



Left Hand Writers

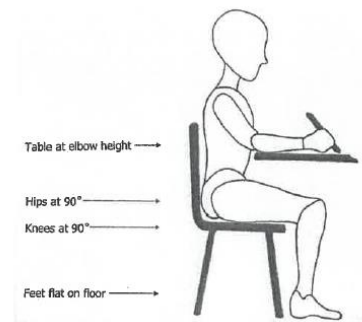
With practice and guidance, the child who uses their left hand can develop their handwriting skills just as well as those that use their right. Helping the left handed child develop an awareness of the important factors to consider prior to and when writing will make handwriting both easier and more comfortable.

The most important factors are:

- Position of the writing paper
- Position of the arm and wrist
- The grip on the pen/pencil
- Word spacing

Posture

- Having a good posture is a crucial starting point so make sure that the child is sitting properly - desk and chair at a comfortable height, feet flat on the floor, bottom at the back of the chair, chair near the table, shoulders relaxed.
- Optional: the table could slope slightly towards the child and the seat slope slightly towards the writing surface. Or try a writing slope or posture pack.
- Things to try to correct this:
 - Use a footstool
 - Cushion on top of the chair
- Left handers may need more space and can prefer to sit on the left side of a shared desk
- If in groups or on a double desk, sit the left handed writer on the left side so as not to bump elbows with their partners. If possible, allow them to sit on the left side of the class when facing the front
- To avoid shadows, aim for a light source which comes over the right hand shoulder. Move seating to the left side of a room if light source is from a central light.

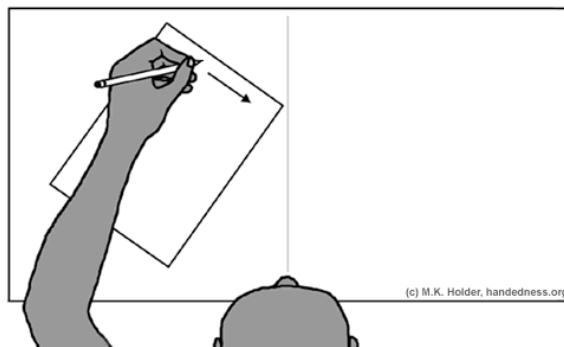


Positioning

- Make sure that the child has plenty of room, particularly if they are working with right hand partners.
- If in groups or on a double desk, sit the left handed writer on the left side so as not to bump elbows with their partners. If possible, allow them to sit on the left side of the room when facing the front
- Place the paper slightly to the left side of the body to give the best view of the line, let the child experiment to find the most comfortable angle.
- Slant the page to the right so as that the top left hand corner is slightly higher. When initially introducing this strategy you could draw a small arrow in the right hand bottom corner, which is pointing towards the top left hand corner to help. Encourage the child to position the arrow so as that it points directly away from them.

This position will help the child's arm to move more freely across the page as they write and hopefully avoid too much smudging.

- Stabilise the paper with the right hand in the middle or towards the right edge of the paper away from the line to be written on
- Use a writing mat to reinforce paper positioning if required
- The left forearm should remain parallel with the sides of the paper to avoid the development of a hooked hand
- Have the child help to make a 'frame' from taping on the desk around the shape of paper which can provide a cue for positioning.
- Use child's forearms as a guide for paper positioning by placing arms on table with hands together forming an upside down 'V', then put paper in towards the L, slanting towards the R.
- Having additional sheets to copy from are helpful when the child needs to be able to read text



Word Spacing

Correct spacing between words can be problematic for the left handed writer. Using the finger space technique can be useful for right hander but it can leave the Left hander in a bit of a knot instead encourage them to leave a space for an imaginary letter 'o' between words.

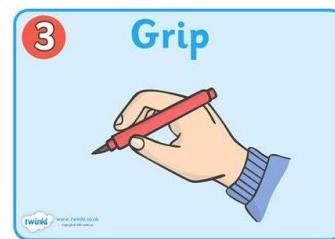
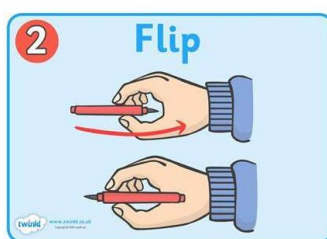
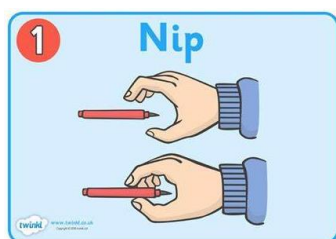
Pencil Grip

The development of pencil grips typically follows a predictable progressive pattern from least mature through to the most mature. Changes in a pencil grip can continue until a child is approx. 10yrs.



Whilst the aim is for them to develop a dynamic tripod grip, some children do have a less conventional pencil grip. It is important to note that you should only try to change a child's pencil grip if

- It is not functional
- It is painful



The above tip can be a useful way to help children develop a functional pencil.

Additional ideas to encourage good pencil grip;



Use a short pencil/crayon to encourage the child to use only their thumb, pointer and middle finger



Put an elastic band or stickers around the pencil/crayon to reinforce finger positioning (approx 2cm from the lead)



Use chunky triangular pencil/crayons to encourage a tripod grasp

- Gripping a pencil too tightly can be a common problem for left handers. This can cause the hand to tire quickly, slower writing, increase fatigue and increase the need to frequently stop. In this instance a soft cushioned pencil grip can help to adjust the level of pressure being put through the pencil and can help to decrease the strain on the finger joints

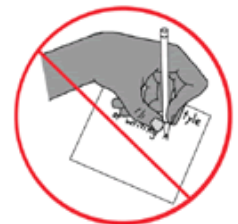
Writing Implements and Grip

- Unlike right handers who pull their pen across a page making it easier to make strokes from left to write Left handed writers have to push their pens across the paper, in doing so the left hander has a tendency to dig the pencil into the paper as they work across the page which impacts of their presentation and consistency. Finding a pen or pencil specifically design for left handers can help this issue
- Ideally left-handers should hold the pen or pencil 2-3cm from the point to enable them to see round their fingers and avoid hooking with the writing hand, a small elastic band wrapped round the pen/pencil can help to reinforce this



- If there is a tendency to grip the pencil too tightly encourage them to hold the pen/pencil further up the barrel or try different types of left hand specific pens/pencils
- If pressing too hard is the problem, try placing cardboard or carbon paper under the paper they are writing on to provide feedback

- If writing is being obscured, try:
 - Moving the grip further back from the tip of the pencil,
 - Moving elbow further away from the body,
 - Positioning the paper nearer or further away,
 - Leaning the trunk forward.



Tips for letter formation

Whilst the left hand writer forms the majority of letters the same as a right hander. There are a few that can be formed differently to make it easier. Allow them to do what it natural or if they are struggling teach them these differences

These include

T – J- I = line down –top line starts at far side and flow left

E-F= Start at far left flow left and down and work the bottom line –finish with middle line