

Advice for left-handed children

Left-handed children can often appear uncoordinated or disorganised as most equipment is set up for right-handed children.

The following advice may assist left-handed children with their writing as there are several differences when writing with your left hand to your right. These include:

- Pushing the pen across the page rather than pulling it, which can cause the point of the pencil/pen to dig in rather than flow smoothly and cause more pressure through the pencil when writing.
- Left-handed people write across the body, which can limit movement. Right-handed writer sworking away from their body and therefore have a wider, freer range of movement.
- When writing, the left hand will cover the paper and may smudge work.

Strategies

Seating

- Place chair to the right of the writing surface, leaving plenty of space for writing on the left side of the body.
- Do not sit a left hander on the right of a right hander during writing activities as their arms will bump into each other and restrict movement.

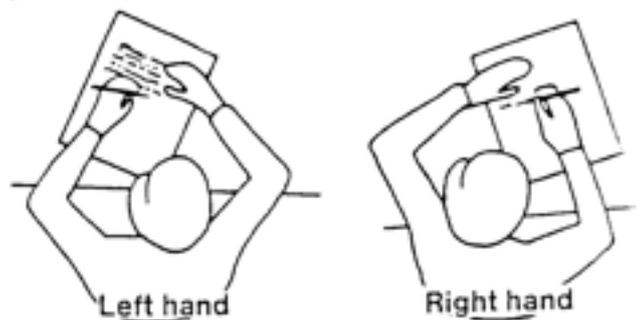
Writing tool and grasp

- In order to see the text as they write and prevent smudging, left-handed students should hold the pen/pencil at least 2cm from the point. This can be indicated by a small elastic band or sticker around the desired area or by using a pen with an integral grip.
- Ballpoint, Berol or fibre tip pens produce less friction.
- Left-handed fountain pens are available from commercial stationers and will provide a smooth ink flow rather than right-handed nibbed pens that won't produce enough ink for left-handers.

- Stabilo and Yoropens have special left handed grips.
- Children often adopt a flexed wrist position to stop smudging, enable them to see their work and get a better angle to use pens designed for right handers. This position can become uncomfortable. Encourage the hand to stay under the written work. To position wrist on a more functional, neutral position try:
 - using a sloping desk top or resting work on a lever-arch file or a clipboard
 - experimenting with alternative tools, pens or softer pencils
 - ensuring paper is angled correctly for a left-handed student (top left angle raised).

Paper position

- The paper should be far enough to the left to enable the child to rest his or her elbow on the working surface and move the forearm in an arc without crossing the midline of the body
- Marking the paper position on the desk with masking tape on the desk may prompt children.
- Position the left hand below the writing line, to enable the child to see what is being written.
- Ensure that a left-hander is not sitting too close to a right-hander.
- Check the light is coming over the right shoulder to avoid casting shadows on the work.
- The paper should be tilted so that the right top corner is lower than the left (see diagram) at an angle of 35-45°.



Left handed scissors

- Left handed scissors have reserved blades which will enable a clean, smooth cut. The left blade is on the top giving the child a clear view of where they are cutting.
- Children should be encouraged to cut out shapes in a clockwise direction rather than anticlockwise for the right handers.



Resources

www.anythingleft-handed.co.uk

For further information please contact our advice email oxl-tr.otadvice@nhs.net

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Children's Occupational Therapy
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