



LEFT-HANDERS CLUB

LEFT-HANDERS CLUB FACTSHEET

HANDWRITING

Many left-handers develop a poor handwriting style and/or posture, usually due to lack of guidance when first learning to write. This factsheet is intended to help left-handers of all ages identify common problems associated with writing left-handed, and correct them to make handwriting clear, efficient and comfortable.






COMMON HANDWRITING PROBLEMS

The most common problems are:

“Hook” handwriting position This is where the hand is hooked around the pen, and runs above the writing line in an attempt to angle the pen in the same way as a right-hander would. This causes the arm and body to be contorted into an awkward position, making handwriting very uncomfortable and slow.

Smudged work Caused by the hand pushing the pen across the page. If the hand is following the writing line, it will automatically smudge the writing as it follows along.

Overtight grip This leads to cramped, badly formed letters and erratic writing style and is also very tiring. Caused by a number of related factors:

-  Bad desk positioning. If the left hander is seated with a right hander on his left they will knock hands, this will force both to write in a restricted space.
-  Tension due to concern about his/her handwriting will cause a tightening of grip.
-  Wrong pen. A slippery or shiny pen barrel is hard to hold. Make sure the pen/pencil is comfortable to grip without undue pressure, especially when hands are hot or tired.

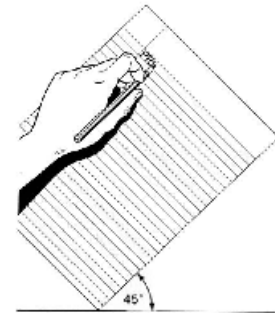
Mirror Writing

Left-handers automatically work across the page from right to left and often produce perfect reverse script until they become accustomed to the direction of reading and writing. Leonardo da Vinci was left-handed and a famously perfect “mirror writer”. Children should never be chastised for this, just gently corrected.

GUIDELINES TO FOLLOW

Many of the problems left-handed children encounter can be solved fairly easily, by following these guidelines:

1. The child should hold the pencil at least 2cm away from the tip so that they do not obscure their writing.
2. For younger children, choose a soft pencil, which does not stick or tear the paper. Older children should be encouraged to experiment with different pens and pencils to find one that flows smoothly across the page. Left-handed fountain pens have angled nibs which prevent catching on the paper and encourage smooth ink flow.
3. Check for awkward posture when writing. Place the paper to the left of the body mid-line and tilt the top clockwise up to a maximum of 45°. This should automatically bring the hand into the correct writing position - *underneath* the writing line.



Ideal writing position for left-hander

4. As younger left-handers often have a tendency to write from right to left (mirror script) a coloured star at the left margin helps to remind them where to start.
5. Left-handed children should be seated on the left side of a double desk, or next to another left-hander to avoid elbow clashing. The same applies at the dinner table.
6. Once comfortably positioned for a good writing style, make sure left-handers can see the blackboard without twisting round.
7. Ensure that the desk and chair are a suitable height for the child. A low table makes a child raise his shoulders, leading to the "hooked" writing style.
8. Do make allowances for clumsiness, smudging and untidiness and emphasise their achievements with lots of praise.
9. Pencil grips, moulded to fit the shape of thumb and finger, help children to develop the correct grip and fit over all standard width pencils & pens. They are available in different shapes and a variety of bright colours.
10. To lighten a tight grip and heavy pressure, try a pencil grip for correct finger position as above, and make a game of writing on 3 sheets of paper with carbon paper between them, the aim being to write lightly enough *not* to make an imprint on the underneath pages.



SUGGESTED FURTHER READING

Below are a selection of books and equipment which we recommend. All items are available from www.anythingleft-handed.co.uk, (tel: 020 8770 3722) who will also be pleased to discuss discounts for purchases by schools.

“Writing Left-Handed” Jean Alston, leading handwriting expert, looks at the writing difficulties facing left-handed children, and gives advice for parents and teachers on ways in which they can help. (Price £5.95 + p&p)

“Left-Handed Children - The Teachers Guide”. Invaluable guidance for parents and teachers on all aspects of left-handedness, throughout the school curriculum and beyond. An LHC publication. (Pprice £8.95 + p&p)

“Helping Left-Handed Children to Enjoy Handwriting” by Ruth Fagg, Enjoyable exercises and practical advice to encourage good handwriting and a relaxed attitude. (Price £2.95 + p&p).

Ladybird “Learn Cursive Writing” is linked to English Key Stage One and provides excellent guidance and practice to develop good writing skills, with useful tips for left-handers throughout. (Price £2.25 + p&p)

“The Left-Handers Handbook”. Author Diane Paul provides a wealth of information on all aspects of this fascinating subject, plus lots of positive advice overcoming difficulties. (Price £9.95 + p&p)

Writing Equipment:

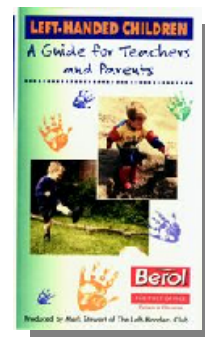
Anything Left-Handed stock a whole range of fountain pens from Platignum, Manuscript, and Pelikano, including calligraphy sets, all with left-handed nibs. Prices start from £3.25 (+p&p). They have also introduced the Berol Handhugger range of pencils and fibre tipped colouring pens, with a unique design of barrel ideal for young children to develop a correct grip. Highly recommended, from £0.55p.

Pencil grips: moulded or triangular shapes in bright colours, from £1.25 each (+p&p)

Pencil sharpeners: the pencil is held in the left hand and turned anti-clockwise.

“Little Lefties” Pre-School Starter Pack, containing everything to make drawing, writing and cutting easy and comfortable when your child first shows signs of being left-handed. Contains Handhugger pencil and colouring pens, scissors, sharpener, pencil grip and first ABC’s book featuring left-handed character “Alf”. A real help for you and your child. For age 3+. Item code 350. Price £14.95 (+p&p)

Training Video & Wallchart: “Left-Handed Children” produced by the Left-Handers Club, and endorsed by the Teacher Training Agency. This unique video provides step by step details of how to help left-handed children with handwriting and other areas of the curriculum. Described by the Teacher Training Agency as “an extremely useful resource....very informative and thought-provoking”. This video and wallchart have been distributed by the TTA to all Teacher Training Colleges in England. Schools must apply for their own copies. *This video is invaluable for all left-handed children, their parents and teachers.* (Price £13.95 & p&p)



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