

yana the OT



FREE RESOURCE

More Handwriting Ideas

32 pediatric OT strategies, sorted by the problem you are seeing

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How to use this

Pick the problem, try one idea

Handwriting is a lot of jobs at once: sitting steady, holding the tool, seeing the shape, planning the movement and keeping going. When writing looks messy, tired or slow, the fix depends on which job is hard.

- **1. Find the problem**

Each page covers one thing you might see, like letter reversals or a tight grip.

- **2. Try just one idea**

Use it for a week or two before you change anything else.

- **3. Keep it short and fun**

Five good minutes beat twenty tired ones.

- **4. Watch the child, not the page**

If it is frustrating or painful, stop and adjust.

Every child is different. These are general ideas, not a diagnosis or a treatment plan. If writing stays hard after a few weeks, or you see pain, it is worth asking an OT.

Posture and set up

A steady body makes a steadier hand

1



Feet on something solid

Hips, knees and ankles at about 90 degrees. If feet dangle, put a box or a stack of books under them.



Table at the right height

Seated, elbows should rest near a right angle. If the table is too high, shoulders creep up and tire out.



Helper hand job

The non writing hand holds the paper still. Tape the page down for kids whose paper slides around.



Move first, write second

A quick stretch, wall push or chair push up before writing can help the body settle.

Grip and pencil hold

2

Small changes in the tool, big changes in the hand

Short pencils and chalk



Break a crayon or pencil into a small piece. A little tool encourages fingertip hold.

Open the thumb space



Make an "O" with thumb and pointer finger, then slide the pencil in. The space stays round.

Tuck a treasure



Tuck a pom pom or small bead into the palm with the ring and pinky fingers while writing. It keeps those fingers quiet.

Try a pencil grip, with a plan



Some kids like a grip, some do not. Try one, see if it helps comfort, and check in with an OT if you are unsure.

Letter formation

Teach the movement, not just the shape

3

Start at the top



Most letters begin at the top. Say it out loud: "start at the top" before every letter.

Group by starting stroke



Teach c, o, a, d and g together, then l, i, t and u together. Same first move, easier to learn.

Say the path



Use short words while writing: "down, up and over." Words give the movement a plan.

Green dot, red dot



Add a green dot at the start spot. Fade the dot as the letter becomes automatic.

Reversals and mix ups

4

Very common in early writers, so stay calm

One letter at a time



Choose the one letter that gets flipped most and work on only that for a few days.

The bed trick



Make two fists with thumbs up, knuckles touching. The left hand makes a "b" and the right makes a "d".

Give a clue at the start



Put a small star or sticker on the left side of the page so there is a visual anchor.

Link sound, shape and move



Say the sound, trace the letter, then write it. Three inputs together help it stick.

Warm ups and hand strength

Get the little muscles ready

5



Playdough power

Roll, pinch, squeeze and flatten dough. Hide small beads inside and dig them out.



Tongs and tweezers

Pick up pom poms, cotton balls or small crafts with tongs, then tweezers.



Clothespin pinch

Clip clothespins on the edge of a box or card. Count how many in one minute.



Squeeze and spray

A spray bottle, a squeeze sponge or a turkey baster all build hand endurance.

Multisensory practice

Let the hands feel the letters

6



Messy trays

Write letters in shaving cream, sand, salt or rice. Wipe it away and try again.



Sky writing

Write big letters in the air with a pointer finger, then on a table, then on paper.



Rainbow writing

Trace one letter over and over in different colors. Each color is a new try.



Water and chalk

Use a paintbrush with water on a sidewalk or a chalkboard. It dries and the child can start fresh.

Copying and visual motor

Helping eyes and hands work together

7



Bring the model close

Copying from a far board is much harder. Give a copy at the desk when you can.



Cover and track

Use an index card to cover everything except the line being read. It lowers visual clutter.



Mazes and dot to dots

Paths and connect the dots build eye hand control without feeling like writing.



Build up the shapes

Practice lines, circles, crosses and squares before diagonals and complex letters.

Pacing, energy and motivation

Writing is tiring work

8



Short bursts

Write for a few minutes, then a hand shake break. Come back for another round.



Write for a real reason

A note to grandma, a grocery list or a card for a friend gives writing a purpose.



Circle the best one

Instead of fixing every letter, have the child circle the best one on the line.



Quality over quantity

Five careful letters are worth more than a full page of rushed ones.

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When to ask an OT

Reach out to an OT if writing is painful, a child avoids writing, you do not see progress after a few weeks, or the hand tires very quickly. An OT can look at the whole picture, which a handout cannot.

Save this for your next writing session

Start with one idea. See what helps.

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