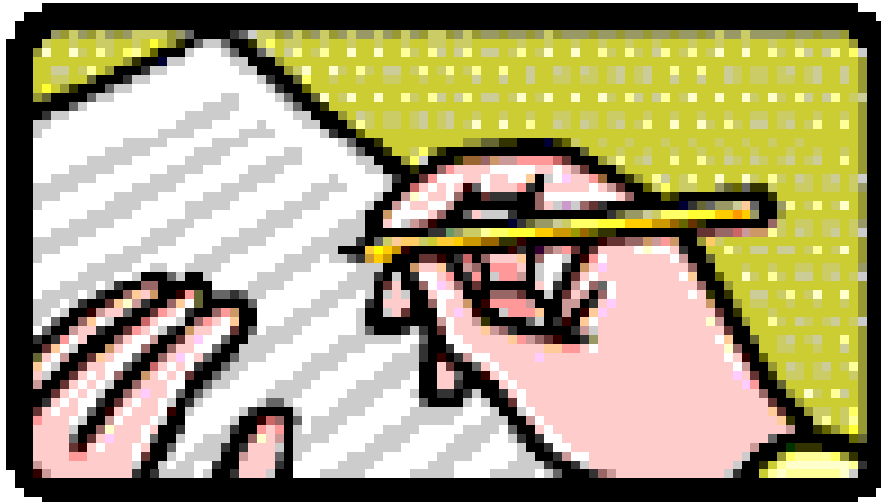




Cherokee County School District

Achieving Handwriting Success



Guide for Teachers

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Acknowledgements

Below is a list of committee members who contributed their expertise to complete this handwriting guide.

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Introduction

With today's busy school day and with all of the language arts curriculum requirements, is it really important to spend time on handwriting? The answer to this question is a resounding YES! Just like spelling, grammar and phonics, handwriting is an important building block that helps support a strong foundation for academic success. Educators and researchers both have reaffirmed that failure to teach handwriting can have far reaching consequences. Until schools can provide a computer on every student's desk, handwriting will be the primary means of written communication and work production. Teaching handwriting increases writing proficiency and increases writing test scores. Illegible handwriting wastes both student and teacher time and research shows that good handwriting tends to accompany complete and well written essays. Let's face it, good handwriting makes a good impression that goes beyond aesthetics and reaches to the very foundation of written communication. To become automatic, students must spend much of their time composing and thinking about how to form letters. This will not come through incidental learning but through imitation, copying and practice.

It is our hope that the information found in this handbook will provide the teachers of Cherokee County School District a resource guide to help them implement a solid foundation for handwriting instruction and handwriting success for our students. Tips for building a solid foundation for both gross and fine motor development, trouble shooting ideas for common handwriting problems, free internet resources that will help teachers produce handwriting materials, and a supplemental list of handwriting programs that might be used to teach handwriting are just a few of the things that will be covered in the resource guide. It is our sincere hope that this will be a starting point for teachers as they develop solid handwriting practices.

Achieving Handwriting Success

Guide For Teachers

Writing Skills

- I. Pre-Writing Activities
 - A. Building Upper-Body Strength
 - B. Building Fine Motor Skills
 - C. Parent suggestions

- II. Getting Ready to Write
 - A. Indicators of Writing Readiness
 - B. Writercise - Exercises That Get Students Ready to Write
 - C. Establishing the Correct Pencil Grasp
 - D. Establishing Optimum Seating and Positioning for Writing
 - E. Correct Paper Orientation
 - Righties
 - Lefties

- III. Handwriting Remediation
 - A. Problems with Pencil Grasp
 - B. Problems with Seating and Posture
 - C. Problems with Spacing
 - D. Problems with Line Placement
 - E. Problems with Paper Orientation
 - F. Problems with Legibility

Grade Level Recommendations

What To Teach in Grades K-6

Websites

Computer Fonts for Handwriting Worksheets
Handwriting Websites

Supplemental List

K-6 Supplemental Handwriting Materials List - 2004
Tips for the Frugal Teacher

Prewriting Activities



Tips for Encouraging Writing Readiness- Upper Body Strength

To become proficient writers, **students need to first possess good upper body strength** to promote good posture and shoulder stability when writing. Playing games that require bearing weight will build upper body strength. These types of activities can be easily incorporated into the school day in a number of ways.

✚ Playground activities like:

- Monkey bars
- Pull-ups
- Climbing
- Crawling through tunnels

✚ Physical Education activities that support upper body strength like:

- Tug-of-war
- Obstacle courses that require crawling or climbing
- Throwing a ball
- Pull-ups and Push-ups
- Seat scooters
- Rowing activities
- Upper body calisthenics
- Wheelbarrow walking

✚ Classroom activities like:

- Desk and Wall Push-ups
- Arm rolls
- Crawling through mazes
- Using a rolling pin to roll out play dough or clay

Prewriting Activities

Tips to Encourage Writing Readiness- Fine Motor

Development of good fine motor and visual motor skills lies the foundation for good handwriting. Here are some suggestions for activities that will help your students develop these important skills.

Encourage games that require moving small objects across the midline and require hand eye coordination.

- Using a magnet fishing pole
- Playing board games where you move small pieces across the midline
- Puzzles
- Building with blocks
- Dominos

Arts and crafts

- Finger Painting
- Clay
- Play Dough
- Gluing and decorating with small pieces of paper or objects

Inside activities

- Tossing and catching bean bags
- Activities that engage students in cooking or pretend cooking that require stirring and kneading.
- Cleaning up trash and other small objects in the classroom

Parent Suggestions

Fine Motor Activities for Home

Although children use fine motor skills at home everyday to dress, clean up their room etc., parents can help their children refine their fine motor skills in a number of ways.

✚ Lacing and threading activities

- Tying shoes
- Stringing beads, macaroni, washers, etc.
- Punching holes in cardboard or paper using a hole punch
- Lacing and sewing activities

✚ Stacking and building activities

- Stacking household items like washers, coins, plastic containers, etc.
- Stacking building blocks
- Playing with commercial construction toys

✚ Winding, twisting and screwing activities

- Playing with wind-up toys
- Screwing and unscrewing jar lids
- Playing with work bench toys

✚ Commercial games

- Marbles
- Jacks
- Perfection
- Ants in the Pants
- Operation
- Don't Spill the Beans
- Hand held video games
- Cards games

Puzzles

Drawing activities

- Writing or drawing on a white board/easel with white board markers
- Writing or drawing on a chalk board/easel with chalk
- Drawing with crayons and paper
- Drawing with stencils
- Finger painting
- Drawing in shaving cream
- Painting
- Drawing with Sidewalk Chalk

Cutting, tearing and folding activities

- Using scissors to cut different paper and materials
- Folding paper
- Wrapping presents
- Tearing paper for art projects

Getting Ready to Write

Indicators of Writing Readiness

There is no magic formula that fits every student; however, there are some indicators teachers can keep in mind when deciding to move a student from readiness activities to writing with paper and pencil.

- ✚ **The student prefers to draw and color rather than scribbling.**
- ✚ **The student has demonstrated clear hand dominance.**
 - Clear hand preferences are usually present between 3 and 4 years of age.
 - It may be difficult to determine hand preference for a student with a physical disability that affects one side of the body. Ask your school's Occupational Therapist for guidance.
- ✚ **The student can hold a pencil with a correct pencil grasp.**
 - The most efficient pencil grasp is called a Tripod Grasp. A Tripod grasp entails holding the pencil between the index finger and thumb, while the pencil rests against the knuckle of the middle finger. See "Establishing the Correct Pencil Grasp" for descriptions of efficient pencil grasps.
 - Don't forget that many students need to be taught how to hold the pencil correctly.
- ✚ **The student can identify the basic concepts needed to follow directions for writing.**
 - Children need to have knowledge of basic concepts and basic shapes to be able to understand and follow directions when learning to write. Some of these are:

| | |
|------------------|-------------------------------|
| Top and Bottom | Beginning and End |
| Start and Finish | Around and Through |
| On and Off | Above and Below |
| Left and Right | Straight Line and Curved Line |
| Up and Down | Basic Shapes |
| Long and Short | Over and Under |

✚ **The student is able to draw the basic strokes needed to write manuscript.**

- These include drawing a
 - horizontal line
 - vertical line
 - circle
 - a slanted line

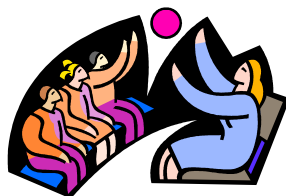
✚ **The student can sit and pay attention for short amounts of instruction.**

Getting Ready to Write

Exercises That Get Students Ready to Write

Before engaging in writing tasks, take a few minutes to “warm-up” your students’ arms and hands.

- ✚ Make large circles with arms in a backward motion
- ✚ Extend arms forward with the backs of hands together, then make slow circular arm movements.
- ✚ Toss a ball or bean bag around the room.
- ✚ Place palms of hands on the seat of a chair and push down. Repeat 5 times.
- ✚ Make a fist with both hands, tensing muscles of the whole arms and hands as hard as possible. Hold for 3 seconds and release. Do 5 times.
- ✚ Crinkle up a sheet of paper into a ball with one hand, then uncrinkle and straighten it out as much as possible. Repeat with the other hand.
- ✚ Place a small object in the palm of one hand (paper clip, button, etc.). Then use the fingers of that same hand to move the object from the palm to the finger tips and then to the desk. Repeat with the other hand.
- ✚ Place the palm of one hand on the desk and raise each finger off the desk. Repeat with the other hand.
- ✚ Write letters using gross motor movements in the air.
- ✚ Draw letters with fingers on carpet.
- ✚ Use a flashlight to draw letters on the wall.



Getting Ready to Write

Establishing the Correct Pencil Grasp

- ✚ Somewhere between 4.5 and 6 years of age we expect a student to be able to hold a pencil with a dynamic tripod grasp. Other adaptive/functional pencil grasps are acceptable if a student is unable to establish the tripod grasp.

FUNCTIONAL GRASP PATTERNS



Tripod Grasp: The pencil is held with the tip of the thumb and index finger and rests against the knuckle of the third finger. The thumb and index finger form a circle.



Quadrupod grasp: The pencil is held with the tip of the thumb, index finger, and third finger and rests against the side of the fourth finger. The thumb and index finger form a circle.



Adaptive tripod: The pencil is held between the index and ring fingers with the tips of the thumb and index finger on the pencil. The pencil rests against the side of the third finger near its end. The pencil is held between these two fingers and the thumb.

Getting Ready to Write

Establishing Optimum Seating and Positioning for Writing

Writing is more than just good fine motor skills. Correct positioning is the key to successful fine motor performance. Students should be encouraged to sit with:

- ✚ Feet flat on the floor or supported surface (no dangling).
- ✚ Bottom scooted all the way back in the chair.
- ✚ Sitting straight and tall in the chair.
- ✚ Writing surface at elbow height.
- ✚ Non-dominant hand on the desk, working as a “helping hand” to stabilize the paper.



Getting Ready to Write

Establishing Correct Paper Orientation

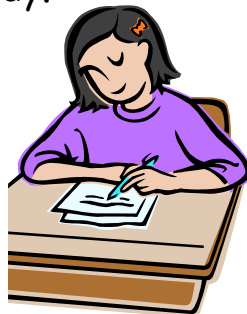
Correct positioning of the paper will support both good posture for writing and correct letter formation. Here are some suggestions for paper orientation.

✚ Manuscript

- Right-Handed
 - The paper should be positioned square so that the bottom edge is parallel to the desk.
- Left-Handed
 - The paper should be positioned diagonally on the desk with the lower right-hand corner pointing toward the left side of the body.

✚ Cursive

- Right-Handed
 - The paper should be positioned diagonally with the lower left corner of the paper pointing toward the middle of the body.
- Left-Handed
 - The paper should be positioned diagonally with the lower right-hand corner of the paper pointing slightly to the right of the middle of the body.



Handwriting Remediation

Problems with the Pencil

✚ Ineffective pencil grasp

- Provide pencil grips that promote proper grasp. Some examples of these are:
 - The Pencil Grip
 - The Stetro Grip
 - Triangular
- Have the student hold a small object like a penny or paper clip against the palm of his or her hand with the ring and pinky finger, leaving the other fingers free for proper placement of the pencil (tripod grasp).
- Have the student participate in activities that emulate the position of a tripod grasp such as:
 - Art activities that require the use of an eye dropper.
 - Games that require them to pick up small object with a pinch.
 - Tweezer games like Operation.
 - Using chalk pieces or broken crayons to color and make lines.
- Try an adapted tripod or Quadrupod grasp. Have the student make a "V" with his or her index and middle fingers; the student holds the pencil between these two fingers and the thumb. See Establishing the Correct Pencil Grip for a picture and more detailed description.



- ✚ **Too much or too little pressure when grasping the pencil**
 - Use pencil grips that provide a cushion
 - Wrap a rubber band around the shaft of the pencil and position it just above the pointed end, where the point of the pencil begins
 - Provide stability by having the student write on a slanted surface.
 - Binder turned horizontally
 - Slanted board or desk top

Problems with Posture

- ✚ Use appropriate desk and chair height.
- ✚ Make sure the student's feet touch the floor. If the student's feet do not touch the floor, place a block etc. under his feet.
- ✚ If the student seems to have difficulty sitting upright in his desk, even though the desk height is appropriate, allow him to rest his forearms on the desk.
- ✚ Provide a slanted writing surface.
- ✚ Check paper position.

Problems with Spacing

- ✚ Use a finger tip between words.
- ✚ Use an M & M to keep spaces, the student can eat the M&Ms as a reward when the writing activity is completed.
- ✚ Use a Post-it Tab and have the student move it to the end of each word as he writes.

Problems with Line Placement

- ✚ Use bold lined paper; this can be made by tracing the lines of regular writing paper with a felt tip marker and then copying it on the copy machine.
- ✚ Use raised lined paper to give students a tactile cue for line placement. This type of paper can be purchased commercially or made by placing a thin line of glue across the lines of regular paper.
- ✚ If a student has difficulty lining up math problems, have them use graph paper or turn their paper sideways and use the lines as columns.

Problems with Paper Orientation

- ✚ Place a piece of tape on the desk as a guide for the top of the paper.
- ✚ Use a clip board to help secure the paper in place.
- ✚ Check to see if the student is using correct posture and positioning for writing.
- ✚ Make sure the non-dominant hand is stabilizing the paper.
- ✚ It is important to use correct letter formation. What a student learns initially is difficult to change later.

Problems with Legibility

- ✚ Poor legibility can be the result of any of the problems above. Make sure that the student is using an efficient pencil grasp, seated correctly, and has his/her paper oriented correctly.
- ✚ Monitor the student as he begins to write. It is very important to use correct letter formation. What a student learns initially is difficult to change later.
- ✚ Tape a strip to the student's desk with a model of the manuscript or cursive writing.

- ✚ Have the student write with a short pencil.
- ✚ If the student has trouble copying from the board, provide a copy of the information for his desk.
- ✚ Allow the student to rest his forearms on the desk for support.
- ✚ Provide highlighter or dots for students to trace to learn correct letter formation.
- ✚ Strategies for letter reversals:
 - Use cognitive cues such as "c come before d" (make a "c", then draw the line and it becomes a "d").
 - Keep a model of commonly reversed letters on the student's desk. Use different colors for the letters to reinforce directionality. (all "b's" and P's" in red, etc.).

GRADE LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS

Kindergarten

Students will:

- use acceptable grasp of a pencil
- become proficient in printing first and last name with a capital letter at the beginning followed by lower case letters
- become proficient in correct formation of all upper and lower case letters and numerals
- write all letters on lined paper by the end of the year
- become proficient in left to right progression

First Grade

Students will:

- use proper letter sizing and spacing
- place numbers and letters correctly on the line
- continue to increase proficiency in left to right progression
- write legibly
- gain speed in writing activities

Second Grade

Students will:

- continue to reinforce spacing of letters and words
- use uniform letter size
- use correct capital and lower-case letters
- continue to increase legibility
- continue to increase rate of speed

Third Grade - Cursive

Students will:

- begin intensive instruction and application
- use correct letter formation
- use capital, lower-case connections
- introduce words and sentences

Fourth Grade - Cursive

Students will:

- receive direct instruction in cursive at the beginning of the year
- review letter formation, words, sentences
- receive assessment of application of cursive in first nine weeks
- write and read cursive by end of fourth grade
- integrate cursive into all subject areas
- focus on legibility

Fifth Grade - Remediate and reinforce cursive

Students will:

- use correct letter formation
- use correct spacing of words
- use fluency in reading cursive
- use fluency in writing cursive
- integrate cursive into all subject areas

Sixth Grade - Mastery level cursive

Students will:

- use correct letter formation
- use correct spacing of words
- use fluency in reading cursive
- use fluency in writing cursive
- integrate cursive into all subject areas
- focus on legibility

Computer Fonts for Handwriting Worksheets

**These fonts were purchased for ALL Elementary Schools. Every computer should have access to these fonts in the Elementary Schools.

Primary Lined

Primary Lined

Primary Trainer

Primary Trainer

Cursive Lined

Cursive Lined

Cursive Trainer

Cursive Trainer

Cursive Trainer Lined

Cursive Trainer Lined

Handwriting Websites

Handwriting Worksheets

<http://www.handwritingworksheets.com/>

Handwriting for Kids

<http://www.handwritingforkids.com/>

Amazing Handwriting Worksheet Making Tool

<http://www.readingkey.com/hwriting-t/>

Pre-made Handwriting Worksheets

<http://www.crosswinds.net/~rozalski/Manuscript.html>

**Teachers can use these websites to integrate Handwriting into all subject areas. You could create Handwriting handouts for the letter of the week, spelling words, character education words, high-frequency words, vocabulary words, student's names for lower grades, story starters, dolch words, and Math terms.

**The websites offer multiple resources. Please explore the sites for more integration ideas.

As additional websites are found, they will be added to the list.

K-6 Supplemental Handwriting Materials List - 2004

| Grade | Publisher | Title |
|-------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| K-4 | Handwriting Without Tears, Inc. | Handwriting Without Tears, Inc |
| K-6 | Zaner-Bloser | Zaner-Bloser Handwriting |

Tips for the Frugal Teacher

Teachers may try these tips to make the best use of handwriting materials they receive.

1. Laminate pages of the handwriting book and use again and again.
2. Locate and use old handwriting teachers' editions. Keep these for handy reference and ideas.
3. Use handwriting books as a model only. Have the students copy the examples on lined paper.
4. Purchase inexpensive shower board at a building supply store. Show your teacher ID and they will cut the board into smaller boards, free of charge. You can use these as personal white boards for your students.
5. Make lines on your white boards with special paint or permanent markers.
6. Use cling sheets that stick to white boards for handwriting practice.

7. Make a transparency of a handwriting practice page and have students practice with vis-a-vis markers.
8. Put clear page protectors over handwriting pages and use vis-à-vis markers.
9. Write on desks with expo markers.
10. Laminate handwriting models.
11. Print one copy of a handwriting activity from a website. Use the rizograph machine to make multiple copies for grade level use. These machines are economical when making 50 + copies.
12. Visit the Teacher Resource Center for ideas.
13. Depending on your school's Partner in Education, request donations of paper, pens, and supplies. Be sure to check with your administrator and follow correct procedures.
14. Use the "favorites" folder on the web for handwriting sites to explore for more ideas.
15. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Use the vast knowledge of experienced teachers for more ideas.

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