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# Learning to handwrite fluently gives your child a big advantage

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Some people think that handwriting is out-moded, like a horse-drawn carriage, rotary-dial phone or fax machine.

Like many males, I copped a lot of flak about my handwriting in primary school, including from my nemesis, Vicky, who forged perfect letters effortlessly with insufferable smugness.

But learning to handwrite is not about pretty letter-making. It's about developing automatic, fast and legible handwriting. This:

- frees up working memory to focus on ideas, planning, organisation and expressive language
- improves both the quantity and quality of writing
- helps with notetaking and remembering content
- provides a big advantage with assignments and high-stakes exams.

Directly teaching handwriting to young students:

- enhances legibility and fluency
- improves sentence-writing skills, writing quantity and quality.

Learning to handwrite fluently takes a lot of time: In Years 4–6, handwriting accounts for 42% of the variability in the quality of children's writing; and handwriting speed continues to increase until at least Year 9.

If, for whatever reason, handwriting remains effortful and slow, students will avoid writing and fall further behind their Vicky-like peers.

If a student's handwriting is illegible, teachers will form negative judgements about the quality of the writing, and award lower marks than an identical response written legibly.

Over time, students inevitably develop their own handwriting style, often combining manuscript (printed) and cursive letters. What matters most is automaticity, speed and legibility.

Free resources exist to help teach students to hold a pencil properly and to write letters in a sensible, sequenced way (see links below).

Learning to type quickly is, of course, still a good idea (see [here](#) for a free resource).

## ***Handwriting links***

[Blog post about pencil grip by Banter Speech](#)

[Workbook by Spelfabet](#)

[CASL Handwriting Program by Graham and Harris \(1999\)](#)

[Webinar by William Van Cleave \(2016\)](#)

[Handwriting resources by PhOrMeS](#)

[Information sheets by The Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne](#)

[Literacy LIFTER by Iowa Reading Research Centre](#)

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*This article originally appeared on the [Banter Speech & Language](#) blog.*

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