

Handwriting Basics

Hand Preference

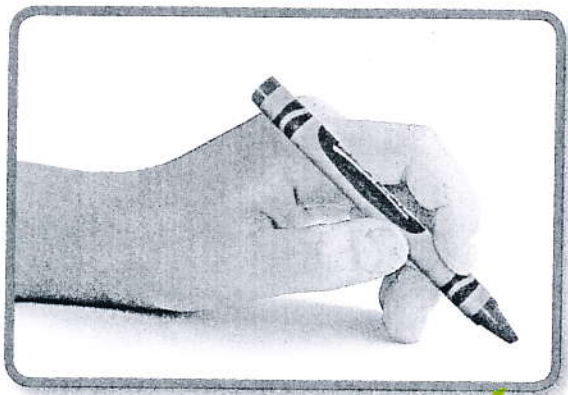
To determine hand dominance, observe each child doing a variety of everyday tasks, such as using a hand puppet, cutting with scissors, throwing a ball, holding a spoon, and hammering a toy peg. Record hand preference for each activity. If a child is definitely left-handed, teach him or her to use that hand for holding the writing tool. If a child is truly ambidextrous, it is probably better to train the right hand.

Helper Hand

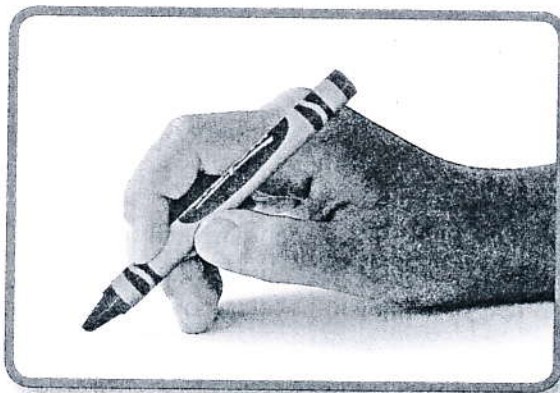
When children write, ask, *Where is your helper hand? You need its help for writing!* The helper hand, or non-writing hand, should always be in sight on the tabletop, securing the paper and shifting it left-to-right as needed as children write. Teach children to get into the habit of looking for the helper hand.

Grip

It can be difficult to persuade a first- or second-grader to change the way he or she holds the writing tool, but prekindergarteners are usually receptive to learning a comfortable and efficient grip. During each writing lesson, model the three-finger hold, or tripod grip, shown below. Keep in mind that a mature writing grip develops over time and with lots of practice.



Left Hand



Right Hand

Hold the crayon between the thumb, pointer, and middle fingers. The pointer rests on top. The end of the bent thumb is placed against the crayon to hold it high in the hand and near the knuckle.

Sitting Position

Using correct body position when writing will help children write better letters. They also will not tire as quickly. Encourage them to sit comfortably erect with their feet flat on the floor and their hips touching the back of the chair. Both arms should rest on the table. Be sure children are relaxed and holding their crayon correctly. Note that the height of chairs and tables should be adjusted to accommodate each child.

Young children should also engage in writing activities that do not involve a table and chair.

- **Vertical Surfaces** Encourage children to write on vertical surfaces, such as easels or whiteboards, to help improve hand and arm strength and encourage proper grasp.
- **Lying on Back** Affix paper to the bottom of a tabletop and allow children to lie on their back to complete a writing task.
- **Lying on Stomach** Place a sheet of paper on the floor and encourage children to lie on their stomach to write.

Each of these activities strengthens the muscles in the upper body, which supports the development of fine-motor skills.



For more information, visit

www.zaner-bloser.com/handwriting

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