

Handwriting guidance for Parents and Carers



Meavy C of E Primary School
2016

At Meavy Primary School we want all children to develop fluent, legible handwriting, ultimately in a cursive style. We believe legible and fluent handwriting is an essential and beneficial skill, even in the age of keyboards and text messaging!

Handwriting is formally taught throughout the school although this may look very different depending on the developmental stage of the children. We use the Nelson handwriting scheme across the school.

The Early Years – When is my child ready to write?

Children must develop the appropriate upper body strength and muscle control in order to write confidently. All children learn to write in a specific way which involves developing control of four key pivots – the shoulder, the elbow, the wrist and the hand. Until all of these pivots are developed your child will not be able to hold a pencil in a correct pincer grip nor be able to write with any control for a sustained period of time.

How can I help my child develop the key pivots?

Stage 1 – The development of the shoulder pivot

- Provide a large surface for your child to make marks on
- Encourage your child to use the climbing frame at the park
- Encourage your child to use an easel to make marks on
- Provide large pieces of playdough and encourage your child to knead the dough when standing up (alternatively put them to work baking bread!)



Stage 2 – The development of the elbow pivot

- Provide your child with roller, long handled brushes and scrubbing brushes to paint with
- Put paper on the underneath of a table and allow them to lie on the floor and draw above them



Stage 3 – The development of the wrist pivot

- Provide your child with house painting or pasting brushes for painting with water or paint using an up and down action



Stage 4 – The development of hand and finger pivots

- Provide your child with tweezers and pegs
- Threading beads encourages the development of the pincer grip.
- Screwing nuts and bolts



Once a child has moved away from a palm grip, and their fingers are spread along the length of the pencil then they are ready to have their pencil grip corrected into a pincer grip. Until then they are not physically or developmentally ready.

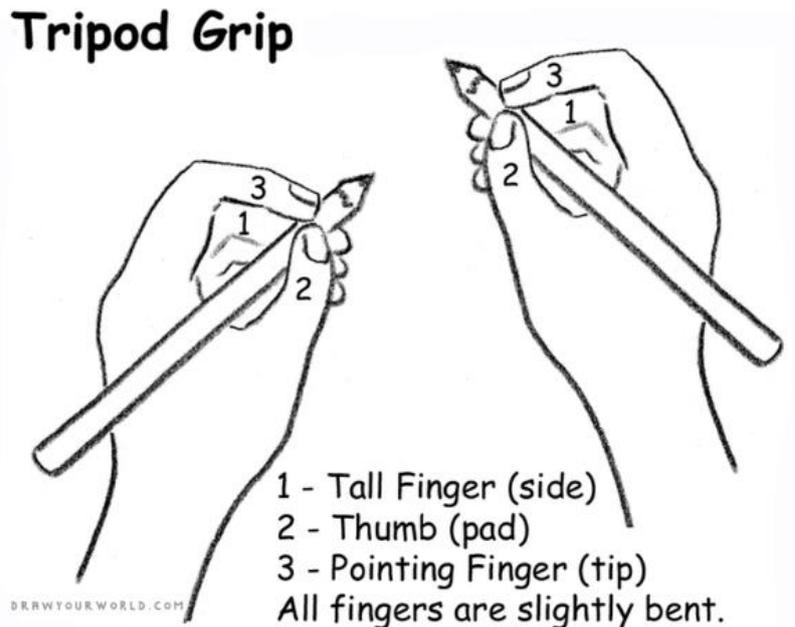
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Early Years Expert

How should my child grip the pencil?

When your child is developmentally ready to write, the pencil grip should be firm but relaxed. The pencil should be held between the thumb and the first finger, resting against the middle finger.

Tripod Grip



There are lots of tricks and resources that we can use to help your child develop the correct tripod grip.

Letter formation

We teach the children to form lowercase letters first. We explain that they belong in families according to the way that they are formed. They are not taught in this order but each new letter is related to its family group.

There are four letter families

Ladder letters, curly caterpillar letters, one armed robot letters and zig zag monster letters



(We use the k with a loop that is in the one armed robot family)

We teach a style of pre cursive letter formation. Although the letters do not have lead ins they do have small flicks.

Teaching young children how letters are formed does not necessarily mean expecting them to write them with pens and pencils. The first shapes are best made in the air/sand/foam/paint/on the back of another child etc. where fine control is not required.

The children will learn that each letter has a position on the line with some letters having sticks (or ascenders) that are taller and some having tails (descenders) that drop below the writing line.

Children need to understand that letters in a word should be evenly spaced. In addition there needs to be sufficient space between each word and the next.

The children begin learning the four handwriting joins during year 2 and we would expect a child to be confidently joining by the end of year 3.

We will give you more information on how we teach cursive handwriting as your child moves up the school.