Occupational Therapy Home and Class Activities

Student Name: ___________________________ Date: _________
Therapist: ___________________________ School: ______________

Handwriting Adaptations
For the Home and Classroom

Fine Motor Adaptations: Improper grasp can limit finger dexterity and control.

- Use a large 3-ring binder or slant board as a writing surface to help position hand and wrist in a more functional position.
- Use a recommended pencil grip to support correct finger placement.
- Use smaller writing utensils (small pieces of chalk, golf pencils, etc) to force a more desirable tripod pencil grasp. If the student is extremely resistant to this technique, use wider or fatter writing utensils.
- Make sure paper position follows the slant of the forearm being used for writing, and is placed at the midline of the work surface.

Postural Adjustments: Improper posture can limit the success of a child’s handwriting and fine motor activities.

- Place both feet flat on the floor, hips back in the chair, shoulders over hips, and head upright and centered. This frees the arms and hands to work more freely.
- Adjust furniture to fit. Desktop height should be between the end of the sternum and navel area.
- Provide foot rest if necessary (old phone books, stools, etc.).
  Allow postural breaks and/or alternative work positions (lying prone on the floor, sitting on the floor with legs crossed, kneeling, etc.).
- Try alternative seating if necessary (cushions, boosters, ball seats, etc.).

***Adaptations should be discontinued if disruption in the classroom is caused by inappropriate behaviors, or if distraction of the child’s education occurs.

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**Spacing and Alignment Adaptations:** Poor spacing and/or letter alignment can decrease the legibility of handwriting.

- When creating writing models, exaggerate space between words.
- Use a spacer to place after each word before beginning the next word (finger, popsicle stick, etc.).
- Use raised lined or color-coded lined paper.
- Set boundaries for each letter to fit in (graph paper, paper with boxes).
- Try different paper, Wider lines, darker lines, raised lines, highlight the lines.
- Use a ruler or index card to expose the line being read or written on.

**Letter Formation Modifications:** Incorrect letter formation (inconsistent or sloppy) results in illegible handwriting.

- Check head alignment (head centered over shoulders, slightly looking down – approximately 30 degrees).
- Check paper alignment (paper centered in work area with top of the page angled to the non-dominant side).
- Encourage student to begin all manuscript letters from the top and counter-clockwise (except for the letter “e”).
- Provide alphabet model at desk.
- “Handwriting Without Tears” is a highly recommended teaching aide for handwriting and is also adopted by the California Board of Education.

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Writing Pressure Adaptations: Writing with too much or too little pressure can result in illegible handwriting and can be a major source of frustration for the student.

Try different pencils/pencil grips. Try colored pencils.

Try dry erase or marker.

TOO LIGHT?
Utilize a pencil grip to aid in correct finger placement.

Use thin lined markers.

Use weighted pencils.

TOO HEAVY?
Utilize pencil grip to aid in correct finger placement.

Use mechanical pencils.

Provide textured writing surface to increase feedback sensation to the hand.

Fatigue: Fatigue will result in discomfort for a student and may make writing legibly difficult.

Modify or shorten writing assignments.

Provide opportunities to type assignment if necessary.

Work for 5, 10, or 15 minute increments and then take a stretch and shake break for a minute. Try to gradually work up to 20 minute increments.

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**Copying from the board:** Copying from the board is difficult because you have to be able to quickly know where you are on both the board and on the paper you are copying to.

Have a peer helper who takes good notes make a copy of his/her notes on a daily basis.

Sit close to the board.

Reduce the amount of copying from the board that is required.

Provide copies of the notes that were put up on the board.

Provide an outline of what is going on the board in order to reduce the amount of writing involved.

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