Handwriting
South Australian Modern Cursive

Education Department of South Australia
Handwriting: South Australian Modern Cursive: R-7 language arts / prepared by the English Curriculum Services and the R-7 Handwriting Committee -Adelaide Education Department of South Australia, 1984
68 p. : ill. (some col.) :30 cm

1. Handwriting - Study and teaching.

DDC 19
372.63
ISBN 0 7243 7173 7
Foreword

It has always been an important task of teachers to help children develop fluent, legible handwriting. The purposes for which people use handwriting and the instruments used have changed significantly in recent years. At the school level it is essential to ensure that approaches to teaching handwriting keep pace with these changes. This curriculum represents the culmination of several years' work during which many teachers have been involved in developing a style to meet contemporary needs and conditions. I wish to thank the committee members who prepared this document and the teachers who trialled the material. This curriculum document now becomes the guide for South Australian Government Schools. It supersedes all previous departmental publications on handwriting. I commend this document to teachers as an excellent base for ensuring that our students develop fluent, legible and personal handwriting styles.

J.R.Steinle
Director-General of Education
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Introduction

The term writing as used in the document *Writing: R-7 language arts* encompasses both the writing process and the means for recording the message.

For the purpose of this document, the term handwriting refers to the technique and style used by children to communicate in writing.

This document is designed to help teachers understand the reasons for adopting the handwriting style called *South Australian Modern Cursive* and the benefits it provides for children. It outlines possible areas for consideration when implementing the style at both the school and classroom level and provides detailed information regarding the technique and style of South Australian Modern Cursive.

The document is intended for teachers who:
- are introducing handwriting to children who have not yet developed their handwriting skills
- are helping children to change from a non-Roman alphabet
- have children whose current handwriting style is illegible or causing difficulty, and for whom a change is advisable.

*Middle and upper primary children, with well established handwriting should maintain and develop their existing style.*

South Australian Modern Cursive

South Australian Modern Cursive is learned in three stages.
- Beginners' alphabet and capitals
- Development of cursive alphabet
- Linking guides

(See Resources Section, p. 62, for examples of lower case script and development of exits. The example on p. 5 highlights cursive linkages.)

For the first eighteen months at school, children will use the beginners' alphabet and capitals when writing. Children may then be taught to develop exits on lower case letters and be given time to practise these before direct linking is introduced, approximately six months later. (See pp. 28 and 29 for rules relating to the introduction of links.)

Upper primary children can experiment with other handwriting styles in order to develop a personal style. However, only those styles which are produced using the same technique as South Australian Modern Cursive (that is, Copperplate, Italic, and Looped Cursive) should be encouraged since the appropriate technique is vital if legible handwriting is to be maintained at speed. Handwriting styles such as Linked Script and Print Script,
which use a finger technique rather than a combined finger, hand and arm movement, should be discouraged. (See pp. 30-31 for ways to help children to experiment with other styles.)

Implementation

It is important to ensure the continuity of children's learning. Therefore, the adoption of South Australian Modern Cursive should be a staff decision. Once the decision to adopt the new style has been made, a programme of teacher inservice will be needed to ensure effective implementation at a classroom level. Teachers may find this new handwriting style difficult since they have established a personal style. Individual and small group practice sessions will help to overcome difficulties. (See pp. 7-9)

Teachers who are setting the foundations for handwriting in reception and year one classes and teachers of year 2 and 3 classes who are assisting children to develop cursive skills, will implement the style in the first year. Teachers of middle and upper primary year levels will then incorporate the style into their programmes as these children progress through the school. (See p. 9 for an implementation time-line.)

All teachers within the school will need to be aware of the change to South Australian Modern Cursive and to develop the capacity to introduce it to children and to improve the legibility, of handwriting in older children.

South Australian Modern Cursive is an appropriate tool for South Australian school children; a tool which will complement the writing process as children express themselves on paper.
Handwriting in perspective

The place of handwriting in the language arts programme
The formalities and conventions in writing, such as punctuation, spelling, grammar and handwriting, are the means to effective written communication. They are not ends in themselves.

In recording their ideas, thoughts and feelings, children need a relaxed technique and style of handwriting that they can produce with confidence and sustain for increasingly longer periods of time. By practising the technique and using appropriate materials, developing writers gain the confidence and ability to produce a legible style that will help them to communicate through writing. Children should aim to develop a personal style that is both pleasing to themselves and easily read by others.

Handwriting developments
Throughout history the process of communication through handwriting has altered according to the changing needs, values and technology of society. Modern handwriting styles have been developed to provide children with a tool for quick and effective communication.

The chart on p. 6 shows some of the handwriting styles that have been taught in South Australia.

Modern handwriting styles
Modern handwriting styles are simplified styles of handwriting. They are based on children's early writing behaviour which indicate that children's natural movements are oval shaped and sloped (see Fig. 1) rather than round and upright (see Fig. 2). (The left-handed person has a natural slope to the left.) Most modern handwriting styles use these natural movements. Children are taught to form letters using the oval and slope upon entry into school (see Fig. 3). As children's proficiency increases in the formation of lower case script, links are learnt and a cursive style can quickly develop (see Fig. 4 on p. 5).

The technique (i.e. the hold of the writing instrument, paper and body position, and the handwriting movement) used to produce handwriting is as important as the style. Children need to develop a relaxed technique to ensure that legibility and speed can be maintained over lengthy periods of time.

Traditional handwriting styles such as Italic relied heavily on special instruments for their reproduction. Modern readily available handwriting instruments have created a need to adopt a style that is easily produced.
There has been an international move towards the simplification of handwriting styles taught in schools. This has resulted from recent understanding of the development of handwriting skills.

South Australian Modern Cursive has been based on international handwriting trends and the existing styles of handwriting in this State. At various times in South Australian schools, children were taught Print Script in their first years at school and then, in middle and upper primary years, the traditional Copperplate which was modified in 1967 to become Looped Cursive. Styles such as Simple Modern Hand (Scotland) and Lehman's Cursive (USA) developed from Italic.

South Australian Modern Cursive has maintained as much character as possible of the styles currently taught in schools. It employs the same technique as Copperplate and Looped Cursive, with the lettershapes retaining certain characteristics of Print Script and Looped Cursive. (For example, $a$ commences at two o'clock, rather than at one o'clock. See Fig. 5.)

The advantages of using South Australian Modern Cursive are:
- children learn a handwriting style based on their natural movements and scribblings
- the transition from script to cursive occurs without the relearning of basic letter shapes
- linking is a natural development
- children acquire a relaxed technique which helps to develop speed and to maintain legibility
- alternative styles can easily be adopted according to particular needs and individual preference
- the style is produced using instruments readily available.

South Australian Modern Cursive

**Beginners’ Alphabet**

`abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz`

**Cursive Alphabet**

`abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz`

`ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ 1234567890`
Handwriting styles

COPPERPLATE
Traditional handwriting style of the 18th century. Adopted in South Australian government schools. Written with a flexible nib for variation in stroke thickness.

LOOped CURSIVE
A less embellished version of Copperplate gradually developed to follow the print script beginners' style in South Australian primary schools. No longer necessarily written with flexible nib and ink.

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN MODERN CURSIVE
One of many efficient styles developed throughout the world since the 1960s. It uses simple lettershapes formed with traditional handwriting technique in both script and cursive forms. Not far removed from the Looped Cursive and Copperplate styles but written with any handwriting instrument.

'BALL AND STICK' PRINT SCRIPT
Alphabet of simple elements, easily learnt and read by beginners. Adopted in South Australia early this century. Round upright shapes.

LINKED SCRIPT
Introduced in the UK in the 1930s by Marion Richardson and others. Tested in South Australia in the 1950s but not adopted by government schools. It is a cursive style using the same letter shapes and technique as 'Ball and Stick' print script.

ITALIC
Traditional handwriting style of the 16th century. Adopted by some independent schools in South Australia. Written with a chiselled nib.

SIMPLE MODERN HAND
Introduced in Glasgow, Scotland about 1960. Uses simple lettershapes formed with the traditional handwriting technique in both script and cursive forms. Not far removed from the Italic alphabet but written with any handwriting instrument.
Implementation

Implementation must take place at both school and classroom levels in order to ensure that the introduction of South Australian Modern Cursive takes place as smoothly as possible. Decisions made at a school level will assist classroom programming and procedures. Implementation within a school should be a gradual process. A suggested time-line is given on p. 9.

School based implementation
Implementation will involve staff inservice, policy development and liaison with parents.

Staff inservice
The staff will need time to practise and become familiar with the style. Decisions regarding resources, timetabling, modelling, record keeping and evaluation will need to be made before the style is introduced to the children. It is suggested that some time during the term prior to classroom implementation be set aside for this purpose.

An inservice programme using this document as resource material will help staff to come to terms with the reasoning behind the change and the benefits to the children. Staff meeting time should be allocated for practice and discussion. Other inservice options may include:

- staff and/or parent workshops
- observation visits to key schools within the region
- hub group meetings
- regional

School assistants and teachers from local kindergartens could be involved in the inservice programme.

Policy development
A school's handwriting policy provides guidelines for school and classroom procedures. The policy will develop through staff discussion and inservice, and should include statements about:

- the place of handwriting in the language arts programme
- the use of blank and lined books
- guidelines for left handed children
- resource allocations
- induction of new staff
- procedures for children transferring in and out of the school
- assessment, evaluation and reporting methods
- programme monitoring procedures.
When South Australian Modern Cursive is implemented in a school, children from reception to year three levels should commence in the first year, with the remaining year levels adopting the style as these children progress through the school (see Fig. 6).

Children who have established an acceptable handwriting style should maintain their existing style, unless they are experiencing difficulty. In such cases children may be given the option of changing to South Australian Modern Cursive.

For further information regarding the process of policy development, see Planning and programming: R-7 language arts.

**Liaison with parents**

Parents will require information about South Australian Modern Cursive and its development. This information could be provided on a parent night or by means of an information sheet. Some parents may wish to learn the style in order to assist their children. Parent workshops could be a valuable way of achieving this.

**Classroom implementation**

Once inservice has taken place, with particular procedures and guidelines decided upon, teachers can consider their classroom programmes. Classroom implementation may involve:

- introduction of style and technique
- organisational strategies
- timetabling
- classroom layout
- evaluation.

**Introduction of style and technique**

Teachers can determine the sequence in which letters will be introduced. The sequence may be based on a combination of the following points.

- The teacher's observation of what the children can do. If children commence letters at the bottom and move clockwise (see Fig. 7), the teacher may decide to introduce letters that incorporate this movement even though the letters commence with a down stroke (see Fig. 8).
- Related letter movements, such as clockwise, anticlockwise or sloped movements (see p. 12).
- Current programmes in language arts and other curriculum areas. The children might produce labels for artwork or stories.
- Guidelines as stated in the school policy.
- The child's name.

Technique would be introduced in handwriting lessons and emphasised in subsequent art lessons or whenever children are writing. (For suggestions on how to use art to aid handwriting, see Resources, p. 53).
Organisational strategies

Teachers can use whole class, individual and group strategies for teaching handwriting. Whole class situations would be beneficial when giving instruction in:

- letter formations
- correct instrument hold
- linking guides
- layout ideas
- alternative styles

It would be useful to divide the class into small groups when:

- handwriting is being assessed
- instruction is necessary for a particular group of children
- practice is required in various skills.

Teachers may organise groups during a specific handwriting lesson or at various times during the day. Individual assistance can be given whenever children are engaged in writing or when the teacher perceives a particular need.

The strategies used in teaching handwriting will depend on the teacher's observations of the children and their needs.

Timetabling

Regular practice is necessary if children are to develop a relaxed technique and desired style. There are various timetable options open to teachers. They include:

- short daily practices
- two or three half hour sessions per week
- part of the language arts block time allocation.

Teachers should alter their timetable according to the changing needs of the children.

Classroom layout

Classroom organisation will be influenced by the resources which teachers use for instruction. Moveable resources such as a white board or overhead projector permit a flexible layout. Children need to see clearly the way in which letters are formed if they are to reproduce them correctly.

Children who experience difficulty copying from the board can be helped if the teacher fixes a copy of the beginners' or cursive alphabet to their tables. Examples of the style should also be placed around the room for easy reference.

Assessment

Assessment should provide information about what the children can do and give the teacher directions to help children to overcome specific problems. Children need to be informed as to the criteria upon which their handwriting is being assessed and encouraged to look at their own handwriting, using similar criteria. Assessment ideas are discussed in the section beginning on p.31.
The classroom programme

The handwriting programme will involve teachers in:
- establishing aims
- deciding content
- organising timetable and resources
- selecting appropriate teaching strategies
- assessing children's handwriting and progress
- evaluating the programme.

The issues of organisation and teaching strategies have been dealt with in 'Implementation' (p. 7) and 'Classroom Programming Issues', (p. 33). For additional information on classroom programming, refer to Planning and programming: R- 7 language arts.

Aims

The overall aim of the handwriting programme is to guide children to develop a handwriting technique which enables them to produce a legible and fluent personal style. The handwriting programme should provide the following elements.

- Instruction in South Australian Modern Cursive technique and style.
- Practice in developing technique in order to experiment with various handwriting styles.
- Experiences that will enable children to come to an understanding of the value and importance of handwriting as an effective tool for communication.
- Opportunities for children to develop the ability to assess and monitor their handwriting progress.
- Opportunities for children to develop the necessary knowledge, attitudes and abilities that will enable them to produce the style with confidence.

Knowledge

Children will become aware that:

- print conveys a message
- handwriting is a tool used in the writing process
- various handwriting styles can be produced with the same technique
- the purpose and audience for writing influence the style and layout used
- pen lifts have specific functions.
Attitudes  Children will develop:
- a positive attitude towards themselves and their handwriting
- the desire to experiment with various handwriting styles in order to develop a personal style
- a willingness to accept responsibility for their own written material.

Abilities  Children will develop:
- hand, eye coordination
- fine motor control
- correct lettershapes by following the suggested sequence of movement
- consistent size, slope, spacing, proportion and alignment of letters
- appropriate use of pen lifts
- relaxed technique
- legible handwriting, at speed
- strategies to assess their own technique and style.

Content  Early handwriting
Learning the skills of handwriting is associated with early attempts to draw and say something with pictures. Children want to do this. They want to play and to try out shapes and signs which will help them to show what they are thinking or feeling. When teachers show children how to use the tool of handwriting, they should allow time for children to experiment with all the shapes they are discovering for themselves as well as the shapes and forms teachers want them to learn.

In early writing, children experiment with shapes, lines, patterns, stick figures, circles, scribbles and letter shapes. They draw and write as complementary processes. When they draw and write, children explore the page or other writing surfaces. They solve problems of space and dimension. They have to learn the principles of putting visual signs or shapes on paper. These signs and shapes might be drawings or letters and words. Children have to learn to fit them on the page, to put them in order, to make them clear and in the right proportion, and to go from left to right and down the page.

As children solve these problems they play with the marks they are making on paper. They need time to experiment and play with early pictures and scribbles as they develop their fine motor skills and their visual perception of what they want to represent, whether it is a picture of a house, a flower, a tree, a dog or the lettershapes which fit their first invented spellings — HS (house), Flwee (flower).

Experiences that assist early handwriting development
Teachers need to allow for the links between play, drawing, writing and handwriting to be made by children as they solve the problems of written language. These links may be developed through involving children in experiences that help them to
develop an effective handwriting technique and style. Such experiences may include: opportunities to write for different purposes and audiences

- manipulation and exploration of line through drawing, painting and patterning activities
- experimentation with handwriting materials and instruments
- verbalisation of lettershapes whilst practising handwriting (e.g. m -'down, up, around, down, up, around, down')
- use of finger plays, puppetry and dramatic activity as relaxation techniques
- time to practise lettershapes
- opportunities to display their writing.

*Lettershape patterns*

Young children enjoy making scribble patterns. The enjoyment children find in this kind of activity can help them develop their skills in handwriting. Teachers can encourage children to practise patterns based on movement incorporated in lettershapes (see Fig. 9).

Other patterning activities can be used to help remove tension and thus help in the development of a relaxed technique for handwriting. (See Resources for examples of activities.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SIMPLE SHAPES WHICH HELP TO ESTABLISH SIZE</th>
<th>ANTI-CLOCKWISE ROTATIONS</th>
<th>HOOKS</th>
<th>CLOCKWISE ROTATIONS</th>
<th>SHARP ANGLES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>lit</td>
<td>ocadquese</td>
<td>jgyf</td>
<td>nmrhbpf</td>
<td>vwzkz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lit</td>
<td>ocadquese</td>
<td></td>
<td>nmrhbpf</td>
<td>vwk</td>
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<td>235</td>
<td>47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>QOSG</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>RBDP</td>
<td>KLMN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>CU</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>VWEF</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 9.
Development of abilities
Children enter school with varying abilities that assist their handwriting. However, teachers will need to provide activities (during structured play or specific lessons) which help children to develop:
- hand-eye coordination
- motor control
- fine motor control
- knowledge of spatial relationships
- visual discrimination.

See Resources section (p. 44) for activities that may be useful in developing these abilities.

Introduction of lettershapes
Teachers can decide on a sequence for introducing lettershapes to children. Any sequence may be valid in a particular teaching situation, although it is not wise to teach minimally contrasted lettershapes together (see Fig. 10).

The chart on p. 12 shows lettershapes grouped according to related movements. Teaching lettershapes as a related group reinforces specific aspects of technique.

Technique refers to hold of the handwriting instrument, the position of the paper and body, and the actual handwriting movement. Style refers to the manner in which letters (or numerals) are formed and linked together to make words.

Suggested methods for holding the pencil

Avoid teaching these lettershapes together
Figure 10.
Technique

One of the most important decisions affecting the success of a handwriting programme is the extent to which children are taught and encouraged to develop sound techniques.

Hold of handwriting instrument

The writing instrument is held gently so that the index finger can flex slightly. Pressure on the handwriting instrument and consistent tension in the fingers or hand may cause fatigue and cramp preventing fluent handwriting. The instrument rests on the side of the top joint of the middle finger, with the thumb resting on the side of the instrument and the forefinger resting on top. A small space should be visible between the thumb and forefinger. The fingers should not be placed too close to the writing tip because tension will develop. The angle of the instrument to the paper should be about 45 degrees. A steep angle will also lead to greater tension. *Left handers should hold the writing instrument further back from the point so that they can see what is being written.*

Paper and body position

The paper and body position should be comfortable for the writer, so that the writer may write with ease for long periods of time if required. The paper should be placed so that its base is at right angles to the forearm of the writing hand and the body should have comfortably balanced support so that body weight does not rest on the writing arm. Tension in the eyes, neck, wrist, shoulders or back indicates an uncomfortable paper and/or body position which will interfere with the optimum handwriting movement and will cause fatigue in the writer.

Recommended paper positions

The handwriting movement

The handwriting movement is a combined finger, hand and arm movement. The arm should be supported lightly by the forearm and the little finger. This allows the writing hand to move smoothly across the page. Avoid a fixed forearm. The fingers will flex slightly in moving to form the letter shapes. The hand will move smoothly ahead of the point of contact between instrument and paper.

Left-handers should hold the writing instrument so that fingers are at least 3 cm from the end. This allows the writer to see
what is being written without having to bend or hook the wrist. See p. 37 for further information on left-handed writers.

Patterning of lettershapes can aid the development of a relaxed handwriting movement. (Finger, hand and arm movements in the air, using a blackboard or large pieces of paper, enable children to relax and 'warm-up' before a handwriting task.) Experimentation with repetitive scribble and letter shapes can also assist developing handwriters to gain a sense of fluency of movement. When teachers are using letter shape patterns during instruction, it is preferable to simulate a word by writing about three to five shapes and then lift the instrument. It is unrealistic to insist on long lines of continuously linked letters.

As handwriting tasks lengthen, older children should be encouraged to use natural pauses as an opportunity to relax the instrument hold. Tapping the forefinger lightly on the instrument or freely rotating the wrist helps to relax the hand. Such exercises will be particularly valuable when children are writing at a greater speed.

**Body positions**

Correct because:
writing arm can move freely
non-writing hand steadies paper.

Incorrect because:
weight is supported on elbow
feet are positioned awkwardly
eyes can be too close to paper.

Correct because:
body is well supported
writing arm is supported on table.
Style  In order to develop a legible, consistent style it is recommended that children learn the correct stroke sequence for each letter. The charts on the following pages detail each letter shape, describe the cursive development of each letter, and highlight potential problem areas.

The differences between the beginners’ alphabet and cursive formation are apparent in the letters f and x and in the exits of a, d, h, i, k, l, in, n, o, r, t, u, v, and w. (Exit refers to the stroke that forms the beginning of the link to the following letter.)

When cursive formation is being taught, two points should be considered.

- Special attention will be required for letters with exits.
- More attention will be required in the spacing of letters.

The linking aspect of South Australian Modern Cursive may become apparent to some children before they have been given instruction in how to link letters, due to the simplicity of the cursive alphabet shapes.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LETTER</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>POINTS TO NOTE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| A | **THREE MOVEMENTS**  
- two diagonal strokes  
- a horizontal bar at height of lower case o  
Commence at the top | Starting place  
Height of bar |
| a | **ONE MOVEMENT**  
- an oval completed by a downstroke  
Commence at the 2 o'clock position | Not joining the oval causes illegibility  
not a |
| A | **ONE MOVEMENT**  
- an oval completed by a downstroke and a 'kick' | Correct starting point, and development of exit point |
| B | **TWO MOVEMENTS**  
- a downstroke  
- two outward swings | The outward swings are equal  
The outward swings start and end with a horizontal stroke |
| b | **ONE MOVEMENT**  
- a downstroke twice the height of lower case o, completed by an oval | Emphasise the starting point to minimise reversals  
Practise starting and completion points  
not b or b |
| C | **ONE MOVEMENT**  
- a segment of an oval  
Commence at the 2 o'clock position | Remember that the beginning and ending points conform to the slope |
| c | **ONE MOVEMENT**  
- a segment of an oval  
Commence at the 2 o'clock position | Lengthens for exit |

NO CHANGE
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LETTER</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>POINTS TO NOTE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **D**  | TWO MOVEMENTS  
- a downstroke  
- a horizontal line, a segment of an oval, a horizontal line  
Commence at the top | Avoid squashing due to omission of horizontal strokes |
|        | ONE MOVEMENT  
- an oval and a downstroke twice the height of lower case o | Non joining of oval causes illegibility  
Failure to retrace causes illegibility |
|        | As above, with a 'kick' | Emphasise one movement to minimise reversals  
May develop a pen lift before downstroke (it then becomes two movements) |
| **d**  | THREE MOVEMENTS  
- a downstroke and horizontal bar  
- top and central horizontal bars | Continuous movement for first section  
The three bars are of equal length  
The middle bar is at height of lower case o  
Starting at 8 o'clock assists linking later |
|        | ONE MOVEMENT  
- a slanted upstroke completed by a segment of an oval  
Commence at the 8 o'clock position | Failure to join oval segment to initial stroke causes illegibility |
|        | | Lengthens for exit |
| **E**  | THREE MOVEMENTS  
- a downstroke  
- top horizontal bar  
- central horizontal bar. | The two bars are of equal length  
Central bar is at height of lower case o |
|        | TWO MOVEMENTS  
- a segment of an oval completed by a downstroke twice the height of lower case o  
- a horizontal bar at the height of lower case o  
Commence at the 2 o'clock position |  
|        | As above, with lengthened downstroke  
Bar slopes | Bar becomes exit  
Link the cross bar for double f |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LETTER</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>POINTS TO NOTE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| G      | ONE MOVEMENT 
  □ a segment of an oval 
  □ a downstroke | The short downstroke conforms to the slope |
|        | ONE MOVEMENT  
  □ an oval completed by a downstroke and 
  a hook | Letter is twice the size of lower case o |
|        | Commence at the 2 o'clock position | not g or g or g |
|        |                          | Lower case o fits into the hook |
|        |                          | The downstroke must be consistent with the slope |
|        |                          | Do not link from the hook |
| G      |                          | NO CHANGE |

| H      | THREE MOVEMENTS 
  □ two downstrokes 
  □ a central horizontal bar | The two sides are parallel and equal |
|        | ONE MOVEMENT  
  □ a downstroke twice the height of lower case o, completed by an arch | Failure to retrace causes illegibility |
|        | As for the beginners' alphabet with an upward movement at the completion of the arch | Too much retracing results in a rounded style |
|        |                          | not h or h |
|        |                          | One movement to aid fluency |
|        |                          | Confusion with n if downstroke is too short |
|        |                          | Exit is a 'kick' |
| H      |                          | NO CHANGE |

| I      | THREE MOVEMENTS 
  □ a downstroke 
  □ two separate serifs | The addition of serifs avoids confusion with lower case i in the beginners' alphabet |
|        | TWO MOVEMENTS 
  □ a downstroke 
  □ dot directly above the downstroke | The serifs may be omitted as children develop speed |
<p>|        | As for the beginners' alphabet with an upward movement at completion of downstroke | Dot at same height as top of i |
|        | Exit is a 'kick' | |
| i      |                          | NO CHANGE |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LETTER</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>POINTS TO NOTE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| J      | TWO MOVEMENTS  
☐ a downstroke with a hook  
☐ a serif  

![J Diagram](Image)  

The serif may be omitted as children develop speed.  
Finished letter is twice the height of lower case o  
Starting point at commencement of a word needs attention  

**jam** not **Jam**  
Does not link to following letter. |
| K      | TWO MOVEMENTS  
☐ a downstroke  
☐ an arrowhead  

![K Diagram](Image)  

The intersection of the arrowhead and the downstroke is at the height of lower case o  
Note commencement of arrowhead  

not **K** or **k**  
The arrowhead should remain sharp to be distinguishable  
Remember slope  |
| L      | ONE MOVEMENT  
☐ downstroke, horizontal base  

![L Diagram](Image)  

Pen stays on paper until completion of letter  
As above, with a ‘kick’  |
|        | ONE MOVEMENT  
☐ a downstroke twice the height of lower case o  |
<p>|        | As above, with a ‘kick’  | not <strong>c</strong> |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LETTER</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>POINTS TO NOTE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| M      | TWO MOVEMENTS  
  □ a downstroke  
  □ three diagonal strokes | Both sections are equal in size and width  
The two top points are level  
The three base points are level |
| m      | ONE MOVEMENT  
  □ a downstroke completed by two arches  
  \[ \downarrow \rightarrow \text{m} \] | Pen lifts inhibit fluency  
not \[ \uparrow \rightarrow \text{m} \]  
Failure to retrace leads to sprawl and illegibility  
not \[ \text{n} \]  
Emphasise regular size and movement  
not \[ \text{n} \] |
| m      | As above, with a 'kick' |
| N      | TWO MOVEMENTS  
  □ a downstroke  
  □ two diagonal strokes commencing at the top of the downstroke | Outside strokes are equal and parallel |
| n      | ONE MOVEMENT  
  □ a downstroke completed by an arch  
  Top of arch is segment of a circle  
\[ \downarrow \text{n} \] | Sprawl must not be too wide  
not \[ \text{n} \]  
Note where the downstroke should begin  
not \[ \text{h} \] |
| n      | As above, with a 'kick' |
| o      | ONE MOVEMENT  
  □ an oval  
  Commence at the 2 o'clock position | The two o'clock starting position promotes the oval shape and slope |
| o      | ONE MOVEMENT  
  □ an anticlockwise oval  
  Commence at 2 o'clock and continue in an anticlockwise direction to the beginning point  
\[ \rightarrow \text{o} \] | Correct anticlockwise movement can be reinforced through games, stirring etc.  
Exit may develop at speed |
<p>| o      | As above, with a hook |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LETTER</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>POINTS TO NOTE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| P      | TWO MOVEMENTS:  
- a downstroke  
- an outward swing  
  
ONE MOVEMENT:  
- a downstroke twice the height of lower case o, completed by a clockwise oval  
  
NO CHANGE | The outward swing commences and ends with a horizontal stroke  
  
Emphasise starting point to minimise reversals  
One continuous movement to aid fluency |
| q      | TWO MOVEMENTS:  
- an oval  
- a short angled downstroke  
  Commence at 2 o'clock position  
  
ONE MOVEMENT:  
- an oval, a downstroke twice the size of lower case o and a 'kick'  
  Commence at 2 o'clock position  
  
As above | The 2 o'clock starting position promotes the oval shape and slope  
  
Non joining of oval causes illegibility at speed  
not q  
Emphasise one movement to avoid reversed letter |
| R      | TWO MOVEMENTS:  
- a downstroke  
- an outward swing and an angled downstroke  
  
ONE MOVEMENT:  
- a downstroke completed by a rounded arrowhead  
  
As above, with a slight hook | The outward swing commences and ends with a horizontal stroke  
  
not R or R  
Sprawl and no retracing leads to illegibility  
not r or r |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LETTER</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>POINTS TO NOTE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>ONE MOVEMENT&lt;br&gt;☐ commence at 2 o'clock and curve anti-clockwise to 10 o'clock, curve and cross down to 4 o'clock, curve clockwise to complete ending at 8 o'clock position&lt;br&gt; ONE MOVEMENT&lt;br&gt;☐ as above&lt;br&gt; Commence at 2 o'clock&lt;br&gt; Fits inside an oval&lt;br&gt;</td>
<td>Emphasise starting point&lt;br&gt; Letter fits inside an oval</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>NO CHANGE&lt;br&gt;</td>
<td>Emphasise the starting place&lt;br&gt; If you link to an s you don't link from it&lt;br&gt; tease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>TWO MOVEMENTS&lt;br&gt; ☐ a downstroke&lt;br&gt; ☐ a horizontal bar&lt;br&gt;</td>
<td>not t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t</td>
<td>TWO MOVEMENTS&lt;br&gt; ☐ a downstroke 3/4 the height of tall letters&lt;br&gt; ☐ a horizontal bar, height of lower case o&lt;br&gt; As above, with a 'kick'</td>
<td>not t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U</td>
<td>ONE MOVEMENT&lt;br&gt; ☐ an inverted arch&lt;br&gt; Commence with a downstroke&lt;br&gt;</td>
<td>Base is a segment of an oval&lt;br&gt; Sides are parallel and level at the top&lt;br&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u</td>
<td>ONE MOVEMENT&lt;br&gt; ☐ an inverted arch completed by a downstroke&lt;br&gt; As above, with a 'kick'</td>
<td>No retracing leads to breakdown of letter&lt;br&gt; not u</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u</td>
<td>As above, with a 'kick'</td>
<td>not u</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LETTER</td>
<td>DESCRIPTION</td>
<td>POINTS TO NOTE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| ![V](image) | ONE MOVEMENT  
   - two diagonal strokes | The first stroke appears more upright |
| ![V](image) | ONE MOVEMENT  
   - two diagonal strokes | Instrument remains on the paper from commencement to completion of letter |
| ![V](image) | As above, with a 'hook' |  |
| ![W](image) | ONE MOVEMENT  
   - four diagonal strokes commencing with a downstroke | Instrument remains on paper  
   - The two base points where direction change occurs are level  
   - Three top points are level |
| ![W](image) | ONE MOVEMENT  
   - four diagonal strokes | Sprawl may cause illegibility |
| ![W](image) | As above, with a hook | not  |
| ![X](image) | TWO MOVEMENTS  
   - crossed diagonals | The top points are level  
   - The base points are level  
   - Intersection of diagonal occurs at height of lower case o |
| ![X](image) | TWO MOVEMENTS  
   - crossed diagonals, both starting at the top | not  |
<p>| <img src="image" alt="X" /> | As above, with a 'kick' |  |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LETTER</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>POINTS TO NOTE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| y      | TWO MOVEMENTS  
☐ a short diagonal downstroke  
☐ a long diagonal downstroke | The short downstroke meets the midpoint of the long stroke at the height of lower case o |
| y      | ONE MOVEMENT  
☐ an inverted arch and a downstroke with a hook twice the size of lower case o | No retracing may cause illegibility at speed  
Too much retracing reduces fluency  
not y or y  
A lower case o fits into the hook y  
No link from the hook |
| Z      | ONE MOVEMENT  
☐ a horizontal bar, a diagonal downstroke and a horizontal bar | The horizontal bars are of equal length |
| Z      | ONE MOVEMENT  
☐ a horizontal bar, a diagonal downstroke, a horizontal bar | Points should be sharp  
not Z or Z  
Does not link to or from other letters |

NO CHANGE
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NUMERAL</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>POINTS TO NOTE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 0       | ONE MOVEMENT □ an oval  
Commence at the 2 o’clock position | NOTE: All numerals are the height of lower case t |
| 1       | ONE MOVEMENT □ a downstroke |  |
| 2       | ONE MOVEMENT □ an oval segment, a diagonal and a horizontal line  
Commence at the 10 o’clock position | Emphasise correct slope |
| 3       | ONE MOVEMENT □ an oval segment, two diagonal curves, and an oval segment  
Commence at the 10 o’clock position | Emphasise correct slope |
| 4       | TWO MOVEMENTS □ a downstroke and a horizontal bar  
□ a downstroke which bisects the horizontal bar | Emphasise correct slope |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NUMERAL</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>POINTS TO NOTE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 5       | TWO MOVEMENTS  
a downstroke and an oval segment  
a horizontal bar | Emphasise correct starting point to prevent breakdown at speed |
|         | 5 5         | 5 not 5        |
| 6       | ONE MOVEMENT  
a segment of an oval, a curved downstroke and an oval | Direction at start same as for an oval |
|         | ↘6           | ↟              |
| 7       | ONE MOVEMENT  
a horizontal bar and a diagonal downstroke | Horizontal bar is the width of lower case o |
|         | ↗7           | 7              |
| 8       | ONE MOVEMENT  
an oval segment and diagonal curve  
followed by another oval segment and diagonal curve  
Commence at the 2 o'clock position | Emphasise starting point |
|         | ↖8           | 8              |
| q       | ONE MOVEMENT  
an oval and a downstroke  
Commence at the 2 o'clock position | ◁q            |
**Formation of letters**
Starting places, direction of movement and number of strokes per letter are important aspects if linking, fluency and speed are to develop with ease. An oval body shape is recommended with a 2 o'clock starting position for all anticlockwise ovals. (A 1 o'clock starting position produces an almond shape; a 3 o'clock starting position produces a circular shape.)

**Size**
Letter shapes should be in proportion. This means they will maintain relativity in both width and height to each other. The overall size of writing will depend upon the purpose of the writing and the size of the surface being used. Larger letter shapes help in the establishment and maintenance of combined finger/hand/arm movements in handwriting. Small letter shapes, less than 2mm, may be the outcome of a tense penhold and will make the task of identifying incorrect letter shape formation more difficult.

**Slope**
For right-handers, a slight slope to the right is the outcome of a well developed cursive technique. For left-handers, a slight slope to the left is the natural result for children who are using a relaxed finger-hand-arm movement. Slope should be consistent for each individual. However, a 5 to 15 degrees variation in the slope to the left or right of vertical is acceptable between individuals.

**Spacing**
Consistent spacing enhances the legibility and appearance of handwriting. Spacing within words, between words, between lines of writing, and the use of blank space on the page should be highlighted in teaching.

**Alignment**
The visual pattern of words becomes more consistent when hooks, descending letters and ascending letters are accurately positioned in relation to each other.

**Linking**
When encouraged to develop a flowing, cursive handwriting technique, children may naturally begin to link groups of letters. However, teaching will be necessary to avoid the development of awkward links.

The introduction of links should not be a slow and laborious process because lettershapes themselves do not change. There should not be any deliberate drawing of lines between letters. When children have developed a good handwriting technique, whole groups of links may be introduced concurrently, as the letter shapes are already quite familiar.

There are specific rules related to linking.
- There is no link from upper case letters to lower case letters.
- Correct starting place and direction of movement for each letter shape are the bases for the development of links.
- The links are the outcome of a flowing handwriting movement rather than deliberately drawn connections between letters in a word.
Any distortion caused to letter shapes through linking should be discouraged (see Fig. 11).

Small groups of letters should be practised rather than individual letters as this is more likely to simulate the movements required for writing (see Fig. 12).

Letters which link to the following letter should link directly from the end of the letter to the commencement of the next letter.

Certain letters do not link to other letters. These are x, y, z, g and j.

The point at which the exit links to the following letter should be no higher than the exit of o.

If you link to an s you do not link from it.

Do not link to f or z.

When linking is introduced to children, they may need to practise:

- developing the exits before linking to the letters a, d, h, i, k, l, m, n, t, and u
- developing the 'hook' on v, w, r, and o
- linking directly to other letters
- linking two letters at a time, or writing small words containing direct links.

Direct links need to be considered and practised during handwriting instruction.

These links should be only those which occur in the English language since handwriting practice should support the development of spelling proficiency.

**Pen lifts**

Pen lifts occur in handwriting even though the writer may not be aware of them. These natural pauses relax the hand and help avoid illegibility. Individuals develop pen lifts to suit their personal style and technique. They will occur at various intervals within words, but not always before the same letter (see Fig. 13).

Children should be discouraged from making a pen lift during the formation of an individual letter, other than where specifically indicated in the charts on pp. 17 -25. As children increase the speed at which they write, they will develop pen lifts naturally.

Teachers should be aware of the functions of pen lifts and encourage children to use them where necessary. Children struggling to write long words using continuous links should be shown where pen lifts can be incorporated in order to relax the hand. However, teachers who observe children making frequent pen lifts would be wise to look at the technique and stroke sequence used by the children (see Resources p. 55).

**Speed of handwriting**

When words are written at considerable speed, legibility can deteriorate due to incorrect handwriting technique or poorly established letter and link formations. Children can be encouraged to recognise the effects that speed has on their style and be given time to practise handwriting in situations such as brainstorming, where speed is necessary.
Middle and upper primary children could:
- experiment with different writing instruments, surfaces and styles to note the effects of writing with speed
- practise note taking at speed with telephone messages, recorded Interviews, broadcasts, and lecturettes
- take dictation from a listening post
- experiment with speed during continuous writing periods
- experiment with different starting points for certain capitals (see Fig. 14).

Experimentation

Young children may require assistance in the development of style, technique and presentation (margins, titles, dates, mathematical problems, poetic forms). However, as children develop proficiency in handwriting they can be encouraged to experiment with alternative styles and layouts, and various handwriting instruments.

Alternative styles

In years six and seven, children can be introduced to alternative styles of handwriting which use the same technique as South Australian Modern Cursive, such as Italic, Copperplate and Looped Cursive.

If children are given the opportunity to experiment with alternative styles, they may develop a preference for a particular style or certain characteristics of a style, and incorporate them into their personal style. Awareness of alternative styles can be developed if the teacher provides:
- samples of handwriting through the ages which trace the development of letter shapes
- collections of adult handwriting samples
- Italic, Copperplate and Looped Cursive alphabet cards, copy books or worksheets
- collections of the different pens used for handwriting e.g. italic pens, split nib pens, fountain pens and feather quills. (Early handwriting styles have more character when the appropriate materials are used.)

When children experiment with alternative styles they need to look critically at their handwriting, paying particular attention to legibility and the maintenance of an easy, relaxed technique.

Various handwriting instruments

The handwriting instrument influences style and comfort of production. Children can be encouraged to try various writing instruments and to select the instrument preferred for their own handwriting, or the one best suited to the purpose of the writing. (See Resources for examples of handwriting styles using various instruments.).

Signatures

Attention can be given to the development of legible signatures. Children enjoy experimenting with signatures and using them whenever possible. Through various activities the children will develop an understanding of the legal, commercial and social implications of signing their names.
Layout
The collection and examination of different layouts will help children improve their own layout techniques. Children will come to understand that:

- a planned layout can increase both legibility and the attractiveness of the finished product
- different sized paper and instruments require different layout techniques
- the time used to prepare a rough layout is well spent when it enhances the finished product
- the number of words per line influences the appearance of the page
- a line containing too many words tends to tire the eye of the reader
- the use of wide margins emphasises the importance of the writing which they surround.

Evaluation and assessment
If any form of assessment is to be worthwhile, it must provide both the children and the teacher with useful information which will help in the evaluation process and the planning of further learning experiences.

As children are central to the learning process, they should share in the evaluation of their work. They need to understand that the assessment of their handwriting will be based on a variety of criteria. For example, handwriting might be assessed at certain times for its visual appeal, its presentation and style (in a project sheet or a book) and at other times for its legible communication of a simple message (such as a reminder, an address or a telephone number). Children also need to realise that the development of a relaxed, fluent technique is essential and that they need to monitor fatigue and tension themselves.

There are several options available for both children and teachers but three processes are essential.

- Monitoring or gathering information.
- Recording information in a useful way.
- Reflecting and deciding on a plan of action.

Options for teachers
Teachers can gather information regarding children's handwriting in order to determine progress.

Observation, anecdotal records and follow up
Anecdotal records provide valuable information regarding the processes children use and the finished product of handwriting. The following questions may help guide teachers' observations.

- Are the children developing sound handwriting techniques which serve the purposes of writing? (Are the children holding the writing instrument in a relaxed manner, writing with a combined finger-hand-arm movement and using an appropriate paper position?)
- Have the children developed a style appropriate to their
everyday requirements? (Are they producing a legible style and forming lettershapes consistently?)

- Have the children developed an awareness of purpose and audience and the effect that these have on the presentation of their handwriting? (Are they able to produce conventional layouts for addresses and letters, and to use margins and headings correctly? Are they using alternative styles where appropriate? Do they select the appropriate tools and materials?)

- Have the children developed the ability to write legibly at a speed consistent with their requirements?

**Samples of work**

A sample of each child's 'usual' handwriting could be taken regularly and kept in the pupil record folders or a loose-leaf folder. These become valuable resource material for children, parents and teacher throughout the year and also provide evidence of progress made.

**Individual assessment using a checklist**

Teachers may use a checklist (like the one below) to record strengths, weaknesses and follow up activities. Children can also keep an individual checklist, monitoring their own strengths and weaknesses, such as speed, legibility and spacing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>GENERAL LEGIBILITY</th>
<th>SPACING WITHIN WORDS</th>
<th>SPACING BETWEEN WORDS</th>
<th>PROPORTION</th>
<th>ALIGNMENT</th>
<th>SLOPE</th>
<th>USE OF LINES</th>
<th>PRESENTATION LAYOUT</th>
<th>LETTER FORMATION</th>
<th>POINTS FOR PRACTICE</th>
</tr>
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</table>

**Options for children**

Children need to develop the ability to assess their handwriting. Teachers can assist by informing children how teachers assess their own handwriting as well as that of the children. Children need to understand such terms as 'technique', 'legible' and 'fluent' in order to do this effectively.

Options for children include:

- keeping dated and annotated samples of work in a special folder and talking with the teacher about them
- using individual checklists
- discussions where children decide the positive aspect of someone else's handwriting and highlight points for practice
- recording statements for future reference.

All records should provide directions for future activities and learning experiences.
In the following section a series of questions and answers has been provided. The questions represent many of the common concerns which have been expressed by those teachers who have been developing plans and strategies for the teaching of handwriting.

Starting points for a programme

Question: How do I find a starting point for a classroom handwriting programme?

There is no set starting point at any particular year level. The starting point will be influenced by the following factors:

- The teacher's previous experience at that year level.
- The children's needs and abilities. (There will be a wide range within the class.)
- The teacher's view of children's learning.

The handwriting programme should incorporate the following points:

- technique
- formation of lettershape
- development of linkages
- development of speed and legibility
- development of presentation and layout skills
- development of alternative styles
- development of the children's ability to look critically at the product and the technique used.

Teachers of middle and upper primary levels may wish to tackle all of these concurrently. Alternatively, they may choose one or two to become the focus of their teaching.

The teacher's aims serve as a guide to what is appropriate for a particular year level. In addition, short term objectives may be useful in planning and monitoring the programme. For example, the objective might be "That the children will be able to grip the pencil in the correct way by the end of term 1".

Teachers should use a variety of writing experiences, media and materials throughout their programme so that the skill of handwriting is not associated with dull 'drilling' of lettershapes. Displays of good handwriting in the form of charts and children's books can act as a model for what is possible.
Organising the programme and timetable

**Question:** What are the organisational options for teaching handwriting?

The purposes for a handwriting lesson will influence how it is organised.

**Working with the whole class:** This is a useful organisational option when:
- new lettershapes, links or pen-lifts are being explained
- children are discussing, assessing and practising patterns or lettershapes.

Regular daily practice of ten to fifteen minutes can be used for these purposes. Timetabling short sessions helps to avoid excessive repetition of rows of lettershapes. This may be a waste of time for many children in the class when only a few require concentrated instruction.

**Small group work:** It would be useful to organise the class into small groups when:
- the teacher wants to pay particular attention to certain children's technique, or formation of lettershapes
- children are analysing their handwriting
- children are discussing the most appropriate layout for a project.

The use of copy cards, work cards or activity sheets may supplement the teaching of a small group. Group work facilitates the monitoring of the handwriting process as well as the product.

**Learning centres.** These can be used when children wish to practise their technique and experiment with alternative styles. A learning centre may involve the children in:
- production of labels, captions, etc.
- experimentation with instruments and materials
- development of signatures
- project work on the history of handwriting
- recording of proverbs, quotations, jokes, riddles and greetings in other languages
- production of decorative titles and borders for books and assignments
- publication of poems or short pieces of prose
- production of books or class newspapers.

Individual assistance can be given during any of the above options, during a writing conference or whenever children are engaged in writing.

**Framework for a lesson**

**Question:** Is there a framework for a lesson with the whole class?

When an aspect of technique or style requires specific attention, the sequence of *warm up, work out* and *wind down* may be helpful activities for a lesson with the whole class.
Warm up of fingers and handwriting movements consists of relaxation activities, finger plays, action songs or rhymes, and patterns which reinforce handwriting movements. At this time, the teacher can check that children are seated at chairs and tables appropriate to their size.

Work out involves thoughtful practice of the technique and lettershapes. Children can be encouraged to make decisions about the number of repetitions they personally need to make, and to monitor the degree of relaxation in their hand while writing.

Wind down involves the children talking about their handwriting, critically analysing the strengths and weaknesses and suggesting changes to technique. At times a wind down may include a presentation of good quality handwriting to other audiences.

**Observation of children's technique**

**Question:** Why is it important to watch a child write?

By watching a child write, the teacher will be able to recognise problems arising in the child's handwriting technique and be able to assist the child to overcome these problems. The teacher can look at the angle and the hold of the instrument, the paper and body position, the support of the writing arm and the use of the non-writing hand. The technique used is as important as the finished product.

**Question:** How can I watch thirty children at once?

It is unrealistic to try to observe thirty children at once. However, there are some alternatives.

- Break up the large group and set targets for smaller groups of children sitting in different areas of the classroom.
- Enlist other children or adults to watch.
- Set some tasks which require the writer's own decision making and assessment so that you are able to observe the technique and formation used by individual children. The use of some kind of inventory or checklist may be helpful. (See 'Evaluation and assessment', p. 31 for suggestions.)

Develop the habit of observing handwriting technique in whatever contexts children are writing, and endeavour through the course of one week to observe each child's technique at least once, giving attention where necessary.

**Demonstrating handwriting**

**Question:** Is the blackboard the best way to demonstrate letter formation?

Teachers may find the blackboard (or whiteboard) to be the most accessible writing surface in the classroom when it is impractical to model for children individually. Alternatives include an overhead projector, poster or butchers paper. The overhead projector enables the teacher to use different degrees of magnification to demonstrate
detail. It also allows children to display their own handwriting easily to a large group.

Working with finger paint, in a sandtray or on the pavement with chalk, can also capture children's interest in lettershape formation.

Children seated in groups may not easily be able to see the display on a board, screen or chart. Reorganisation of seating arrangements or duplicated cards can assist these children.

**Instruments**

**Question.** What instruments should I provide for the children?

*Beginners:* Pencils with a soft lead (4B, 2B, B), crayons, oil pastels, chalk, paint brushes with fine or thick tips, and a variety of felt tipped pens are all useful for beginners. Paint brushes and felt tipped pens are particularly good because they do not require pressure on the tip and therefore aid the development of a more relaxed handwriting technique. Pencil grips may be useful for some children having problems.

*Experienced handwriters:* Harder tipped instruments such as HB pencils, ballpoint pens, nylon tipped pens and fountain pens with a ball point or nib tip may be used by more experienced handwriters. Children in upper primary years should have some choice regarding the instrument used. Teachers should discuss with children the advantages and disadvantages of various handwriting instruments to help children with their choice. Characteristics such as the length and diameter of the barrel and slipperiness of the writing tip will need to be considered. Pens which are greasy and slip over the page causing loss of control should be avoided.

A nibbed instrument will be useful when exploring the Copperplate and Italic styles of handwriting, and it may be preferred by some older students. Lettering pens, brushes and ruling pens may be useful for lettering or printing.

**Surfaces**

**Question:** What writing surfaces should I provide for children?

A variety of quality and size of writing surfaces should be used. The surface and size will frequently be determined by the task.

*Beginners:* When practising lettershape, letter combinations or linking, children should use small blackboards and chalk or the large classroom blackboard to develop style and technique. Ease of erasure ensures that imperfect models or reversals are not reinforced. Scrap paper or newsprint can also be used for experimentation.

*Experienced handwriters:* When children can confidently produce simple sentences in legible handwriting, lined paper may be introduced. Rulings wider than 8 mm should be used until the children show that they have both the muscular control and the handwriting skill to reduce the size of their writing to fit 8 mm lines. It is important that good quality surfaces and handwriting
instruments be used where possible so that the children can produce handwriting that reflects care and consideration for an audience.

Children who need special consideration

**Question:** How do I provide for the left-handed writer?

Left-handed children will need special attention if they are to develop fluent, relaxed handwriting.

- Seat the left-handed child to the left of a right-handed child so that their elbows do not bump each other.
- Allow the child to use a lower than normal writing surface.
- Teach the child to hold the instrument at least 3 cm from the tip.
- Encourage the child to turn the paper from the vertical position to a slightly clockwise one (see diagram on p. 14) and place it left of the body midline.
- Use a left-handed teacher in the school or a parent who uses an appropriate technique to assist a left-hander.
- Do not change the slope if a left-hander has a natural backhand slope, provided it is not too exaggerated or inconsistent.
- Seat the child so that hand and arm do not exclude light. Ideally, light should come from behind and over the right shoulder.

**Question:** What approach should I take with a child who appears to have no preferred hand?

Carefully observe the child's manipulative skills and eye-hand coordination in both writing and non-writing contexts. Some children will use either hand with facility for different tasks. In cases of uncertainty 'preference tests' may be used to establish hand dominance. When such tests are administered, ensure that the child is placed in a position so that either hand may be used easily. In each test record the preferred hand.

Tests to establish hand preference include:

- cutting out a circle with each hand (the best result is recorded)
- throwing an object to the teacher
- receiving an object from the teacher
- reaching for something high
- erasing the blackboard
- stringing beads
- putting marbles into a jar, one at a time.

If preference cannot be established with the above tests, the frequency of letter reversals with each hand may be used as another indicator. Teachers will need to decide, through discussion with the parents and the child, which hand is to be encouraged. Consistency of lettershapes, spacing, proportion, alignment, frequency of letter and word reversals should be taken into account when the decision is made.

From observation you may also conclude that a right-handed child may have left eye dominance, or that a left-handed child has right eye dominance. In such cases it may sometimes be necessary
to seek additional advice if the child's progress is being hindered.

**Question:** How do I cope with a child who has difficulty copying lettershapes and words from the blackboard?

The following ideas may help a child who is experiencing difficulty copying from the board.

- Stand beside the child while you are demonstrating and describing the lettershape in the book or on the paper.
- Make sure that the child is sitting facing the board.
- Encourage the child to rehearse the lettershapes or words in the air or on the table, using a finger.
- Affix a personal alphabet to the desk, or hang clear, simple charts near the eye level of the child.
- Guide the child's hand to form the letters.

**Question:** How can I assist an upper primary child who is using an established but illegible handwriting style?

Closely observe the handwriting technique (the process) and style (the product). Use anecdotal records, sampling or checklists, and talk with the child to find out why the handwriting is difficult to read or causing frustration to the writer.

Develop the child's awareness of the problem through discussion and examination of handwriting samples. Refer to:

- legibility and general appearance
- consistency of style
- letter formation
- awkward techniques.

Determine whether the child shares your concern and is prepared to make a commitment to relearn technique and/or style.

Provide short and varied tasks to ensure that both technique and style become familiar to the child. A range of exercises from repetitive patterning through to publication of labels, riddles, and poems can be provided. Encouragement of good attempts is important at this stage to help the child to see the benefit of practice.

Negotiate a 'contract' to improve the child's handwriting. Such a contract should give details of:

- specific objectives
- an agreed time after which improvement might reasonably be expected
- provision for reporting to the child and parents with samples of work.

The contract should make provision for:

- a variety of activities that involve writing for a purpose, such as daily silent sustained writing in a journal or writing stories to be read by younger children
- experimentation with a variety of handwriting instruments
- a handwriting learning centre or writing electives (e.g. book making).

There should be a clear understanding that the contract will expire when the child's interest is lost or when the teacher feels that sufficient progress has been made.
Special note: Upper primary children should maintain their existing style. If their handwriting is not consistent, fluent and legible, they may be introduced to South Australian Modern Cursive and given the option to adopt the style if they wish.

Question: How do I provide for children from countries where an alphabet other than the Roman alphabet is used?

South Australian Modern Cursive is appropriate for children who are literate in languages which do not use the Roman alphabet because it involves the learning of only one style. These children will need time to carry out the following activities.

- Practise holding and manipulating the handwriting instrument in order to develop a relaxed finger, hand and arm movement.
- Practise diagonal downstrokes and oval movements (see Fig. 15).
- Practise patterns that will assist children with linking and alignment (see Fig. 16). Ask children to make four or five links and then to start a new pattern, since handwriting is not a continuous series of links across a page.

When children are able to make these patterns in a relaxed and fluent manner they can be shown how to combine them to form upper and lower case letters (see Fig. 17).

It may be necessary for some children to develop their fine motor control in order to manipulate the handwriting instrument. For further ideas, see Resources, p. 43.

If children are experiencing difficulty, advice could be sought from the Languages and Multicultural Centre. (This answer has been adapted from Assisting non-English speakers: handwriting, Languages and Multicultural Centre, Education Department of S.A. 1981.)

Writing on lines

Question: When should I introduce writing on lines?

Blank surfaces are best for beginners. By writing on blank paper, the children learn about the proportions within letters, (e.g. the stroke of a d is twice the height of its oval portion) and the proportions between letters. It is important that children learn about these proportions before their movements are restricted within lines. When children have this knowledge of the proportions of lettershapes and a sense of alignment (e.g. the tail of the g hangs below an a), then the following sequence for introducing writing on lines could be adopted.
Writing on lines

1. Write between lines which are far apart.
   Children follow the path from left to right, staying within the lines.

2. Write on a line.
   Children concentrate on keeping the main body of the handwriting resting on the line.

3. Write between two lines, about a ruler width apart.
   Children concentrate on the proportions of letters.
4. Write between four equally spaced lines, with ascenders touching the top line and descenders touching the bottom line.

Children learn the proportion of ascenders and descenders in relation to the main body of the handwriting.

5. Write on lines 11 mm apart.

Children write on every other line. The height of the main body of the handwriting is half the distance between the lines.

6. Reduce size of handwriting (main body and ascenders) to 2/3 the distance between the lines. Lines remain 11 mm apart.

Children continue to write on every other line.

7. Maintain the same size of handwriting. Lines remain 11 mm apart.

Children write on every line.

8. Write on lines 8 mm apart.

Children write on every line. The height of the handwriting remains at 2/3 the distance between the lines.
Resources

This section of the document provides suggestions for handwriting activities and examples of resource materials. It is envisaged that teachers will use these suggestions as a guide to what they may provide in their classroom programmes.

The Resources section has been divided into two parts for easy reference. The first part concentrates on ideas and activities that are useful for children who have not yet developed their handwriting skills, while the second part is devoted to ideas for children on the way to mastering the skill of handwriting.

A sample of South Australian Modern Cursive is provided on p. 62. This page may be photocopied and reproduced for a child's individual reference sheet, or may be fixed to desks for easy reference. Teachers should use only that section of the page which will be useful for the particular needs of the children in the classroom.

Part One-Early Handwriting Development
This section includes examples of activity cards and patterning exercises which are useful for beginners. There are ideas for classroom activities and a chart which highlights complementary activities for early handwriting development. Details of a follow-up activity for the children or instructions for how to use the card could be given on the back of each activity card.

Sample patterns will help children to develop movements that will be used to form the letters in South Australian Modern Cursive. Patterns which are not based on specific letter shapes are useful as an aid to relaxation, but have not been included here.

These pages represent only a small portion of the possible activities and resources that can be used to complement classroom handwriting programmes.
## Complementary activities for early handwriting development

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<td>Hand-eye coordination</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Cutting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pattern making</td>
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<td>Sequence—between, before, after, next, oval, slope, straight, up, down, left, right, top, bottom</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Hand-eye coordination</td>
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<td>Sorting</td>
<td>Perceptual discrimination</td>
<td>Big, little, as large as, the same as, oval</td>
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<td>Matching</td>
<td>Perceptual discrimination</td>
<td>One-to-one relationships</td>
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<td>objects</td>
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<td>letters</td>
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<tr>
<td>Threading</td>
<td>Fine motor control</td>
<td>In, on, next, before, after, size</td>
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<td>Hand-eye coordination</td>
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<td>ACTIVITY</td>
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<td>Finding differences</td>
<td>Perceptual discrimination</td>
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<td>[ ] letters</td>
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<td>Sewing, lacing, buttoning, buckling,</td>
<td>Fine motor control</td>
<td>Sequence—in, out, top, bottom,</td>
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<tr>
<td>and tying laces</td>
<td>Hand-eye coordination</td>
<td>through, next, after</td>
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**Early handwriting patterns**

```
/   /  
m   uu
o   vv
/   /
ol  <<<
```
Practice patterns for slope

Practice patterns for specific letters

Pattern for r m n h p b

Pattern for u y

Pattern for a d g q

Pattern for v w x

Pattern for l h k b t i q p

Pattern for f j g
Activity cards for beginners’ alphabet

g x c

g x c

z h y

z h y

c e s

cot can nettle set sail sits
coil ice tell eel sill sister
m g d z
mumps dig gold fizzy zoo
mint my dog edge buzz zip
Activity cards for capitals

A
Ann Adam
Aa
Find some names starting with 'A'. Write them down neatly.

B
Big Ben
Bb
Write a story about a clown called 'Bobo'. Let some of your classmates read it.

F
Fred Frog
Ff
Write the day and the month that begin with a capital 'F'.

J
Jack Jill
Jj
Write the nursery rhyme 'Jack and Jill' and draw a picture.

Y
Yongola
Yy
Make a list of some streets near your school. Do any begin with 'Y'?

Q
Queen
Qq
Write the names of the members of the Royal Family.
Ideas for Handwriting Activities

Many activities can be used to supplement children's early attempts with handwriting.

- Hand-clapping games with a partner. These develop coordination and rhythm.
- Musical doodles. Children create patterns and doodles to music, songs and rhymes (see Fig. 18).
- Finger drumming to marching tunes.
- Decoration of books, cards and displays. The children work within a given border.
- Patterns which require children to reproduce a particular design.
Activity cards designed by the children for their own use.

Notes to parents, written by the children. (This will give them a purpose for producing good handwriting.)

Talking to the hand. This helps children to internalise the movements required to produce letters consistently (see Fig. 19).

Part Two: Later Handwriting Development

The following pages provide examples of activity cards which will assist children with linking guides and correct letter formation. Various lists and ideas are included for developing handwriting skills through art and for helping children to overcome handwriting problems. Activities for learning centres which deal with certain aspects of handwriting are also given.

It may be necessary for some children to practise specific letter formations. Children can be encouraged to compose and record sentences using alliteration.

Children will find it useful to practise common links which occur in words. The word list given on p. 50 could be made into activity cards for children to trace or copy.

Handwriting movements

**Clockwise movements**

h m n r p b PRBDJ

**Anti-clockwise movements**

c o a g qu y e COQGU

**Horizontal strokes**

t z TFHL Z

**Oblique strokes**

v w x z k AMVWZYK

**Ascenders and Descenders**

t l b h k p q g j y f d
Cursive handwriting

Q qu Quentin Quinn is quite quick. Quickly Quentin!

K k Kay has a khaki kayak.
Kay's kayak is quick.

P p Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers.

Word list

babe ajar aqua taxes
iced likely first stayed
after palms stunt haze
Roger none avid Lassie
thick Pope awe effort
Practice patterns for specific links

Links to: i u y l

Links from: o r v w

Links to: o a c d g q

Links from: b p s

Links from: f

r e o

roads tomatoes bolt
toasted then toes
toasted felt growl
Perth moon
hare need offering
friend differ Otto
enter ice tempo
parrot Easter
Activities based on the history of handwriting

Activities for children:

- Trace the history of handwriting from Babylonian and Egyptian times. Write in cuneiform. Produce scrolls, cave paintings, tablets.
- Research oriental handwriting, learning some of the symbols, and reproducing them. Display them, using a world map.
- Make a chart of Roman numerals with Arabic equivalents.
- Collect samples of illuminated manuscripts and other styles of historically important writing in books and documents.
- Make a scrap book about handwriting. There are many examples in magazines and newspapers. Work with a friend. The finished book could be presented to the class or school library.

When children are investigating the history of handwriting, they may wish to experiment with various styles. Clear reference material should be available for the children. Examples, such as the one below, can be found in books on history, art, lettering and advertising.

XVIIIth Century copperplate

```
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
mnopqrstuvwxyz
```

Commercial styles of lettering

Activities for children:

- Collect different types of lettering from magazines and newspapers.
- Select a style of lettering you like, and practise it. Use lined paper vertically to help you with the spacing (see Fig. 20).
- Use some of your new styles for the class noticeboard, title pages or birthday cards of your own.
- Make a collection of advertising slogans from television commercials.
- Make illustrated table cards for teachers and children in years 2 or 3. Illustrate with pictures from magazines.
- Make class birthday chart and illustrate with signs of the zodiac.

Vertical lines  Figure 20.
Developing handwriting skills through art

Some aims in undertaking these exercises are:

- enjoyment of the task
- satisfaction with the finished product
- increasingly thoughtful and skilful placement of lines or marks on a page
- increasing awareness of the techniques involved in producing smooth flowing lines, the effect of different instruments and line thicknesses, and of the demands of presentation for an audience.

Children will benefit from opportunities to work with a variety of writing instruments (brushes, pencils, pens, textas etc.) and other materials. The teacher should encourage discussion about such aspects as balance of design, effects of contrast in line thickness and colour (i.e. stimulating awareness of presentation and audience). Attention should be focused on smooth flowing movements (i.e. relaxed hand movements). Most of all, children should be allowed to enjoy the creativity of this approach to developing handwriting skills.

Exercise 1

- Start at the top left-hand corner.
- Use a simple flowing line.
- Follow the line, changing the pen thickness for variety.
- Begin on the original path, then wander away, and finally arrive back on the original path.
- Follow the new path, varying the thickness of the line.
  (Left to right flow, downward progression of lines, control of spacing and movement are emphasised.)
Exercise 2
Fill the page with lots of anticlockwise spirals. They can be of different sizes.

Exercise 3
Start at centre top.
- Draw a line from top to bottom with bumps wandering to the left.
- Follow the path on the right side of the line, mirroring the bumps.
- Follow the lines on either side, keeping a regular distance between the lines.
- Vary the distance between lines, keeping it constant for each movement from top to bottom.

(Top to bottom flow, control of horizontal spacing, smooth uninterrupted movement, recognition of mirroring to right and left of central point are emphasised.)
Assisting children to overcome handwriting difficulties

- Check grip/hold - a pencil grip may help.
- Allow children to experiment with different pens until a suitable one is found.
- Discuss styles - a change of style and therefore technique may be needed.
- Use daily practice sessions of ten minutes.
- Check seating position, paper slant, etc.
- If the child is left-handed, use ideas in the booklet obtainable from the Left Handed Products Co, 81 George Street, The Rocks, Sydney, NSW (Telephone 02 27 3674).
- Allow children to work with a pencil and an eraser for easy alteration.
- Try a variety of lined paper in order to find a size that suits the children.
- Experiment with underlays and guide sheets for size and slope.
- Check letter formation.
- Introduce pen lifts instead of retracing to avoid illegibility. Pen lifts can occur before the letters based on oval shapes (see Fig. 21), the letters with ascenders (see Fig. 22) and the letters s, x and z. Double letter combinations can involve a pen lift (see Fig. 23). Letters may appear to be linked when a pen lift has occurred (see Fig. 24).

Encouraging handwriting through the writing programme

The following list suggests possible activities in which children may be involved during the course of the classroom writing programme. These activities can assist the development of handwriting abilities, and they may be included in a learning centre.

- Addressing envelopes, setting out official letters, preparing formal invitations
- Completing forms:
  - applications for club membership, driver's licence
  - banking
  - enrolment for school or electoral roll
  - excursion consent
  - income tax (first page)
  - medical claim
  - questionnaires
  - orders
  - telegrams
- Publishing:
  - verse and prose
  - acronyms and abbreviations
  - colloquialisms
  - idioms
  - proverbs
Dear Sandy,
Thank you for inviting me to your birthday party. I will be very happy to come.
Your friend,
Kym.
Menu

Soup of the day

Roast pork and apple sauce with vegetables

Fruit salad and cream

You are invited to a birthday party on Saturday 6 June at Sandy’s house 3 p.m.

R.S.V.P. 19 Old St, Newtown.
South Australian Modern Cursive can be written with

*felt-tip pen*

*pen cil*

*nylon tip pen*

*ball point pen*

*fountain pen*

*fountain pen with italic nib*

*flexible nib in dip pen*

*or even charcoal*
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The sample of South Australian Modern Cursive provided on the following page may be photocopied and used for reference.