

Handwriting Helps



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Summary: Tips for helping your struggling handwriter, using occupational therapy (O.T.) related ways, easy-to-make guides, and more. Even a tongue depressor can work to help kids with their handwriting.

Do your kids have trouble spacing their letters? Or are their letters all over the page? Some kids try so hard, and their writing is still illegible.

Did you know that the visual system does not completely develop until age 9? Handwriting requires a lot of visual perception skills. That means our younger ones are often struggling with where and how to place their letters on the page, and they often can land all over, everywhere!

Young kids need lots of time to learn letter shapes. This can be accomplished through activities like:

- fingerpainting,
- making letters in the air,
- and playing games with letters

But once your child knows their letters and is trying to put words on the page... their visual perception may just not yet have developed. And practicing repeatedly in a workbook can just get frustrating and may not be helpful for some of our kids.

Below are easy to do tricks from my years as an O.T that can really help kids who struggle with their handwriting and placing their letters correctly on the page.

1. Learning to Write from Left to Right

Make a green line on the left side of the handwriting paper, and a red line on the right.

Then say to them: "Start at the green light and stop at the red one!" Make it a game! Like red light, green light...

2. Leaving Space between Letters and Words

Many kids struggle with spacing, as this requires more visual perception skills than many young writers have yet. Typically, kids crowd their letters together, leaving no space at all, or too much space between words.

What's the answer?

Just a popsicle stick or a tongue depressor - A popsicle stick can make a great spacer for your kids. The ones that are thicker at the end work best for the widely spaced handwriting paper.

Take the stick and show your child how to space letters. This shows them the spacing, that their visual system doesn't yet tell them about.

I recommend having a family popsicle party first, coloring and decorating each one, to make it their own.





3. Placing Letters Where They Go on the Lines

Letters can also be hard to place on the line, especially when dealing with different sizes of letters, i.e., *f* takes up two lines, *e* only one.

Here are some handy guides, for each type of letter. I just made mine out of cardstock, but cardboard would probably last longer.

There are 3 guides that you can make as follows:

- One guide for small letters (a, c, e, etc.)
- Another guide for tall letters (b, d, l, etc.)
- One more guide for letters with tails (g, j, p, etc.)

All 3 guides are shown to the left.

Here are the templates that I used as an O.T. Feel free to print them and make them out of cardboard or cardstock. Fit them to your size of handwriting paper. I recommend the widely spaced ones like I used above.

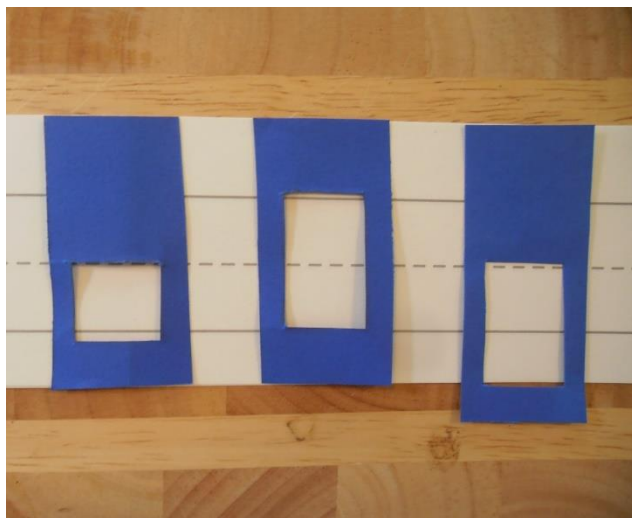
I would pick one type of letter to focus on first, say the little ones, a, c, etc., and help your child get used to using the guide with the small letters first.

The site StudentHandouts.com includes many free printable templates such as the one pictured above: [Large Lined Writing Sheet for Display](#)

4. Use Short Sessions with a Focus on Success.

I suggest doing just one of these writing strips a day. Short and sweet lessons are the best. Using these guides can help your kids with their handwriting until their visual perception kicks in.

You are doing such great things by working on handwriting with your kids!



Handwriting can help in these ways:

- Improve visual perception skills.
- Develop kinesthesia and the sensory processing system.
- Increase retention, as the act of writing the words on the page will plant the information in their brain, in a special sensory system way.

Betsy Sproger is a homeschooling mom of a college grad, a veteran homeschool blogger, and a retired O.T. who blogs at **BJ's Homeschool**, about homeschooling high school, college, 2e and [handwriting helps](#).

