

# Occupational Therapy Advice

2017



## When Handwriting is Difficult

### Suggested strategies and activities:

#### Type of script

- \* Make sure that the child is encouraged to use the most efficient script in handwriting, whether it be printing or cursive.

#### Adequate time and volume

- \* Not all children produce the same amount of work in a given time. Allow and adjust time for completion of work if handwriting is difficult.
- \* Work collaboratively with the child to set realistic expectations of performance and volume of work. This helps to reduce their anxiety.
- \* Provide positive feedback when the child produces work in line with these expectations.
- \* Break down longer tasks into smaller components, and provide feedback along the way.
- \* Allow the child to have regular movement breaks to promote motivation and attention.

#### Copying skills

- \* If copying from the board is challenging, try the following strategies:
  - \* Limit visual "clutter" on the board.
  - \* Use black and blue markers on whiteboards, as these stand out best.
  - \* Writing lines on the board may also help the child to maintain focus.
  - \* Attach a small alphabet strip to the desktop to eliminate confusion about letter formation and orientation during copying.
  - \* The child should be positioned as close to front and centre as possible.
- \* Consider the need for provision of handouts instead of copying from the board. This can include instructions regarding homework tasks.

#### Variations to handwriting

- \* Functional handwriting is an important skill for all children. However, if handwriting is difficult on an ongoing basis, alternative methods should be considered.
- \* Typing skills can be introduced from an early age, alongside handwriting practice.
- \* Initially this can be used for activities and recording short pieces of work, and may be required for longer pieces of work as the child progresses through school.
- \* Oral reporting is another method which may be explored if typing is also difficult for the child. This may include the use of a scribe or a Dictaphone.

Your therapist will also advise if other considerations such as posture, writing tools, equipment, letter formation, desktop and environmental factors need to be addressed.

**Let us know if you have any questions!**