are a crucial skill to learn in the early years. All learners need to become familiar with a keyboard and learn the functions of the keys. They need to experiment with a keyboard and enjoy using one. For some learners, using a keyboard will be their only form of communication. For all learners to take their place in society, communication through a keyboard will be a fundamental and growing necessity.

The development of keyboard skills in all learners has become a necessity for schools and educators. Keyboards are now used regularly by nearly every member of society and indications are that they will be increasingly used and needed in the future, in all aspects of work and leisure. Learners in the early years need basic skills and these need to be built on to achieve increasingly more sophisticated skills through the middle years. Often, young people learn computer skills (and technically complicated ones) very quickly in comparison to older learners, and educators can use this ability in teaching keyboard skills.

The development of keyboard skills in those learners who are unable to write by hand is a priority for educators. It enables learners to communicate on an equitable basis.

Keyboard skills and handwriting feature most strongly in the strategies strand for English in the SACSA Framework. In the introduction to this strand we find:

> In these Early Years of schooling children experiment with a range of reading and viewing strategies, including skimming, scanning and using text features to search for information. [KC1] [KC6] *They explore strategies for using a computer keyboard*, tools and screen to compose, create, read and view texts. [KC6] [KC7]

and

> In the Early Years *children practise handwriting and keyboarding* to communicate ideas so that written products can be shared with others. [T] [C] [KC2] (Early Years Band: R–2—English page 149).

appendix 6

Further resources

Exercise books

'Research findings provide strong evidence that, for the majority of children, use of lined paper facilitates more legible handwriting than unlined paper' (Alston & Taylor 1987, p 76).

A4 exercise books with:
* 24mm dotted thirds
* 18mm dotted thirds
* 14mm dotted thirds.

Crayons
Triangular grip wax crayons
Triangular plastic crayons

Pencils
Triangular pencils, HB, 2B, 6B
Colour triangular pencils

Markers
Triangular markers

Pens
Any triangular design

Assessment rubrics
Models of rubrics can be found at many internet sites. One of these is <http://rubistar.4teachers.org/index.php>.

Write-on and wipe-off boards for educator use

Student practice boards

Interactive whiteboards

Typing programs
* *Easy 2 Learn Typing 2* 2002, Curriculum Corporation, Australia.
* *Garfield's Typing Pal Deluxe* 2003, Dataworks De Marque, Victoria.
* *Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing* 2002, The Learning Company, California.
* *Phonics Alive! 6 Typing* 2000, Advanced Software, NSW.
* *TTAPS Touch Typing: A Program for Schools* 1999, The Happy Mac, Victoria.
* *Typequick for Students: Kewala's Amazing Keyboard Adventure* 2005, Typequick, Sydney.
* *Typing Tournament: The Essential Typing Tutor* MAC/WIN CD available from EdAlive: <http://www.edalive.com>.

Resources on CD
Aussie School Fonts—CD available from New Horizons at <http://www.nh.com.au>. This software allows you to convert text into SA Modern Cursive. You can create sheets of your own handwriting exercises, posters, crosswords and flashcards.

Handwriting Fonts—CD from Ready-Ed Publications at <http://www.readyed.com.au>, or PO Box 276, Greenwood WA 6024. Although the unlimited site licence is appealing at only $45.00, this CD includes only Foundation Print, Foundation Cursive, Foundation Modern, Queensland Beginners and Victorian Modern Cursive. The CD is advertised with Foundation Fonts for NSW, ACT, SA and Tasmania. However, these are the NSW fonts rather than SA Modern Cursive.

BBC Words and Pictures software is available from <http://www.bbcschoolshop.com> and presents four activities to reinforce the recommended way to form letters using the magic pencil. This could be useful for some learners.

glossary

ascender	head of the letter (heads)
automaticity	habitual and unconscious actions in handwriting that develop with practice
cursive	joined up writing
descender	tail of the letter (tails)
dropped in	The link from a letter is begun, but the pen/pencil is then lifted to the starting point of the new letter and, as the new letter is being formed, it connects with, or touches, the link from the previous letter, hence 'dropped in'.
exit	the stroke (hooks and kicks) that forms the beginning of the link to the following letter
hook	stroke that forms the exit from the top of a letter and is a precursor to linking
kick	stroke that forms the exit from the base of a letter and is a precursor to linking
linking	the chunking of groups of letters
metalanguage	This is a form of language used to describe or analyse another language–in the case of handwriting, to describe or analyse a written language. This language is the language of instruction and may need to be made appropriate to the learner's development (eg using the terms 'heads' and 'tails' for the concepts of 'ascenders' and 'descenders' when teaching young learners).

oval	an oval body shape with a 2 o'clock starting position for all anti-clockwise letters
pen lift	natural pause that relaxes the hand, which the writer may not be aware of and which helps avoid illegibility
proprioceptive	relating to the sense of the position of parts of the body, relative to other neighbouring parts, which provides feedback on the status of the body
SACSA	South Australian Curriculum, Standards and Accountability
script	printing; not 'joined up' writing
speed loops	These connect letters by the quickest possible means. Speed loops are generally used to join letters that have heads or tails.
tactile	relating to the sense of touch
tripod grip	This is the desirable hold on a writing implement—the writing implement rests on the side of the top joint of the middle finger, with the thumb resting on the side of the implement and the forefinger resting on top; a small space should be visible between the thumb and forefinger. The tripod grip is also called the 'precision grip'.

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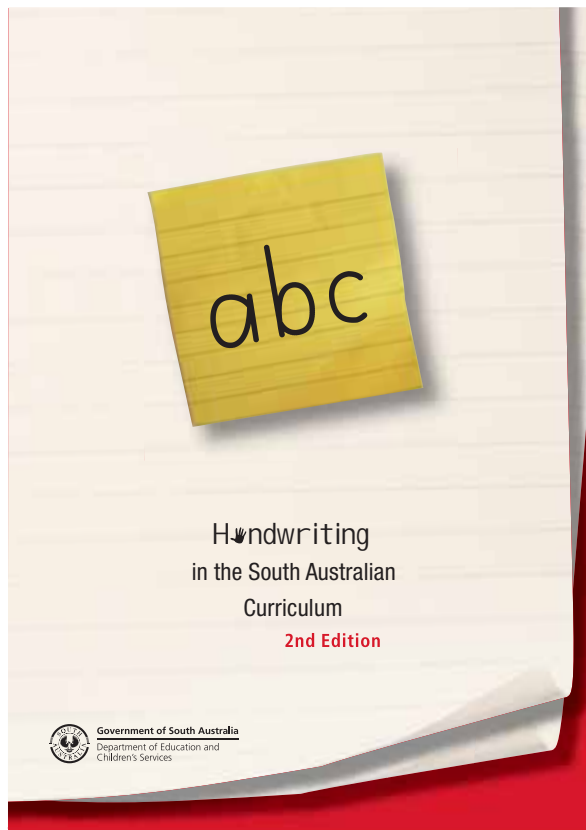
Slope cards

Handwriting in the South Australian Curriculum
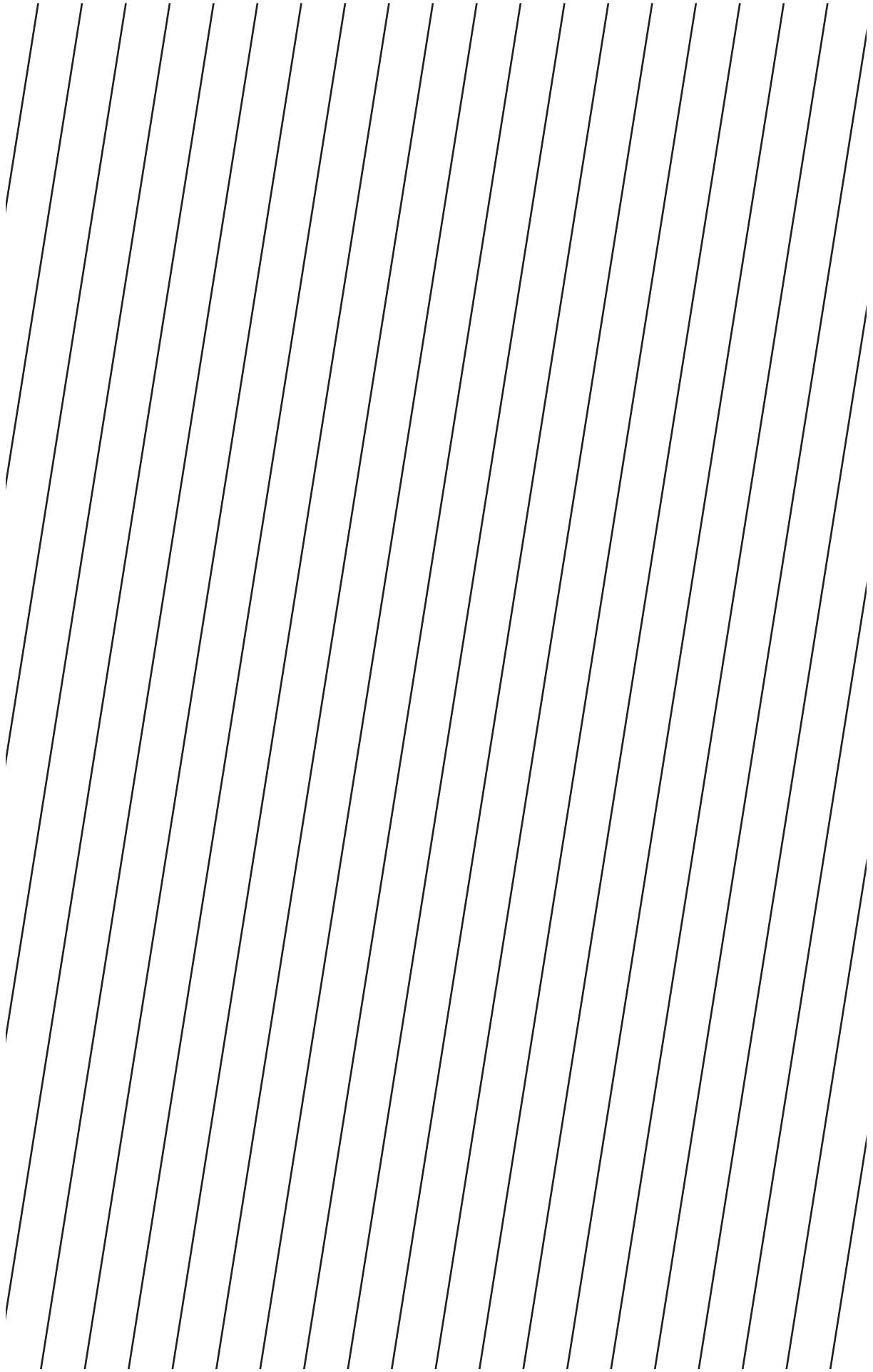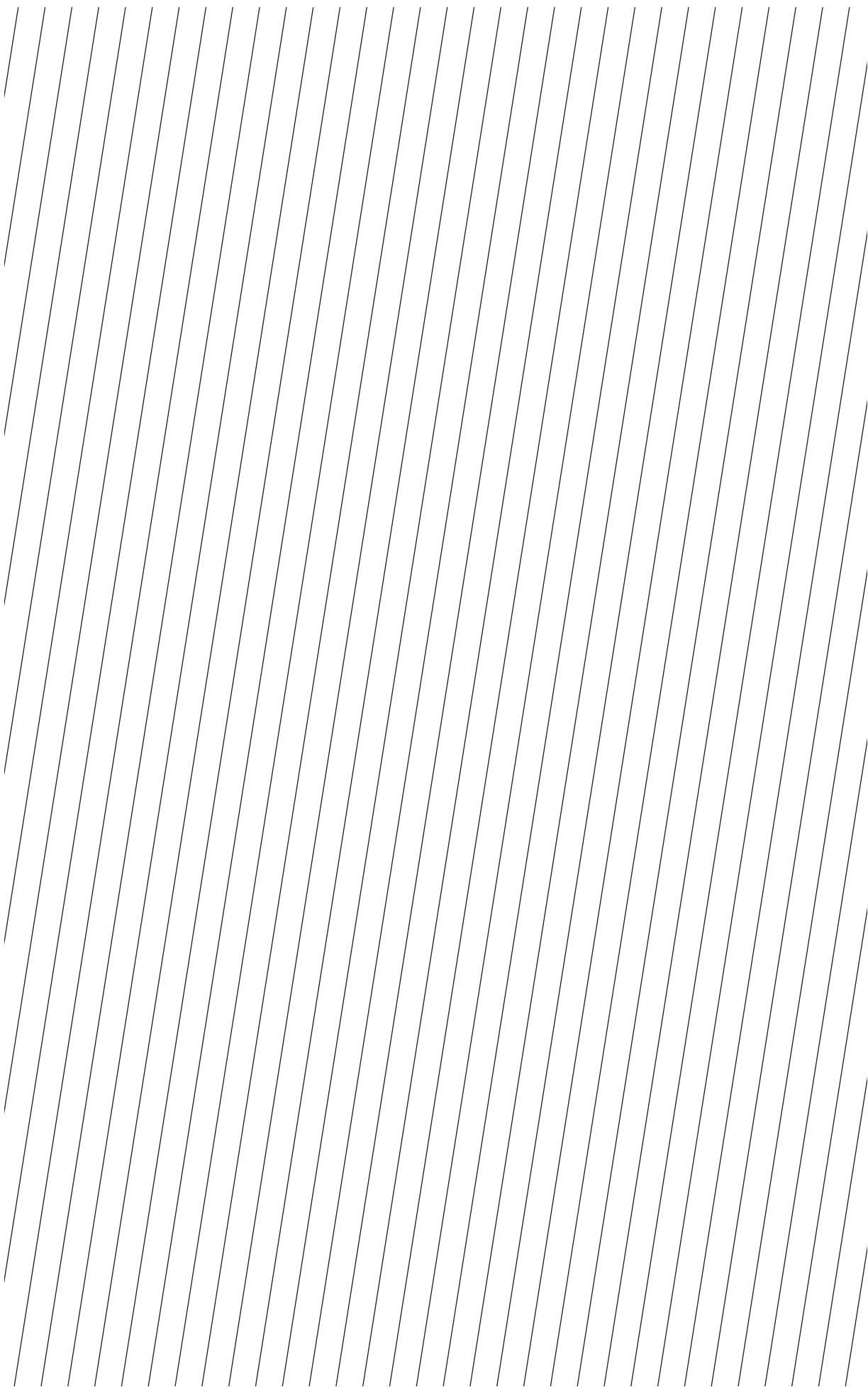
Order Form

Handwriting in the South Australian Curriculum

Department of Education and Children's Services

This book asserts that it is still important for children to learn to write by hand. In learning to handwrite, students also learn about the shape and sound of letters which is essential for reading.

Learning to handwrite supports students to develop literacy skills and is a responsibility of schools.

Handwriting in the South Australian Curriculum presents practical ideas for the teaching of handwriting, which will work with any modern cursive font.

Handwriting
in the South Australian
Curriculum
2nd Edition

Government of South Australia
Department of Education and
Children's Services

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Please send me _____ (copies) of *Handwriting in the South Australian Curriculum* at $24.95 each (inc. GST) plus $5 postage (per copy)

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☐ Charge my credit card   Signed _____

☐ Mastercard   ☐ Visa   ☐ Am Ex

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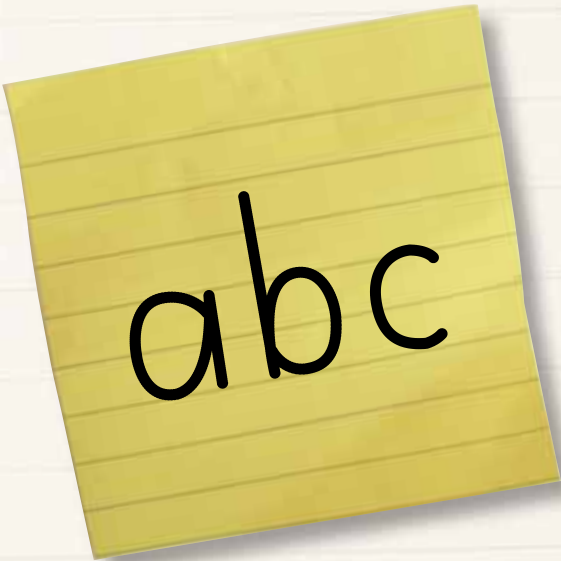
Handwriting
in the South Australian
Curriculum

Information for Parents

Handwriting in South Australian Schools and Preschools

Why it is important to learn to handwrite?

Handwriting is one form of communication using words. Although it is increasingly useful for learners to be able to write using a keyboard, the ability to handwrite remains an important skill in many aspects of their everyday lives.

Learning to handwrite also supports learners to recognise letters and symbols and to understand the sound of the letters which they use to form and read words.

Developing a handwriting style is, additionally, an essential aspect of establishing our identity as human beings. A signature is still widely recognised as the mark of an individual.

All learners, who are physically able to, should be provided with the opportunity to develop a handwriting style that enables them to write easily and in a way that can be understood by others.

Should children be able to write before they start school?

Many children will show an interest in handwriting before they attend school and will experiment with making marks on paper and 'doing writing'. While there is no expectation that children are able to write in the formal sense before they start school, many children feel a great sense of achievement when they are able to recognise and write letters and, particularly, write their name.

"The ability to write is the very foundation of communication"

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

What support can learners expect in school and preschool settings?

All schools and preschools have received copies of the resource *Handwriting in the South Australian curriculum.*

This resource has been developed after careful consultation with school and preschool educators from across the state.

It acknowledges that schools and preschools have a responsibility to provide resources and opportunities for learners to further develop hand–eye coordination and be supported to develop handwriting skills. This should be part of a whole school and preschool approach.

Learners in schools can expect to be instructed about the formation of letters, have regular opportunities to practise handwriting, receive feedback on their progress and get additional support when it is necessary.

Which handwriting style should children learn?

Most schools in South Australia provide learners with South Australian Modern Cursive as the model for forming letters (as illustrated). This font was developed to be used with a wide range of writing implements, including ballpoint and felt tipped pens which have increasingly replaced the fountain pen.

The South Australian Modern Cursive font has two forms: beginners' alphabet and the cursive formation. The beginners' alphabet is usually taught first followed later by the cursive formation. When learners are introduced to the cursive formation they will often be introduced also to the ways that letters link to one another.

When learners have developed a fluent cursive style they may go on to experiment with speed loops. Ultimately, learners will develop a personal handwriting style.
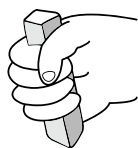
What is the best grip and when should it be learnt?

The preferred mature grip is the tripod or precision grip. In order to use this grip, children need to have developed appropriate fine motor skills as well as reached a particular stage of muscular development. It is important to bear in mind that each individual develops at a different rate and it can be damaging to expect children to use the mature tripod grip before they are ready to do so.
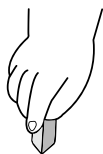
Typically, learners will begin with a palmar grasp and progress to incomplete tripods before they adopt the tripod grip (see illustration).

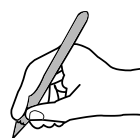## What support can parents/caregivers provide for children?

- Include drawing and writing in your everyday activities. Involve your children in writing shopping lists and letters and drawing pictures to send to friends and relatives.
- Help to develop your children's upper body strength and coordination through visits to playgrounds and participation in physical games and sports.
- Develop your children's visual discrimination and fine motor skills by doing such things as puzzles and constructing with Lego.

Palmar Grasp   **Incomplete tripods**   **Tripod Grip**