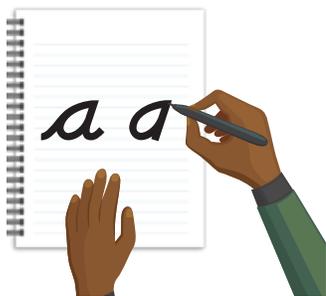
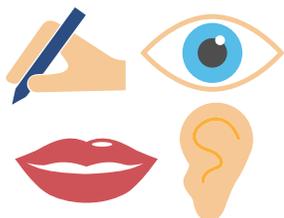


Handwriting Tips



✓ Teach Lowercase Letters First

Lowercase letters comprise more than 90% of all that we read and write. Uppercase letters are used only at the beginning of sentences and with proper nouns. Teaching lowercase letters first provides students with the most vital information they need to be successful in writing. Once students have mastered the lowercase letters, they should be taught how to write the capital letters and when they are used.



✓ Teach Handwriting Using All Four Learning Modes

When teaching students how to write, always use all four learning modalities: seeing, hearing, doing, and speaking. Show the students how to form the letter (seeing) while providing explicit spoken directions (hearing). Then ask the students to repeat the action (doing) while repeating the directions aloud (speaking).



✓ Teach Each Letter with Large-Motor Movements

Teach letter formation using large muscle movements originating from the elbow. Demonstrate the motions using your pointer finger on the large handwriting charts or the Logic of English Whiteboard. Students should then imitate the motions using their pointer fingers and movements that originate from the elbow. Once the motions have been learned, students should practice the sequence of movements writing with a marker on the Logic of English Whiteboard, on a chalkboard, in the air, in sensory boxes, with sandpaper letters, or with tactile letters.



Put your pencil on the baseline.

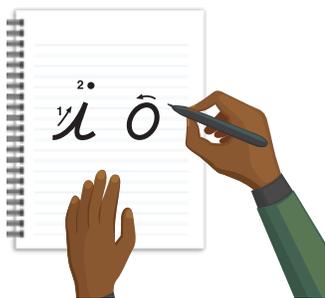
✓ Provide Clear and Explicit Directions

Some students who have poor handwriting are unclear about how to form the letters and how they relate to the lines on the page. When teaching, it is important to provide students with full, explicit directions on letter formation, leaving no room for confusion. The Rhythm of Handwriting Series includes explicit directions for introducing each letter. Students who are sensitive to too much auditory input may learn each letter using only the rhythmic, bold instructions.



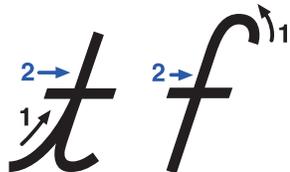
✓ Emphasize the Rhythm of Handwriting

Fluent handwriting is rhythmic, pausing only at the natural stopping or reversal points in the letters. Other than the natural stopping points, the pencil should continue in a steady motion. The bold keywords in The Rhythm of Handwriting materials provide students with abbreviated directions which accent the natural rhythm of each letter.



✓ Strokes or No Strokes

Some students benefit greatly by learning the strokes in isolation before learning how to write each letter. These students see each letter as a puzzle that is formed by putting the pieces of the strokes together. Other students feel confused by learning the strokes in isolation and have the greatest success by learning how to write each letter as a whole. Experiment to find your student's learning style by teaching the relevant strokes before teaching a letter. Practice writing the strokes with a pointer finger on the handwriting chart provided. Ask the student if it was helpful. If the student finds this helpful, continue in the same manner with the following chapters. If the student was confused by learning the strokes individually, then skip the strokes page and move straight into teaching the letters.



✓ Crossing T's and F's

Students should cross the lowercase "t" and "f" in the direction of reading and writing. i.e. from left to right. In cursive, write the whole word before picking up the pencil to cross or dot a letter.

✓ Provide Support

Until students have mastered how to form the letters with ease, they should not practice alone. Students who are asked to copy letters without direct instruction tend to focus on the visual image rather than the motions needed to write the letter. This detracts from building the muscle memory needed to write fluidly. In addition, without clear instruction, some students will reverse the image, making it more likely for them to struggle with reversals in both handwriting and reading. Clear, explicit teaching using all the learning modalities will eliminate confusion and reversals.



In addition, careful guidance from the beginning will prevent bad habits from forming. Investing time now to ensure that each student develops correct muscle memory for each letter and understands how each letter is formed will save you much time and frustration in the future for both writing and reading.

✓ Limit Copywork Until the Student Can Read

Students should not be asked to copy letters, words, sentences, or paragraphs until they are able to read the sounds and words they are copying. When asked to do so sooner, the task is akin to art, and void of any language learning value.



Once students have mastered writing and reading several of the single-letter phonograms, they may begin to combine the single-letter phonograms into words. When students begin to write words in The Rhythm of Handwriting Series, they should read the word aloud and then write the word, saying the sound of each letter while they write.

✓ Encourage Mastery

It is only through abundant practice that students learn to write fluently. Require daily handwriting practice until all the letters have been mastered. At the end of a practice session, ask the students to evaluate their own writing by picking the letter or word on the page that is written the most neatly. Ask the student to explain why it is the best. Then, as the teacher, choose the letter that you think is written the most neatly and explain why.



For some students, a letter may need to be retaught a second or even third day before all motions are mastered. This is particularly true after a weekend or break. Simply repeat the steps. Always provide clear, explicit instruction. Require students to model the motions correctly while repeating the directions aloud.

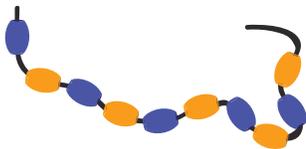


✓ Transitioning to Pencil and Paper

The decision to transition to pencil and paper should be based upon the age, development, and prior experiences of the student. Many older students will find great success in learning to write a letter using large-motor motions with the handwriting chart, then immediately writing the letter with a pencil.

Students with less developed fine-motor skills benefit from extended large-motor practice. By learning letter formation with movements that originate from the elbow as opposed to the fingers, students are programming the motions and rhythms into their brains. The muscle memory which is formed using large-motor movements will translate into fine-motor motions once the student has developed fine-motor skills. If a student is lagging with fine-motor development, writing exercises may continue with large-motor practice using a whiteboard, chalkboard, sandpaper letters, tactile letters, and sensory boxes until his fine-motor development is sufficient for writing with a pencil.

During this time, students should also be engaged in fine-motor activities on a daily basis. Many of the examples below require adult supervision.



- Color with markers, chalk, crayons, and other media.
- Provide an eyedropper and small paper cups. Fill one cup with water. Direct students to transfer the water with the eye dropper. For added fun, use a few drops of food coloring in each cup and allow students to experiment with mixing colors.
- Make necklaces and bracelets with plastic beads.
- Use tweezers to move beads from one cup to another.
- Provide students with small colored pom-poms and direct them to sort them by color.
- Provide clothespins that pinch. String a rope between two chairs and allow students to hang up doll clothes, socks, or pictures to display.
- Use child-safe scissors.
- Provide students with bolts, nuts, and washers of varying sizes to sort and screw together.
- Play with building toys.

Many students will benefit from some or all of the following tips when transitioning from large-motor movements to writing on paper. Clear and explicit teaching can prevent unnecessary confusion and provide students with the support they need to succeed.



✓ Pencil Grip

Instruct the students how to hold the pencil with the thumb and the first finger so the pencil rests gently on the middle finger. If the student struggles to hold the pencil correctly, provide a pencil grip.



✓ Paper Position

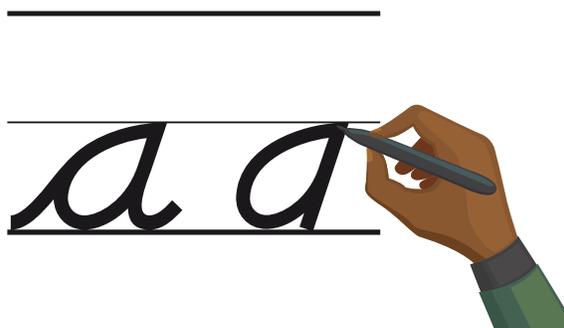
Demonstrate how to place the paper at an angle so the arm naturally sweeps from the elbow rather than needing to tense the shoulder or twist the wrist. Ask the students to make curved sweeping lines along the paper, using motions from their elbow. Then position the paper so the student's strokes follow the lines of the paper.



Line Size

The Rhythm of Handwriting Student Workbooks provide a variety of line sizes for each exercise. Allow the student to experiment. Discuss: which line is the most comfortable? On which size does the student write the most neatly? Which line size is a better fit for the student's hand? In future exercises, allow the student to choose the line size that is most comfortable and results in the most legible writing.

Despite conventional wisdom that young students should use paper with giant spaces between the lines, many beginning writers benefit from much smaller lines. Because they have small hands, smaller lines encourage students to use fine-motor movements originating in the fingers without stretching uncomfortably.



For more tips on How to Teach Handwriting,
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