

How can I support my students to gain pencil control?



Who is this information for?

Teachers, support workers, parents (for support with homework).

Which students may need support with this?

- Students who are learning to grip a pen or pencil
- Students who are learning to press on with the right amount of pressure
- Students who are learning to write more legibly
- Students who are learning to write more and finish work
- Students who want to increase the comfort in their hand when writing

What can I do and how will this help?

There are lots of small changes that can be made to support students to gain pencil control. Students should have **regular practice** using some of the suggestions below.

■ Does the student need a pencil grip or thicker pencil?

A student may press down hard when writing because of a weak grip. Gripping tightly may help them to control their pen or pencil when writing. This can often make the student's hand ache and they may need to shake their hand to relieve this feeling. A grip or thicker pencil is often more comfortable to hold, so the student doesn't have to grip too hard.



■ Does the student need to use a pen?

A pen often glides more easily than a pencil when writing. This means the student will need to grip less tightly when writing. Try the student with a thicker pen and one with a built in grip to make holding the pen more comfortable.



■ Does the student need to use a writing slope?

A writing slope can help with pen or pencil control by supporting the wrist and forearm. It can also encourage a more comfortable upright sitting posture.



■ Does the student need to record school work on a computer?

If the student needs to record school work, and handwriting is not progressing for them, consider using a computer. It is important to **make a plan** for **practising touch typing**, using the computer in lessons and printing off their work. Research suggests students will need 25-30 hours of teaching and ongoing practice.

■ Does the student need to use other ways to record their school work?

If the student is not progressing with writing and typing following **practice**, they may need to look at other ways to record their school work. This could include:

- Using gapped worksheets, if the student's handwriting is easy to read but writing longer pieces of work is effortful.
- Using a scribe. Telling someone else what to write is often difficult for children to do. It is important to **make a plan** to **practise** this and build it into the school day.

Where can I get more information?

See the following occupational therapy sheets:

- How can I support my students to sit well in class?
- How can I support my students to develop early writing skills?
- How can I support my students to form letters and present their work?

To write or to type –
That is the question!

For more information visit the Canchild website which has lots of useful information within its DCD (Developmental Coordination Disorder) resources - www.canchild.ca

Contact us for further advice and to tell us what you think of this information:

**Children's Occupational Therapy Service
Integrated Children with Additional Needs (ICAN)**
Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust
3rd Floor, Stockdale House
Headingley Office Park
Victoria Road
Leeds LS6 1PF
Tel: **0113 843 3620**
Email: **central.spa1@nhs.net**