

Assisting the Left-Handed Student

It is very important to teach good habits for handwriting to the left-handed child from the beginning. This begins with teachers identifying left-handed students within their classrooms. In order to reinforce good writing habits, left-handed students need special attention. Unlike the right-handed student, a left-hander must push the pencil toward the center of the body when printing. If taught as a right-hander, the left-hander will move toward midline frequently smearing his writing. The left hand will block what is being written. As a result, left-handed children will often hook their wrist in order to see what they are doing.



Tips for Assisting the Left-Handed Student

- Model the correct paper position. The paper should be placed to the left of the student's midline at an angle of 30-35 degrees with the top left corner of the paper higher. This allows the student to rest the elbow on the writing surface and move the forearm in a complete arc.
- Position the student with the light source over the right shoulder to avoid shadows cast on the paper by the writing hand.
- Have the student hold the pencil slightly farther back than a right-handed student (approximately 1-1 ½ inches from the pencil tip).
- Have the student stabilize the paper with the right hand.
- Have the student place the writing hand below the writing line to:
 - ~ Avoid wrist hooking
 - ~ Avoid smearing
 - ~ Allow the child to see what is written
- Group left-handed children together for support and modeling.
- When providing copying tasks or practice for writing tasks, place the words or letters at the top of the paper or on the right side of the page. Provide a model that will not be covered by the writing hand.
- It is acceptable for left-handed students using a dynamic tripod grasp to slant their writing backward. Some left-handed students will prefer to form the little lines of capital letters A, H, I, T, and J from right to left (this is acceptable).

*See reference page for Olsen(9), and Therapy Skill Builders(10)

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