



## **Handwriting Without Tears**

*Handwriting Without Tears* is a program designed to teach children how to write, developing handwriting skills for children in pre-kindergarten through fifth grade. This program is used to help children learn the most effective way to produce letters, as handwriting is the foundation for everyday and life-long activities such as writing and reading. When children are successful with handwriting they are more eager to learn and participate in activities. *Handwriting Without Tears* is used when the child has solid comprehension of language and is ready to learn, and capable of attending. The pre-k section, *Get Set For School*, focuses on learning the alphabet, numbers, shapes, colors, and developing body awareness. A variety of multi-sensory approaches are used including: coloring shapes and animals, singing and dancing to music, and using different hands on material to practice forming the letters. The kindergarten through fifth grade section teaches children how to write through a progression of lessons starting with capital letters, lowercase letters, and then moving into lowercase cursive letters, and capital cursive letters. Each lesson focuses on the introduction of a new letter through providing a demonstration, copying of the letter, followed by writing the letter without a visual.

### **Order of Participation in Kindergarten to 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Program:**

- Capital Letters: These letters are taught first because of how they are produced (size and starting point) making them easier to learn than the lowercase letters. Also, this order encourages children learn the orientation of letters, decreasing the likelihood of reversing their letters.
  - Frog Jump Capitals: F, E, D, P, B, R, N, M
  - Starting Corner Capitals: H, K, L, U, V, W, X, Y, Z
  - Center Starting Capitals: C, O, Q, G, S, A, I, T, J
- Lowercase Letters: The lowercase letters that are taught first are similar in form but smaller when compared to their capital letter.
  - c, o, s, v, w; t; a, d, g; u, i, e, l, k, y, j; p, r, n, m, h, b; f, q, x, z
- Lowercase Cursive Letters: These letters are taught before capital cursive letters because they are similar to the lowercase print letters which children are most familiar with, as they are commonly used.
  - c, a, d, g; h, t, p; e, l, f; u, y, i, j; k, r, s; o, w, b, v; n, m; x, z, q
- Capital Cursive Letters: These letters are taught last due to being only occasionally used.
  - A, C, O, U; V, W, X, Y, Z; P, B, R, N, M; H, K, T, F; I, J, D, L; G, S, E, Z

**Practice Forming the Letters:** It is important to have your child always start in the upper left hand corner working from top to bottom then from left to right. You can provide a visual cue by adding a small smiley face at the top corner of the paper or equipment that is being used.





When learning the print letters, there are four types of lines that will always make up the letters: big line, little line, big curve, and little curve. The letters are taught by forming the letters using wooden pieces in the shapes of these 4 lines.

- Wooden Pieces: Each letter is formed by using the 4 lines (big line, little line, big curve, little curve). Using a background (colored construction paper), have your child practice forming the letters by putting the wooden pieces together. For beginners, provide your child with the correct wooden pieces. To challenge your child, have them pick out which lines and curves they will need to form each letter.
- Magnet Board: Using a magnet screen, have your child stamp the wooden pieces with magnet strips on the board in the same order that the letter would be formed.
- Play Dough: Break the play dough into separate pieces so your child can roll it out and make the lines and curves needed for that letter, and then form the letter with the pieces.
- Chalk Board: Use a chalk board to make writing fun! Make the letter with chalk and then erase it by tracing the lines with a wet sponge.
- White Board: Create the letter with a dry erase marker and then erase it by tracing the lines with your finger or sponge.

Practice Writing the Letters: Children can practice writing the letters by first tracing them and then using lined paper with an example (visual model) of the letter on the page. If this is too difficult, add dots on the lines where the child should be starting and stopping or where the lines and curves meet.

Activities for the Home: carry over into the home environment is the key to success!

- Create the letters using wooden pieces, pipe cleaners, pieces of yarn or ribbon, Wikki Stix, putty, and play dough
- Form the letters with smaller craft supplies or items around the house such as: Pom-Poms, sequins, beads, buttons, and coins
- Practicing writing in shaving cream, sand, finger paint, and flattened play dough. They can use their fingers and/or a tool such as a straw, toothpick, or plastic fork
- Make it fun by using a white board, chalk board, or magnet board
- Use puffy paint or glitter glue to trace or free hand the letters
- Download fun and free templates for different letters and lined paper off of Google Images

Helpful Tips:

- Encourage a proper seated position: chair pushed in, sitting upright, feet on the ground, and facing forward in the chair.





- Use play dough or putty to warm up their hands, add beads for the child to dig out. Encourage them to stretch and squish the play dough and use the muscles in their hands.
- Have your child stabilize the paper with their supporting hand (“helper hand”) while they write with their dominant hand. The closer their helper hand is on the paper to where they are writing will provide your child with more control.
- Encourage your child to use an age-appropriate grasp. Ask your therapist for more information regarding grasp techniques.
- Encourage your child to start at the top left corner and take their time as well as practicing at home.

Where to find the Material:

Items can be purchased at stores such as Wal-Mart, Target, Michaels, and Jo-Anns or online at amazon.com or hwtears.com

Olsen, J. (2015). Handwriting Without Tears. Retrieved from <http://www.hwtears.com/hwt>

