

Practical Parenting: Handwriting

Have you ever wondered why some children just seem to be able to pick up a pencil and write when others never seem to master the art?

Common issues are: -

Hand/Eye co-ordination issues.

- Letters are all different sizes; perhaps starting out small and getting bigger.
- They leave no spaces between the words.
- They squeeze words in at the end of the line or write up the margin.
- It may be hard to keep the writing on the line.

Add to that list: -

Cognitive issues

- Think of what you want to write about.
- Think of each word...and write it.
- Think about how to spell each word...and write it.
- Remember your capital letters, full stops, commas, speech marks, etc
- Make sure that your ideas are written in the right order.
- Set out your paragraphs.
- Make sure that your story makes sense!!!

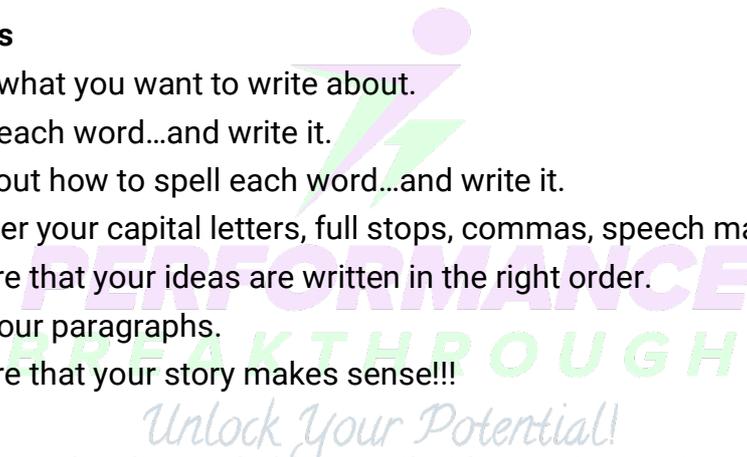
I haven't even started on how to hold a pencil without using 10 times more muscles than a child should have to...

When you look at the above lists, you can begin to see why, when we say to our children, "Just write the sentence" they look at us as if we are crazy....

So why is it so difficult for some?

With regard to the pencil grip; If a child's fine motor skills are not developed properly the brain will send a weak signal to the hand and fingers, making it difficult to hold a pencil between the finger and thumb then rest the pencil on the strong middle finger. This issue can result in a tight grip, which hurts the fingers, leaves dents etc and tires the hand too quickly. It may also result in heavy or spidery handwriting.

Hand/Eye co-ordination issues



Many of the children, we see in our clinic, have difficulty with hand/eye co-ordination. This affects the child's ability to play sport but it also has a direct impact on how they write words on a page.

If they cannot judge the spacing between words, the size that letters should be and where the edge of the page is, then their eyes are not sending the correct signal to the brain in order for the brain to accurately judge where the point of the pencil should be on the page. When they are writing they actually think they are leaving spaces but when they look back at what they have written they realise they have not.

How many times have you said to your child. "Just take a new line. Why are you squeezing that word into the end of that line, you have a whole page"?

The signal from the brain to the eyes is again, strong when they start following their writing across the page but at the end of the 2nd or 3rd line the eyes are tiring, as the signal is failing, and they really don't want to have to re-set their eyes and judge where their hand needs to be on the next line. There is always a reason why children do what they do 😊

Practical parenting tip...It is very frustrating for parents when they see messy handwriting, especially when they have witnessed nice writing at some stage.

We often hear from parents "They can do it when they want to."

But, when you think about it, the nice handwriting is usually seen either, when they are writing about something that they are interested in (so the brain isn't being drained through boredom) or nice writing is seen at the beginning of the story, when the brain is sending a strong signal to the muscles of the eyes and hand. As the child continues to write down the page, the writing becomes more erratic and messy as the signals are starting to fail. It therefore follows that it is equally frustrating for a child to write a sentence, paragraph or story only to find that Mum or Dad thinks it should be neater and they are made to do it again....this is the point at which tears usually start!

Understanding that your child is not being lazy or uncaring about their work can reduce a lot of stress and exasperation, especially at homework time.

A daily statement at our clinic is **"If a child can, they will."**

If you would like further information on how we can help your child's hand/eye coordination skills please contact us.



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