

## Occupational Therapy Service for Children and Young People

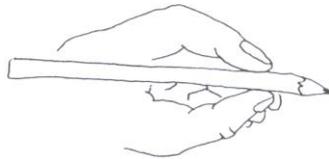
### Writing Advice for Left Handed Children

The following recommendations are for teachers and parents who support children who are left-handed.

#### Writing Tool and Grip

In order to see as they write and to prevent smudging, the left hander should hold pencil/pen at least 3 centimetres from the point. This can be indicated by a small elastic band around the desired area for grip which can be removed once the child is familiar with position.

Aim for tripod grip: i.e.



This grip, taught in early stages along with sitting and paper position should eliminate need for a 'hooked' hand. If this has developed it can be remedied in the following ways:

1. Vertical blackboard writing using handwriting patterns. This encourages a full arm movement with greater freedom and a less cramped position. Frequent practice of large writing on paper should be provided.
2. Sloping desk-top board - Commercial ones are available, for information contact your Occupational Therapist.
3. Attention to correct sitting and paper position.
4. Use of thick barrel pen, crayons, felt tips for writing patterns.

Left handed children often push the pen/pencil across paper. Ball-point, Berol or fibre tip pens produce less friction. Specially made left hander nibs are available from stationary shops.

A sharp pointed pencil is not helpful to young left handed children as they are likely to jab or pierce paper. Soft pencils are more beneficial for this purpose to allow smooth movement across paper.

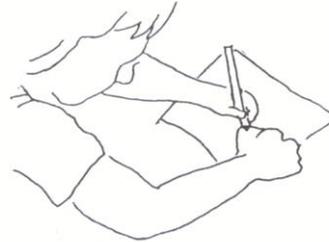
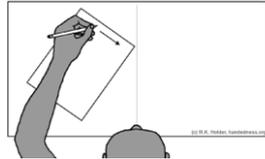
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### **Paper Position and Supportive Hand**

The paper or book for writing should be placed to left side of body midline. Tilted approximately 32° to the right. The writer sits towards the right of writing surface.

Paper is supported by right hand.



### **Making the Best Use of Lighting**

Writing should not be obscured by shadow from head or hand. If there is artificial light or strong sunlight then positioning the left handed child to receive light from the left is important.

### **Writing Pressure**

Left handed children tend to grip the barrel of the writing tool more tightly. If this tendency is observed, the child can be reminded to stop writing and shake and flex their hand to relax muscles.

If pressure is excessive, interleaves of carbon paper between writing sheets will help the child to gauge how heavily or tightly he is pressing. Excessive pressure is lessened if writing tools are held further from the point.

### **Seating**

Check that a left handed child is not sitting too close to the right of a right handed child. This will avoid their arms colliding.

Some, but not all, left handed children will find writing easier if they can sit on a higher chair **BUT** ensure that his/her feet are still firmly on the floor.

When copying words, numbers, letters, writing patterns etc. a left handed child is helped if these are placed down the right hand side of page.

It is helpful if the child can experiment with both left and right handed scissors.

It is also helpful, if not amusing, for the teacher/parent to try left handed writing with the child to understand the difficulties encountered.

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In some cases laterality (awareness of both sides of the body) or directionality (e.g. up, right, left, down) problems can affect the child's ability to cope with classroom expectation. This should be noted by teachers.

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