

bib
nib
bip
pip

Suggestions for Better Penmanship



LIVING BOOKS CURRICULUM™
www.livingbookscurriculum.com

Suggestions for Better Penmanship

By Bonnie Billeb

Contributor, LBC Curriculum

Included here are additional suggestions to those already mentioned in *Italics: Beautiful Handwriting for Children*.

Remember

- Have your child strive for his best, that is, to make as perfect a copy as he is able.
- Keep the lessons short. Ten to fifteen minutes are sufficient. It is not necessary to make long copy work. Use a part of any *Primary Language Lesson*.

Appropriate desk height

To measure the appropriate desk height for your child, have him hold his arm at his side with the elbow bent at a 45-degree angle. When his forearm can rest on the tabletop, this height will give good writing posture. It is also important to have a chair that allows his feet to rest flat on the floor.

Pencil grip

Teach your child early on the correct pencil grip. An incorrect grip is a hard habit to break. We use the word “grip”, but in reality the pencil should be gently held. A test of this is to slowly pull the pencil from between your child’s fingers. It should slide out easily. To teach the correct grip, lay the pencil across the thumb and second (index) finger. Then, grasp it near the point with thumb and index finger. This pencil position provides easy control without the cramping experienced with many other holding methods.

Copy strip

While learning and using italic handwriting, whether manuscript or cursive, your child will need a model from which to easily work. A copy strip with the letterforms is a great help. Prepare a strip of lined paper with each of the letters of the alphabet, written in the manner you expect your child to print or write. You can copy the appropriate letters from the italic handwriting book. Then, post the copy strip where penmanship practice takes place. Cover the strip with clear, self-adhesive paper to make it last longer.

First lessons

It can be helpful to begin with a desktop whiteboard and erasable markers. Make a couple of models on the board, commenting where the letter begins and how the strokes are made. Let your child copy the letter as many times as necessary to learn its form correctly. This might be the whole lesson for one day. When your child knows the form, move to lined paper. Show him

where the parts of the letter go and give him an opportunity to practice under your watchful eye. Evaluate his writing with comments on letter formation. An example might be, "I like the shape of the oval" or, "Look how nicely this letter touches the top (or bottom) of the line." Evaluating in this way prepares your child for evaluating his own writing.

Self-evaluation

Another method to encourage good penmanship is to have your child evaluate his own writing at the end of each practice based a scale that includes: letter form, height, spacing, and consistency. If he is working on an individual letter, have him look at each line, choosing his best and worst letters. Next to his best, he can put a star, and then allow him to erase his worst and rewrite it better.

Writing projects

One of the things I've found that motivates students to improve their penmanship is to give them something to produce. A special penmanship project such as one of these could be offered to your child:

- Letters to friends,
- Verses on fancy paper to hang on their walls,
- Poetry to copy (their own, or one they hear and like) and send to someone or to put on a poetry bulletin board, or in their copy notebook,
- Cards of all types,
- Titles for drawings,
- Non-fiction re-writing to put into publication (journal, science newsletter),
- Family history or newsletter,
- Historical document in poster form,
- Final copies of stories sent to friends or family members.

Other ways to practice penmanship

For just practice of penmanship, some things can be used that are practical, but don't add much to the student's work load such as the following:

- One day a week use spelling list;
- Poetry, verses, or historical documents being memorized;
- Spelling or grammar rules to be written in a notebook;
- Final copies of stories, letters, thank you notes, or other documents;
- Lists to be memorized.