

CLASSROOM ACCOMMODATIONS: HANDWRITING



Why is handwriting hard for a child with fine motor difficulties?

Handwriting relies on a complex set of fine-motor movements, which change along with varying demands on different days, in different writing contexts, and as children progress through the primary school years (e.g. moving from printing to cursive). The same amount of writing for a child with fine motor difficulties requires far more effort than for a child without such difficulties.

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Provide more time

When quality of handwriting is the learning focus or important (e.g. test setting), offer **more time**. This might be needed during tests, for homework, later in the day as fatigue builds or after another challenging motor task.

More time also allows for **rest breaks**, often needed when producing considerable amounts of writing.

But please don't keep a child in at recess or lunch to finish their writing.

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Reduce demands

When quality of handwriting is **NOT** the learning focus, look to reduce the cognitive/physical load by:

- Focus on the information rather than the writing style
- Focus on the quality of the work over quantity
- Embrace technology (see below)
- Use a scribe (pair students)
- Circle every second question on a worksheet and ask them to only complete those
- Ask them to write the specific word they are learning to spell rather than the whole sentence
- Use word-based games like letter tiles for spelling
- Ask the child to spell words aloud rather than write them
- Provide math sheets with the problem already written so they only have to calculate and record the answer

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Embracing technology

There can be reluctance to use technology as it doesn't 'fix' handwriting quality. But technology can help a student demonstrate their knowledge and progress or when showing signs of fatigue. Consider trying:

- The use of typing, which is often easier to master as the keyboard remains stationary and is predictable
- Dictation or talk-to text (there are math specific dictation apps too to help with equations)
- Apps like SnapType assist students to complete worksheets



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Limit multi-tasking

Provide specific checks - "how will you start this task"?

Break down instructions



Provide encouragement

Offer a quiet area to work

Use specific feedback around the rules of handwriting

Provide worksheets to copy from the desk rather than the board

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Tools that may be useful

- Slant boards
- Pencil grips
- Clip board to stop sheet moving
- Spacing sticks
- Start and stop points
- Paper with raised or coloured lines
- Graph paper for aligning math problems



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