



# HANDWRITING AND PRESENTATION GUIDELINES

Rossmoyne Primary School

## Overview

While technology has impacted on the different ways we communicate, the ability to handwrite legibly remains a vital skill in many aspects of everyday life. At Rossmoyne Primary School, we are dedicated to preparing students for the future. An essential part of this is ensuring every student has the ability to write fluently and legibly.

## Rationale

Increasing evidence points to the need to have automatic, fluent handwriting as part of the writing process.

*"...automaticity in handwriting is an essential prerequisite to the production of high- quality, creative and well-structured written text. The multiplicity of cognitive processes involved in writing... mean that when attempting to produce text, novice writers can experience significant problems with capacity limitation of working memory or cognitive load."* (Riley, Beard et al, 2009.p 284)

In other words, if handwriting (along with other factors such as spelling and grammar) is automatic, the writer has more working memory available to focus on other aspects of writing such as creativity, the synthesis of information and attending to the needs of an audience.

Handwriting is therefore an essential component of the curriculum and needs to be taught explicitly. Particular emphasis needs to be given to this skill in the early years so that fluent, cursive writing is developed as soon as possible. Students in the pre-compulsory years should be given extensive pre-writing activities to develop their fine-motor skills.

Ref: The SAGE Handbook of Writing Development by Roger Beard, Professor Debra Myhill, Dr Jeni Riley, and Dr. Martin Nystrand (2009)

## Font

We use the NSW Foundation font at Rossmoyne Primary School. Teachers should aim to model this font when writing for their students. The school has decided that students can be introduced to speed loops as soon as they are ready; eliminating the need for extensive practise and modelling of touch joins.

The NSW Foundation Style is based on research related to children's motor skill development. The Foundation Style In the early years, the emphasis is on the gross motor movement of left to right direction across the page and then in later years focuses on finer fluent movements. The movements involved in Foundation Style are ergonomically efficient for both wrist and arm movement and suit both right and left-handed students. All letters in Foundation Style are based on three basic movements: clockwise ellipse, anti-clockwise ellipse, and downward diagonal stroke.

These simple movements are combined and repeated to form letter shapes. Rather than the 'bat and ball' style, these patterns assist students to 'pick up' and 'put down' the pencil as little as possible. This way students can maintain consistency of size and slope. Curves or 'wedges' are also used to assist students to develop a flow. The aim is that by practising these basic movements in both manuscript and cursive writing, students will gradually develop their own fluent and legible style. There are several developmental stages of the NSW Foundation Font and individual differences in style are encouraged as students become more proficient writers. By High School, students should have their own fluent and legible style which will serve them well for writing quickly both in lessons and for assessment tasks and examinations.

*The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dog!*  
ABCDEFGHIJKLMN OPQRSTUVWXYZ  
1234567890 **NSW Print**

*The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dog!*  
ABCDEFGHIJKLMN OPQRSTUVWXYZ  
1234567890 **NSW Cursive**

Students in Year 3 and beyond who have already established an effective handwriting style (moved schools, international students) should not be required to change that style during independent writing.

## Curriculum

The Western Australian Curriculum: English requires teachers to formally teach and assess aspects of students handwriting. It recognises the need for all students to develop a personal handwriting style that is legible, fluent and automatic and supports writing for extended periods.

The English year level content descriptions describe teaching support for students that progresses from beginning with unjoined letters in the early years to writing using clearly formed joined letters with increasing fluency and automaticity from Year 3 onwards. The overall aim is that all students develop a personalised, fluent and legible handwriting style that enables them to communicate effectively when writing for different purposes.

Department of Education Handwriting Guidelines (revised 2016).

**Table 1: Excerpt from: English – Scope and sequence P–10**

	Pre-primary	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Years 8–10
<b>Literacy</b>									
<b>Creating texts</b>									
<b>Handwriting</b> Developing a fluent, legible handwriting style, beginning with unjoined letters and moving to joined handwriting	Produce some lower case and upper case letters using learned letter formations	Write using unjoined lower case and upper case letters	Write legibly and with growing fluency using unjoined upper case and lower case letters	Write using joined letters that are clearly formed and consistent in size	Write using clearly-formed joined letters, and develop increased fluency and automaticity	Develop a handwriting style that is becoming legible, fluent and automatic	Develop a handwriting style that is legible, fluent and automatic and varies according to audience and purpose	Consolidate a personal handwriting style that is legible, fluent and automatic and supports writing for extended periods	This sequence ends at this year level. Students should be supported to continue developing a fluent, legible, joined handwriting style.

## Students with Special Needs

Students with disabilities, learning difficulties and/or motor coordination issues are likely to have difficulties with handwriting. These students may require teaching and learning adjustments.

Refer to Appendix 1 – Accommodations for Handwriting Difficulties.

## Word Processing Skills

From an early age, students should be supported to develop the following word processing skills:

- the constant position of letters on a QWERTY keyboard;
- using the space bar and shift key for capital letters;
- cutting, copying and pasting;
- creating a bulleted and/or numbered list;
- changing the page format from portrait to landscape;
- using different font sizes for effect;
- using the bold, italics and underline functions for formatting purposes; and
- aligning, inserting objects and formatting texts around objects.

## Assessment

Children will receive age-appropriate feedback (oral and/or written) on their progress, and extra support if necessary. Assessment and monitoring will be ongoing by way of observation by the class teacher.

Examples of criteria by which children's handwriting can be evaluated are:

- neatness/legibility
- size
- shape
- slope
- spacing
- speed/fluency
- functional pencil grip

## Pencil Grip

It is important to establish and reinforce a proper pencil grip as early as possible. **The tripod grip is the preferred grip as it allows for proper control of the pencil but not the only effective grasp.** In the tripod grip the thumb, index finger and middle finger form a triangle to hold the pencil with the ring finger and the little finger supporting the middle finger. The pencil should be positioned between the three fingers so there is equal pressure. The index finger should rest on top of the pencil all fingers are slightly bent. There should be an open and rounded web space (the space formed by the thumb and index finger).

It is felt that handwriting difficulties could be avoided in later years if there is an early emphasis on strong fine motor skills, learning how to hold a pencil and regular practise on how to use it.

The goal of a proper pencil grip is that it is stable and comfortable and is able to be moved with the smaller muscles of the fingers rather than the whole hand.

A functional pencil grip should:

- be pain free
- allow for age-appropriate legibility (though this is affected by other factors too)
- ensure children are able to write for an age-appropriate amount of time without fatiguing

What assists in achieving each of these?

- Pencil movements that are driven by the thumb and fingers, rather than the wrist or elbow. This requires the wrist and elbow to be stabilised on the table. These "dynamic movements" are usually established by age 5-6.
- Having the ring and little fingers tucked into the palm of the hand.
- An open web space between the thumb and index finger, forming a C-shape.

Interestingly, occupational therapists are moving away from using pencil grips (moulded foam/plastic added to a pencil) if a grasp is functional. Not all functional pencil grips look the same.

When a grasp is problematic or inefficient, remediation such as hand strengthening activities, and accommodations, such as typing or allowing a child more time to complete written work may be required.

Ref: PLD - The Development of Appropriate Pencil Grip; Perth Children's Occupational Therapy

## Implementation

Staff have agreed to commence the implementation of the Rossmoyne Primary School Handwriting and Presentation Policy from the commencement of Semester 1, 2023. NSW font will be taught across the school from 2023 onwards with teachers understanding that children will likely use a combination of both fonts in middle primary, during independent writing, during this transition period. It is expected that all posters and resources, relating to handwriting and phonics, will be in NSW font by 2024. Year levels 1-4 currently have a handwriting book on their book list. It is imperative that the correct font has been added to the booklist and that explicit teaching of handwriting continues to occur. Peggy Lego training will be provided for all early childhood and junior teachers, and they will also be provided with a variety of resources based on the training. These will be stored on Connect.

Year	SCSA	Paper	Line Size	Writing tool	Corrections	Ruling Up	Time allocation	Other considerations
PP	Produce some lower case and upper case letters using learned letter formations (ACELY1653)	*Plain paper / lines as a scaffold to writing	24mm	Formative lead pencil	Cross out	X	Peggy Lego Fine motor activities; practice integrated daily	NSW Print
1	Write using unjoined lower case and upper case letters (ACELY1663)	Dotted thirds	24mm or 18 mm	Thick triangular	Cross out / eraser	X	3 x 20 min (including Finger Gym)	
2	Write legibly and with growing fluency using unjoined upper case and lower case letters (ACELY1673)	Dotted thirds	14mm	Thick triangular	Cross out / eraser	Red margin with double line at the top Yr 2 – red pencil	2 x 20 min	
3	Write using joined letters that are clearly formed and consistent in size (ACELY1684)	Dotted thirds	14mm	Standard sized lead pencil	Cross out / eraser		2 x 20 min	NSW Print, cursive when ready
4	Write using clearly-formed joined letters, and develop increased fluency and automaticity (ACELY1696)	Dotted thirds	14mm	Standard sized lead pencil / blue pen at teacher's discretion	Cross out/eraser		2 x 20 min	NSW Cursive
5	Develop a handwriting style that is becoming legible, fluent and automatic (ACELY1706)	Ruled / dotted thirds	8mm / 9mm	Lead pencil/blue pen (teachers discretion)	Ruled line through error. Tape whiteout for presentation pieces.	Yr 3-6 Red pen		Beginning to develop a personal style.
6	Develop a handwriting style that is legible, fluent and automatic and varies according to audience and purpose (ACELY1716)	Ruled/ dotted thirds	8mm / 9mm	Lead pencil/blue pen (teachers discretion)	Ruled line through error. Tape whiteout for presentation pieces.			

\*Pre-Primary teachers are to use 24mm lined paper, but with the understanding that it should not be with dotted thirds until a child is developmentally ready. Initially plain paper or folded paper is developmentally appropriate.

The following is a guide for teachers of when to introduce the major handwriting developmental stages but teachers are encouraged to make their own judgments as to when individuals are ready to move on. X indicates the first year that a new stage is introduced and therefore needs particular focus. For consistency across the school, a standard recommended line size for year groups has been included.

	K	P	1	2	3	4	5	6
<b>Standard line size in mm</b>		<b>24</b>	<i>24/18</i>	<b>14</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>8 / 9</b>	<b>8 / 9</b>
Pre-writing strokes	X							
Teaching and reinforcing of: -pencil grip -posture	X							
Introduction to individual letter formation writing.	X							
Teaching and reinforcing of: -paper position -letter formation & height -writing on the line -letter & word spacing -punctuation		X						
Introduction to joins and cursive writing.					X			
Consolidation of joins and cursive writing.						X		
Development of personal style with an emphasis on legibility and fluency.							X	

## Endorsement and Review Dates

This policy was endorsed by the School Board on 3 November 2022.

Next review – 2025.

## Appendix 1



# Accommodations for Handwriting Difficulties

**Handwriting is a fine-motor skill that causes problems for many students with specific learning difficulties. Handwriting problems often arise from a difficulty in automatically remembering and mastering the sequence of muscle motor movements required in writing letters or numbers. For students with handwriting problems, there are a range of accommodations that can be used in the classroom to reduce the burden of handwriting. The following are suggested:**

- **Change the demands of writing rate**
  - Allow more time for written tasks including note-taking, copying, and tests.
  - Permit the student to begin written projects or assignments early.
  - Allow the student to type some assignments and projects.
- **Adjust the volume of written work**
  - Allow the student to use voice-activated software or a scribe to dictate some assignments or tests.
  - Teach and allow abbreviations in some writing (such as b/c for because). Have the student develop abbreviations in a notebook.
  - Reduce copying aspects of work. For example in mathematics, provide a worksheet with the problems already on it.
  - Reduce the length requirements on written assignments.
  - Limit the need for draft copies, or have the student type their final copy instead of re-writing it.
- **Change the complexity**
  - Have a writing file that contains a model of cursive or print letters and a laminated template of the format required for written work (cut out holes where name, date, title, and information should go so it can be placed over A4 worksheets).
  - Provide a template or blank copies of diagrams, charts etc, for completion rather than asking the student to create one from scratch.
  - Remove neatness or spelling (or both) as marking criteria for assignments. Alternatively, provide two marks; a mark for content, and a qualitative mark for neatness and spelling.
  - Encourage the student to use a spellchecker and have someone proofread his or her work.
- **Change the tools**
  - Allow the student to write in print or cursive, whichever is most legible.
  - Encourage the student to use paper with raised lines, to encourage writing on the baseline.
  - Allow the student to write on graph paper for mathematics to assist with aligning columns of numbers.
  - Allow students to write with pens or pencils of their choice. Soft plastic pencil grips help the student to use the correct grip.
  - Allow alternatives to hand written responses such as the use of a computer, a scribe or a digital recorder.
- Allow students to take breaks when writing so they can put pencils down and shake or stretch their hands.
- Allow the use of technological aids such as spellcheckers, word processing, and voice-activated software (see information sheet on **Computer Software and Assistive Technology**). If the handwriting problem is severe and impeding academic progress, occupational therapy may be of assistance.