

Straight to the point

It's important to remember that poor hand writing is fairly common amongst students, and can be due to any number of reasons. It is therefore very important to have your hand writing assessed to determine whether your difficulties are related to your medical condition or other things such as muscle weakness, poor posture, attention/concentration difficulties or problems with visual perception.

Very few people need to have a computer to record all their work at school but in exceptional circumstances this may be necessary and the Occupational Therapist may be able to help. Similarly, some students will require additional time to complete exams and assignments.

This is not a straight-forward matter, however and involves submitting reports to the examination board in good time, so talk to your Occupational therapist if you are worrying about your exams.

Other useful leaflets:

- Study skills
- Mind Your Back!
- Pain in the Neck

Department of Rheumatology

Physiotherapy 0121 333 8221
Occupational Therapy 0121 333 8213

Data Protection

We collect information about our young people and families relevant to their diagnosis and treatment. We store it in written records and on computer. We may have to share some of your information with other people and organisations. If you have any questions and/or do not want us to share that information with others, please talk to the Adolescent Rheumatology team or contact PALS (Patient Advice and Liaison Service) on (0121) 333 8403/8611.



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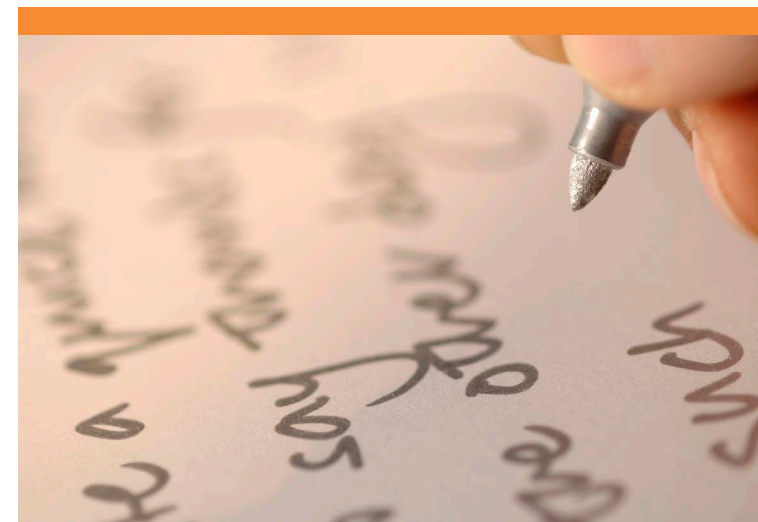


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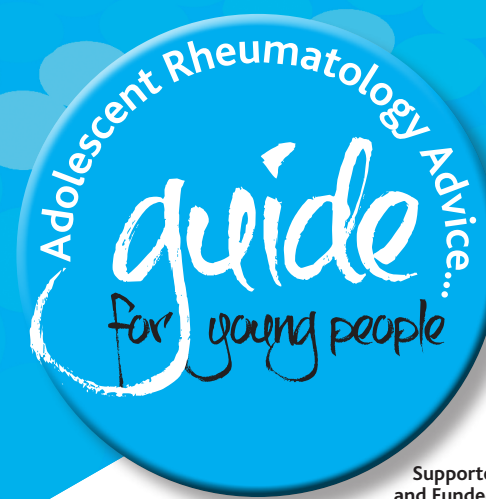


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The write stuff

A guide for good handwriting



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Top tips for getting it write!

Everyone gets an achy hand when using a pen or pencil for a long time and this even includes very young children when colouring. Students are particularly prone to this because of the large amount of work they are expected to do, so try not to stress about it too much. Instead follow these useful tips and try to take regular short rests and pace yourself to allow the muscles in your hand to recover.

Firstly, have your eyes tested if you notice that you need to hold your head close to the page in order to see your work

- Ensure you are sitting in a good position, with hips and knees supported at approx. 90°.
- Your feet should be flat on the floor or, if you can't reach, supported on a small step
- Try out different height chairs to ensure you are in the best position
- Position yourself so that your elbows are bent to 90°. Your arms should rest on the table rather than 'hitching' up your shoulders
- Your forearm should be at 45° in relation to the table and about 2/3 of your forearm should rest on the table.
- Your Paper/book should be slanted for cursive (joined up) writing or upright for printing
- If using the computer, organise your work station to ensure that the mouse and keyboard are within easy reach and your screen is directly in front of you

Remember poor posture is a major cause of pain when handwriting. Paying particular attention to your posture and changing position frequently will help reduce pain and fatigue.

- Try not to hold the pen/pencil too close to the nib/tip
- Try a fountain pen or gel/roller ball if you tend to press onto the paper heavily

OR,

- Use a padded pen grip on a biro if you tend to grip the pen so tightly you get a lump on your middle finger
- Try a fatter pen or one with a moulded barrel
- Practice handwriting patterns to help get a smooth and fluid handwriting style
- Try to reduce your amount of written work, using abbreviations when notetaking, or photocopy notes instead
- If you're left handed try to sit next to other 'lefties' to give yourself more room
- Think about using a key board for homework if possible, to give your hands a rest
- Writing can get messy when you lose concentration, so take regular rests if possible, and try not to spend hours on end doing written work.
- Put your pen down regularly for a moment to take regular stretches

Useful warm up/interval exercises

- Shrug shoulders up and down
- Circle shoulders forward and backwards
- Turn head from side to side holding for a few seconds
- Touch right ear to right shoulder and then left ear to left shoulder
- Clasp hands together in front of you and stretch forward, then clasp hands behind back and squeeze shoulder blades together
- Circle wrists in both directions
- Move wrists up and down
- Stretch fingers out straight and then wiggle them around



Try out different types of pen and nibs to find out what works for you

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