

HILLINGDON CHILDREN'S INTEGRATED THERAPY SERVICE - CITS
OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY - Universal Strategies Booklet
Letter formation and Handwriting – School Aged

Contents:

- Introduction:
- Shape - Letter formation
- Space – finger spacing
- Size and sitting on the line - Yellow guidelines/ sky, grass, soil
- Alphabet strip
- Handwriting checklist

Introduction:

This universal strategies booklet on letter formation and handwriting follows on from our Advice sheet (<https://www.cnwl.nhs.uk/application/files/4315/8469/9272/Handwriting.pdf>) and has been formulated to ensure that the same message about writing is being shared between schools, parents and therapists.

Why do we need universal package for letter formation and handwriting?

The ever increasing academic demand on our children to write before they are developmentally ready is causing many to fall into bad writing habits early on. This makes it difficult to correct when they are older and have been flagged up as not keeping up with their peers in speed and legibility.

Writing **does not** require specialists to teach, practice or review difficulty with it. There are simple steps that need to be followed before a child learns to write to ensure they are ready. The first steps are making sure the child is able to copy age appropriate shapes and lines required for forming letters and numbers later (please see early years prewriting strategies). Once those have been mastered the child can be taught numbers and letters with the emphasis on the start and end point (formation).

We then move on to sizing, placement on a line and spacing as they progress.

It is imperative that letter and number formation is performed correctly before the child is required to write words and before they start with cursive (joined up) writing. If a child learns the incorrect formation it will impact their ability to write legibly and efficiently in later years.

Shape

When a child is ready to write (has learned the pre-writing shapes. See **Early Years Advice Sheet on Pre-Writing**), they need to learn to form letters accurately.

Letters are grouped into four '**LETTER FAMILIES**' based on how they are formed and their starting position. It is easier for them to learn the correct formation by grouping letters with similar formation together.



l t i u y j



r n m h b k p



c a d o s g q e f



z v w x

TOP TIP: MOVEMENT BREAKS

We need movement to help us focus throughout the day, they can aid concentration and attention to tasks. They also help give children feedback about where their body is in space and can temporarily increase muscle tone to promote endurance and good posture for table top tasks.

Movement breaks only need to be for a few minutes. Allow your child to have movement breaks frequently (dependant on age) .

Examples:

- * Handing out books
- * Star Jumps
- * Using a fidget toy
- * Doing Stretches/Yoga poses
 - * Hopping
 - * Throwing/catching a ball
- ** Any activity which may involve using the muscles to push/pull, lift/move etc.

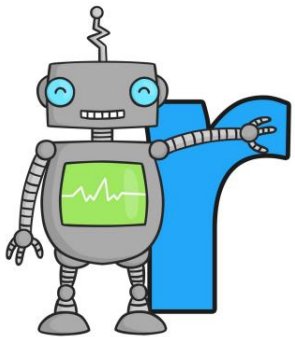
See our advice sheet on supporting attention and focus -

https://www.cnwl.nhs.uk/application/files/1815/8469/9273/Supporting_attention_and_focus.pdf

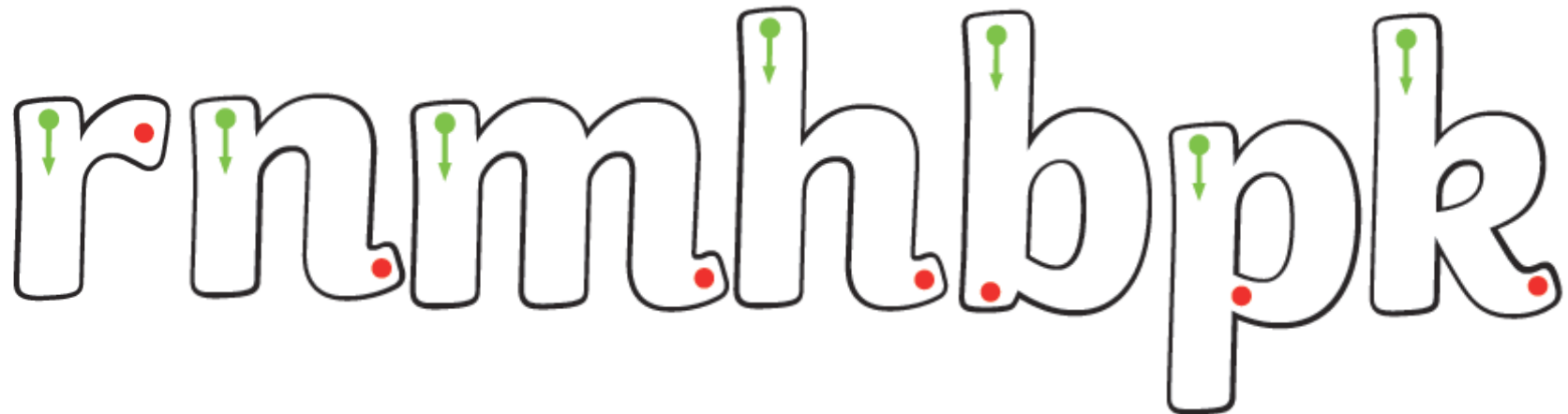
- Please see our letter formation worksheet on the next two pages.
- Encourage your child to start at the green dot; the letters are generally formed by following the first letter in each group.
- Your child should finish the letter at the red dot.



Curly Caterpillar Letters

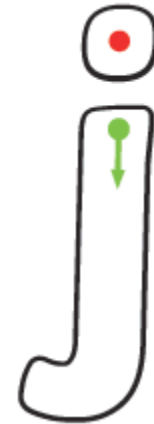
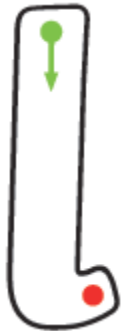


One Armed Robot Letters



- Please see our letter formation worksheet on the next two pages.
- Encourage your child to start at the green dot; the letters are generally formed by following the first letter in each group.
- Your child should finish the letter at the red dot.

Long Legged Giraffe Letters



Zig Zag monster Letters



Space

Leaving a space between words makes them easier to read.

- ✓ 'Finger spacers' or lolly pop sticks / coffee stirrers can be used as a visual reminder for leaving a space. Allow them to decorate it.
- ✓ Grid paper can help, leaving one square between words.

Finger Spacing

How to use:

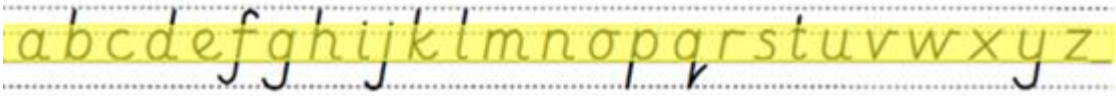
- Print out finger-spacer
- Cut it out
- Allow your child to colour or decorate as desired
- Laminate and cut to size
- Give to your child and encourage your child to use between words to prompt where the fingers space should go and how big the finger space should be.



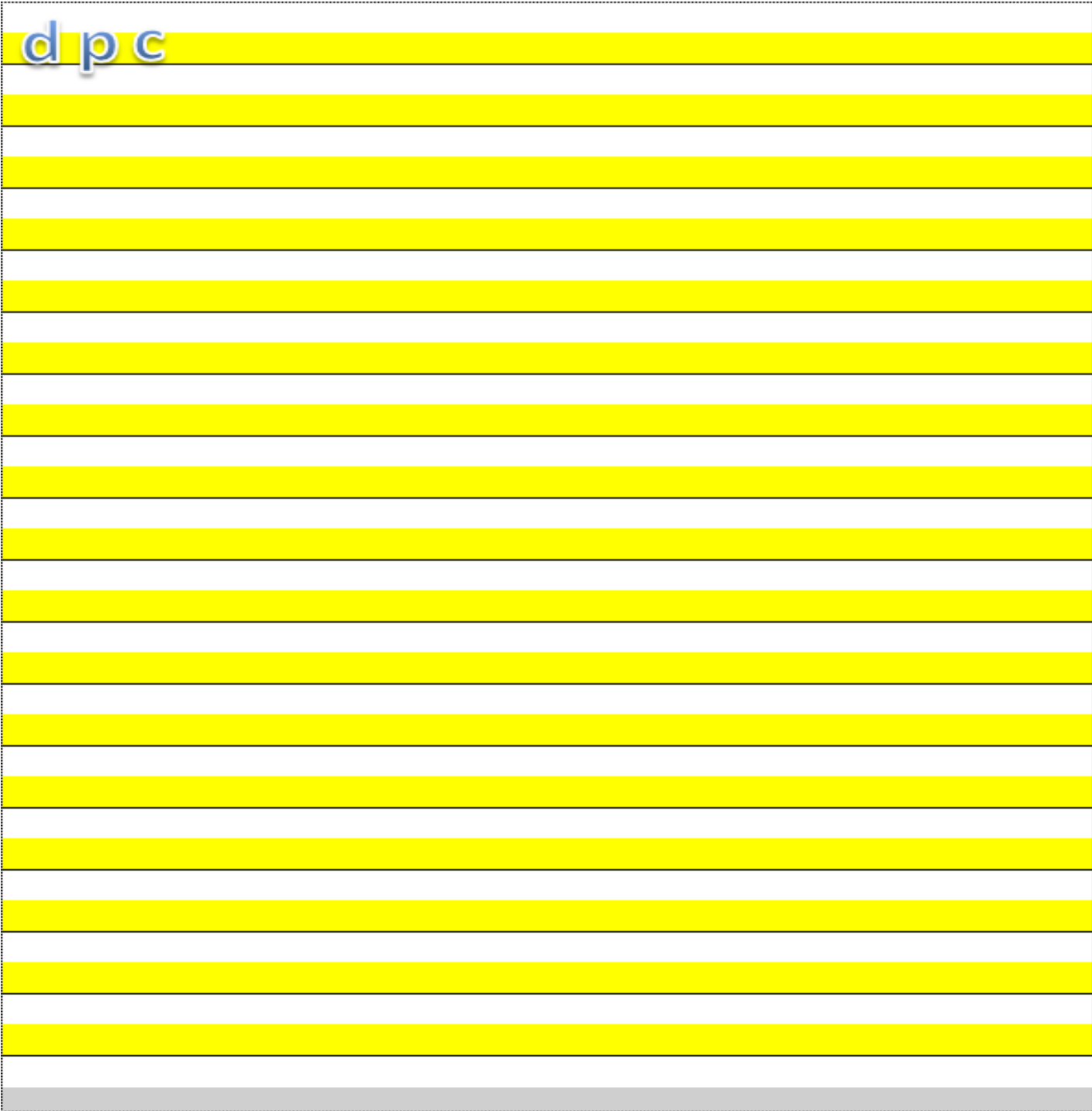
Size  **Sitting**
(on the line)

Below are two different styles that may help your child to understand how to place their letters and help understand sizing of letters.

Yellow guidelines – this is where the bottom half of the line is highlighted. The main 'body' of the letter should sit in this highlighted section. Any heads or legs (ascending and descending letters) should sit in the white part of the line above or below.



d p c

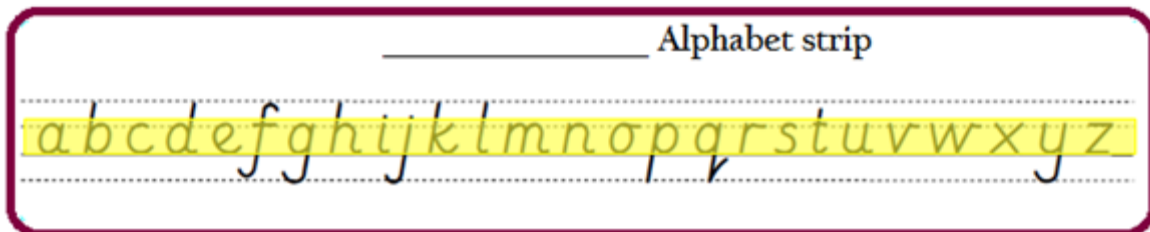
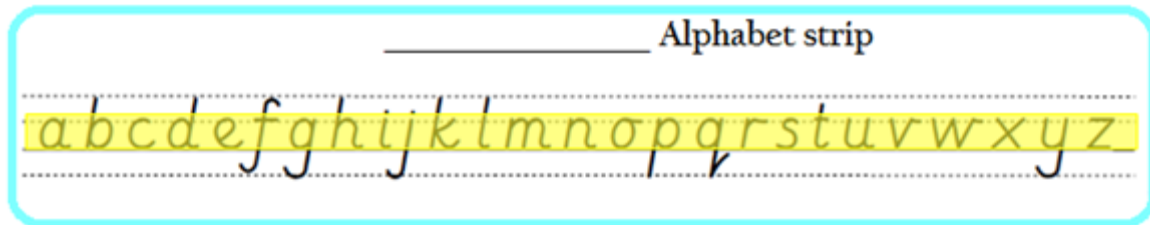


Sky, grass, soil- this is where the top line is blue (sky), middle line is green (grass) and bottom line is brown (soil). The main 'body' of the letter should sit in the grass section. Any heads (ascending letters) should sit in the sky above and any legs (descending letters) should sit in the soil below.




Alphabet Strips:

Your child may find an alphabet strip useful to have on their workstation if they have difficulty with letter memory, formation or reversals.



Handwriting Checklist:

Your child may also benefit from having a checklist on their workstation.



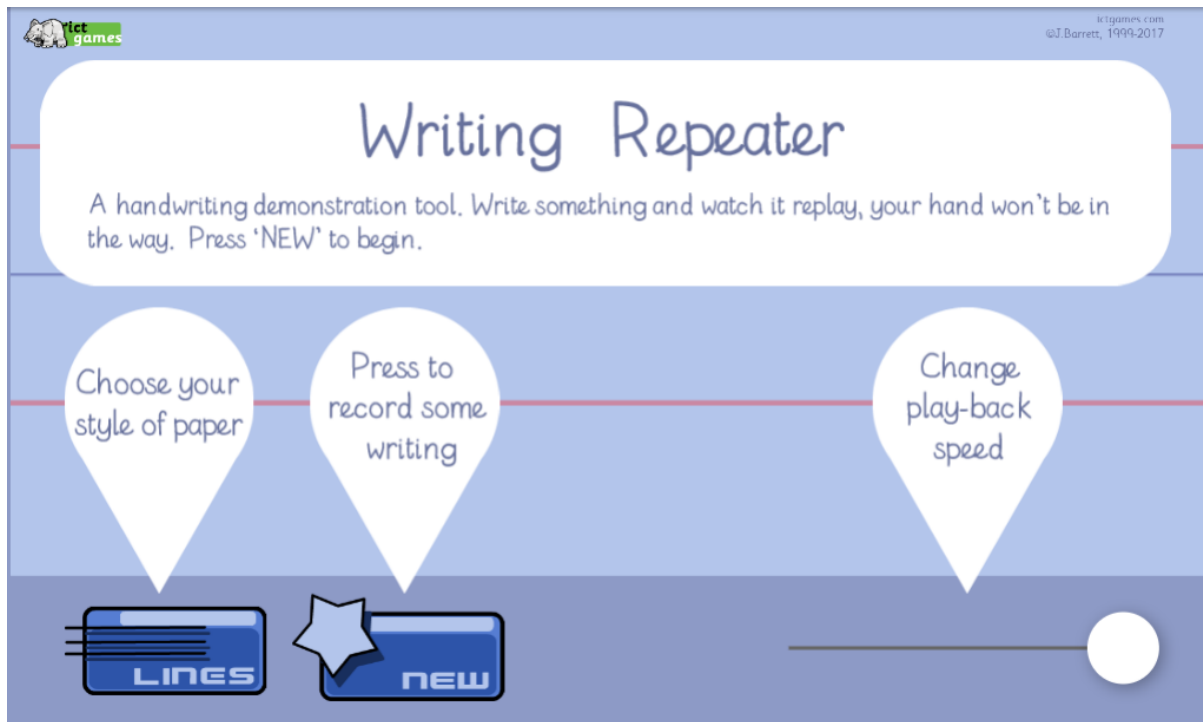
• HANDWRITING •
QUICK CHECK

When writing, ask yourself these questions:

- 1. Am I forming my letters like we practiced?
- 2. Am I writing on the lines?
- 3. Am I spacing between words and letters?
- 4. Are my capital letters bigger than the lower case letters?
- 5. Are my tall letters (b,d,f,h,k,l,t) reaching the top line?
- 6. Do my letters with tails (g,j,p,q,y) fall below the bottom line?
- 7. Am I taking my time?
- 8. Can I read my writing?
- 9. Did I start at the left margin and stop at the right margin?

Useful Websites:

<https://www.ictgames.com/mobilePage/writingRepeater/index.html>



<https://www.ictgames.com/mobilePage/skyWriter/index.html>



Useful Apps:

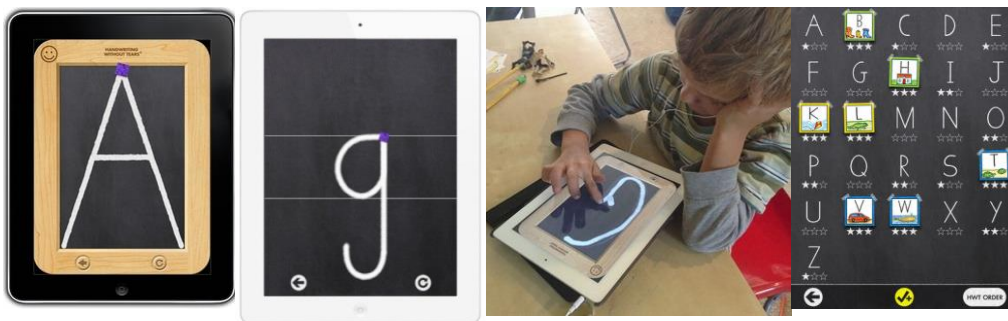
Touch and write- letter formation (low print + cursive), shapes and numbers practice using shaving cream, jelly, finger paint, and more!



Hairy letters- practice correct letter formation



Wet ,Dry Try- Handwriting without tears programme



Writing Wizard – Practice shapes, patterns, numbers, letters and words.



Additional Information:

Useful books:

- Penpals for Handwriting
- Write Well Books

Useful websites:

- <https://nha-handwriting.org.uk>
- <https://morrellshandwriting.co.uk/>
- <http://eyecanlearn.com/perception/>
- <http://www.highlightskids.com/>
-

Further Reading:

- <https://nha-handwriting.org.uk/handwriting/help-for-teachers/ages-and-key-stages/>
- <https://home.oxfordowl.co.uk/english/primary-handwriting/>
- <https://www.teachhandwriting.co.uk/foundation-stage-handwriting.html>
- The National Curriculum