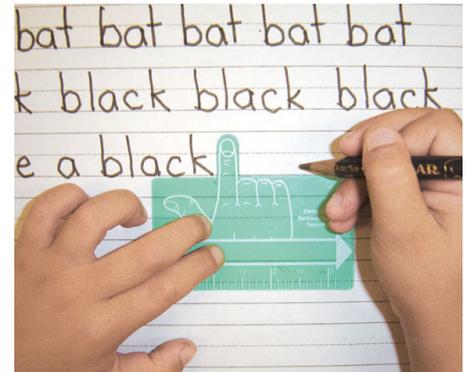


# How can I Support my students to form letters and present their work?



## Who is this information for?

Teachers, teaching assistants, parents (for support with homework).

## Which students may need support with this?

Students who are still learning to:

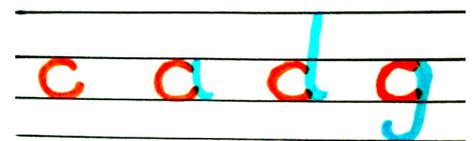
- Form letters
- Write letters the same size
- Leave spaces between words
- Keep their words on the line

## What can I do and how will this help?

When students are still learning to write, it takes a lot of effort to remember the letter shape and control the pen / pencil. You may therefore see a dip in the quality of their handwriting when they are needing to complete pieces of independent work. Students will need **regular teaching and practice** at handwriting. Research suggests a minimum of 20 taught sessions are needed. There are different ways you can support students:

### ■ Does the student need extra practice to form letters clearly?

**Students need to practise** 'little and often' to help them remember how to form letters. Students often benefit from practising letters within a '**letter family**'. An example of this is the letter 'c'. Forming this letter can then lead into forming a letter 'a' and then the letter 'd' and so on. The student is



learning to start at the same point each time to help remember how letters are formed. This is also recommended in the National Curriculum guidelines (revised July 2014). Research suggests students 7 years and older **benefit from direct teaching and a problem solving\* approach** to developing handwriting. Examples of this type of approach include:

- Grade the task so that you just work on one little bit at a time, i.e one letter from a word, or one stroke of an individual letter.
- Ask the student to look at a letter they have formed and one you have formed, and ask questions such as - 'what is different between mine and yours?'
- If the student is struggling to see how they are going wrong and how you are doing it more effectively - demonstrate forming the letter and make it really obvious how they are going wrong, so they work it out for themselves.
- Use words or rhymes to help them to visualise the letter or remember a series of steps or rules. It is more powerful if the student comes up with these ideas themselves.

\*Acknowledgements: Polatajko, H.J & Mandich A (2004) *Enabling Occupation in Children: The Cognitive Orientation to Daily Occupational Performance (CO-OP) Approach*, Ottawa: CAOT Publications ACE.

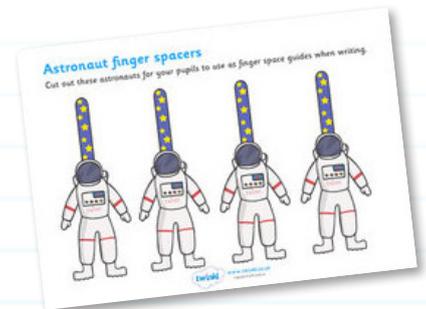
Students under 7 years old and some students with learning difficulties benefit from a more multi-sensory way of learning. This could be practising letters in sand with a stick to draw with or with their finger using shaving foam. See our information on 'How can I support my students to develop early writing skills'.

■ **Does the student need help to start at the left hand side of the page?**

Having a dot to help them remember where to start point can be useful. For example a green dot on the left side of the page for 'go' and a red dot at the end of the line to stop writing.

■ **Does the student need a finger spacer?**

If the student is working on remembering to leave a space between their words, a finger spacer can be useful. Examples of finger spacers include using a lolly pop stick, or searching on the internet for downloadable ones to cut out and laminate.



■ **Does the student need extra visual prompts?**

For students who need to practise using capital letters and full stops, having a laminated prompt card with these simple reminders on can be useful so the student can learn to check their work and make the changes.

■ **Does the student need to write on different paper?**

For students who need to practise where letters sit on the line, paper with extra lines can help. Practising on paper with extra lines can help students see where 'tall' and 'tail' letters sit in relation to each other such as 'd' and 'g'



## Where can I get more information?

For more information on supporting students with handwriting in class see the following information on our website:

- How can I support my students to gain pencil control?
- How can I support my students to sit well in class?

[www.leedscommunityhealthcare.nhs.uk](http://www.leedscommunityhealthcare.nhs.uk)

For more resources on letter formation, finger spacers and other visual supports, visit [www.sparklebox.co.uk](http://www.sparklebox.co.uk) or [www.twinkl.co.uk](http://www.twinkl.co.uk)

### 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](mailto:central.spa1@nhs.net)

For more information on handwriting and letter families, the Canchild website has lots of useful information within its DCD (Developmental Co-ordination Disorder) resources - [www.canchild.ca](http://www.canchild.ca)