

Help Your Child to Better Handwriting



Handwriting is a complex process of managing written language by coordinating the eyes, arms, hands, pencil grip, letter formation, and body posture. The development of a child's handwriting can provide clues to developmental problems that could hinder a child's learning because teachers depend on written work to measure how well a child is learning.

Occupational therapists can evaluate the underlying components that support a student's handwriting, such as muscle strength, endurance, coordination, and motor control, and parents can encourage activities at home to support good handwriting skills.

What can an occupational therapist do?

- **Demonstrate** proper posture to supports the proper use of the arms, hands, head, and eyes.
- **Measure** the level of physical strength and endurance.
- **Analyze** fine motor control, such as the ability to hold a writing utensil.
- **Determine** visual and perceptual ability that influences a child's ability to form letter and shapes using a writing utensil.
- **Help** develop and evaluate handwriting curriculums and collaborate with teachers on effective strategies.
- **Suggest** home activities that promote the development of skills needed in good handwriting.

What can parents and families do?

- **Encourage** children to participate in sports and games that could improve visual, motor, and coordination skills, such as playing ball, jacks, marbles, and outdoor sports.
- **Require** children and teens to use silverware when eating to develop hand grip.
- **Provide** an activity that exercises the hands, such as cutting pie dough or pizza and using cookie cutters.
- **Encourage** writing handwritten letters to grandparents and friends.

Need more information?

A child's inability to master good handwriting skills could indicate a more serious problem such as developmental or learning disabilities. If you would like to consult an occupational therapist about your child's handwriting, talk to your child's teacher about whether a referral to occupational therapy is appropriate. Your physician, other health professionals, and your school district's director of special education may also be able to help.

Occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants are trained in helping children with a broad range of issues in addition to the development of handwriting skills, such as proper computer use, proper backpack use and behavioral problems.