

# Helping your child with Handwriting

## What is handwriting?

- The function of writing is to give meaning
- Handwriting is a complex skill
- It is a process
- It involves vision, visual memory, posture, body control, hand-eye co-ordination, pencil grip and letter formation
- It involves a child using co-ordination to hold crayon/pencil; keeping the paper still; and putting enough pressure to make a mark
- There are different stages that children pass through to becoming a writer
- **Children pass through these stages at different rates**

## Emergent Writing

- Scribbling stage
- Making marks that may resemble letters
- Making marks that look like letters
- Using one letter to represent a word
- Using invented spelling
- Using conventional grammar, punctuation and spelling

## What to do at home

- **Encourage** handwriting
- Provide different materials for writing
- Practise **fine motor skills**
- Be a helper **not** a teacher
- Practise basic movements (sand/ flour, etc.)
- **Take it slowly**
- **Demands / expectations** can cause undue tension

## What makes handwriting difficult?

- Poor fine motor skills
- Incorrect pencil grip
- Uniformity of letter size
- Interspersion of upper & lower case letters
- Keeping letters on the line
- Directionality

## Left Handed Children

- Write towards the body
- In order to avoid a 'hook'
  - They must hold pencil differently
  - They must position paper differently

## Home / School

- Keep in touch with teacher
- Be familiar with how letters are to be formed
- Be familiar with the style of writing

## Note:

- The more your child uses finger activities the sooner the required skills may be acquired.

Brendan Culligan ([brencull@eircom.net](mailto:brencull@eircom.net))

Author of 'Improving Children's Spelling' and '*Spelling and Handwriting*'

# Helping your child with spelling

## What is spelling?

- The function of spelling is to give **meaning**
- Spelling is **writing words from memory**
- Some children 'catch' spellings but many don't and have difficulty
- Spelling is difficult as we don't always spell a word the way it sounds
- There are different stages that children pass through to becoming a speller
- Spelling is predominantly a **visual skill**
- Spelling and writing go hand in hand
- Spelling should not be an oral activity

## Spelling Myths

- A poor speller is not intelligent!
- The more I read the better my spelling!
- Breaking up a word and sounding it out will improve spelling!
- Spelling can be taught through rules!

## What to do at home

- 'Live' the strategy that is being used in school
- Discuss the words prior to learning
- Look for words within words or parts that are already known
- Ask if s/he knows any part of it
- Have child write the 'bits' s/he knows
- Have child focus on the difficult 'bits'

- Look how the words are put together
- Make sure that if you call out spellings to your child, s/he **must** write them down
- Let the **child** then **check** if the word is correct or not
- Always encourage your child to 'have a go' – take away the fear of being wrong!

## Correcting Spelling

- Child should **always** check his/her own attempt
- Firstly, praise the child for the 'bits' that are written correctly
- Only then do you focus on the 'wrong bits'
- Can you **picture** the 'bad bit(s)'

## Measuring Progress in Spelling

- Progress is best seen in child's free writing
- An improving score in a weekly test is not a real sign of improvement
- Are the child's mistakes 'getting better'?

## What if I am not a good speller?

- No problem! Use a dictionary together
- Talk about what you do if you don't know a spelling
- Use a spell-checker. **Be careful!** (at times they are of no use and they do not remove the need to learn how to spell).

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