

Kinetic Letters

**making handwriting
easy for everyone**



Handwriting

- Complex skill
- Difficulty for many children because they may not have developed the necessary physical skills and hand eye co-ordination to be able to learn to write easily.

Key Principles

- ✓ Physical strength underpins handwriting, as poor handwriting may be the result of poor strength.
- ✓ Children are not expected to do anything before they are developmentally ready for it.
- ✓ The different components of writing are mastered individually before being used in combination.
- ✓ Letters are learnt as movements not as visual shapes and movement remains central to developing flow and fluency.
- ✓ Handwriting is made easier using a pen and white board. Lying on the floor to write enables the hand to be held in the correct position for writing.

Learning that suits their age

- ✓ Movements for learning letters
- ✓ Spoken prompts for recall
- ✓ Stories to explain letter shapes
- ✓ Physical activities to build strength
- ✓ An order for learning letters
- ✓ Skills are developed separately in order to achieve **automaticity**.

Physical strength underpins handwriting

- *“They’re always wriggling around, they just can’t sit still.”*
- *“You’d think sitting on a chair without falling off it couldn’t be that difficult!...”*

These concerns can be caused by a **lack of physical strength...**

Because...

Children can’t sit still enough to concentrate on learning if they have not developed Shoulder and Pelvic Girdle strength...

And...

Children can’t hold a pencil effectively or comfortably for very long, unless they have developed physical strength.

Strong Bodies- Pelvic Girdle Strength

Why is this important for handwriting?

- A strong Pelvic Girdle enables children to sit still and concentrate without wiggling.

How is this achieved?

- ✓ Lie on the floor to read and write- teach children that this 'makes bodies strong'.
- ✓ Kneel to draw and colour, resting paper on a vertical surface
- ✓ Physical activities to develop balance: climbing, jumping, hopping, skipping
- ✓ Balancing games- musical statues

Shoulder Girdle Strength

Why is this important for handwriting?

- It enables the hand to hold the pencil correctly and write well.

How is this achieved?

- ✓ Lie on the floor to read and write
- ✓ The plank is practised daily
- ✓ Table kneeling activities
- ✓ Games involving passing a beanbag, whilst kneeling up.
- ✓ Crawling games
- ✓ Kneel to do writing patterns on an easel
- ✓ Work on monkey bars, pull ups and press ups

Forearm and Wrist Strength

How is this achieved?

- ✓ Activities that require controlling the movement of the forearm from pronation (palm down) to a neutral (thumbs up) position, develop strength.
- ✓ Hammering games
- ✓ Activities that require wrist stability and control e.g. Hand prints
- ✓ Activities requiring forearm control e.g. Playing musical instruments
- ✓ Crawling and clapping games

Hand and Finger Strength

- **Why is this important ?**
- **The hand has muscles that need strengthening in order to enable dexterity and strength.**
- **Both of these functions are required in order to write legibly and at speed without physical discomfort.**

How is general hand and finger strength achieved?

- ✓ **Crawling games- strengthen the muscles in the hand as the weight is transferred from one side of the palm to the other.**
- ✓ **Finger rhymes- improve the dexterity and control of the fingers.**
- ✓ **Duck beak squeezing, duck beak stretch**
- ✓ **T-rex head stretch**

Hand and Finger Strength for the Two Roles of the Hand

For Manipulation

- The Three friends
- Holding fingers- job is to hold the pencil
- Pillow finger- job is to be a pillow for the pencil.

For Strength and Stability

- The resting fingers- job is to rest on the writing surface.

Warm up, finger chats

How can the hand build strength for the Two roles of the Hand?

- ✓ Scrunchies
- ✓ Tweezers and tongs
- ✓ Clothes pegs, cubes (coin under resting fingers)

Working Positions

Floor is best

- ✓ It is comfortable
- ✓ It helps concentration.
- ✓ It supports and builds physical strength.
- ✓ And... Children enjoy it

Most reading and writing is done lying on the floor on tummies and this remains a favourite position for most children throughout Foundation Stage.

Learning the Letters

Kinetic Letters programme

- Letters are learnt with the Move it, Say it, Write it approach.
- Movement of the whole body, arm or hand underpin all stages of the letter shapes.
- Letter writing is practised on a non permanent form (white boards and pens)
- Letter Family Stories provide explanations for letter formation.
- Physical strength is developed, letter shapes are learnt as movements without a writing tool and learning is Kinaesthetic.
- DAILY- SEPARATE to phonics lessons

The Six Letter Parts

- Six Letter Parts is the Kinetic Letters Term for the six basic component parts of letters when they are deconstructed. Therefore it follows that all 26 Letters of the alphabet can be reconstructed for writing using different combinations of these six letter parts.
- Children need to learn and practise these Six Letter Parts separately, before they begin to put them together to write whole letters.

Trail Maker

- **Down-bump**
- **Up**
- **Flick**
- **Slide**
- Making **the Sign Post** before pull/push
- **Pull** (2 hands for Pre-school/ older children use their writing hand)
- **Push** (2 hands for Pre-school/ older children use their writing hand)

Star tips!

- Practise the moves whilst saying the words.
(Co-ordinate movement and speech)
- Use trail markers to enhance the experience.
 - Magic wands
 - Squeegees
 - Shakers
 - Glow sticks
 - Torches

Letter Trails

Letter trails is the name for the imagined 'marks' left in the air when children mimic the Monkeys from the stories. They make the letter moves in the air and, just as an aeroplane leaves a vapour trail in the air following the movements, they leave an imaginary vapour trail behind.

The Letter Trails teaching strategy is known as

'Move it, Say it, Write it'.

Step 1- Letter Trails are taught as whole body movements with the hand holding a Trail Maker

Step 2 -Letter Trails are practised with the finger in shallow sand tray

Step 3- Letter trails are practised with a pen on a white board.

Letter Heights- The Brave Monkey and the Scared Monkey

Why is this important?

- Writing the correct relative heights of letters is essential for reading back handwriting. Without this accuracy, children cannot read their own work back nor have it read by others.
- Kinetic letters has a strategy for this issue based on an image of the tree, with high and low branches.
- The high branch belongs to the Brave Monkey who makes double height letters and the low branch belongs to the Scared Monkey who makes single height letters.

How is this achieved?

- First children are introduced to these two monkeys, through the Jumper family story. The Brave monkey jumps **down** from the high branch of the tree to make **b and h** and then the scared monkey jumps down from the lower branch of the tree to make **r n m**.
- The BRAVE monkey also makes all the Upper-case letters and numerals.

Brave Monkey (happy face)
Scared Monkey (worried face)

- Throughout the programme the other Letter Family stories are introduced with all further adventures of the two Monkeys who go from their individual branches to make the correspondingly appropriate height of letters.

Six Letter Families

- Jumper h m n r b p down, bump Back up
 - Abracadabra c a o d g q s Pull in (all start with c)
 - Squirter e In the middle
 - Window l i t u down, bump
 - Fisher g j y f pull around to make a tail
 - Slider v w x z k slide down
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- **g** is unique as it belongs in two families because it has two distinctive features. It begins with a c (Abracadabra) and has a tail (Fisher family)

Holding the Pencil

- Point the pencil at my tummy.
- Pick it up with my holding fingers.
- Tip it back and lay it across my hand and pop my pillow finger underneath.

Children's Pencil checks

- Are my Holding Fingers level with each other?
- Can I see a little bit of colour between my Holding fingers?
- Is my pillow finger underneath?
- Is my pencil laying across my hand?