

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

### Writing readiness - things you can do



### Handwriting performance - things you can do



## ABOUT OT

The occupational therapist within the school setting can help with fine and gross motor coordination, sensory processing, visual perceptual skills, and visual motor integration. Therapy can be provided in small groups or on an individual basis as required. By using a holistic intervention approach occupational therapy can have a positive impact on your child's educational journey.

### Further information about child occupational therapy can be found on the following websites:

Kids Sense – [www.childdevelopment.com.au](http://www.childdevelopment.com.au)

Developmental OT WA – [www.dotwa.org.au](http://www.dotwa.org.au)

### Public occupational therapy services:

To locate your nearest Child Development Service please refer to the WA health department website, and look for 'child and adolescent health service' in the 'about us' section. [www.health.wa.gov.au](http://www.health.wa.gov.au)

Private occupational therapy services can be found via Occupational Therapy Australia at [www.otaus.com.au/find-an-occupational-therapist](http://www.otaus.com.au/find-an-occupational-therapist)



## Handwriting A complex skill



## How to help children with handwriting

by

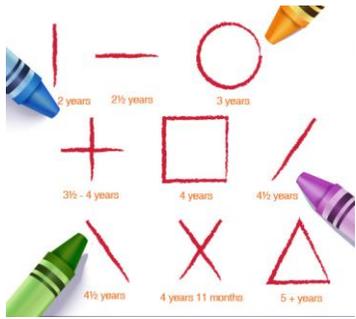
Mel Tibbitts & Michaela Simeoni

Occupational Therapy Students

Curtin University

## WRITING READINESS (Pre-writing)

Pre-writing skills are the important skills children need to develop before they can write. These skills contribute to the child's ability to hold and use a pencil, and the ability to draw, write, copy and colour.



Before a child can write, they typically learn how to form pre-writing patterns. These patterns are created by pencil strokes that most letters and numbers are made of (see image left). Once a child has mastered how to write these shapes they then find writing letters and numbers easier



### If a child is having difficulties with handwriting readiness they may:

- Have an awkward pencil grasp
- Have messy and/or slowed handwriting
- Have difficulty copying pre-writing patterns
- Have difficulty controlling a pencil during writing, drawing and colouring tasks (staying within lines)
- Get tired easily during pencil tasks
- Have too heavy or too light pressure when doing writing/colouring tasks
- Have weak shoulders/core and poor posture
- Have difficulty using both hands together for two handed tasks and poor hand-eye coordination

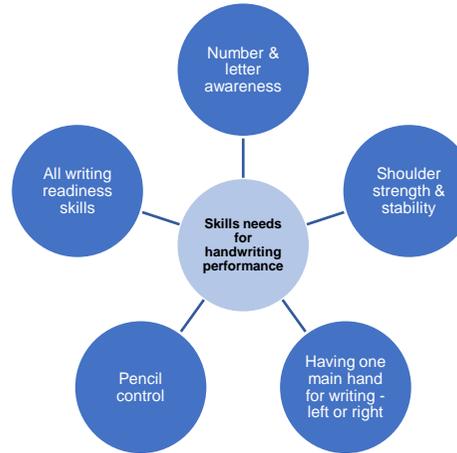
## WRITING PERFORMANCE

Producing a written piece of work requires two things:

**Product** - what the writing looks like. Is it neat, legible, on the line, correctly formed?

**Performance** - how is the pencil held? How fast is the task performed? Is there any pain during performance?

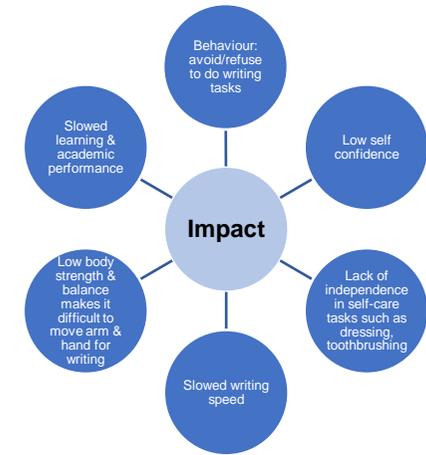
These two aspects depend upon if it is readable and how the writing is produced, formed by mastering the **building blocks for handwriting performance** which include:



### If a child is having difficulties with handwriting performance they may:

- Look awkward in the way they hold the pencil and produce the writing.
- Have writing that is messy, unreadable, letters not written on the line and/or are not the correct size.
- Be slow to complete written tasks.
- Say they are tired or have an achy hand when writing.
- Fatigue quickly while sitting at a computer to type and use a mouse.
- Avoid writing, or writes very short answers, even though they can verbally answer in detail.
- Fail to stabilise the page with their non-dominant hand and slumps at the table.
- Apply inappropriate pressure to the paper when writing - either too heavy and often breaks the pencil, or too light and hard to read

## How do writing readiness and performance difficulties impact a child?



### When a child has difficulties with writing they can also experience difficulties with:

- Engaging in school work and meeting academic requirements
- Mastering writing letters and numbers correctly
- Learning to write their own name or draw age appropriate pictures
- Anxiety due to difficulties 'keeping up' in class.
- Completing work set in class, tests and exams within the allocated time
- Decreased self-belief
- Manipulating items for construction (puzzles, Lego).

