

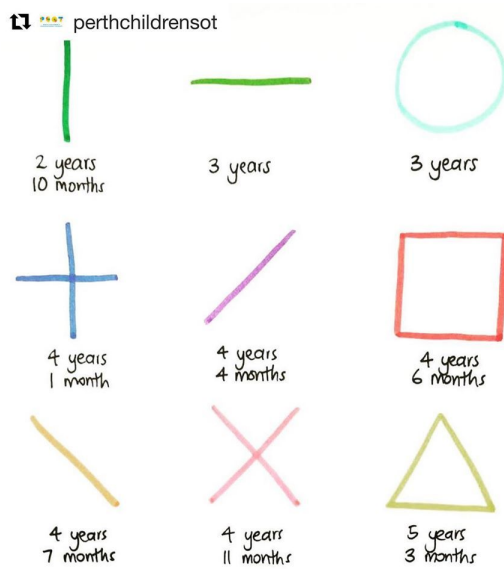


# Occupational Therapy Connection

## Monthly Newsletter

### Handwriting Tips and Tricks

Handwriting is a foundational skill that can influence students' reading, writing, language use, and critical thinking. Handwriting is a complex task that requires many different skills. Your student must coordinate their eyes, arms, hands, and core to produce lines, shapes, letters, and numbers. They must demonstrate a functional pencil grip, fine motor control, visual motor integration, and postural control. All of these skills need to be developed in order for your student to be successful in producing written expression. As an OT, I am not a handwriting teacher but I do work on building skills student's need to write as well as provide modifications and tools to foster and help students produce legible handwriting.



In order for student's to be successful producers of handwriting, they first need to develop pre-writing skills. These skills begin to develop at a young age. The image shows the progression of development with the suggested age a student will develop this skill. It is important to note that all children develop skills at their own pace. By encouraging your young students to "practice" writing through copying and imitating pre-writing strokes, you are setting the foundation for handwriting skills. Remember that small tools are best for small hands. Meaning using broken crayons and golf pencils are best for Preschool and Kindergarten students.

**Kindergarten-** Your child may enjoy drawing and labeling objects, using invented spelling with no vowels ("bed" becomes "BD"). They might write in upper case letters —

most of them correctly formed and begin to string separate words together to express more complex thoughts.

**First grade-** Fine motor skills are stronger and your child gains better control in writing letterforms. They are learning the difference between uppercase and lowercase letters. Invented spelling is still common. Writing is fun as your child gains confidence and "automaticity."

**Second grade -** Your child's handwriting may become smaller and neater. Your child is able to focus more on what they are writing than on the mechanics of forming letters.

**Third grade and up -** Writing should be automatic at this age. Students may develop their own style of writing. They should be able to copy from near and far point without omissions and legibly.

The following is a list of suggestions for modifications and tools to help with handwriting in the classroom and at home to help your student.

- To help with letter placement
  - Trace the baseline with a highlighter or bold marker
  - Use Wikki Sticks or a ruler on the writing line
  - Use graph paper for math and handwriting (one letter or number per square)
  - Bold lined paper or paper with varying colors on the top line and bottom line
  - Draw boxes on fill in worksheets - one letter per box
  - Highlight the left margin line
  - Write on a vertical surface (board, easel, or under the desk works)
  - Use a three ring binder as a slant board
- To help with letter formation
  - Use alphabet stamps for spelling words
  - Use magnetic letters or Scrabble tiles to spell out words
- To help with pressure when writing
  - Use mechanical pencils or erasable pens
  - Put a piece of craft foam under the paper to be written on
- To help with spacing and writing within given area
  - Cover part of the page with an index card (either above where they are working or below)
  - Use a physical spacer between words
  - If copying from text, highlight the spaces as a reminder
  - Skip lines when writing
- To help with copying
  - Provide notes with keywords missing to copy from the board
  - Provide copy on desk for near point copy of notes
  - Near point: place paper/book in close proximity to the writing paper
  - Far point: write large and use bright colored markers
  - Reduce clutter on the student's desk
  - Use a ruler, bookmark, line guide or finger when reading/copying

