

Low Tech Adaptations to Improve Handwriting

Handwriting is the most frequently appearing concern on IEP's. Students with a variety of disabilities (and many without) experience difficulties with producing legible handwriting. Today there are many, very available items that can be used to help a student produce more legible, readable written output. Here are a few suggestions.

Try different paper

There are a variety of papers that are available in school supply catalogs. There are wider lines, darker lines, even raised lines (Pro-Ed, 8700 Shoal Creek Blvd., Austin, TX 78757-6897. Ph. (800) 397-7633. Cost \$29 per package of 250).

Try different pencils/pens

Office supply stores now carry a multitude of different pens and pencils. There are some that are larger in diameter, triangular shape, oval shape, covered with a rubber surface. Purchase a variety and try them out.

Try another medium

Some students can write better with a dry erase marker on a small dry erase board. It takes less pressure to produce a mark and is easily erased to repair mistakes.

Use pencil grips

Just as there are many different types of pencils and pens these days, there are also many types of pencil grips. They are soft, hard, smooth, sticky, round, triangular, square, etc. Collect a variety and keep them available.

Make your own adaptations

If you cannot order the special paper, try making your own raised line paper by carefully tracing the bottom lines-with Elmer's Glue. Then let it dry and you have a raised line to try. You can also make a quick and inexpensive pencil grip using Adhesive Mounting Putty. This is the stuff that you use to hang posters instead of tape, tacks or staples. It is easily shaped and will not dry out Take one section of mounting putty from package and shape around pencil, making finger grips to fit hand. Change it as needed until it feels "right" for the child.

Practice with Wikki Stix

Wikki Stix are colorful, flexible sticks about 8" long. They are tacky to the touch. They bend for drawing, tracing and 3-D stand up figures. They stick to any surface and peel off without a trace. Children can form letters with Wikki Stix or use them as line guides when writing, placing them along the top line, so that the student brings their letters up to the line. (Highlight the bottom fine with a colored highlighter pen.) Wikki Stix are available from school supply catalogs and Sax Crafts. Cost \$4.89 for a package of 48.

Implementation

One of the definitions of insanity is doing the same over and over and expecting different results. If a student is truly struggling with handwriting, don't continue having him/her practice in the same position, with the same penal on the same paper- Try other alternatives until you begin to see improvement. Don't forget to try the slant board described earlier in this section or using the computer for written output You can start with Story Writer in Kid's Tune Deluxe, also described earlier in this section.

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