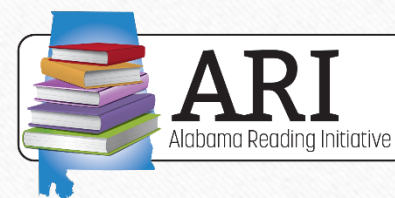


A B C

a b c

Handwriting Guidance

Alabama Reading Initiative





Purpose

This guide was developed as an instructional tool to support teachers, parents, and students in Grades K-3 with handwriting developmental skills. This guide will work in conjunction with the local district/school curriculum for handwriting.

Lexi's Law

Lexi's Law requires cursive handwriting to be taught by the end of third grade in all state schools. Lexi's law prescribes a standardized method for teaching cursive handwriting and provides classroom instructional plans outlining when and how cursive handwriting is to be taught.

The Alabama Course of Study requires cursive writing instruction beginning in second grade.

Handwriting Matters

According to Moats and Tolman (2019), young and struggling writers tend to devote most of their attention to letter formation, sustaining the effort of the physical act of writing, and managing spelling, spacing, and punctuation. In the beginning, this is a lot of work, and the simple act of getting words on the page takes all the cognitive resources available.

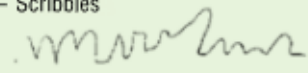
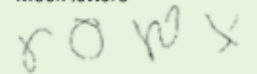
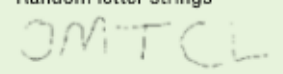

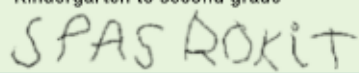
Moats. L. & Tolman, C. (2019). LETRS 3rd Edition. Voyager Sopris Learning, 2(3), 242.

Handwriting Matters

- Handwriting is closely linked to academic achievement, especially composition and literacy skills.
- Current research suggests that students may learn to spell words more accurately through the process of handwriting. Direct handwriting instruction was also found to be related to improved reading at the word level for first grade students who had previously been identified as having handwriting difficulties.

Cahill, S. S. (2009). Where does handwriting fit in? *Intervention in school and clinic*, 44(4), 223-228.



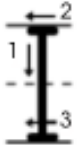
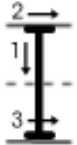


Table 8.2 Phases of
Literacy Development
and Writing
Development
(Paulson & Moats,
2018)

Phases	Literacy Development	Writing Development
1	Prealphabetic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing letter knowledge and lack of phonemic awareness Sight words learned by visual cues Words spelled nonphonetically Preschool to kindergarten 	Prealphabetic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Three unique levels of writing that lack any use of letter-sound connections <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scribbles  Mock letters  Random letter strings  Toddlers and preschoolers (ages 2–5)
2	Partial Alphabetic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letter-name knowledge and developing phonemic awareness Sight words learned by partial phoneme-grapheme connections with partial phonetic spellings Kindergarten to first grade 	Semiphonetic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beginning awareness of the connection between letters and speech sounds Late preschool to kindergarten 
3	Full Alphabetic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full phonemic awareness and complete phoneme-grapheme correspondences Spellings are phonetic First grade to third grade 	Phonetic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writing words using close letter-sound correspondences Kindergarten to second grade 
4	Consolidated Alphabetic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Known grapho-syllabic spelling units used to decode unfamiliar words Grapho-syllabic and grapho-phonemic units used in spelling Third grade and beyond 	Conventional <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Orthographically and grammatically correct writing Third grade and beyond <p>Space rocket</p>

Determining the Dominant Hand

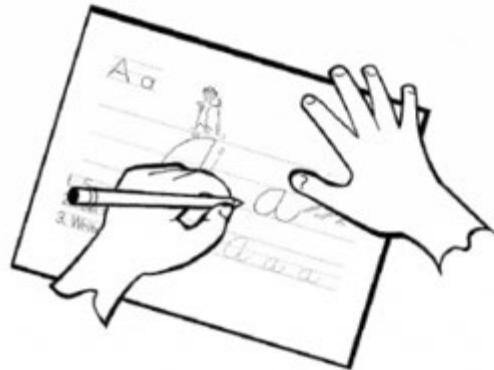
Use these exercises to determine a student's natural hand preference.

- Stand in front of the student. Hand the student a pencil in the middle of his or her body and see which hand the student uses to reach for it.
- Ask the student to show you how he or she would throw a ball.
- Watch the student engage in other fine motor activities, such as cutting with scissors and using a fork. Which hand does the student prefer?

Left-Handed	Right-Handed
	
	
	

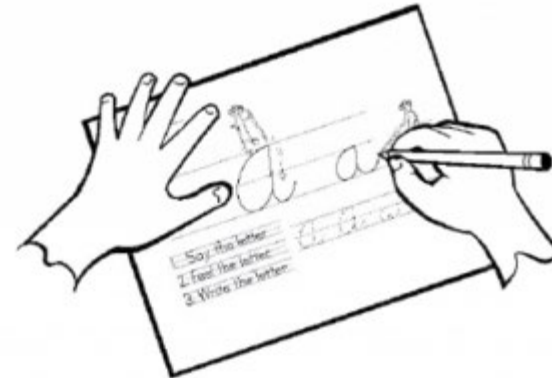
Pencil Position and Grip

Left hand



Left corner of paper are up.
Bottom right corner points
toward your body.

Right hand



Right corner of paper are
up. Bottom left corner points
toward your body.

The Five Pencil Grip Developmental Stages

There are 5 developmental stages, that a child needs to go through, before they can successfully use a mature tripod grip. They need to work through each stage and as their hand, shoulder and arm strength and mobility increases so does the ability to move to the next developmental stage of the grip.

There are principles of development called “big to small” and “proximal to distal” – basically this means that children develop the larger muscles of the trunk and arms before the smaller muscles of the hands and that the proximal muscles closer to the body centre (shoulder muscles, upper arm muscles) develop before the distal muscles which are further away (hand muscles).

A child may not develop a three-finger tripod pencil grip until the age of 5 or 6. This is considered the most appropriate pencil grip, for right and left-handed writers, as it allows the fingers and wrist to work together to provide a freer flowing movement.

The Five Pencil Grip Developmental Stages



Stage 1: Palmer-supinate grasp

Holds the crayon/pencil in fist (whole hand) like a dagger. They use whole arm movements from the shoulder to mark-make. Due to this whole arm movement they prefer to work on a vertical surface.

The Five Pencil Grip Developmental Stages



Stage 2: Palmer or digital-pronate grasp

Holds a crayon/pencil with the palm of the hand facing down towards the paper. The crayon/pencil is held by all the fingers and the thumb. The movement comes from the shoulder and elbow. Again, due to the way the arm moves a vertical surface is preferred.

The Five Pencil Grip Developmental Stages



Stage 3: Four finger and thumb grip

Holding the crayon/pencil between the thumb and four fingers with the crayon/pencil in a nearly vertical, upright position. Movement comes from the elbow and wrist.

The Five Pencil Grip Developmental Stages



Stage 4: Static quadruped or tripod grip

Holding the pencil in very nearly in the correct position however the web space is narrower than it would be if held in a mature tripod grip. This means that the movement is coming from the wrist and large finger movements.

The Five Pencil Grip Developmental Stages



Right-Handed



Left-Handed

Stage 5: Mature/Dynamic tripod grip

This is traditionally considered the most appropriate handwriting pencil grip for both left and right-handed writers. Holding the pencil between the thumb and index finger with pencil supported on the middle finger. The ring and little fingers are gently curled inwards. This gives an open wide web space which means the movement comes from the fingers.

Body Positions

Proper body position is important to ensure legibility in writing, as well as to promote factors that lead to good health. Students should sit straight in their chairs, leaning forward slightly to place hands on the desktops in the proper writing position.



Kindergarten

By kindergarten, students should be taught to do the following:

COS #34- Print legibly, using proper pencil grip.

- a. Print upper and lowercase letters using proper approach strokes, letter formation, and line placement.
- b. With prompting and support, print first and last name using proper letter formation, capitalizing only the first letter of each name.
- c. With prompting and support, use lower case letters in the majority of written work, using capitals only when appropriate.

Keys of Legibility Manuscript

Keys to Legibility Manuscript

All entries will be judged according to the Keys to Legibility—Size, Shape, Spacing, and Slant.



The size is correct when all letters of the same size are even in height and rest on the baseline.

tall letters

b d f h k l t

short letters

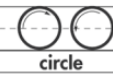
a c e g i j m n o p
q r s u v w x y z



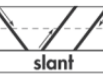
Manuscript letters are based on four kinds of lines. The shape of the letters is determined by these lines.

horizontal

vertical



circle



slant



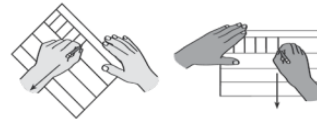
Slant (vertical quality)

All manuscript letters are vertical in relation to the writing lines. Good vertical quality is achieved by **positioning the paper correctly, pulling the downstrokes in the proper direction, and shifting the paper as the writing line fills.**

Paper Position

left hand

right hand



Letters should be spaced evenly.

football soccer

Letters should not be too close.

Letters should not be too far apart.

football football

There should be a one-finger space between words. Allow enough space for two fingers between sentences.

This is correct spacing. It

For Handwriting Contest information, call 800.924.9233 or go to www.zaner-bloser.com/hwcontest

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Example: Kindergarten (Focus Areas)

First Semester

Prewriting skills focusing
on basic writing strokes:

(Include left-right progression, top-
bottom, and up-down)



Correct pencil grip,
paper, and body
position.

Write first name using
correct upper and
lowercase letters.

Begin with vertical line and
slant lines letters and
numeral formation:

Letters: l, I, t, E, F, H, i, L, T,
W, Y, K, X, Z, A, N, M, V, v, y,
w, k, x, z

Numerals: 1, 4, 7

Focus instruction on
backward circle and curve-
line letters. Continue to write
on unlined paper.

Letters: O, Q, C, G, o, a, d, c,
e, f, g, j, q, u, s

Numerals: 0, 6, 8, 9

Example Kindergarten (Focus Areas)

Second Semester

Continue with the first semester skills. Review and practice letters learned.

Introduce the correct use of uppercase and lowercase letters in the student's last name.

Introduce forward circle letters (b, p).

Letters: P, R, B, D, U, S, J, b, h, p, r, n, m

Numerals: 2, 3, 5

Begin students to using ruled paper for instruction and practice.

Use correct letter formation as students learn to form letters, words, and sentences.

First Grade

By first grade, students should be able to do the following:

COS#30- Write legibly, using proper pencil grip.

- a. Print upper and lowercase letters fluently, using proper approach strokes, letter formation, and line placement.
- b. Print first and last names using proper letter formation, capitalization, and punctuation.
- c. Use lower case letters in the majority of written work, using capitals only when appropriate.
- d. Write letters of the English alphabet in alphabetical order from memory.

Example Traditional Manuscript Alphabet



Traditional Manuscript Alphabet

A a B b C c D d

E e F f G g H h

I i J j K k L l M m

N n O o P p Q q

R r S s T t U u V v

W w X x Y y Z z

**Example:
First Grade
(Focus Areas)**

First
Semester

Review correct pencil grip, paper position, and body position.

Review basic strokes, letter formation, and line placement.

Practice writing first name and last name.

Use lined paper with top, middle, and bottom line. Top line can be the "hat" line, the middle the "belt" line, and the bottom the "shoe" line.

Place emphasis on using capital letters only when appropriate.

**Example:
First Grade
(Focus Areas)**

**Second
Semester**

Continue review of
pencil grip, paper
position, and body
position.

Continue review of the
uppercase and
lowercase letter
formation with aim for
manuscript mastery.

Write letters in
alphabetical order from
memory.

Transition from
guideline paper to
notebook paper.

Continue to review
letter formation and line
placement to enhance
writing fluency.

Second Grade

By second grade, students should be able to do the following:

COS#37- Write legibly.

- a. Write words and sentences fluently using correctly formed manuscript letters with appropriate size and spacing.
- b. Demonstrate cursive writing stokes, including undercurve, overcurve, downcurve, and slant.
- c. Form uppercase and lowercase in cursive.

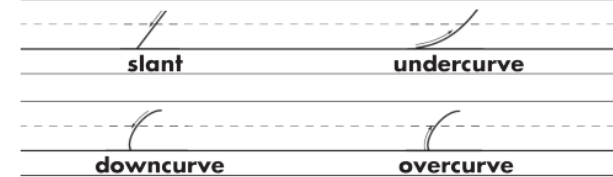
Example Keys to Legibility for Cursive

Keys to Legibility

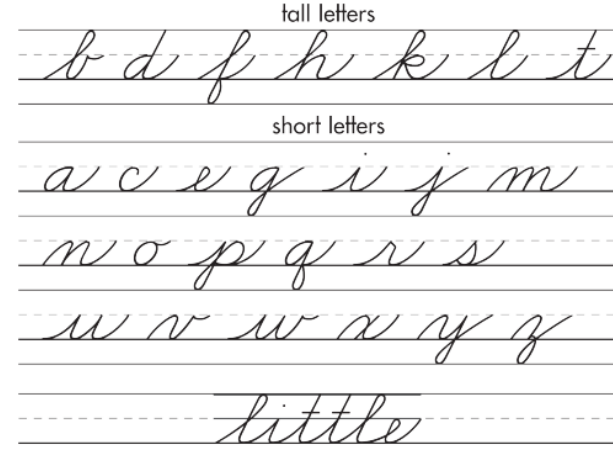
Cursive



The cursive letters are made up of four basic strokes.



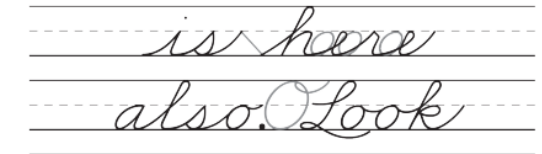
The size is correct when all letters of the same size are even in height and rest on the baseline.



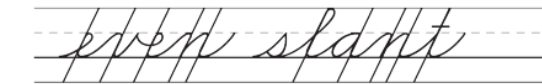
Attention students: All entries will be judged according to the Keys to Legibility—Shape, Size, Spacing, and Slant.



Spacing between letters, words, and sentences should be even. Between letters in a word there should be just enough space for a minimum-sized oval. For uniform spacing between words, the beginning stroke should start near the ending stroke of the preceding word. A slanted line (45°) drawn from the endpoint of the last stroke to the baseline should touch both words. Allow enough space for an uppercase **O** between sentences and two uppercase **O**'s for the indentation of a paragraph.



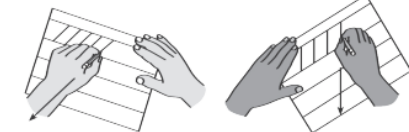
Cursive letters should have a forward slant. Correct slant is achieved by positioning the paper correctly, pulling the downstrokes in the proper direction, and shifting the paper as the writing line fills.



Paper Position

left hand

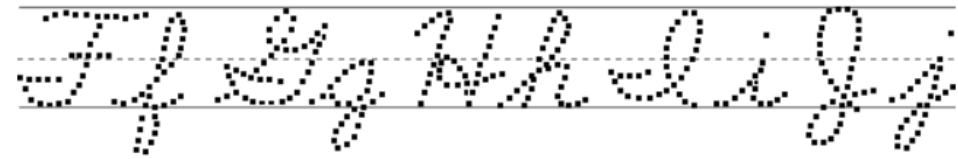
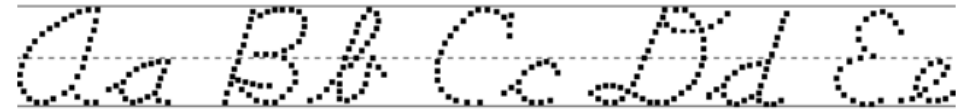
right hand



Example
Uppercase and
Lowercase Letters
in Cursive



Trace the cursive letters.



**Example:
Second Grade
(Focus Areas)**

**First
Semester**

Transition from
guideline paper to
notebook paper.

Continue to review the
correct pencil grip,
paper, and body
position.

Continue to review
uppercase and
lowercase letter
formation with aim for
manuscript mastery.

Review correct spacing
between letters and
words.

Continue self-evaluation
techniques.

**Example:
Second
Grade
(Focus Areas)**

**Second
Semester**

Continue review of
pencil grip, paper
position, and body
position.

Reduce the spacing
between letters and
words.

Continue to review
uppercase and
lowercase letter
formation with aim for
manuscript mastery.

Reduce the spacing
between words and
downsizing of uppercase
and lowercase letters.

Transition from
guideline paper to
notebook paper.

Continue self-evaluation
techniques.

Third Grade

By third grade, students should be able to do the following:

COS# 31- Write legibly with connected, correctly formed letters and appropriate spacing between words.

Example: End of Third Grade Cursive Proficiency

Name: _____ Date: _____

Cursive Handwriting

Rewrite the following sentence below in your best *cursive* writing:

The quick brown fox
jumps over the lazy dog.

Handwriting practice lines (dotted lines for cursive writing).

Self Evaluation			
I know I can do better	I have some things to work on.	I have good handwriting.	I know this is my very best and is great.
Teacher Evaluation			
You can do better	You have some things to work on.	You have some good handwriting.	You did your very best and this is great work.

Example Student Handwriting Self-Assessment Checklist

Before Writing	Yes	No
I feel comfortable with the chair and table.		
I sit correctly.		
I position the paper correctly.		
I hold the pen/pencil correctly.		

Example Student Handwriting Self-Assessment Checklist

During and after writing	Yes	No
I form the letters correctly.		
The letters sit correctly on the line.		
The slant of my letters is regular.		
The spacing between my letters is even.		
The spacing between my words is even.		
The letters with curve are nicely rounded.		
I use capital letters correctly.		

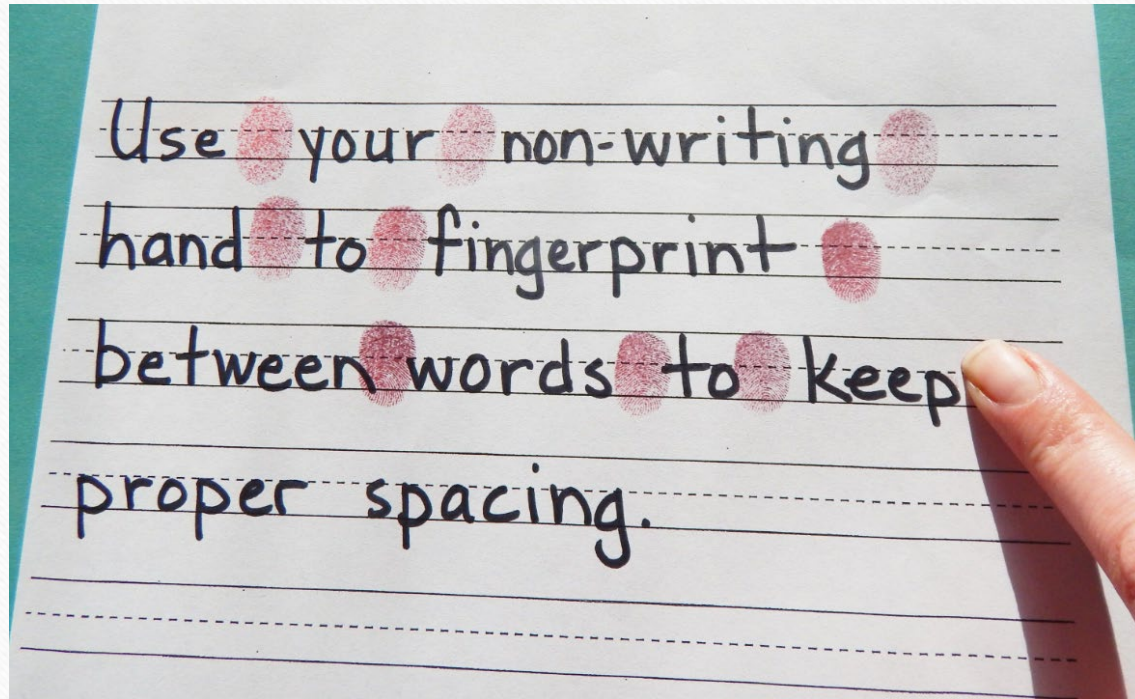
Example: Handwriting Rubric

Overall Handwriting	5	4	3	2	1	Score
Letter Formation	All the letters formed correctly	Most of the letters are formed correctly (more than 75%)	Some of the letters are formed correctly (50-75%)	Few of the letters are formed correctly (25-50%)	Less than 25% of the letters are formed correctly	
Placement	All letters are oriented correctly on the lines	Most of the writing sample is oriented correctly on the lines. (more than 75%)	Some of the writing sample is oriented correctly on the lines (50-75%)	Little of the writing sample is oriented correctly on the lines (25-50%)	Less than 25% of the writing sample is oriented correctly on the lines	
Letter Sizing	All letters are sized correctly	Most of the letters are sized correctly (more than 75%)	Some of the letters are sized correctly (50-75%)	Few of the letters are sized correctly (25-50%)	Less than 25% of the letters are sized correctly	
Spacing of Letters	All letters are spaced correctly	Most of the letters are spaced correctly (more than 75%)	Some of the letter are spaced correctly (50-75%)	Few of the letters are spaced correctly (25-50%)	Less than 25% of the letters are spaced correctly	
Legibility	All letters in the writing sample are legible	Most of the writing sample is legible (more than 75%)	Some of the writing sample is legible (50-75%)	Little of the writing sample is legible (25-50%)	Less than 25% of the writing sample is legible	
Speed	Keep up with peers when completing handwritten assignments	Takes 25% longer than peers to complete handwritten assignment	Takes 50% longer than peers to complete handwritten assignment	Takes 75% longer than peers to complete handwriting assignment	Takes more than 75% longer than peers to complete handwritten assignment	
Neatness	Writing assignments are always neat without erasures, torn paper or cross outs	Most (>75%) of the writing assignment is neat without erasures, torn paper or cross outs	Some (50-75%) of the writing assignment is neat without erasures, torn paper , or cross outs	Little (25-50%) of the writing assignment is neat without erasures, torn paper or cross outs	Less than 25% of writing assignment is neat without erasures, torn paper or cross outs	
Spacing of Words	All words are spaced correctly	Most (>75%) of the words are spaced correctly	Some (50-75%) of the words are spaced correctly	Little (25-50%) of the words are spaced correctly	Less than 25% of the words are spaced correctly	

Handwriting Terms

- Baseline- The line upon which the letters rest
- Cursive Writing- Writing in which the letters are joined together in a flowing motion
- Horizontal Strokes- Left-to-right or right-to-left progression of a line used in manuscript writing
- Lowercase Letters- A letter written or printed in a size smaller than or in a form differing from its corresponding uppercase letter
- Manuscript – Writing in which letters are not joined and the writing instrument is lifted after most strokes, also called “print writing”
- Slant Line- The diagonal line that is a basic manuscript stroke and is always pulled downward
- Spacing- The distance between letters, between words, between sentences, and between lines
- Uppercase Letter- A letter often written or printed in a form differing from its corresponding lowercase letter; a capital letter of the alphabet
- Vertical Strokes- One of the manuscript basic strokes; it is always pulled downward (except in the uppercase manuscript U)

Spacing



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