



## Key Sentence

Ninety-seven percent of surveyed elementary teachers believe that handwriting instruction is important. Twelve percent of these same teachers noted that they were not prepared to teach handwriting (Graham, Harris, Mason, Fink, Moran, & Saddler, 2008)

## Introduction

Is handwriting relevant in the digital age? Yes! The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), for example, maintains that the visual-motor skills developed in handwriting are linked with academic achievement; therefore, it is important for teachers to address pencil grip and writing legibility (Chassiakos, 2017). Furthermore, Graham, Harris, and Fink (2000) ascertain that students with unreadable handwriting lack a fundamental skill needed for expressing ideas in writing. Unfortunately, many students, including those with disabilities, struggle with handwriting (Mason, Harris, & Graham, 2013). Students' difficulties in handwriting can interrupt the writing process and can interfere with intended meaning. Importantly, difficulties with handwriting may lead students to avoid writing and may lead them to believe they cannot write (Berninger, Mizokawa, & Bragg, 1991).

# Get Ready to support handwriting instruction.

Handwriting instruction is not only important but it is newsworthy! Read the [New York Times](#) article [What's Lost as Handwriting Fades](#).

Do handwriting styles make a difference? Given a lack of research supporting any one specific handwriting style, handwriting expert Dr. Steve Graham (1999) suggests beginning with a traditional manuscript style, one matching the style selected by the school system. View examples of handwriting styles on the [Draw your World](#) website.

Take time for evidence-based practices in handwriting instruction! Handwriting should be taught frequently. Ten minutes of instruction and practice, twice weekly, can improve students' handwriting (Berninger et al., 1997). Go to [Reading Rockets](#) for Dr. Louis Spear-Swerling's overview of handwriting instruction in [The Importance of Teaching Handwriting](#).

## SET learning in motion with recommendations from the experts.

In pre-school and early kindergarten, handwriting should be integrated when teaching letter sounds. For older students, each letter should be taught in isolation, followed by application in context (Troia, 2006). Recommendations for teaching handwriting to students with disabilities have been consistent over the last thirty plus years (Graham & Miller, 1980; Mason, Harris, & Graham, 2013) and include:

- **Modeling.** Letter formation should be taught by a teacher or other expert overtly modeling how to form letters. Visual cues such as providing arrows to indicate the direction of writing are especially effective for students with memory difficulties.
- **Discussion.** Instruction time should include discussion about common and uncommon letter features. Examples should be clearly provided.
- **Self-evaluation.** Students should be taught how to independently evaluate and improve their handwriting. For example, students should be taught how to select the “best” letter they have written by circling letters or by drawing a star, check mark, or smiley face next to their best written letter. Students should also be taught to identify letters needing more writing practice.
- **Facilitative supports.** Students' handwriting should be supported by adaptations as needed. Marks for paper placement on student desks and tripod grip molds for pencils, for example, can be easily provided. Adaptations may not change the manner in which a student writes; however, if used early, adaptations may help a student avoid writing bad habits.

- **Fluency.** It is expected that students with disabilities will write slower, with less legibility, than their non-disabled peers; therefore, fluency should be supported. Writing quickly, however, should not be at the expense of legibility. The most common recommendation for improving fluency is to provide opportunities for meaningful writing across the school day and at home.

## For more information GO to

Dr. Steve Graham's (2009-2010) article, [Want to Improve Children's Writing? Don't Neglect Their Handwriting](#), in **American Education**. Dr. Graham provides important information about all aspects of teaching handwriting across grade levels. Be sure to look for the "Checklist of Best Practices" for teaching students to become better writers. An excellent tool for all teachers.

Need information about dysgraphia? **GO to Learning Disabilities Association of America** and **Understood** for information for signs, symptoms and strategies.

[Read more](#)

For assisting parents, **GO to LDonline** for the expert's answer to "What should I do for my child who has an IEP but still has trouble with handwriting, taking notes, and writing speed?"

[Read more](#)

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