

# How to Help Kids Develop Handwriting Skills for Academic Success



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Handwriting is a fundamental skill that can directly affect a child's academic success. Yet, many young children struggle to learn letter formation and continue to have trouble producing age-appropriate writing as they progress through school.

Spending time learning the individual stroke sequences of each letter is imperative. If a child doesn't have a clear mental picture of how each letter looks, they will have trouble reproducing it from memory.

**Here are the recommended steps for young children who are just beginning to write:**

- Help your child identify uppercase and lowercase letters. Then compare and match the uppercase and lowercase versions of each letter.
- Have them trace letters to help them understand the strokes.
- Demonstrate the correct stroke sequence of a letter, then ask the child to imitate you by producing the same letter.

- Ask them to independently reproduce the letter with correct stroke formation from memory.
- To avoid confusion, children should learn how to write all uppercase letters first before moving to lowercase letters. Repetition is key: be sure the child practices each letter's formation again and again.

*Once the basics are mastered, be sure to monitor handwriting as the child progresses through school.*

**Here are a few signs parents should look for that may indicate their child is struggling:** Illegible handwriting; fluctuation in the size of letters; unfinished words or sentences; poor pencil grip; poor body position while writing; inability to write for very long due to writing pressure; difficulty organizing ideas on paper; avoidance of writing, leading to anxiety and/or emotional outbursts.

The answer might be as simple as providing a pencil grip for more control, or paper with more space between the lines. Check with your child's teacher for further suggestions and consider a visit to a pediatrician to rule out any visual-motor challenges. A professional who specializes in handwriting, such as an occupational therapist, could also help. At the KCC, we use tools such as the developmentally based Handwriting Without Tears program, which offers multi-sensory teaching methods and is fun to learn.

If you notice your child is having trouble writing, it is important to take action. When children are able to write letters easily and clearly, they can spend more time focusing on the message they wish to convey.



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