

How To Fix Handwriting Problems

Problem Area: Alignment

Components of Alignment:

1. **Start:** where each letter/number begins
2. **Placement:** putting the letter/number on the baseline

What is Alignment?

- ★ Aligning the letters correctly on a writing line
- ★ Starting capital letters/numbers at the top line.
- ★ Making sure all letters/numbers “bump” the bottom line.
- ★ Making sure all “small”/“middle” lower case letters start at the middle line.
- ★ Making sure all “upstairs”/“tall” lower case letters start at the top line.
- ★ Making sure all “downstairs”/“fall” lower case letters have a “tail”.

Strategies to Improve Alignment:

- ★ Explain and orient the child to top, middle and bottom BEFORE introducing letters/numbers. Give plenty of exposure to top, middle and bottom – i.e. of their body, of the desk, of a piece of paper, etc.
- ★ Emphasize that capital letters always start on the top and stop at the bottom
 - Use “Where Do We Start Our Letters” – as warm up activity for Capital Letter formation
- ★ Explain that lower case letters can be “upstairs, middle, or downstairs” or “tall, small or fall” BEFORE introducing letters. Be sure to apply this concept to a writing line. Give LOTS of examples before asking the child to apply this concept independently when writing.
- ★ Teach and use the Lower Case Alphabet Stretch
- ★ Explain how letters/numbers NOT touching the bottom line are “floaters”
- ★ Always reference the starting and ending points when forming a letter/number
- ★ Use additional visual cues to show child the different lines (i.e. highlighting each a consistent color)
- ★ Use worksheets/activities that have the child identify and correct alignment of letters/numbers
- ★ ALWAYS USE LINED PAPER WHEN COMPLETING HANDWRITING TASKS.

Activities to Improve Alignment:

1. Lower Case Alphabet Stretch

Supplies Needed:

- ★ Visual model of lower case alphabet on three lined paper

Procedure:

- ★ Explain top, middle and bottom of the child’s body and have them identify each area on themselves.
- ★ Explain how some lower case letters are “upstairs”/“tall” and reach the “top”; some are “middle”/“small” and reach the middle; and some are “downstairs”/“fall” and go all the way under the bottom line.
- ★ Go through each letter modeling the body movements (See Attached)

2. Fishing for Letter/Numbers

Supplies Needed:

- ★ Clear paper (i.e. laminating paper or sheet protectors)
- ★ Writing Line
- ★ Paperclips
- ★ Magnet/Magnetic Wand

Procedure:

- ★ Print letter/numbers onto clear paper and cut into small squares.
- ★ Attach paperclip onto each square.
- ★ Have the child “fish” for a letter/number using the magnet (it will attach to the paperclip)
- ★ Once the child retrieves the letter/number, have them position it the correct way on the writing line.

3. Building Letters/Numbers

Supplies Needed:

- ★ Line/Curve Templates (See Attached)

★ Pretend Paper Template

Procedure:

- ★ Make templates out of construction paper, cardboard or foam paper.
- ★ Practice making each capital letter and/or number out of the templates using the letter formation guide.
- ★ Emphasize the starting point and the direction of following strokes.
- ★ Talk about the “kinds of lines” the letter is made up of (big lines, little lines, big curve, little curves) and how many of each.

4. Wet-Dry-Try Letters/Numbers

Supplies Needed:

- ★ Small Chalkboard
- ★ Chalk
- ★ Small pieces of sponge

Procedure:

- ★ Make a letter/number on the chalkboard for the child
- ★ Have the child “wash off” the letter/number by using a small wet piece of sponge to go over the letter. Make sure that the child is “washing it off” just ONE stroke at a time, NOT the entire board.
- ★ Have the child “dry” the strokes with a small dry piece of sponge.
- ★ Talk about the “kinds of lines” the letter is made up of (big lines, little lines, big curve, little curves) and how many of each.
- ★ Emphasize the starting point and the direction of following strokes.
- ★ Have the child attempt to make the letter/number using the “image” left on the chalkboard from wetting and drying.

5. Playdoh Letters/Numbers

Supplies Needed:

- ★ Playdoh
- ★ Model of letter/number on paper

Procedure:

- ★ Place the paper model of the letter/number in front of the child.
- ★ Talk about the “kinds of lines” the letter is made up of (big lines, little lines, big curve, little curves) and how many of each.
- ★ Emphasize the starting point and the direction of following strokes.
- ★ Have the child form the letter/number out of playdoh. First, have the child form it ON the paper model. As the child becomes more familiar with how the letter/number is formed, have him/her form it on a tabletop/surface while just looking at the paper model.