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Handwriting
in the South Australian
Curriculum

Information for Parents



Government of South Australia

Department of Education and
Children's Services

Handwriting in South Australian Schools and Preschools

Why it is important to learn to handwrite?

Handwriting is one form of communication using words. Although it is increasingly useful for learners to be able to write using a keyboard, the ability to handwrite remains an important skill in many aspects of their everyday lives.

Learning to handwrite also supports learners to recognise letters and symbols and to understand the sound of the letters which they use to form and read words.

Developing a handwriting style is, additionally, an essential aspect of establishing our identity as human beings. A signature is still widely recognised as the mark of an individual.

All learners, who are physically able to, should be provided with the opportunity to develop a handwriting style that enables them to write easily and in a way that can be understood by others.

Should children be able to write before they start school?

Many children will show an interest in handwriting before they attend school and will experiment with making marks on paper and 'doing writing'. While there is no expectation that children are able to write in the formal sense before they start school, many children feel a great sense of achievement when they are able to recognise and write letters and, particularly, write their name.



"The ability to write is the very foundation of communication"

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

What support can learners expect in school and preschool settings?

All schools and preschools have received copies of the resource *Handwriting in the South Australian curriculum*.

This resource has been developed after careful consultation with school and preschool educators from across the state.

It acknowledges that schools and preschools have a responsibility to provide resources and opportunities for learners to further develop hand–eye coordination and be supported to develop handwriting skills. This should be part of a whole school and preschool approach.

Learners in schools can expect to be instructed about the formation of letters, have regular opportunities to practise handwriting, receive feedback on their progress and get additional support when it is necessary.

Which handwriting style should children learn?

Most schools in South Australia provide learners with South Australian Modern Cursive as the model for forming letters (as illustrated). This font was developed to be used with a wide range of writing implements, including ballpoint and felt tipped pens which have increasingly replaced the fountain pen.

The South Australian Modern Cursive font has two forms: beginners' alphabet and the cursive formation. The beginners' alphabet is usually taught first followed later by the cursive formation. When learners are introduced to the cursive formation they will often be introduced also to the ways that letters link to one another.

When learners have developed a fluent cursive style they may go on to experiment with speed loops. Ultimately, learners will develop a personal handwriting style.

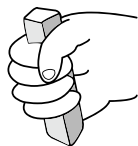
What is the best grip and when should it be learnt?

The preferred mature grip is the tripod or precision grip. In order to use this grip, children need to have developed appropriate fine motor skills as well as reached a particular stage of muscular development. It is important to bear in mind that each individual develops at a different rate and it can be damaging to expect children to use the mature tripod grip before they are ready to do so.

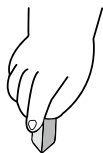
Typically, learners will begin with a palmar grasp and progress to incomplete tripods before they adopt the tripod grip (see illustration).

What support can parents/ caregivers provide for children?

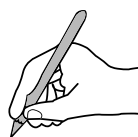
- Include drawing and writing in your everyday activities. Involve your children in writing shopping lists and letters and drawing pictures to send to friends and relatives.
- Help to develop your children's upper body strength and coordination through visits to playgrounds and participation in physical games and sports.
- Develop your children's visual discrimination and fine motor skills by doing such things as puzzles and constructing with Lego.



Palmar Grasp



Incomplete tripods



Tripod Grip