

Handwriting (Dysgraphia)

Good handwriting is an important foundation of success in school.

Handwriting is an activity requiring good fine motor skills and eye-hand coordination. Effective writing helps people to remember, organize, and process information, (Susan Jones M. Ed. Dec. 1998).

Children of all ages may experience handwriting difficulties. Handwriting problems stand in the way of communicating knowledge, impact self-esteem, grades, and academic independence.

There are many effective interventions, accommodations, and adaptations to improve handwriting. Should your child display any of the following problems, speak with your child's teacher, school handwriting specialist, and/or contact an occupational therapist in your area specializing in handwriting difficulties.

Dysgraphia Symptoms

- Spending more time than peers to complete assignments
- Struggles on the mechanics to produce neat written work instead of focusing on content
- Producing illegible writing despite adequate time and attention to the task
- Inconsistent spaces between words or letters
- Consistently writing above or below lines of paper
- Mixing print and cursive, upper and lower case, or irregular sizes, slant, or shape of letters
- Content of writing not reflective of your child's other language skills
- Unusual wrist or paper position when completing a writing task
- Writing too hard or too soft
- Poor posture when writing
- Copying is slow or labored even if legible
- Unusual grip on pencil
- Uncompleted words and letters, or omitted words

Dysgraphia Treatment

- Look at posture during writing. Children need to sit in a chair with hips, knees, and feet at 90 degree angle. If your child's feet do not touch the floor, place boxes, phone books, stool at feet to help with stability.
- Paper positioning is important. The paper should run in the same direction as the child's forearm. Use visual cues such as a strip of colored tape placed on table or desk top to align paper positioning with forearm.
- Child writes too hard. Offer a mechanical pencil to help control how much pressure is used. Write on a softer, yet stable surface such as phone book, to decrease pressure.
- Child writes too soft. Fun activities can include coloring or filling in stencils to increase hand strength and pencil pressure. A weighted pencil may help increase awareness of the pencil within hand.
- Child writes with floating arm. Use coloring activities or stenciling while lying on floor to place weight on arms, increase wrist rotation, and increase shoulder stability.
- Child stabilizes paper with other hand. Use a clipboard or a piece of tape to hold paper in place. Child holds pencil too close or too far from the tip. Provide a verbal cue to hold pencil where the paint ends when using a traditional pencil or wrap a rubber band around the area where the fingers should grip.