Buckinghamshire Healthcare
NHS Trust

Secondary Resource Pack

Visit our website:
http://www.buckshealthcare.nhs.uk/childrenandyoungpeoplesOT

Contents

Fine Motor Skills 5

Hand Warm–Ups 6

Hand Warm–Ups Continued 7

Hand Strength 7

Finger Dexterity 8

Gross Motor Skills 9

Body awareness and coordination 10

Bat and Ball Coordination 11

Balance 12

Core Strength 13

Motor Planning 14

Bilateral Integration 15

Visual Perception – Making Sense of What You See 16

Visual Discrimination 17

Visual Closure 18

Visual Spatial Relationships 19

Visual Memory and Visual Sequential Memory 20

Visual Form Constancy 21

Visual Figure Ground 22

Some Useful Tips and Strategies 23

Handwriting 24

Older Children and Handwriting 24

The Purpose of Writing 25
Correct Formation 27
Letter Groups 29
Ascenders, Descenders and Letter Size 32
Spacing 33

Organisational Skills 35

Preparing for the School Day 36
Homework 37
Remembering Information 37
Staying Organised 38
Following Instructions 38

Self Esteem 39

What is Self Esteem? 40
Healthy versus Unhealthy Self Esteem 41
How Do We Build Healthy Self Esteem? 42
Extra tips for parents 46

Sensory Processing 47

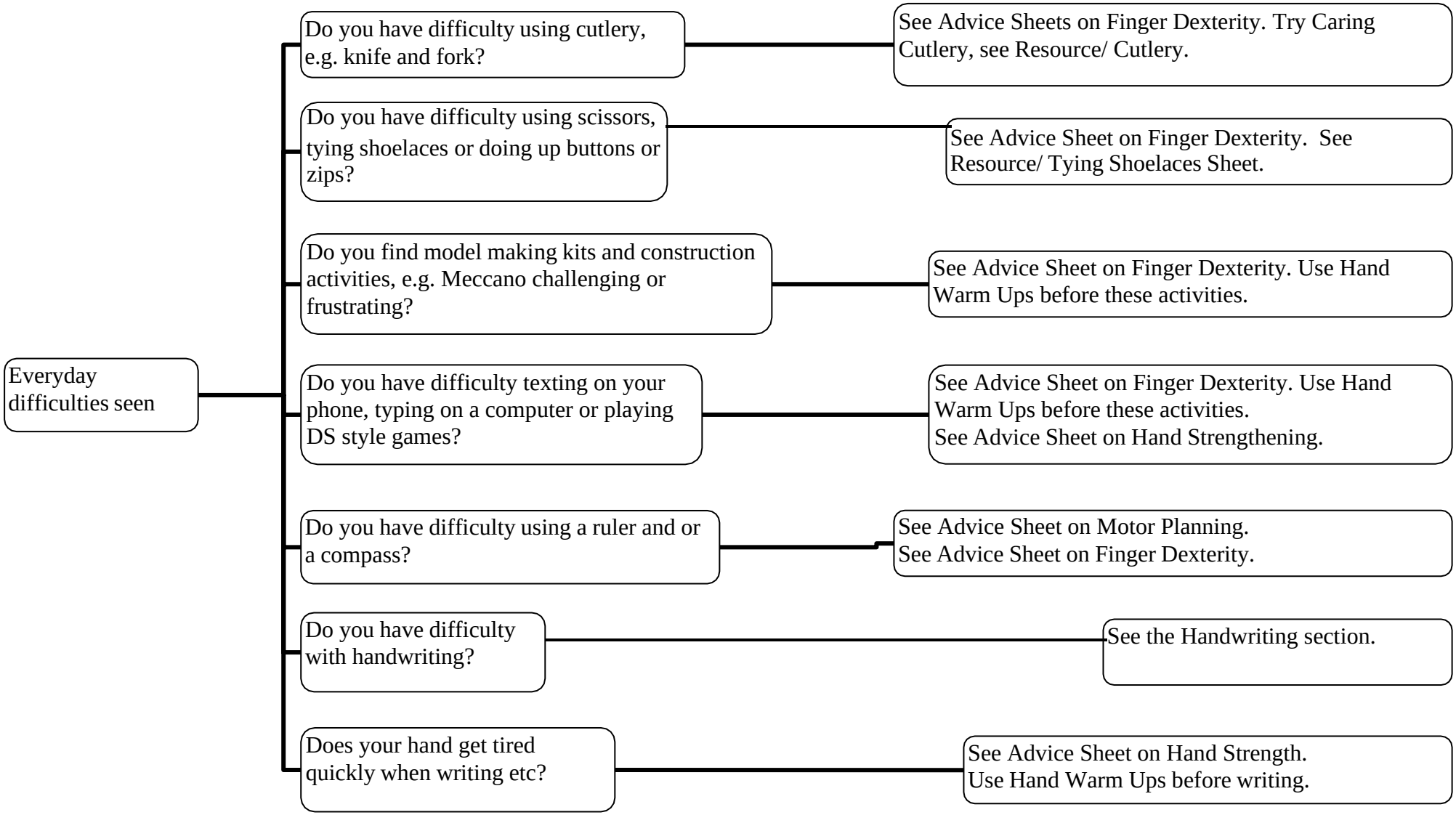
What is Sensory Processing 47
Sensory Strategies 48
Tactile Strategies 48
Seeking Touch 48
Sensitive to Touch 49
Auditory Strategies 50
Under-sensitivity to Sound 50

Sensitive to Sound 51
Calming Strategies 53
Heavy Work 55
Organising and Alerting Strategies 56
Deep Pressure Touch 56
Movement 56
Other Activities 57

Resources 58

Posture Pack 58
Shoe Laces 59
Cutlery 60
Touch Typing Programs 61
Pens and Pencils 62
Specialist Papers 63
Rulers 63
Scissors 63
Useful Websites 64

Fine Motor Skills



Hand Warm–Ups

The following activities are a great way to warm up the hands and fingers before handwriting or other fine motor tasks (cutting, practical technology lessons) and can be done at your desk.

- Theraputty exercises:
- Theraputty (available from www.homecraft-rolyan.com) is a great way to strengthen hands – start with red, moving onto green, as strength improves.
- Roll the putty into a ball, then squash it flat like a pancake with the palm of your hand (or use both hands together).
- Place fingertips and thumb on the outer edge of the flattened putty and bring into the centre, making a peak.
- Roll the putty into a fat sausage and pinch along the whole length of the sausage with the thumb and index finger. Reshape the sausage and repeat with the thumb and other individual fingers.

Hand Warm–Ups Continued

- Chair push ups – place hands on either edge of your chair and push your bottom off the seat with your arms straight. Do 5-10 of these.

- Pencil push-ups: place your pencil on the paper and, keeping your wrist and hand still, lift the pencil off the paper and back down again using just your thumb and 2 fingers. Do this 10 times.

- Pencil roll-ups: Lay a pencil on your flat palm at your fingertips and try and roll it towards your wrist and back again using just your fingertips, keeping your wrist still. Do this 10 times.

- Help to hang the washing out at home with clothes pegs (open the pegs using your thumb and index finger only).

- Use ice tongs or tweezers to pick up small objects.

- Pop bubble wrap between your thumb and index finger.

Hand Strength

- Squeeze hand grips (available from sports shops and Argos) – increase the resistance as strength improves.

- Squeeze a stress ball.

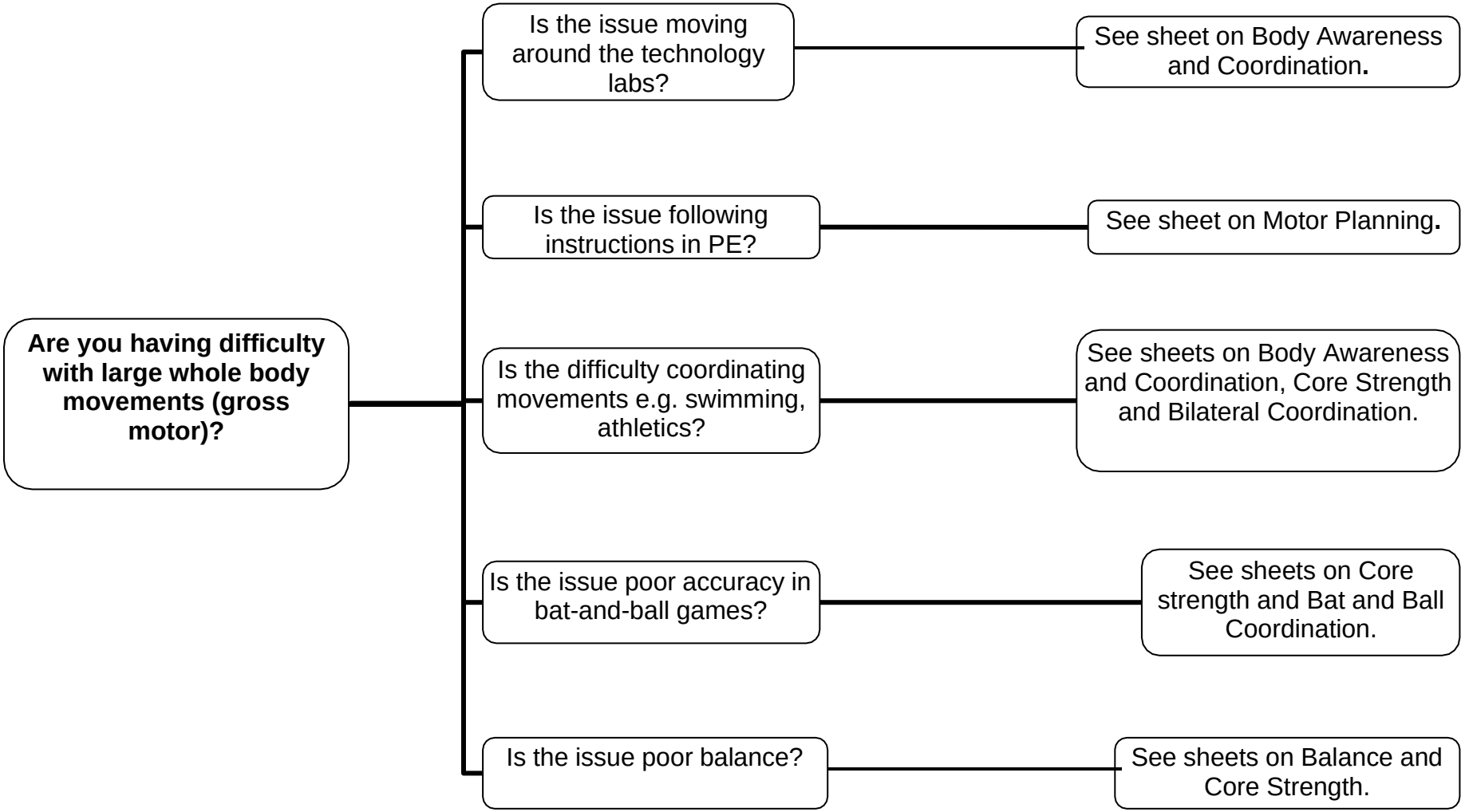
- Wring out flannels and sponges in the shower/bath.

Fine Motor Skills

Finger Dexterity

- Pegboard games and puzzles with pegs – e.g. Chinese Chequers, Travel Chess, Travel Monopoly. Small pegboards with multi coloured pegs are also good for making up patterns and copying designs. Try and use only the tip of index finger and tip of thumb to pick up the pieces.
- Play pick up sticks or Jenga.
- Construction games – Meccano, modelling kits, start with something simple and move on to more complex.
- Origami and making paper aeroplanes.
- Chaining paper clips together.
- Jewellery making and Hama Beads.
- Subbuteo / table top football games – flick the ball with your fingers.
- Applying make-up and nail varnish or elaborate hairstyling.
- Almost anything that works fingers and hands!

Gross Motor Skills



Gross Motor Skills

Body awareness and coordination

- Participate in activities that offer resistance to muscles i.e. you know your muscles have worked. E.g. Trampoline, swimming, weight training, climbing, gardening, bike riding, skateboarding

- Star- jumps. Begin with legs only if too difficult and progress to arms and legs. Try 10 in the morning and 10 in the evening. Build up from there. Think about the quality of your movements rather than speed.

- Wii or “Connect” dance routines. Try choreographing dance moves to your favourite song and perfect them (many examples of dance routines are available on YouTube). Try including some movements on all fours and lifting arms and legs (test your coordination).

- Massage/rub your arms and legs with different textures in shower e.g. loofah, exfoliating mitt, flannel, sponge, body brush. This will awaken your tactile/touch system which will help with body awareness.

- Body Roll – lie straight with arms above your head and roll over trying to move your body as one. Try on living room floor and on grassy slope.

- Aerobics and Yoga – classes or DVDs.

Gross Motor Skills

Bat and Ball Coordination

- If struggling with bat-ball games you need to consolidate catching and throwing skills. Practise throwing at targets using different “balls” e.g. rolled up socks, beanbag, beach ball, water-filled balloon, football, tennis ball.

- Practise throwing and catching with a competent partner or alone against a wall. Start with a larger ball if a tennis ball is too difficult.

- You could also try bouncing a ball between yourself and partner. Increase the distance between you and your partner and decrease the size of the ball as it gets easier.

- With a partner sit on floor with legs wide apart and bat a beach ball away from you with a rolled up newspaper. If you don’t have a partner bat against a wall. Progress to small balls and a greater distance apart.

- Suspend a ball or rolled up pair of socks from a door frame (using a drawing pin and old tights) and practise batting it away using rolled up newspaper.

- Practise bat and ball games with a competent partner. Reduce the distance between you and your partner to make it easier, see if it is easier, kneeling on the floor or standing up.

- If ball skills are a difficulty you will need extra practise and repetition to reinforce movement patterns to enhance your motor memory for these activities.

Gross Motor Skills

Balance

- Being able to balance relies on the strength of your tummy, pelvis and back muscles (core stability) so you need to work on these as well.
- Practise standing on one leg – time yourself and try and beat your score. It is made easier if you fix your eyes on a spot level with your eyes.
- Practise hopping to increase your dynamic (on the move) balance skills.
- Turn gym bench upside down and balance along the narrow ridge. To make it easier stabilise yourself by placing your hand on a partner's shoulder. To make it harder try balancing on each foot for a few seconds.
- Try sitting on a gym ball when you are watching TV, using the computer or other activities where you sit still.
- Yoga.
- Martial Arts.

Gross Motor Skills

Core Strength

It may be that you have low muscle tone so you need to work your muscles harder to gain the core stability that will enhance your gross motor skills.

- Modified curl ups – Lie on your back, bend your knees, hold onto your mid thighs and curl head and then chest off the ground. Don't hold your breath. You may only be able to curl your head up first and progress to chest. You have to be sure your tummy muscles are engaged.
- Crab walk/crab football
- Tug of war/ tray pushing with a partner – kneel opposite partner with hands flat against tray held at shoulder level, keeping elbows straight and hands on tray. Push partner.
- Wall pushups – Stand facing a wall with your feet about shoulder width apart. Place your palms on the wall with your arms straight out at shoulder level. Bend your arms to lower and raise your body towards the wall.
- Pull ups on monkey bars in park, doorframes, pull up bars.
- Lying on your tummy over a gym ball (65cm diameter), walk out onto your hands until ball is at pelvis level, keeping your back straight. In this position, read a book, play a game or watch TV. This improves your back and neck muscles.
- Playing Twister with friends.

Gross Motor Skills

Motor Planning

- Obstacle Courses - Under, over, slide, climb, through, between, forward, back.
- Ball Against the Wall – add turns, claps, bounces etc.
- Juggling - Start with one, work towards 2. Try 3 beanbags between two people.
- Matchstick Pyramid - Lay two sticks parallel. Put another two sticks across these at right angles. Keep building up this square, alternating layers or vertical and horizontal sticks. See how many layers you can do, before it crashes down.
- Miming - Think of an animal, object or actions. Child uses body movements to imitate this. Adult or friend guesses. Change roles.
- Mirror Mirror – an Adult models different positions. The child must try to be the adult's reflection. Begin very simply e.g. place right hand on right hip. Do without speaking!
- Long rope - Place rope on the floor in a pattern in which rope crosses itself often. Have child walk along rope, jumping over each crossing point.

Gross Motor Skills

Bilateral Integration

- Forward Rolls - Place both hands on the ground, roll over with feet together. Try holding object (eg. ball) between feet all the way.
- Carpet Feet or Dots - Cut out right and left feet shapes or dots from carpet. Place feet shapes in different patterns. Have the child step L-R or jump two feet together.
- Swimming - Breastroke, Overarm or Backstroke
- Sack Race - Use sack jumping also as part of an obstacle course.
- Jumping In and Out of Hoops - Lay hoops in a pattern on the ground or hold them off the ground. Alternatively use rope or a long piece of elastic tied around two chairs. Vary activity by placing balloon between child's knees.
- Trampoline Games
- Skipping with Rope - Keep both feet together.
- Soldier Jumps - Jump, putting the same arm and leg forward, then jump and change to the opposite arm and leg
- Bats and Racquets - Ball games using bats or racquets which involves holding with two hands.
- Construction games and crafts
- Wall climbing
- Throwing and catching a ball against a wall: face on/ side on/ under their leg

Visual Perception – Making Sense of What You See

Everyday difficulties seen

- Do you have difficulty telling the difference between similar letters i.e. p and d?
  Do you find it difficult to notice similarities and differences between objects and words?
  → Visual Discrimination
- Do you find it difficult to tell what a shape is if only shown a part of it or if it is partially hidden?
  Do you find it hard to recognise a word if you cannot see all of the letters?
  → Visual Closure
- Do you have difficulty spacing your letters and words in writing?
  Do you have difficulty staying on the line?
  Do you have difficulty copying patterns or shapes?
  Do you find it hard to aim a ball at a target in games?
  Do you often trip over things because you have not noticed them?
  → Visual Spatial Relationship
- Do you have to think hard about what a letter looks like before writing it?
  Does it take you a long time to copy from the board at school?
  Do you struggle to remember maths equations, book quotes, lines in a play?
  → Visual Memory and Sequential Memory
- Do you sometimes put your clothes on the wrong way around or put your shoes on the wrong feet?
  Do you find it hard to recognise a word, shape or object if it is turned upside down or on its side?
  → Form Constancy
- Do you find it hard to find things in your desk, pencil case, school bag or drawers at home?
  Do you easily lose your place on the page when reading?
  Do you find it hard to read off the board at school if there is lots of writing?
  → Visual Figure Ground

Visual Perception – Making Sense of What You See

Visual Discrimination

The ability to match exact characteristics of two shapes when one of the shapes is among similar shapes - Noticing similarities and differences between shapes, objects and symbols.

- Spot the difference – noticing the differences between pictures.
- Memory - remembering pictures, are they the same?
- During car journeys, see how many street signs and road signs you can remember.
- Guess Who? Board game – a fun game where you have to discriminate carefully between features.
- Playing Dominoes.
- Using a magazine: Pick out particular features on a page and try and get your partner to find them. It could be handbags on a page.
- Using a magazine: look for a particular letter and see if you can find all of them.

Visual Perception – Making Sense of What You See

Visual Closure

The ability to visualise a complete whole when given incomplete information or a partial picture.

- Word games i.e. Hangman - needing to fill in the letters missing to make the word.
- Finishing off incomplete pictures.
- Transferring a picture from one grid to another.
- Symmetry/mirror pictures – copying the other half of the picture so that it is the same as the first half.
- ‘Quiz Kids’ magazine created by Puzzler for 7-12 year olds, is available to purchase from WHSmith’s.
- Half ‘n Half Design and Colour Book from Ann Arbor (www.annarbor.co.uk).

Visual Spatial Relationships

Visual spatial Relations provides us with information about the position of two or more objects in relation to ourselves and each other.

- Rush Hour (also called Traffic Jam) available from places like www.amazon.co.uk / www.happypuzzle.co.uk. The student has to place the cars as indicated on the card and then move the cars to allow the red car to get out.
- Lego or Meccano
- Copy a design – present the student with a photograph or drawing of a construction and see if he/she can copy it.
- Shape by shape game, available from www.happypuzzle.co.uk. Turn the cards over to see the ‘hints/clues’ on the back. Place the shapes (or squares) according to the pictures.
- Making and following an obstacle course is a great gross motor activity, which combines awareness of the body position in space and the relationship between the body and other objects - involve climbing, crawling through hoops and equipment etc.

Visual Perception – Making Sense of What You See

Visual Memory and Visual Sequential Memory

This is the ability to remember for immediate recall, all the characteristics of a given shape and being able to find this from an array of similar shapes. Sequential Memory is the ability to recall visual images, e.g. objects, shapes, symbols and movements in a sequence. This is a necessary skill for remembering and recalling visual information and spelling.

- Pairs (Sequential Memory game with cards or letters) - You will need a set of memory cards:
- Divide the sets so the student has one card and you have one card. Ask the student to place his/her cards face up on another table or on the carpet. Select 3 of your cards and place them face up – the student has to remember the cards as well as the sequence. When he/she is ready, turn your cards face down and allow him/her to go and find the cards and place them in the correct order. Make the game more difficult by adding another picture thus using 4 this time. Try not to use the same pictures over and over, vary the pictures and the sequences to get maximum benefit of this game.
- Variation
- Ask the student to write down the words / pictures for the sequence he/she had to remember
- Use cards with letters, numbers of abstract shapes.
- If the student is confident try words.
- Junior Scrabble.
- Obstacle races - having to remember sequence of directions and tasks.
- Big Brain Academy game – Happy Puzzle company sell a board game version of this (ages 8 to adult) or you can get this as a computer game for the Nintendo DS or Wii (if you have one). There is a series of games called Memorise which will specifically work on visual and auditory memory. Look at a detailed picture or table of objects (10+) for 1 minute then see if you can list everything on that picture/all the objects.

Visual Perception – Making Sense of What You See

Visual Form Constancy

The ability to see a form and being able to find that form, even though it may be smaller, larger, rotated, reversed and/or hidden. It is an important skill, as it represents the child's ability to interpret the environment consistently and accurately, regardless of changes in presentation of the information (such as print size, font, cursive, upper case letters and such like).

- Pictureka! Game. This is a board game where players have to find specific items from a board before the other players. A demo version is available online from www.hasbro.com/games/kid-games/pictureka/.
- Card Games - Using standard and picture cards, even if they are the wrong way round. Play card games of any sort. You can also play the card game UNO. This is available to purchase from most toy shops.
- Reading words in different texts, fonts.
- Sorting and categorising objects and pictures, depending on size, date etc.

Visual Perception – Making Sense of What You See

Visual Figure Ground

This is the ability to perceive a form visually and to find this form hidden in a busy visual background.

- Jigsaws of increasing complexity.
- Word searches.
- ‘1001 things to spot’ by Usborne or similar hidden object activity books.
- Circling the same word / letter in a paragraph (try newspaper text).
- Finding a number in the phone book or Yellow Pages.
- ‘Letter Tracking’ ‘Word Tracking’ or ‘Sentence Tracking” from places like www.annarbor.co.uk.
- Helping to set the table and finding the correct sized cutlery in the drawer/putting it away in the correct compartments.
- “Where’s Wally?” books, these may be challenging to start so begin with the activities listed above.
- Pictureka games.

Visual Perception – Making Sense of What You See

Some Useful Tips and Strategies

- You should try to sit near the board and teacher, in an area with few visual distractions. When the class has to copy from the board, it may be helpful for you to use a photocopied sheet to save having to copy e.g. worksheets with fill in answers.
- Talk to your teachers about using visual cues on the paper e.g. highlight border at top and left of page with green marker. Highlight bottom and right border with red to emphasise where lines stop. Try using alternate forms of paper e.g. colourful lines, raised or textured lines.
- Use a clear/Perspex ruler as a line tracker when writing.
- Use graph paper as a visual cue of size and position and orientation in drawing activities.
- Use a contrasting background, if focusing on particular details.
- Draw a thicker or darker line to help with cutting or writing/seeing material on the line.
- Use all of your senses i.e. sight, hearing, touch, movement to reinforce what is learnt.
- Ask teachers to give verbal cues and demonstration to back up visual instructions.
- Your parents should discuss the possibility of you being allowed extra time to complete written work with your teachers.
- Use highlighter pens or stickers to differentiate sections of text that need to be read or copied.
- Visual cue cards can often be useful.
- The following internet sites may provide some useful worksheets – www.edhelper.com, www.eyecanlearn.com, www.teachingexpertise.com

Older Children and Handwriting

Many older children feel that handwriting is something they are not good at. It is a difficult skill to acquire and negative experiences at a young age can affect a child's confidence in their ability to improve for many years. Add to this the difficulty of changing a style of writing that they have used for years and it can be seen that a genuine desire to make changes is crucial to a child's success at improving handwriting. Serious motivation and commitment is needed if significant change is to be made.

Although computers are increasingly important in our daily lives we still need to write lists, messages, birthday cards etc meaning that handwriting remains a necessary life skill. Good touch typing skills are very useful, taught alongside handwriting, not instead of it.

The Purpose of Writing

Children need to understand why they are asked to write. That sounds a very simple statement but it is surprising how many children look blank when asked why writing is important and why they need to write.

Writing serves a number of purposes but it is essentially a means of communication. When you are not present your written words provide evidence of your opinions and your knowledge of a subject and information. It is important that children see handwriting used, in the classroom and at home, and see that it is valued. It is very easy to print labels and notices on computers knowing that the presentation will be tidy and consistent but children need to see evidence that handwriting has a purpose in daily life.

In the classroom make sure that some handwritten notices are always in use. When possible use children's own writing to label items to demonstrate that this is a useful and necessary skill.

At home let children see that you write lists, telephone messages, birthday cards and addresses on envelopes. Encourage children to write for themselves – birthday wish lists, shopping lists, lists of what to take on a trip or what is needed for school on different days of the week.

Within school one of the main purposes of writing is to demonstrate to teachers that information has been understood and lessons absorbed. In order to concentrate on the content of the work a child must have the mechanics of handwriting deeply embedded in the brain. As they move through the school system the demands on children to produce greater quantities of quality writing increase. This means that it is important to lay the foundations of good, fluent handwriting early so that it becomes a skill like eating and cleaning teeth that hardly needs to be thought about consciously. Making the mechanics of handwriting automatic allows a child to concentrate on content.

The flowchart below will help you and your child, pinpoint the particular areas of handwriting that are causing problems and indicate where to find information that can help.

If you have difficulties with handwriting answer all the questions and work on the activities suggested. Take care not to overload with too many interventions at one time.

- Is the issue posture? → See information on good sitting posture in the Resource Section and Core Strength in Gross Motor Section
- Is the issue pencil grip? → Try a range of specialist grips and pens. See list in the Resource Section
- Is the issue formation of letters? → Work on letter groups as detailed in Letter Formation Sheet, Visual Memory and Sequential Memory in Visual Perception Section.
- Is the issue inconsistent sizing of letters or relative position of tall, small and hanging letters? → Work on lined paper as detailed on Ascender, Descender and Letter Size Sheet
- Is the issue around writing on the line? → Try paper with thicker, blacker lines. Try paper with raised lines. See Resource Sheet for suppliers.
- Is the issue poor spacing of letters or words? → Use a finger or a pencil as a prompt for spaces between words. Try to maintain a cursive script to space letters within words.
- Is the issue speed and fluidity? → Consider the ‘Speed Up!’ programme. Details in Resource Section.
- Is the issue tiredness and fatigue? → Consider Posture Pack and/or Touch Typing. Details in Resource Section. Also Core Strength, Hand Strength and Finger Dexterity in Fine Motor Section.

Handwriting

Correct Formation

The correct formation of letters is one of the most important things to get right. In order to develop a fluent cursive script letters must begin and end in the correct places. It is difficult to learn joins if, for instance, you finish the letter 'e' at the left end of the horizontal bar and your teacher is demonstrating a smooth transition from the base line up to the next letter.

When teaching children to write it is important to watch how they produce their letters and not just check the finished shape. A letter shape becomes fixed as an incorrect formation can be difficult and even distressing for a child to correct. Some children will arrive at school having already learnt some unfortunate habits often in the letters of their name. Gently teaching correct formation of one or two wrongly formed letters as part of groups of related letters is a fairly painless way to sort this out.

Many children who have difficulty with handwriting find the prospect of sorting out the problems daunting and are reluctant to commit to trying because the whole issue has become enormous in their minds. Make sure that the child understands that there are a fixed number of letters and that they can be ticked off a list as they are achieved.

One visual way of demonstrating that this is something that can be defined and measured is to have two pots or jars and some plastic letters. Place one each of the letters of the alphabet in one pot and as correct formations become secure transfer those to the second pot. The child can then see progress as more and more letters disappear from the 'to learn' pot to the 'learnt' pot. Paper or card letters can be used but the plastic ones provide a greater visual measure.

Using plastic letters as a way of clearly demonstrating how much work is to be done is also helpful when breaking the alphabet down into groups of letters to work on together. Seeing four or five small, manageable groups to separate out, work on and move on from helps children build confidence and believe that this is something they can achieve and succeed at.

It is easy for a child to feel overwhelmed by the difficulties and decide it is impossible to solve the problem or make any improvements. Tackling problems in clear, defined sections helps keep the child focussed on one issue at a time. Encouraging the child to set realistic goals helps develop confidence. He can then go on to build on each achievement and move forward towards the next challenge.

Handwriting

Letter Groups

Working on related groups of letters links the shapes together for a child. If a child knows that ‘d’ and ‘q’ have the same anti-clockwise circle as a root but that the vertical stick is positioned differently he has the confidence to start the letters and the information to know the subtle differences between them.

To some extent the order the letter groups is introduced in does not matter as long as the children are able to consolidate one group before the introduction of the next.

The groups are:

Anti-Clockwise Circles

Tall Straight Letters

Short, Straight Letters

Short or Hanging, Continuing Letters

The Exceptions

Personal Style

Older children will be developing their own individual style and the most important thing is for it to be legible. Speed and fluency are also important but only if the writing can be read. If you study adults’ writing you will see that many people write with a mixture of printed and cursive script and older children will be developing their own personal style. This may include one or two unconventional formations and as long as it doesn’t slow the writing down or make it difficult to read this is acceptable.

Handwriting

Group 1 Anti-Clockwise Circles a, c, d, g, o, q

These letters should all begin in the same place – about 10 past 2 on a clock face, and move in an anti-clockwise direction with the appropriate completion of the letter as required.

Closing the circle (except for ‘c’) is important as an open ’d’ for instance, can be mistaken for ‘cl’.

Group 2 Tall Straight Letters b, h, k, l, t

This is a relatively straightforward group of letters, each starting with a simple vertical stroke. Work on the initial stroke of these letters using the style the child is familiar with, i.e. some schools begin from the top and go straight down, others use a lead in stroke from the base line or from mid way up the letter. The key is to be consistent within the letter group that all of these letters begin in the same way and, like the anti-clockwise circles, are completed differently.

Using the same method as above, teach these letters, starting at the top and coming down and finishing off.

Group 3 Short, Straight Letters **i, m, n, r**

These letters begin with a short, straight vertical and like the tall letters the method for beginning the letter will be dictated by the writing style the child is familiar with.

Group 4 Short or Hanging, Continuing Letters **j, p, u, v, w, y**

These letters begin in a similar way to the short, straight letters but continue smoothly into the next part of the stroke at the base. There are fewer similarities between these letters which means that they need to be introduced carefully with plenty of explanations to highlight the similarities and differences. Again use the letter style the child is familiar with when forming letters like ‘v’ and ‘w’.

Group 5 The Exceptions e, f, s, x, z

The last group consists of letters that don't fit into a pattern. Children will often have learnt these letters as they were needed and may have been mis-forming them for many years.

e The letter 'e' can be linked to the anti-clockwise circle letters of group one, stressing the differences. This letter starts with a straight line across the middle from left to right before flowing into an anti-clockwise circle like the letter 'c'.

f Care must be taken with the letter 'f' to teach it in the style used by the child's school. There are several variations around the length of the tail, whether it is straight or looped and the position of the cross stroke. Work out a method with the child that will flow naturally into the joins of a cursive script.

s A high frequency letter that can be tackled after the anti-clockwise circles are secure. This letter begins with an anti-clockwise stroke then changes direction as it flows to the base line. Most children can relate the changing direction to a snake slithering along, reinforcing the shape and the sound with the letter name.

x A letter where it is important to know the school rules. Some scripts do not join this letter at all, others join only the lead in stroke or the exit stroke whilst still others join it at both so ask the school for clear instructions. The letter itself is fairly simple as long as the child has grasped the concept of diagonal lines. Check this first as some children really struggle with this.

z Again this letter appears straightforward but only if the child is confident with diagonal lines. Verbal prompts are helpful with all these letters to give a rhythm to the strokes and an anchor to hold onto.

Handwriting

Ascenders, Descenders and Letter Size
(Relative Letter Size)

Letters: **a c e i m n o r s u v w x z** are mid-zone letters

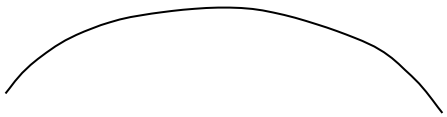
Letters: **b d f h k l t** are tall (ascenders)

Letters: **g j p q y (z)** are descenders, having a tail!

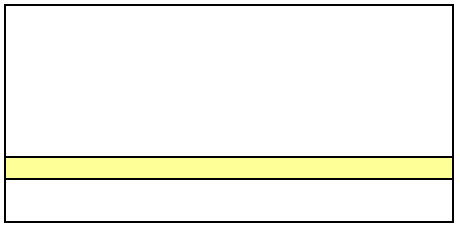
Practise forming shapes or letters sitting on a line

straight line _____

Try a curved line - to reinforce this principle.



To reinforce the placing of the different height letters try taping a strip of masking tape along a table and ask the child to place plastic or card letters correctly in relation to the tape. The width of the tape needs to match the height of the mid-zone letters.

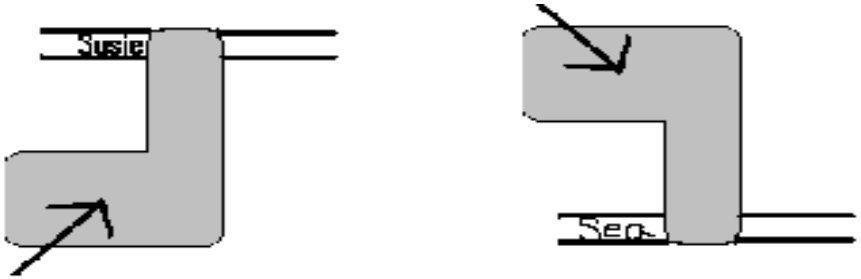


Try maintaining a cursive (joined up) script for each word – space will come where the word stops.

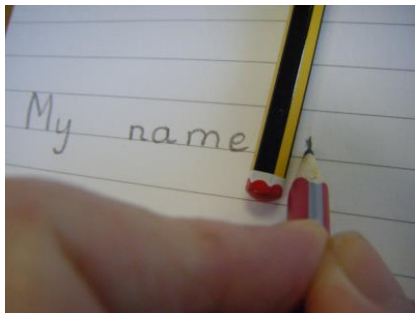
Handwriting

Spacing

Space between words – Encourage a right handed child to finger space between words; use maths paper and remind them to leave a ‘cube/box’ between words; or place a yellow stamp or sticker (small dot) between words. Encourage the child to place a dash after each word and two dashes after each sentence. The action of stopping between words to carry out an activity if repeated regularly will lay down a memory to ‘break’ between words.
Space between words - They could also make a ‘finger card’ in an inverted ‘L’ shape, to hold whilst stabilising the page and writing.



Hold this part with the non-writing hand. This stabilises the finger spacer and the writing page at the same time. Can also be used upside down, as you get to the bottom of the writing page.



Left Handed Writers - Some of the above advice works well for left handed writers but
they should not be asked to use a finger to mark space between words as this means
they are writing across their right hand. A spare pencil, laid on the page from above the writing can be an effective method

Handwriting

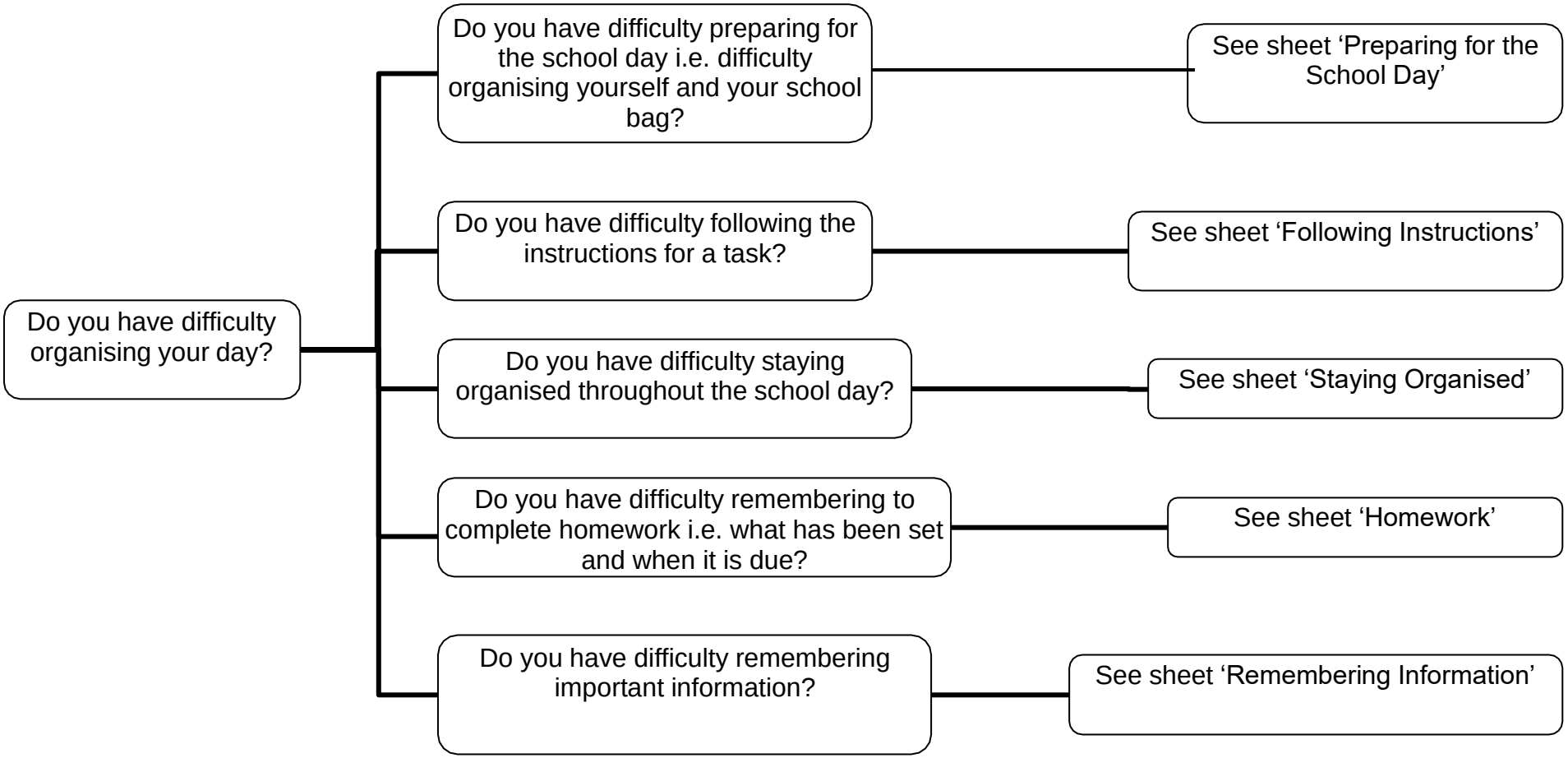
Good Posture

A good sitting posture is important, especially when working for long periods of time.

Remember:

- Feet flat on the floor.
- Hips level with or slightly higher than knees.
- Forearms resting flat on the table.
- When using a computer eyes should be level with the top of the screen.

Organisational Skills



Organisational Skills

Preparing for the School Day

- Establish a routine of emptying and re-packing your school bag when you get in from school.
- Use a timetable and checklist for what books and equipment are required for each subject the next day.
- On your timetable, write all equipment required for the subject underneath.
- Consider colour coding or using pictures on your timetable to correspond with a ‘colour’ or picture for each different subject.
- Have an organised storage system at home i.e. filing trays/draws/box files and colour code to correspond with the ‘colour’ of each subject.
- Consider the type of school bag you have i.e. size and number of pockets, to allow different subjects to be kept in different pockets which can be labelled.
- Attach small copy of timetable to zipper of school bag as a reminder in the day.
- Double check contents of bag and cross reference with timetable.
- Laminate timetables and lists you use regularly so that you can tick things off and then re-use the list.
- Lay our all items i.e. school clothes/P.E. kit/school bag/lunch box in one place ready for the next morning.

Organisational Skills

Homework

- Use a wall calendar at home to record important dates and events.
- Put regular homework and after school clubs on your weekly timetable.
- Use a homework diary/folder/box file.
- Find one or two friends that you can phone or text to check homework details.
- Consider attending a homework club or having a homework ‘buddy’.
- Use colour coding for different subjects.
- Set reminders/alerts on mobile phone/net book and/or laptop.

Remembering Information

- Use a wall calendar or phone calendar to record important dates or events.
- Set reminders/alarms on phone/laptop or netbook.
- Make lists of things you need to do and ‘check’ them off as you complete them.
- Consider using a checklist ‘app’ on your phone.
- Add reminders to timetable.
- Be prepared to ask – use parents, sympathetic members of staff at school and friends to confirm details.
- Check off each step of the task as it is completed.

Organisational Skills

Staying Organised

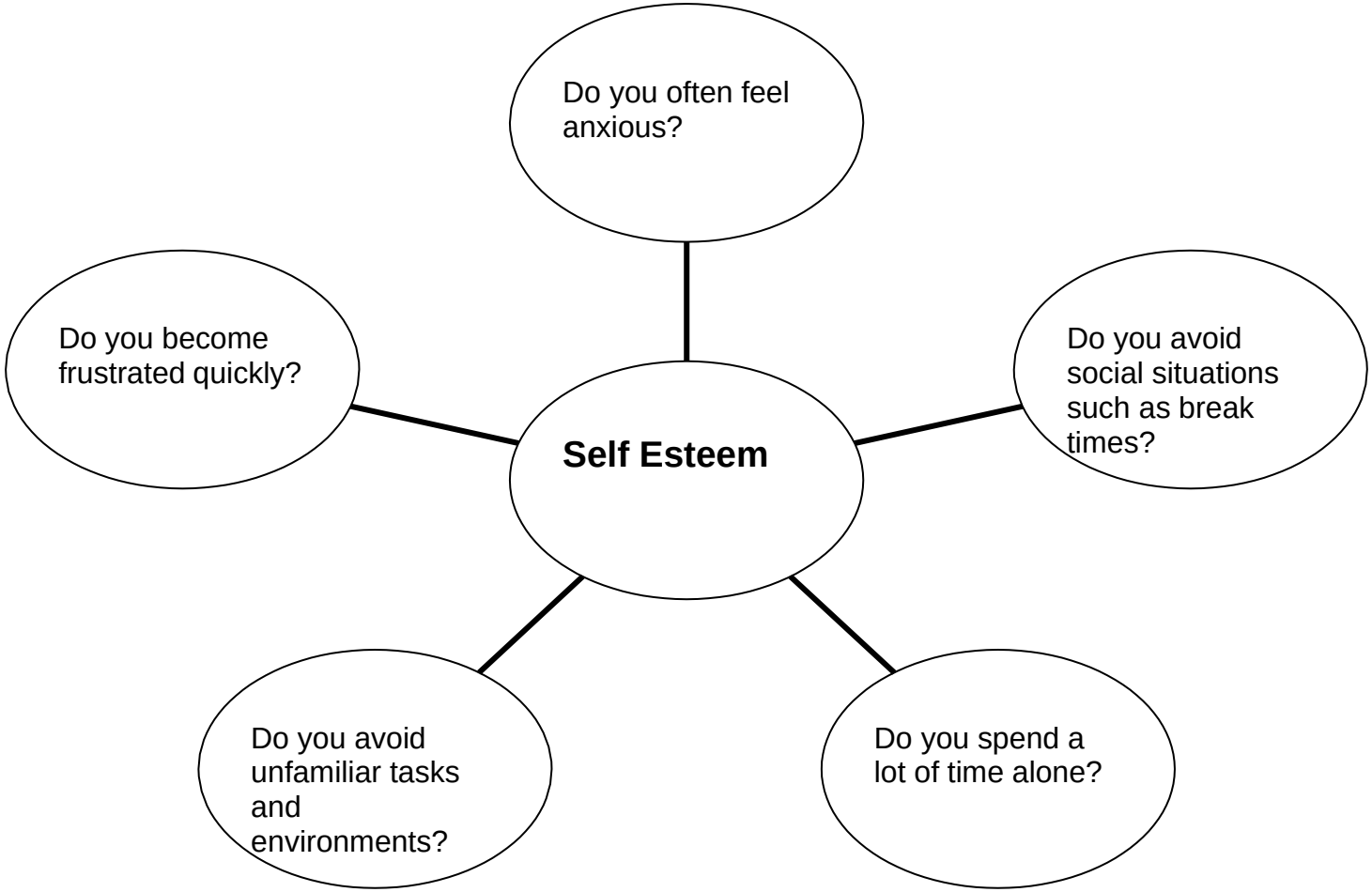
- Consider using a locker or having a designated space to store equipment until needed i.e. musical equipment/P.E. Kit or books.
- Label everything – colour code things if possible, use highlighter pens to link loose sheets by colour to their subject.
- Try to put the date on all your work.
- Try and be tidy; return all items to the correct place after use or if not to the correct place at least to one place.
- Use technology to help – put your timetable on your laptop and your phone and any other device that will take it. Set up alarms to remind you of deadlines. Find an app to prompt you about regular homework routines and deadlines or set reminders on your mobile.
- Have a copy of your timetable fixed to your back pack/pencil case/anything you always carry. Make sure it includes extras like after school commitments.

Keep a small notepad to write yourself notes – or text yourself.

Following Instructions

- Read the instruction out loud twice to ensure that you have understood it. Or whisper it quietly to yourself, verbalising things can help.
- Leave yourself a message on your mobile of instructions.
- Have a written copy of the instructions in front of you, highlight directions with a marker pen.

Self Esteem


Do you often feel anxious?
Do you become frustrated quickly?
Self Esteem
Do you avoid social situations such as break times?
Do you avoid unfamiliar tasks and environments?
Do you spend a lot of time alone?

What is Self Esteem?

Self esteem is how you regard yourself and how you feel about yourself.

Self esteem is about:

- Feeling OK about who I am and about myself.
- A feeling of confidence and not needing to compare myself to others around me.
- Handling rejection without feeling rejected.
- Feeling I have a place in the world where I belong.
- Trusting my own judgement, treating mistakes as learning experiences.
- Facing failure without feeling like a failure.
- Accepting responsibility for my actions and reactions.
- Setting and expecting to achieve personal goals, facing the future with good expectations.

Healthy versus Unhealthy Self Esteem

What does someone with a healthy self esteem look like?

- They have the confidence to attempt tasks which are perceived to be difficult
- They are more able to discount the value of areas where they are less confident
- They tend to set themselves realistic targets which are attainable

What does someone with an Unhealthy Self Esteem look like?

- They lack confidence in their ability to be successful
- They will often try and avoid situations which may be humiliating
- They are more likely to pick up on negative comments
- They are more likely to use negative self talk
- They are more likely to reject or ignore positive comments

Self Esteem

How Do We Build Healthy Self Esteem?

Outlined below are some strategies that will help you to build healthy self esteem:

- Practice basic self care such as getting enough sleep, eating a healthy diet, getting regular exercise and practicing good hygiene
- Forgive yourself when you don't do all that you hoped. Self nurturing can be difficult at first if you are not use to doing it. Don't be critical of yourself if you don't get it just right!
- Plan fun and relaxing activities for yourself. You could go to the cinema, go for a walk, have a bath, paint your nails or whatever you enjoy doing. List below your enjoyable activities:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Self Esteem

How Do We Build Healthy Self Esteem cont.

- List the enjoyable things that you can do.

-
-
-

- Reward yourself for your achievements. A reward is something that is special to you that you would cherish and not normally do.

  My rewards are:

-
-
-

- Remind yourself of your strengths and achievements. One way to remind yourself is to make a list of things you like about yourself or to keep a file of your certificates and accomplishments.

  My strengths are:

-
-

- I have achieved:

-
-
-

- Think of somebody you admire and make a list of all the qualities this person has:

-
-
-
-
-
-
-

- Write the letters of your name horizontally down a piece of plain A4 paper. Colour in each letter of your name and be as creative as you would like to be. Next to each letter of your name, write a positive quality about yourself e.g.

C aring
H appy
L oving
Outgoing
E nergetic

- Draw or write a fairy tale in which you are the hero / heroine.
- Draw a favoured activity or toy and say why you like it.
- Make a personal scrapbook of all the good things that happen.
- Finish the sentence activities: I am looking forward to… / One thing I like about you is… / A good thing about me is… / I feel really happy when… / I like it when you…
- Design a ‘Coat of Arms’ and include in the design illustrations of activities you are good at.
- Write something for a class newspaper (so that each person can see their name, work or achievements in print).
- Draw or write about a special day when lots of wishes came true.
- Imagine a special or happy place. Draw, write or talk about this place.
- Write an autobiography.
- Draw 5 people that really matter to you and describe why they are important.
- Make up some positive statement cards (each card has a positive description on it such as fun, friendly, sporty etc. Choose 3 cards to stick beside each person’s name in your group.
- Make up a special chest of personal treasures with valued photos, objects, descriptions of events etc.
- Make up a personal album of successes.
- Prepare a ‘wanted’ poster and list all the reasons why a pupil would be wanted by others.

Self Esteem

Extra tips for parents

- Give your child positive feedback, making sure it is specific. Tell them exactly what you like about their behaviour and why.
- Teach your child to use positive thoughts and statements e.g. “It looks difficult, but I will try…” rather than “I can’t”.
- Various websites indicate that it takes at least 20 positive statements to counteract one negative statement.
- Help your child recognise and acknowledge when they do something well even if it was only part of the task.
- Give honest positive feedback even if it is “you really tried hard there… that was good enough.”
- Acknowledge your child for an accomplishment by saying: “I knew you could do it.” This reinforces your confidence in your child’s ability.
- Be consistent with your discipline. Your child needs to know what to expect from you.
- Condemn the action, not the child, e.g. “It is naughty when you swear”. Avoid humiliating your child.
- Practise the rule to punish in private. Develop a quiet, discreet signal between you and your child to indicate when their behaviour at a public event is inappropriate. Such a signal preserves your child’s dignity.
- Stay calm during times your child is being punished. It may be helpful following a behaviour infraction to remove your child from the situation and from you until everyone cools off. You can then deal with the situation more rationally at a later time.

Sensory Processing

What is Sensory Processing

- Sensory experiences include touch, movement, body position, vision, smell, taste, sound and the pull of gravity.
- The process of responding to, organising and interpreting this information is called sensory processing.
- Sensory processing difficulties can arise when a person’s response to one or more of the senses affects their day to day functioning. This can present as being over sensitive to stimulus or under sensitive (not registering) that stimulus.

Sensory Strategies

Tactile Strategies

Seeking Touch:

- The child who seeks tactile input by continually touching objects or people requires more opportunity to have appropriate forms of tactile experiences throughout the day.
- Try to incorporate a tactile experience during lessons, e.g. a sea shell if discussing the seaside etc, so they can explore as they learn
- During craft activities incorporate tactile contrasts between items, e.g. soft/hard, smooth/rough, warm/cool etc.
- Making tasks and routines less predictable will help the child to stay alert and encourage them to find out more about the learning activity.
- Encourage the child to explore their need to touch objects in an age appropriate way, e.g. allow them to use a fidget object such as a piece of Blu-Tack, small squeezy ball etc. The aim is for the object to help them concentrate.

Sensitive to Touch:

The child with tactile sensitivity may have difficulty screening out touch sensations that most people are barely aware of, for example, the feel of a label in their clothes. They may subsequently have difficulty shifting their attention to other sensations like the sound of a human voice, because they are so overwhelmed by messages about touch.

- Prepare child for activity by providing a visual cue.
- Before and after tactile activities, provide deep pressure into the palms of the hands, such as “chair pull ups” and “palm presses”.

- Allow child to be first or last in line so they are not “bumped” as frequently. Allow the child to take responsibility for this decision.
- Approach child from within their visual field.
- Tell the child when you are going to touch them. Always touch firmly and without moving your hands. Only touch when absolutely necessary.
- Consider the child’s position in relation to others during assembly or group activities, allowing them an element of choice.
- Acknowledge the child’s anxiety or negative feelings towards tactile tasks. Consider use of a tool, e.g. paintbrush, or wearing gloves during messy activities to enable the child to participate more fully. Allow free access to hand washing, or consider using wipes at desk/table.
- Do not force the child to endure a stimulus that creates discomfort. Introduce any touch sensations/tactile activities gradually.

Auditory Strategies

Under-sensitivity to Sound:

The child does not seem to be aware of sounds and noises that other children notice. They may make noises such as humming, clicking etc whilst working.

NB: These children should always have had their hearing checked. If their speech and understanding appears affected please consult a Speech and Language Therapist.

- Ensure you have the child's full attention prior to giving instructions or attempting to engage in conversation.
- Use gestures and/or visual supports to supplement verbal directions if required.
- Encourage the child to sit near the teacher's desk, or focus of lesson e.g. T.V.
- Ask the child to repeat instructions and explanations. They can also act as a classroom messenger by reinforcing the instructions for others.

Sensitive to Sound:

The child with auditory sensitivity may have difficulty screening out noises from the next classroom and tolerating background noise such as a fan. This child is likely to react emotionally to unexpected and loud noises such as the school bell or an aeroplane and be fearful of appliances such as a vacuum cleaner. They may subsequently have difficulty attending during lessons, because they are so overwhelmed by other auditory information.

- In situations where the child experiences a lot of loud noises, headphones/ear defenders or earplugs may be helpful to buffer some of the noise e.g. in assembly or a music/dance class.
- Whenever possible, alert or prepare the child before an offending noise occurs, i.e. school bell, fire alarm. Avoid using appliances or equipment at times when you would like the child to maintain their focus.
- Keep auditory distractions to a minimum.
- Limit extraneous auditory input from the hallway by closing the classroom door.
- Encourage the child to sit away from open windows and doors and sit in a quiet, distraction free area. The area around the teacher’s desk is often the busiest in the classroom.

Sensitive to Sound continued

- Prepare the child in advance for distractions such as visitors or announcements. A visual support is helpful.
- Consider setting up barriers or “cubicles” for deskwork that other children can also access.
- Allow child to request the use of headphones or earplugs during tests or deskwork, after the verbal instructions have been given.
- Make sure that it is quiet before instructions are given.
- Ask the child to repeat back what has been said to check for understanding and accuracy.
- Use gestures and/or visual supports to supplement verbal directions.

Calming Strategies

These activities can help any child who is anxious, but are particularly useful for children who are sensory defensive. They help to reduce exaggerated responses to sensory input.

- Counting down – teach child to count themselves down from 10 – 1 before moving on to the next activity. The counting should be done fairly slowly and with eyes closed.
- In order to “let off steam” following school etc encourage the child to use one of the following immediate calming strategies:
  - Trampolining – sustained jumping up and down
  - Using pillow/punch bag
  - Wrap self in duvet/sleeping bag
  - Pull on Theraband
  - Go for a walk/run/swim.
- Body pressure – teach child to sit on the floor with knees bent up to chest, arms around knees and then squeeze themselves very tightly. The same thing can be done sitting on a chair.
- Allow access to a quiet space with beanbag or cushion available, to escape from too much stimulation.

Calming Strategies continued

- Slow rocking or swaying (rhythmic motion), i.e. using a rocking chair or swing.
- Listen to soft and rhythmic music. Mozart and Vivaldi are thought to be calming and conducive to learning.
- Reduce noise and light levels.
- Provide hand squeezy, e.g. ball.
- Teach the child to push down with both hands interlinked onto their head to provide deep pressure, when over stimulated or anxious. If they find this calming/helpful, allow them to regularly use this strategy.

Heavy Work

- Chair push ups - sitting on standard class chair, hold onto the sides of a chair and lift their bottom off chair. Hold position and count.
- Stand in door frame and “push out” the sides.
- Monkey bars – hanging and swinging from bars is great.
- Push open heavy doors.
- Carry books against body, hugging to chest, i.e. carry books/objects to office/from class to class.
- Place chairs on desk at end of day
- Help move gym mats in P.E.
- Climbing and using gymnastics equipment.
- Rearranging classroom furniture when appropriate.
- Perform sports activities that involve running and jumping.
- Trampolining.
- Swimming.
- Weight activities e.g. sitting with heavy books on knees, weights in blazer pocket, heavy back pack etc.

Organising and Alerting Strategies

Organising and alerting activities can help any child who is either over or under-active become focused and attentive. These activities are particularly useful during transitions in the school day. Fidgeting can be a strategy that the child uses to stay alert and focussed; this should be allowed to continue, as long as this is not affecting the child or other children's concentration.

Deep Pressure Touch

- Teach the child to push down with both hands interlinked onto their head to provide deep pressure, when over stimulated or anxious. If they find this calming/helpful, allow them to regularly use this strategy.

- Encourage deep pressure into the palms of the hands, such as "chair pull ups" and "palm presses".

Movement

- Take movement breaks to stand up and stretch between classroom activities, these should include a heavy work element if possible.
- Run classroom errands to provide opportunities for movement.
- Implement a card system so that child can have a discreet method to request a movement break.

Other Activities

- Sharpening pencils with manual sharpener.
- Using musical instruments such as wind instruments (blowing) or drums.
- Chewy pencil toppers.
- Sipping iced water (will alert).
- Drinking through sports bottle.

Resources

Posture Pack

The Posture Pack includes a writing slope, a wedge cushion, a storage file and a pencil case with a timer/clock inside.
The Posture Pack can also be used on the lap, on the floor and in the car. Usually purchased as a complete system, but the desk part and seat part can be ordered separately.
The Writing Slope tilts papers and books to the correct angle for reading and writing, just like old-fashioned school desks.
The tilted surface improves visibility too. It allows the eyes to focus on the whole page at once, something children normally achieve by curling over the desk, creating the habit of writing and reading with their face very close to the page.
Remember, a young child's focal length is naturally short, so it's inevitable they will get their eyes close to the paper, the answer is to get the paper closer to them!)
Posture Pack is strong yet light and has a built in carrying handle. It stores both loose and punched papers, and has a removable A4 wallet to transport papers to and from school.
The Posture Pack Seat Wedge tilts the seat forward to a more comfortable angle for working, making it easier to lean forward to work without slouching.
The Seat Wedge fits cleverly inside the Writing Slope to provide a complete portable solution.
The desk slope has 3 storage systems inside that keep frequently used items to hand.

1. A “ring binder” type fitting which allows lots of punched papers to be stored.
2. A storage wallet to keep loose A4 sheets without punching.
3. A pencil case which keeps erasers, etc. at hand.
   All this plus a strong handle for portability.

Available from:
Back in Action www.backinaction.co.uk
43 Woodside Road
Amersham on the Hill
Bucks
HP6 6AA
T 01494 434343

Resources

Shoe Laces

'Bunny Ears' or 'Two-Loop Tie' Method

Find a place where you can sit in a comfortable, balanced position. Try practising with a shoe on your lap or a table top first.

1. Student picks up shoelaces.

2. Student crosses laces, laying them across front of shoe.

3. Student puts upper lace under the crossed laces, through the cross created, with the shoe in a toe-to-tongue direction.

   Pushing the upper lace through a second time helps the lace stay tight.

4. Student grasps a lace in each hand and pulls tight.

5. Student makes a loop.

6. Student makes second loop with the other shoelace.

7. Student crosses loops across the front of shoe, maintaining grasp on the loops (same action as step 2).

8. Student puts upper loop under crossed laces, through the triangle created with the shoe, in a toe-to-tongue direction (same as step 3).

Student grasps a loop in each hand and pulls tight

Resources

Cutlery

The Caring Cutlery range is a set of stainless steel utensils moulded into contoured, ivory coloured plastic handles with built up ends. These are of value to those with a weak grip and restricted wrist or finger movement. The knives and forks have a shaped indent on the top for the index finger, to help with directional control. The knives also have a serrated blade to assist with cutting. The knife, fork, spoon and teaspoon are available as a set. Within the range there is an angled knife and left and right-angled forks and spoons that are designed to minimise wrist movement. The cutlery range is hygienically sealed, easy to clean and dishwasher safe.

Length of handles 127mm (5").

Available from a range of suppliers including:

Homecraft Rolyan	www.homecraft-rolyan.com
Amazon	www.amazon.co.uk

Resources

Touch Typing Programs

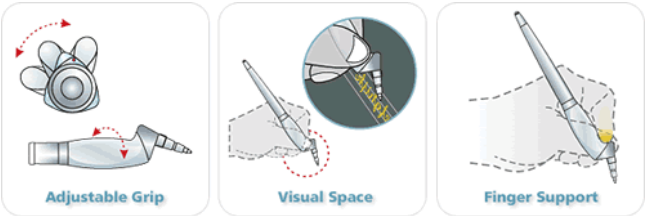
BBC Dance Mat:	http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/typing/
English type Junior:	http://www.englishtype.com/junior.php?subMenu=1
Typequick:	http://www.typeandtest.com/touch-typing-student/
V3 Typing Skills:	http://www.v3.co.uk/vnunet/downloads/2128117/kids-typing-skills
KAZ, Keyboard A-Z:	www.amazon.co.uk
Doorway Text Type:	http://doorwayonline.org.uk/texttype.html
2Simple 2Type:	http://www.2simple.com/2type/#
Typing Instructor 4 Kids	http://www.electricsoftware.co.uk/shop/article_0092939209166V0100/Typing-Instructor-for-Kids-4
TypingQueen	http://typingqueen---typing-tutor.smartcode.com/info.html
Nessy Fingers	http://www.nessyfingers.co.uk/

This is by no means a comprehensive list as programs are released and updated regularly. For many programs it is possible to download a trial version for a limited time period or a demonstration version with limited features. It is worth taking advantage of some of these to establish which program suits your child's learning style. Currently the BBC 'Dance Mat program is free and is being used by a number of schools in this area.

Resources

Pens and Pencils

It is increasingly possible to buy specialist, shaped pens and pencils in supermarkets and stationery shops. Where possible try out a pen before you buy. The pens currently available can be viewed almost as trend setters rather than looked on as writing aids. Below are a few examples but there are many other shapes and styles.



Yoropen available as a pen and a pencil. Can be used in left or right hand.

Stabilo 's'move available in a wide range of colours, left and right handed.

Stabilo Elastic Chunky round pen with non-slip body

Grips

There are a large number of pencil grips available and again it is good to try before you buy. Some schools will have samples of the more common grips but many older children prefer not to draw attention to themselves by using grips.

Ultra Cross Guard designed to correct a thumb wrap

Ultra Jumbo Grip provides a large, moulded area to grip

Grippit a discreet aid to help position a pencil correctly

Resources

Specialist Papers

A variety of specialist papers are available from websites such as Amazon as well as 'The Dyslexia Shop' (www.thedyslexiashop.co.uk).

Papers are available with a variety of line styles – thick lines, bands to indicate positioning of tall letters (ascenders), hanging letters (descenders) and small letters or raised lines to give tactile or proprioceptive feedback.

Rulers

A ruler with a central grip can be helpful for children who struggle with fine motor skills. These can be purchased from the Dyslexia Shop (www.thedyslexiashop.co.uk).or are sometimes available in places such as W.H. Smith or Tesco.

Scissors

A range of specialist scissors is available from Peta UK Ltd (www.peta-uk.com). Cutting can be a particular issue for left handed people.

Resources

Useful Websites

Website	Equipment
www.annarbor.co.uk	Visual Perception Activity Books
www.anythinglefthanded.co.uk	All sorts of things for lefthanders plus some general items.
www.backinaction.co.uk	Posture Pack
www.cultpens.com	Special Pens and pencils
www.edhelper.com	Visual Perception Worksheets
www.eyecanlearn.com	Visual Perception Worksheets
www.happypuzzle.co.uk	Visual Perception Games
www.hasbro.com/games/kid-games/pictureka/	Visual Perception Games
www.homecraft-rolyan.com	Theraputty
www.homecraft-rolyan.com	Cutlery
www.learningspaceni.co.uk	Pencil Grips
www.peta-uk.com	Scissors
www.specialdirect.co.uk	Pencil Grips and other handwriting equipment, including writing slope
www.stabilo.co.uk	The full range of Stabilo pens and pencils
www.taskmasteronline.co.uk	Pencil Grips and other handwriting equipment
www.teachingexpertise.com	Visual Perception Worksheets
www.thedyslexiashop.co.uk	Special Papers and Rulers