

Occupational Therapy Home and Class Activities

Student Name: _____ Date: _____
Therapist: _____ School: _____

Handwriting Adaptations

For the Home and Classroom

Fine Motor Adaptations: Improper grasp can limit finger dexterity and control.

- € Use a large 3-ring binder or slant board as a writing surface to help position hand and wrist in a more functional position.
- €
- € Use a recommended pencil grip to support correct finger placement.
- €
- € Use smaller writing utensils (small pieces of chalk, golf pencils, etc) to force a more desirable tripod pencil grasp. If the student is extremely resistant to this technique, use wider or fatter writing utensils.
- €
- € Make sure paper position follows the slant of the forearm being used for writing, and is placed at the midline of the work surface.

Postural Adjustments: Improper posture can limit the success of a child's handwriting and fine motor activities.

- € Place both feet flat on the floor, hips back in the chair, shoulders over hips, and head upright and centered. This frees the arms and hands to work more freely.
- €
- € Adjust furniture to fit. Desktop height should be between the end of the sternum and navel area.
- €
- € Provide foot rest if necessary (old phone books, stools, etc.).
- € Allow postural breaks and/or alternative work positions (lying prone on the floor, sitting on the floor with legs crossed, kneeling, etc.).
- €
- € Try alternative seating if necessary (cushions, boosters, ball seats, etc.).

*** Adaptations should be discontinued if disruption in the classroom is caused by inappropriate behaviors, or if distraction of the child's education occurs.

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Spacing and Alignment Adaptations: Poor spacing and/or letter alignment can decrease the legibility of handwriting.

- € When creating writing models, exaggerate space between words.
- €
- € Use a spacer to place after each word before beginning the next word (finger, popsicle stick, etc.).
- €
- € Use raised lined or color-coded lined paper.
- €
- € Set boundaries for each letter to fit in (graph paper, paper with boxes).
- € Try different paper, Wider lines, darker lines, raised lines, highlight the lines.
- €
- € Use a ruler or index card to expose the line being read or written on.

Letter Formation Modifications: Incorrect letter formation (inconsistent or sloppy) results in illegible handwriting.

- € Check head alignment (head centered over shoulders, slightly looking down – approximately 30 degrees).
- €
- € Check paper alignment (paper centered in work area with top of the page angled to the non-dominant side).
- €
- € Encourage student to begin all manuscript letters from the top and counter-clockwise (except for the letter “e”).
- €
- € Provide alphabet model at desk.
- €
- € “Handwriting Without Tears” is a highly recommended teaching aide for handwriting and is also adopted by the California Board of Education.

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Writing Pressure Adaptations: Writing with too much or too little pressure can result in illegible handwriting and can be a major source of frustration for the student.

- € Try different pencils/pencil grips. Try colored pencils.
- €
- € Try dry erase or marker.

TOO LIGHT?

- € Utilize a pencil grip to aid in correct finger placement.
- €
- € Use thin lined markers.
- €
- € Use weighted pencils.

TOO HEAVY?

- € Utilize pencil grip to aid in correct finger placement.
- €
- € Use mechanical pencils.
- €
- € Provide textured writing surface to increase feedback sensation to the hand.

Fatigue: Fatigue will result in discomfort for a student and may make writing legibly difficult.

- € Modify or shorten writing assignments.
- €
- € Provide opportunities to type assignment if necessary.
- €
- € Work for 5, 10, or 15 minute increments and then take a stretch and shake break for a minute. Try to gradually work up to 20 minute increments.

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Copying from the board: Copying from the board is difficult because you have to be able to quickly know where you are on both the board and on the paper you are copying to.

- € Have a peer helper who takes good notes make a copy of his/her notes on a daily basis.
- €
- € Sit close to the board.
- €
- € Reduce the amount of copying from the board that is required.
- €
- € Provide copies of the notes that were put up on the board.
- €
- € Provide an outline of what is going on the board in order to reduce the amount of writing involved.

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