

Handwriting

Know Your School's Writing Style

Throughout primary school, the main aim is to enable children to write fluently, legibly and with increased speed. It is especially important for parents to know whether each word starts on the line (with a lead-in stroke) or starts where a printed letter will begin. In UK schools, capital letters are usually simply written and it is rare for any schools to join capital letters to the rest of words, although where lead-in strokes are included, it can look like the capitals are sometimes joined.

What Is Cursive Writing?

Cursive writing is writing that joins up letters. Although many believe that cursive writing involves joining all the letters in a word and looks like 'loopy writing', this is not the case. Each school will have made a decision about which handwriting style to use. Some styles join all lower case letters, including descenders (j, g, y, etc) using a loop. However, many cursive styles do not join every letter and some do not join letters that end on the left-hand side, such as b, p and s.

Many countries have a style that is consistent across the country or region. In English schools, handwriting style is determined by individual schools, though there are objectives in the national curriculum and teacher guidance for developing handwriting. Some schools offer a handwriting page or guide for parents and others offer a parent meeting or workshop to explain handwriting.

What Does the National Curriculum Say About Handwriting?

The national curriculum does not require children to develop fully joined writing; in fact, some of the learning objectives require children to determine which letters they will join and which they won't. By the end of primary school, children are expected to adjust their writing speed and pattern according to the task and purpose of writing. For example, when writing notes, it is acceptable to have writing that is less tidy than when writing a poem in their best handwriting.

Many schools adopt a separated-letter start to writing, sometimes using the separate cursive letters and sometimes using a 'printing' style. Other schools start with joined writing straight away. There are some spelling benefits of joining writing early and some cosmetic benefits in joining later, but there are good reasons for using each model. As a parent helping your child, it is sensible to check what your child's school does and work in a similar way. It is likely that your child will be expected to develop all the techniques of cursive writing and then to ultimately find the joined style that works best for them by the end of primary school.

Postcard or Birthday Card?

Many children find using 'best writing' tricky when required to write at length. However, when short messages are used on greetings cards or postcards, it's a great opportunity to write in best. Gently draw lines 1cm apart in pencil to help your child's layout and help them plan the sentence before writing it. This reinforces the national curriculum principle that neatness should be linked to the purpose of writing. Writing for a special person or special occasion should always be as neat as we can.

Pen Pals

Conventional letter writing is increasingly rare and this reduces the amount of opportunity your child gets to write for a purpose at home. Consider pairing with a friend or sponsoring a child through an established charity. Some charities encourage children to write to those they sponsor and this is a great chance to give and receive handwritten messages.

Form Filling

Encourage your child to start filling in basic forms to judge which type of writing is needed when. School reply slips (except the signature!) can be filled in by older children as long as you're with them. If their joined writing is hard to read, they should use capital letters in the way that adults do on official forms.

Take a Break

Sometimes, writing at length can feel like a tiring chore, which can discourage your child. Encourage them to take regular breaks with finger exercise or yoga to stretch and rest their mind. Why not play 'rock, paper, scissors' or have a quick thumb war?



Step 1

Problems with Handwriting?

Parents and teachers may become concerned if a child has not managed to gain a basic, fluent handwriting style by the end of year 3. A significant number of children still write in a size, pattern and flow that is difficult to read. Once children start to write more across the curriculum, this can start to make learning in a range of subjects trickier. This helpful blog takes a look at some of the challenges of handwriting and makes some sensible suggestions for parents.



Step 2

Choosing the Right Line Guide

Line guides can be used behind a plain sheet of paper to encourage children to write straight and to size their letters appropriately. Schools often convert children from 1.5cm or 1cm lines to 8mm lines in year 3. For some children, this is too small to complete the necessary round-letter shapes and still fit in ascenders (the tall or long bits of lower-case letters like p, b or d). To help your child build confidence in writing, you could use this pack of various line heights to work out which line guide works best for your child and encourage your child to use this at home. When writing letters or doing your own work at home, you could help to boost your child's view of their own writing by using their favoured line guide.

Step 3

Handwriting Practise

Here at Twinkl, we have our own handwriting scheme that is widely popular in schools and offers a choice of two different styles (cursive un-looped and continuous cursive looped). Why not try out this free taster pack and match the activities you use to the handwriting style that your child's school uses? It includes free fonts, animated letter formations and a variety of exercises and activities to support your child's handwriting development in year 3.

Handwriting and Spelling

Evidence suggests that joining letters consistently aids spelling, as repetitive practise of writing certain word sounds (such as -ough) leads to greater retention. These helpful year 3 spelling sheets combine useful opportunities to practise the year 3 spelling words with handwriting practice. As your child does not need to write at length, you can encourage them to spend time writing the words neatly. This well-paced work helps with the acquisition of spelling patterns and the journey to neater writing.

Step 4