

Letter-join's Guide to Provision for Left-handed Writers

Recognising the needs of left-handed pupils

Teachers should be aware of the specific needs of left-handed writers and make appropriate provision. Some practical help right from the start can make a huge difference to the learning outcomes of left-handed children.



Modelling left-handed writing

It is difficult for left-handers to follow letter formation when modelled by a right-handed teacher. Teachers must be prepared to demonstrate correct letter orientation to left-handed children on an individual or small group basis. Sitting opposite left handed children can also be helpful, as this allows them to mirror the teacher's technique.

Challenges for left-handed writers

Left-handed children commonly experience the following challenges when they start learning to write:

Left-handers 'push' the pencil

Left-handed children have to push the pencil across the paper instead of pulling it like a right-hander. This causes the pencil to dig into the paper so that handwriting does not flow easily. Pushing the pencil along means that the tip may jump so the flow is not continuous.

Left-handers cannot see what they are writing

As the pupil's hand is following the pencil, it is hard for them to see what they have just written. They may hook their left wrist to move their hand and wrist out of the way, making writing uncomfortable. This method can affect handwriting stamina and legibility and cause fatigue and pain when writing.



Handwriting support for left-handed pupils

To help left-handed children to overcome these difficulties, they should be taught how to adopt good handwriting techniques from the start, as follows:

Position the paper correctly

Left-handed children should position their paper/book to their left side and slanted. This makes it easier for pupils to see the tip of the pencil as they write.

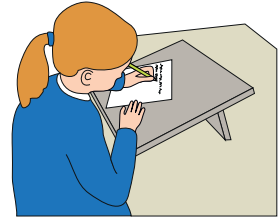
Use the right hand for stability

To prevent the paper from sliding as they write, pupils should use their right hand to steady the page.



Keep the hand and wrist under the line

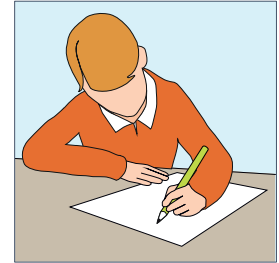
Left-handers often curl their wrist over the top of the pencil so that they can see their writing. Writing on a sloped surface can help left-handers to keep their hand and wrist under the line and the pencil on the line.



Hold the pencil with a good tripod grip

Use the Tripod Grip Rhyme (below) to ensure the correct pencil grip.

To enable children to see as they write and to prevent smudging, left handers should hold their pencil at least 3cm from the point. This can be marked by stickers in the correct place for grip until the child is familiar with the position.



Sit left-handed children on the left

Left-handed pupils should sit to the left of a right-handed child so that they are not competing for space.



Put a dot at the start of the line

Left-handed children often naturally write from right to left when learning to write. Putting a mark at the left-hand side of the line can remind them where to start writing. Extra practice with left-to-right exercises may be necessary before pupils write left-to-right automatically.

Tripod Grip Rhyme

Left handed grip

1. Point away the pencil,
2. Pinch it near the tip,
3. Lift it off the table,
4. Spin it round...
5. ...and grip.

Right handed grip

1. Point away the pencil,
2. Pinch it near the tip,
3. Lift it off the table,
4. Spin it round...
5. ...and grip.