Birkwood Primary School
Whole School Handwriting Progression

Handwriting Overview

At Birkwood Primary School, we believe that all children, by the end of KS2, should have the ability to produce fluent, legible and, eventually, speedy handwriting. We aim to make handwriting an automatic process to free up working memory for compositional and creative thinking. We believe that handwriting is a basic skill that influences the quality of work throughout the curriculum, therefore we provide children with purposeful and plentiful opportunities to practise their handwriting regularly. Handwriting requires frequent and discrete, direct teaching. The preparation to write begins within foundation stage and progresses from EYFS through school with a carefully planned handwriting programme grown from Read Write Inc yet bespoke to Birkwood. We expect that children have daily opportunities for discrete handwriting practice, until it becomes automatic. Joined handwriting is the ultimate goal, with adaptations for specific individuals, including left-handed pupils, where appropriate. Our research base includes:

The DfE Writing Framework

National Handwriting Association

EEF – Physical Development

Helping Handwriting Shine

Fluent Handwriting Purpose

To develop fluent, legible and increasingly automatic handwriting so that pupils can devote cognitive effort to composition rather than letter formation.

Whole School Non-Negotiables

- Correct posture, pencil grip and paper position
- Daily handwriting opportunities
- Consistent use of Read Write Inc. formation language and mnemonics
- Letters taught through handwriting families
- Capital letters taught separately and never joined
- Correct formation of digits 0–9
- High expectations across the curriculum
- Regular assessment and intervention

Teaching Sequence

- Prepare (1-5 minutes): recall, review, 4Ps (Posture, Pencil, Paper, Pressure)
- Warm Up (1-5 minutes): modelled practice and processing
- Main Activity (up to 10 minutes): letter formation, joins, words and sentences
- Metacognitive Reflection: (throughout plus 1min at end) identify best example, discuss success and next steps

Nursery – Pre-stage 1

- Develop gross motor control
- Develop fine motor strength and dexterity
- Encourage purposeful mark making
- Build independence in handling a range of tools
- Move progressively from gross motor development to fine motor control and purposeful mark making

Reception – Stage 1

Stage 1 begins as soon as most children can read Set 1 sounds. We continue to teach children to form letters correctly.

- Continue to develop gross and fine motor control
- Teach Set 1 letter formation using RWI mnemonics
- Secure lower-case letter formation
- Teach correct tripod pencil grip, posture and paper position from the outset
- Introduce capitals for names
- Teach correct digit formation 0–9

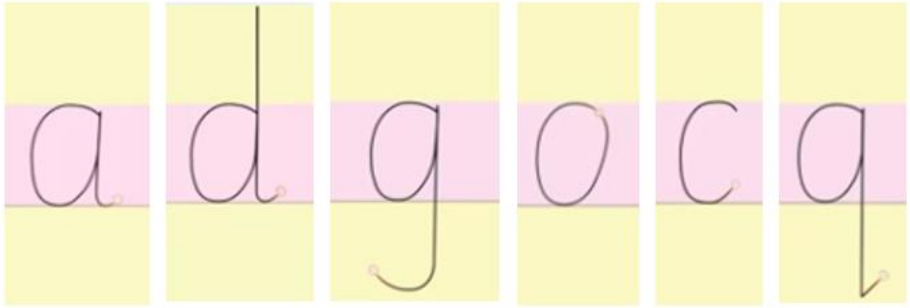
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Year 1 – Stage 2

Stage 2 begins during Year 1. Children learn the relative size of letters and to form letters that will flow easily into a joined style.

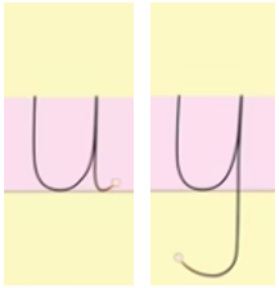
- Teach relative letter size and line positioning
- Teach letters through handwriting families
- Teach capitals and digits
- Secure ascenders, descenders and spacing
- Introduce exit flicks when formation is secure
- Build fluency and consistency

Letters are taught systematically in letter families. Each family has a common formation:
a d g o c q

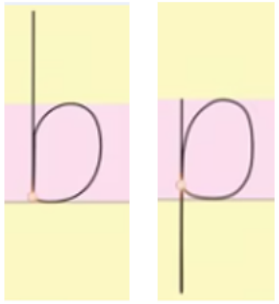


*In the Summer Tem of FS2, children are introduced to the c letter family.

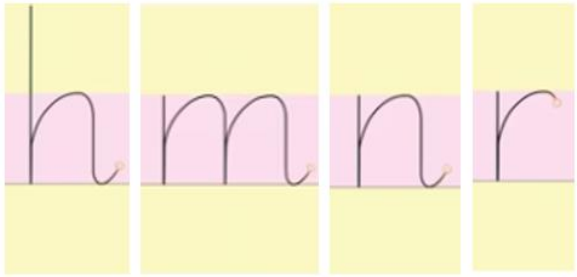
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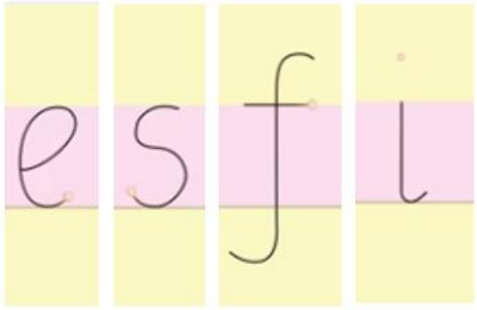
b p



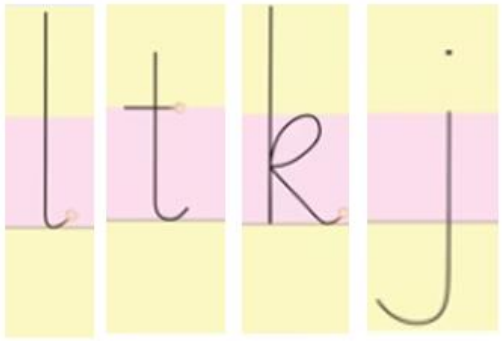
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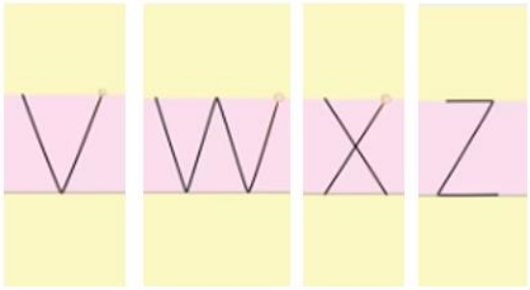
e s f i



l t k j



v w x z

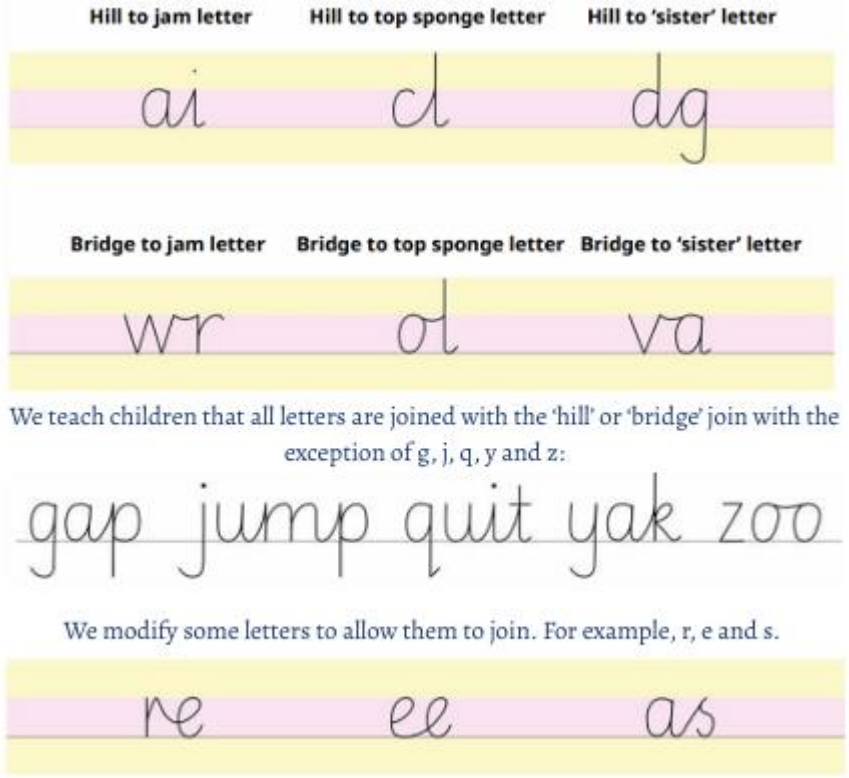


Year 2 – Stage 3

Stage 3 follows straight on from Stage 2.

Children learn how to join letters using two basic joins – the 'bridge' join, the 'hill' join and the two variations on each.

- Consolidate pre-cursive formation
- Teach diagonal and horizontal joins systematically
- Practise joins through bigrams, words and dictated sentences
- Maintain correct size, spacing and orientation
- Do not join x and q at this stage



Years 3 & 4 - Stage 4

Stage 4 helps children develop a mature and speedy style.

- Revisit and consolidate all diagonal joins
- Teach joins involving hooks, loops and more complex combinations
- Revisit and consolidate all horizontal joins
- Begin joining x and q where it aids fluency
- Apply joins in words, sentence and extended writing
- Increase automaticity and stamina
- Develop speed while maintaining legibility
- Some pupils may leave selected joins unjoined if this improves legibility
- Use joined handwriting consistently across the curriculum

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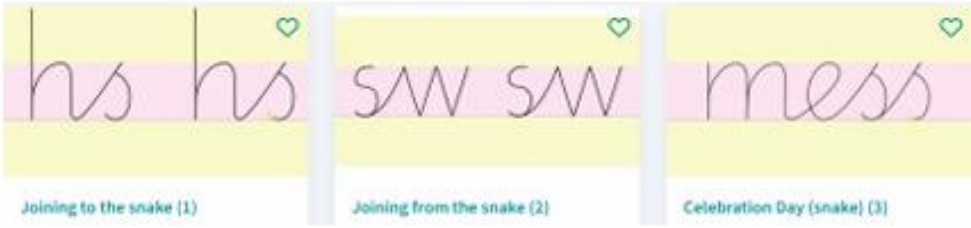








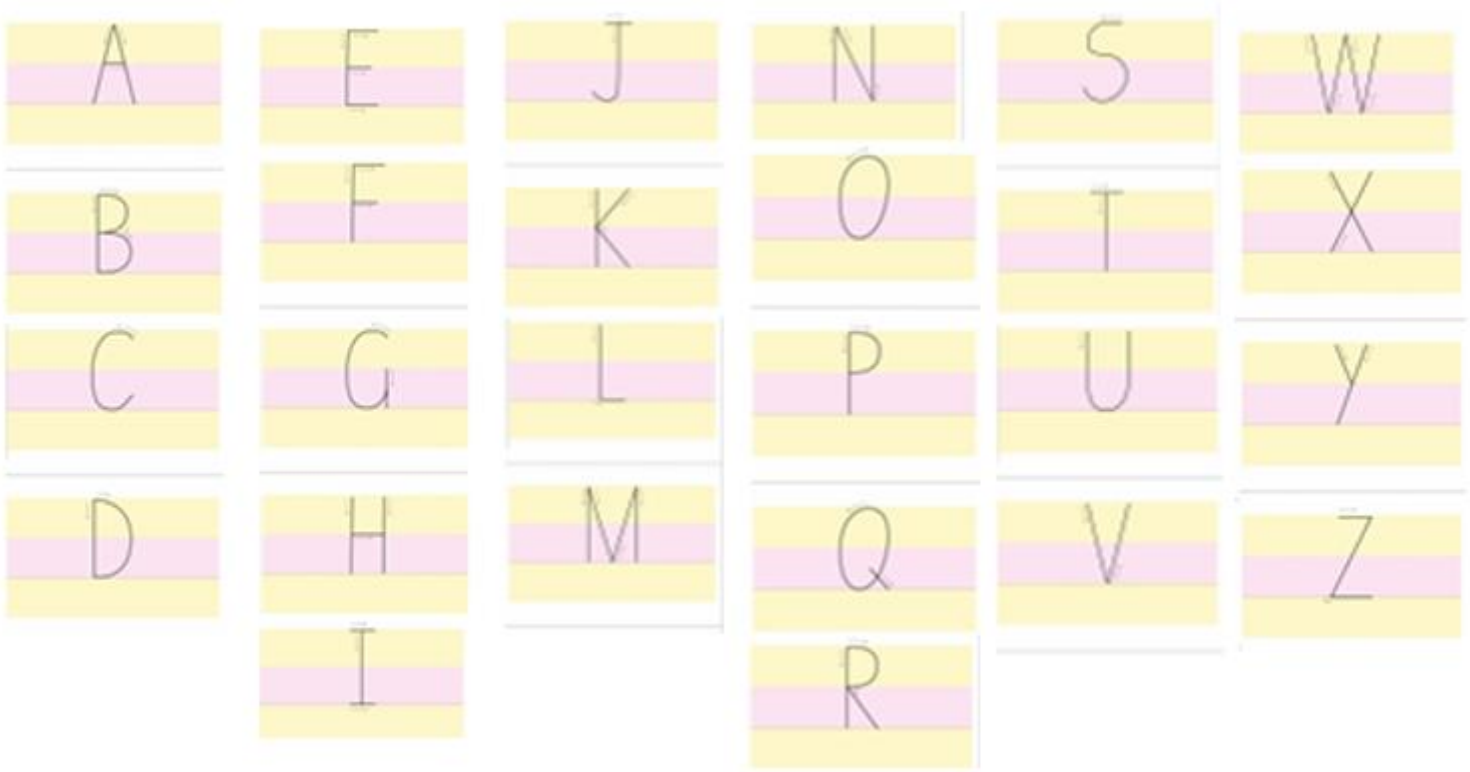




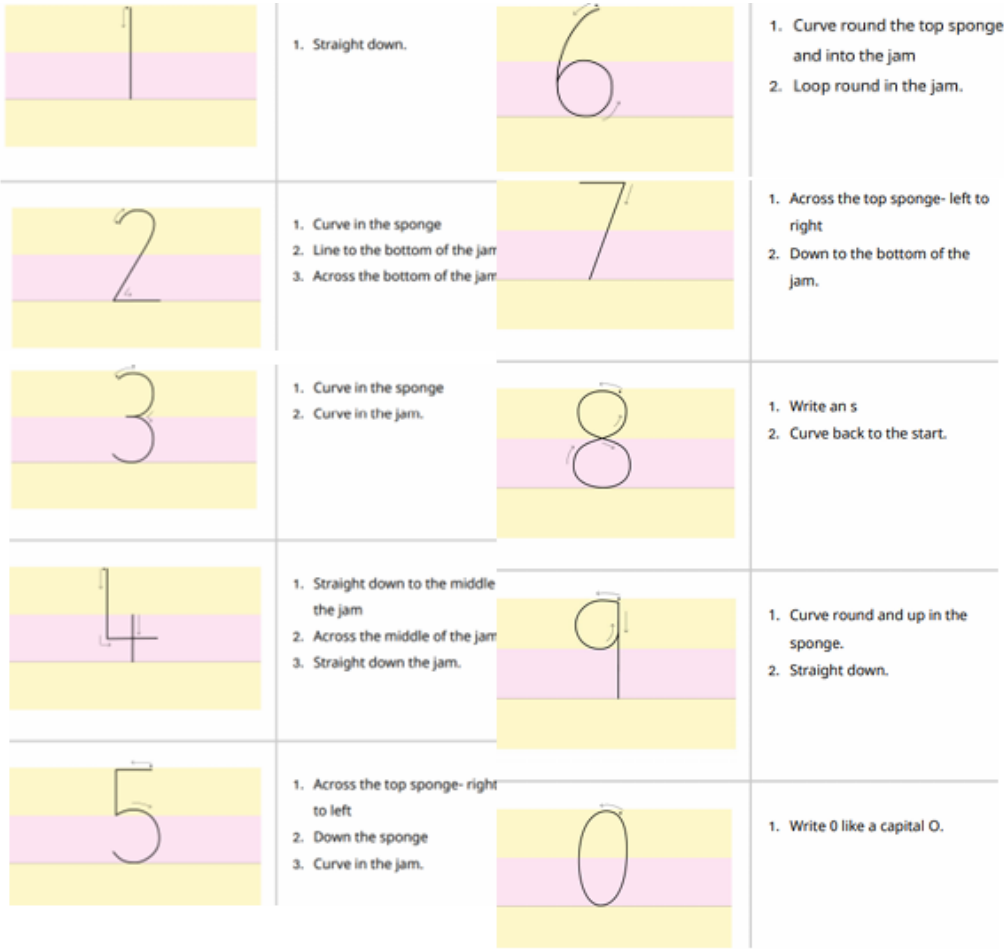
Lower Case Formation (See RWI portal for full details)



Capital Letter Formation (See RWI portal for full details)



Number Formation (See RWI portal for full details)



1. Straight down.

1. Curve in the sponge
2. Line to the bottom of the jam
3. Across the bottom of the jam

1. Curve in the sponge
2. Curve in the jam.

1. Straight down to the middle of the jam
2. Across the middle of the jam
3. Straight down the jam.

1. Across the top sponge- right to left
2. Down the sponge
3. Curve in the jam.

1. Curve round the top sponge and into the jam
2. Loop round in the jam.

1. Across the top sponge- left to right
2. Down to the bottom of the jam.

1. Write an s
2. Curve back to the start.

1. Curve round and up in the sponge.
2. Straight down.

1. Write 0 like a capital O.

Paper & Books

Foundation 1

Large bespoke resources

Foundation 2

Handwriting books

Year 1 & 2

Autumn - cake paper

Spring & Summer - handwriting books

Year 3 & 4

Writing books

Handwritten scaffolds / sheets where appropriate

Starting points

2026-2027

Year 1 start from Stage 2

Year 2-4 start from Stage 3

Font

Teachers live model the correct font or bespoke written handwriting resources which exclusively model RWI with fidelity.

Teachers use RWI modelled handwriting in all English writing lessons except years 5 & 6 in 2026-2027 (full cursive joined).

RWI handwriting style to be insisted upon and encouraged when writing across the curriculum (with the exception of years 5/6).

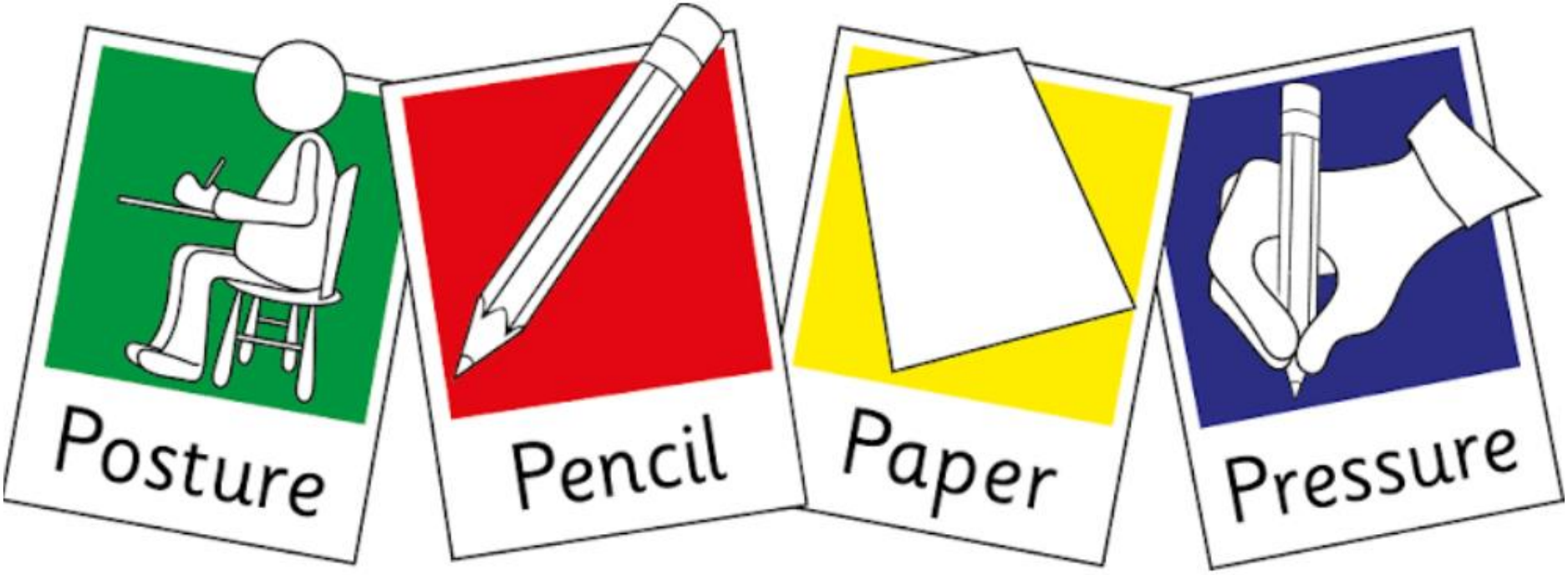
Diagrams must be labelled in print and not joined.

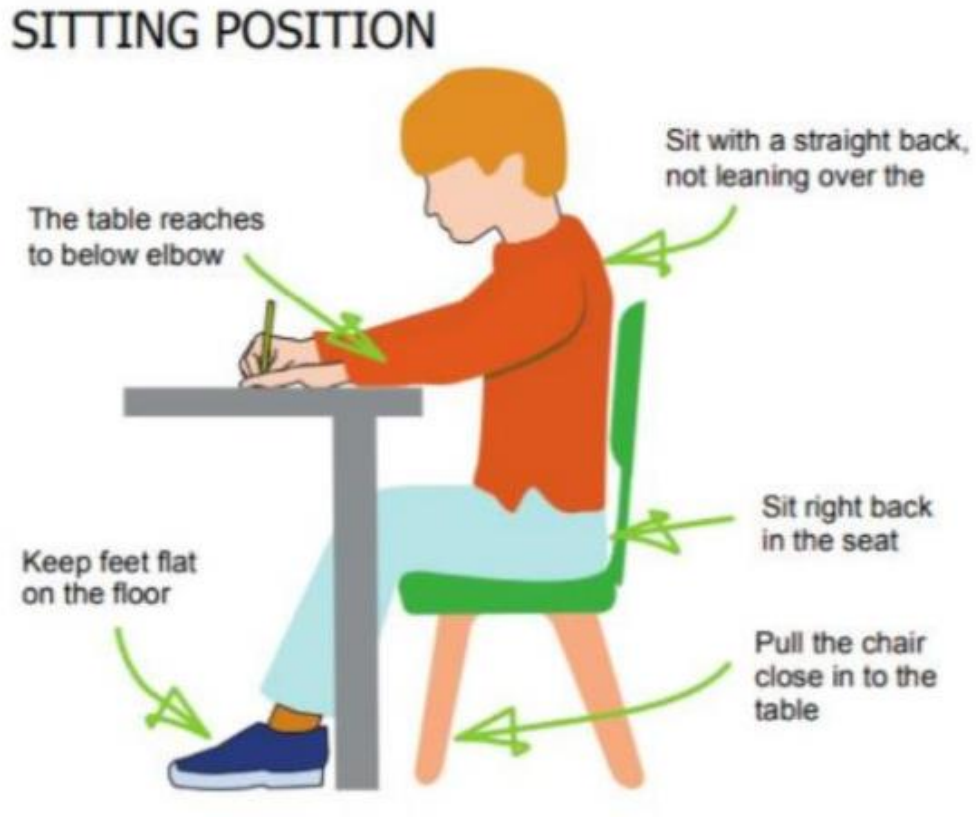
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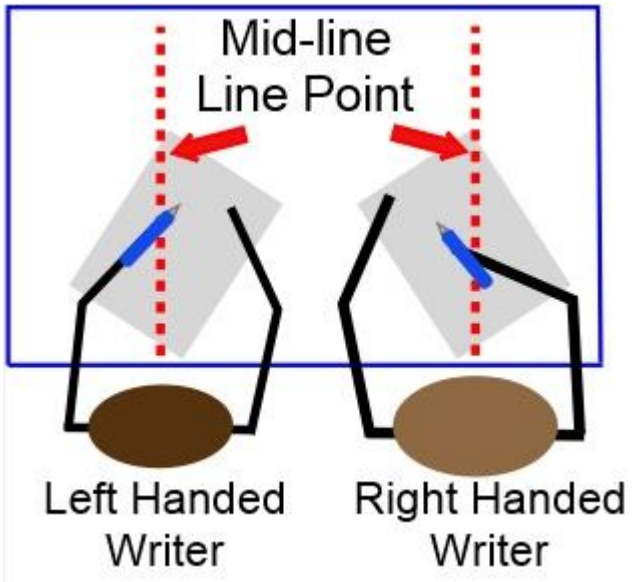
Getting Ready to Write

Getting ready to write with sitting position and posture is fundamental.

Pupils are taught to sit correctly at a table, holding a pencil comfortably and correctly.







Stages of pencil grip

Palmer Grasp	Digital Pronate Grasp	Static Tripod Grasp	Dynamic Tripod
			

Handwriting is a Complex Skill

