



Helping your child with handwriting using the 'sky, grass, soil' handwriting guide



This visual guide helps to explain where parts of letters should go. It has dotted lines which enable children to write ascending (tall letters such as 'h' and 't') and descending (letters going below the line, such as 'p' and 'g') letters correctly.

Getting ready: before you start any handwriting activity, check positioning at the table. This ensures that your child will be stable and ready to write.

- **Feet** should be flat on the floor or on appropriate support (e.g. footstool).
- **Pelvis** should be the back of the seat, back straight.
- **Thighs** parallel to floor and **knees** at a 90 degree angle.
- **Forearms** resting on desk with elbows level with the desktop at 90 degrees.
- The work surface is high enough to stabilize the shoulders (a slanted work surface can sometimes help, e.g. writing slope or wide A4 lever arch folder; the writing paper should be secured to the slope, e.g. with blu-tac).
- Paper stabilised with non-dominant hand.
- Neck and shoulders relaxed.
- Body facing desk squarely so non-dominant arm can support body weight.
- Paper tilted to the left about 45 degrees anti-clockwise (if right-handed) or to the right (if left handed).

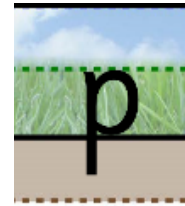
SITTING POSITION



Paper position for right-handed children

Learn the names of the sections: the blue line symbolizes sky, green for grass, and brown for the soil. Give verbal cues and model good formation, for example, for the letter 'p':

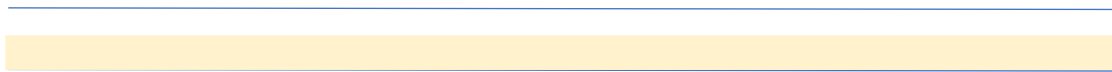
- start at the top of the grass;
- go down through the soil to the line;
- back up to the grass;
- arch and then tuck in.



All letters start from the top, apart from d and e.

Give lots of guided practice: start off with the wider sky, grass and soil lines template, gradually reducing the size to regular line guides. Once letters are accurately formed, the guides can also be used for practising dictated words, such as high frequency words. *Be prepared to reteach and remind!*

If a 'sky, grass, soil' template is not available you could highlight a 'grass' area on lined paper:



Practice 'letter families' together: these letters are formed in a similar way:

- 'ladder letters' (l, i, t, u, j, y)
- 'one armed robots' (r, b, n, h, m, k*, p)
- 'caterpillar letters' (c, o, a, d, g, q, f, e, s)
- 'zig zag monsters' (z, v, w, x, k)



*The letter 'k' can be either a one armed robot or zig zag letter, depending on school writing style.

Further handwriting guidance: Northumberland HNS Care Trust

<http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/documents/861/Advice%20for%20first%20school.pdf>