



Whole school Handwriting procedure using Little Wandle and Letter Join



TAPESTRY
LEARNING
PARTNERSHIP

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Key principles of handwriting at Djanogly Strelley Academy

At DSA, the key principles behind our handwriting approach are based upon guidance from Little Wandle, Letter Join, the DfE Writing Framework 2025, Ofsted Telling the Story: the English Education Subject Report 2024, the EEF (improving literacy in KS1 and KS2), Ofsted Research Review Series: English 2022, the National Handwriting Association and the Literacy Excellence Centre (*links to all of these available in the appendices*).

Fluent handwriting is a significant predictor of positive writing outcomes. A lack of fluency can constrain pupils by hindering their composition; reducing their motivation; and preventing others from understanding what they have written. Being able to write also is an aid to memory – note taking can make learning more active and therefore fluency and automaticity of handwriting should not be underestimated.

To support pupils to obtain automaticity in handwriting, we know that the **consistent** teaching of handwriting should be:

- Taught in small steps with lots of opportunity for practice.
- Cumulative, building on what pupils have learned previously.
- Consolidated before teaching moves on so pupils do not practise letters incorrectly.
- Revisited when further practice is needed.
- Demonstrated by the teacher with consistently high expectations of standards in all their own writing.
- Responsive to pupils' needs, identified through what teachers notice in their writing.
- In addition to any handwriting that forms part of phonics instruction.
- Modelled in all writing activities.

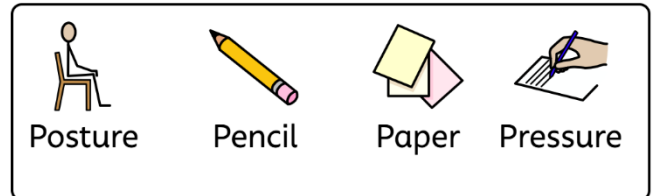
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Our 'ready to write' routines:

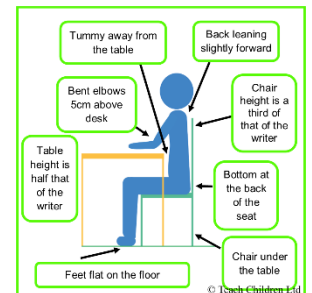
An inefficient pencil grip can cause discomfort, which can affect children's motivation, fluency, legibility and cause them difficulty in sustaining their writing speed. At DSA, we know that explicit teaching and practice is needed to support our children in developing the physical skills for handwriting.

Therefore, at the beginning of each handwriting lesson, children are reminded to check that they are 'ready to write' with the 4 Ps. This should be reinforced in every written task throughout the day.



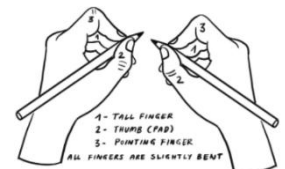
Posture

Learning to sit correctly at a table for handwriting type activities is not just important for developing a physically comfortable and maintainable sitting position; it also allows the arms and hands to move freely and enables the paper to be tilted and positioned correctly, helping to improve the quality of the handwriting.



Pencil grip

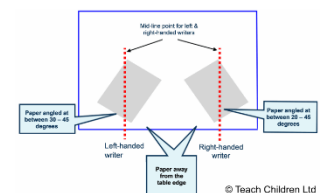
An inefficient pencil grip can cause discomfort, which can affect motivation, fluency, legibility and create difficulty in sustaining speed. Changing a child's pencil grip when it is established can be a challenge!



Paper position

The paper position and tilt on the desk, for both right and left-handed writers, can make a big difference to a child's handwriting experience and comfort and yet it is an element which is often neglected.

By positioning and tilting the paper correctly, the writing hand stays in one comfortable position on the table and the non-writing hand moves the paper diagonally up the table (while maintaining an appropriate paper tilt angle). With the non-writing hand moving the paper up the table, the writing line stays in the same place which means eye movements are less, helping to make the writing experience less tiring and stressful.



If the paper is positioned and tilted correctly, with their writing hand under the writing line, they will also be able to see more easily what they have just written and where to place the next letter, word or section of text on the page. This is especially important for left-handed writers.

Pressure

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Some children struggle to know how hard or how light to press with their pens/pencils. Difficulties with pencil pressure can result in tension/pain in hand and arm; a slower handwriting speed; or too little pressure may result in lack of control of the pen/pencil.

Throughout a lesson, pupils are praised for showing that they are 'ready to write' and reminded of the 4 Ps if their posture, pencil grip, position or pressure needs more support.

Teachers model the correct way to hold a pencil and maintain posture when writing and explain why sitting comfortably helps them to write easily. At times, teachers may also show pupils what 'poor' sitting looks like (leaning forward, close to the paper; resting their head in their hand or on the table; dangling their non-writing arm or hand instead of using it to steady the paper) and the impact this has.

If teachers notice that children are finding it particularly challenging to show that they are 'ready to write', they investigate whether there might be a reason for this (for example, if poor eyesight is causing the child to peer closely at their writing). Support and adaptations are offered for children on an individualised basis.

Left-handed support

Left-handed pupils need specific demonstration and adjustments, including by making sure they:

- Have space to write
- Sit to the left of any right-handed pupil to prevent their arms colliding
- Slant their paper to the right
- Use softer pencils that require less pressure
- Grip the pencil at a slightly higher point so they can see around their fingers
- Do not hold the pencil too tightly or press down too hard

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Expectations for handwriting in each year group

2 Year Olds	- Fine motor control and precision development e.g. malleable materials, water play, cutting with tools - Gross motor skills including opportunities for painting on large easels, scarf dancing, or using shoulder/arm movements to make large shapes both indoors and outdoors - Regular opportunities for mark-making and drawing using chunky and short crayons to support development of appropriate pencil grip - Planned play to support development of core strength, stability, balance, spatial awareness		
Nursery	- Fine motor control and precision development e.g. threading, water play, using tweezers, cutting - Gross motor skills including opportunities for painting on large easels, using chalk on pavement, or using shoulder/arm movements to make large shapes both indoors and outdoors - Regular opportunities for mark-making and drawing - Regular opportunities to practice pre-writing patterns: Practice drawing continuous shapes like zigzags, curves, and tunnels to learn directional, flowing movements. - Core strength, stability, balance, spatial awareness		
F2	- Follow the Little Wandle letter formation - Individual letters - Correct pencil grip – pinch and flick - Modelling on lines (whiteboards) - Introducing 4Ps and ensuring correct equipment, seating and support. - Identify left-handers, considered in seating plan where appropriate (conversation with parents) - Children should not be expected to write at length or for a purpose as automaticity of letter formation is the priority. Dictation is used to support pupils – individual letters, words and short sentences.		
Year 1/2	A typical year may look like this: (Once the children are forming all letters correctly/letter formation is secure, we begin to add lead outs and then some joins)		
	<u>Letter formation phase – teaching the basics</u> - Model using the Little Wandle letter formation rhymes - Lower case but no lead outs - Insist letters are on the lines in all books outside of the lessons. - Work in handwriting books 3/4 sessions a week - Follow Letter join progression. (letter families Long Ladders, Curly Caterpillars, One-armed Robots and Zig-Zag) - Support for some children may include yellow letters to trace with a start point indicated. - Correct pencil grip – pinch and flick - Correct sitting position - Identify left-handers, considered in seating plan - Those without automaticity in letter formation use pre-dictation in their English books to reinforce the letter formation and positioning	<u>Letter sizing phase- ensuring appropriate sizing of the letters in relation to each other.</u> - Model using the Little Wandle letter formation rhymes - Capital letters are now taught with lower case alongside (revision) - Insist letters are on the line outside of handwriting lines - Support may be given using a yellow highlighter to indicate midway point. - Work in handwriting books 3/4 sessions a week - Follow Letter Join progression (letter families Long Ladders, Curly Caterpillars, One-armed Robots and Zig-Zag) - Correct pencil grip – pinch and flick - Correct sitting position	<u>Pre joining phase</u> - Pre-cursive, lower case letters with lead outs - Follow Letter Join progression (letter families Long Ladders, Curly Caterpillars, One-armed Robots and Zig-Zag) - Insist letters are on the line - Work in lined books 3/4 sessions a week - Correct pencil grip – pinch and flick - Correct sitting position - Begin to join appropriate letters ONLY when letter formation is correct – starting and finishing each in the right place, ensuring size is related to others from the same family.
Year 3 and Year 4	- Identify left-handers, considered in seating plan - Ensure modelling of 4Ps by all adults writing. Insist on 4Ps for pupils. - Autumn 1 – letter formation - Learn and consolidate joins – use letter join break – once letters are consistent in formation, shape and size. - Follow Letter Join Recovery for 2026, then appropriate Letter Join MTP - Minimum of two sessions a week - Work in handwriting books, with same expectations for all writing in books. Those children with automaticity may complete handwriting lessons in English books.		

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Year 5 and Year 6	Those without automaticity in letter formation use pre-dictation in their English books to reinforce the letter formation and positioning
	- Identify left-handers, considered in seating plan - Autumn 1 – letter formation - Revise and consolidate joins – use letter join plus no lead only when pupils are ready - Follow Letter Join Recovery for 2026, then appropriate Letter Join MTP - Minimum of two sessions a week - Work in handwriting books initially and until letter formation is correct, then letter formation can be practiced in English books, as appropriate for those with automaticity.

In each Handwriting lesson, the teacher models the focus skill to the children in their own handwriting book (Y1+) or whiteboard (F2) underneath a visualiser. This is so that the children see the letter/join being modelled by hand using the writing equipment that the children will also be using in the correct position.

When the children are practising, adults circulate the room to address misconceptions. There is a particular focus on adults checking **sitting positions**; **pencil grip**; **accurate letter formation and joins**; and **letters placement on the line**. Incorrect or malformed letters or joins should be challenged in the moment.

Sequences of letters alongside the lower-case Little Wandle formation rhymes

Ladder letters	L l l I i i T t t U u u J j j j Y y y y	Down the lollipop stick. Down the iguana and dot the leaf. Down the tiger and across its neck. Down and around the umbrella and back to the ground. Down the jellyfish and dot its head. Down, around the yo-yo and curl around the string.
Curly Caterpillars	A a a D d d C c c O o o o F f f f E e e S s s s G g g g Q q q q	Around the astronaut's helmet and down into space Around the duck's body, up to its head and down to its feet. Curl around the cat. All around the octopus. Down the flamingo to its foot and across its wings. Around the elephant's eye and curl down its trunk. Down the snake from head to tail. Around the goat's face and curl under its chin. Around the queen's face, down her robe and a flick at the end.
One armed robots	B b b b H h h K k k M m m N n n P p p p R r r	Down the bear's back, up and around its tummy. Down, up and over the helicopter. Down the kite, up to the top corner and down to the bottom corner. Down, up and over the mouse's ears. Down, up and over the net. Down the penguin's back, up and around its head. From the cloud to the ground and over the rainbow.

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Zig Zag	V v v v W w w w X x x x Z z z	Down to the bottom of the volcano and back up to the top. Down and up and down and up the waves. From the top, across the box to the bottom. From the top again across the box to the bottom. Across the top of the zebra's head, zig-zag down its neck and along.
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Classroom environment

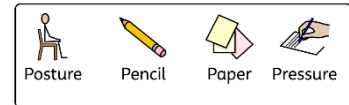
Adults in school must use the correct letter formation for all writing that children can see. This includes on working walls, displays, boards, books, flipcharts and modelling under the visualiser. In key stage one this will include the flicks out and key stage two this should include modelled joined writing beginning in year 3 and 4. Teachers should refer to the TAFs for writing for key stage appropriate expectations.

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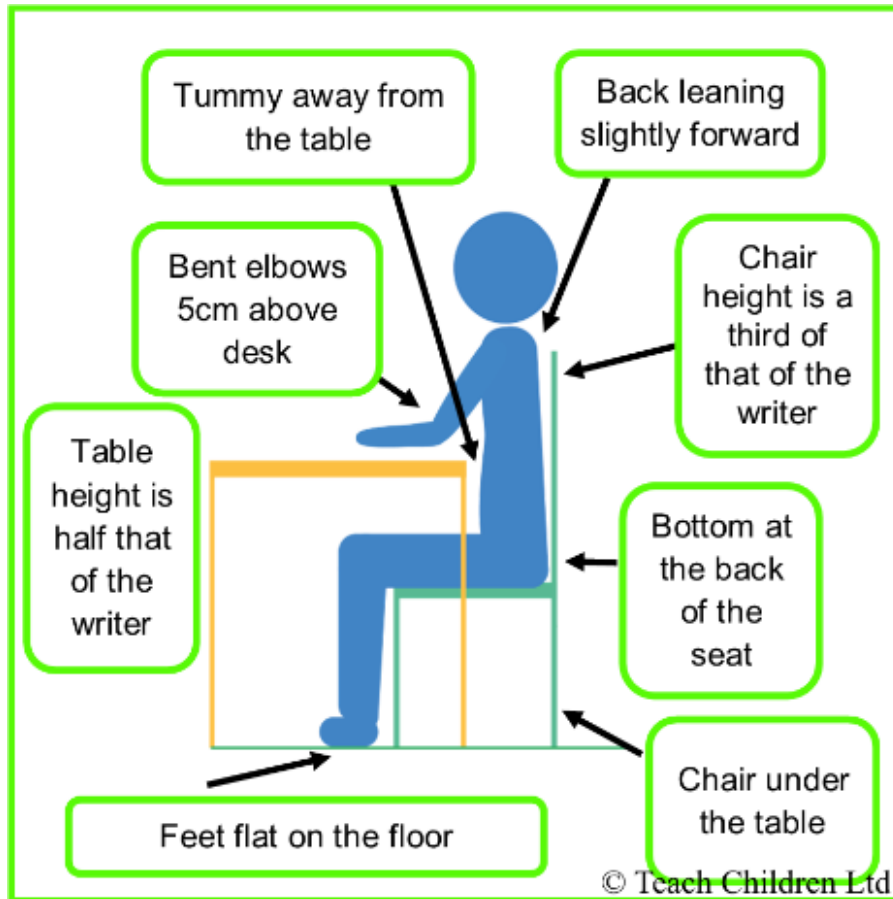


Appendices:

Guidance linked to the Four Ps:



Posture:



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Tripod pencil grip:

Pencil grip

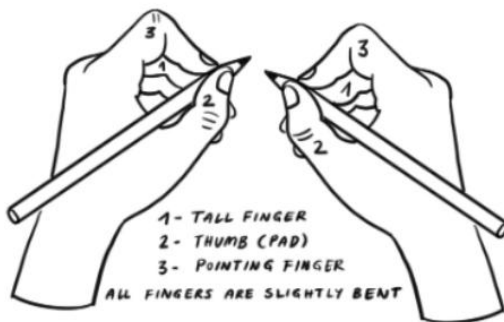


right-hand pencil grip

Hold your pencil between your thumb and index finger while it rests on your middle finger. Don't hold the pencil too tightly!



left-hand pencil grip



Teachers should encourage pupils to maintain correct finger positioning. Most pupils find the tripod grip the easiest to learn and support grips can help. Teachers should show pupils how to pinch the pencil with the index ('pointing') finger and the thumb, about a finger space from the end (on the coloured part just above the sharpened point); and how to rest the middle finger underneath the pencil to support it. If necessary, a sticker can show pupils where to place their fingers. The way a child grips the pencil will affect the quality, speed and flow of the handwriting. The grip should be relaxed, not pressing too hard on the pencil or the paper.

(DfE, The Writing Framework 2025, Appendix A)

'Nip, Flip, Grip' [How to hold a pencil - Nip, Flip, Grip Method \(Tripod Grasp\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WjzNyHgPZac&t=1s)



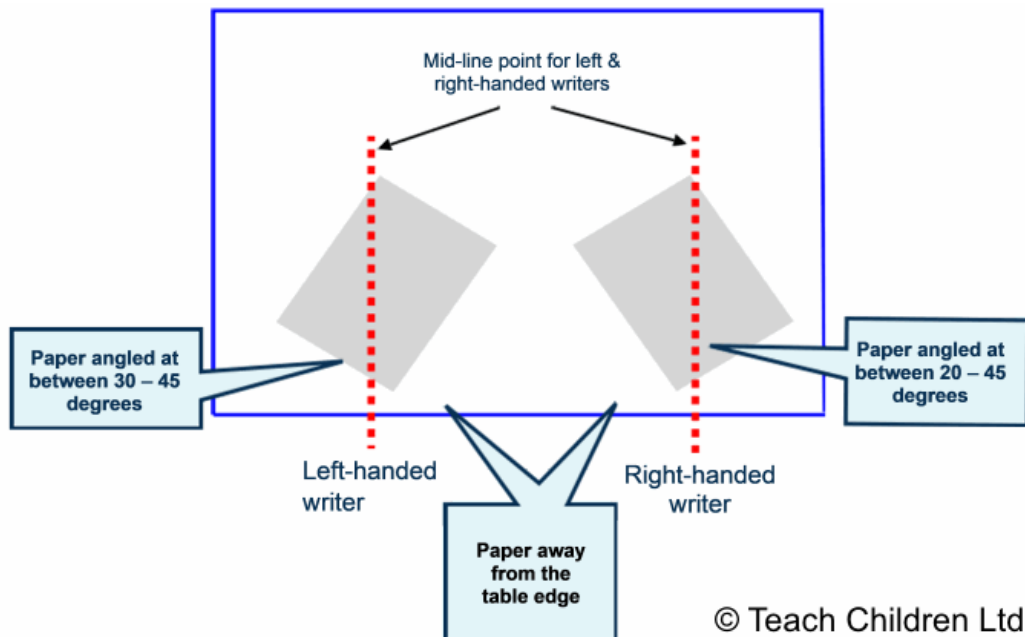
National Handwriting Association: Video modelling of the Tripod Grip

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WjzNyHgPZac&t=1s>

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Paper position:



Paper positioning for left handers:



Paper positioning for right handers:



Pressure:

LIGHT PRESSURE INDICATORS

- Faint, shaky script
- The fingers are often more extended at the joints and higher up the pencil

HEAVY PRESSURE INDICATORS

- Marks that go through to the next page
- Raised ridges on the back of the paper that can be felt with the fingertips
- Red marks on the skin because of contact with the pen
- White knuckles

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Links to guidance which has informed our whole school handwriting procedure:

- Letter Join
 - [*HandwritingRecovery.pdf*](#)
 - *(Teams link)*
- DfE Writing Framework 2025
 - [*The writing framework*](#)
- EEF Improving Literacy in KS1
 - [*Improving Literacy in Key Stage 1 | EEF*](#)
- EEF Improving Literacy in KS2
 - [*Improving Literacy in Key Stage 2 | EEF*](#)
- Ofsted Telling the Story: the English Education Subject Report 2024
 - [*Telling the story: the English education subject report - GOV.UK*](#)
- Ofsted Research Review Series: English 2022
 - [*Research review series: English - GOV.UK*](#)
- The National Handwriting Association
 - [*National Handwriting Association – Charity promoting good practice in handwriting*](#)
- The Literacy Excellence Centre
 - [*Literacy Excellence Centre | Flying High Partnership*](#)