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
   o 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.