

# Is it important to be able to write by hand?

With a flurry of new stationery shops opening up aimed at children, we know that this technology savvy generation still love getting a new pencil case stuffed with pens, pencils and novelty shaped erasers. At Explore Learning tuition centres, children can earn rewards and there is always a flurry of excitement when the prize cabinet is restocked with smelly pens or animal rubbers. So why not use National Stationery Week as an opportunity to harness your child's love of stationery and get them practising their writing.

By handwriting work, you can edit and amend your ideas, do several drafts whilst still having copies of what you've written before to refer to. If we get children to do this we, and they, can see the journey they've been on and how their story, poem or letter has developed. Computers have many great education benefits and for some people handwriting is simply not an option, but when we delete and edit a document we lose what has gone before. So harnessing technology alongside good old fashion writing is the perfect combination.

Why do we need to still handwrite though? Handwriting something shows that personal touch and that you care. At work we often get members of staff posting a picture on social media, of a thank you card from a customer or another member of staff. They get excited about receiving them and want to share the sentiment that the handwritten note shows. Rarely does an e-mail get the same reaction. If you have children what moments do you treasure? The first time your child wrote their name or the first e-mail they wrote? Our handwriting is part of our personality and a way to express ourselves.

However, we know from experience over that it's not always easy to get children to put pen to paper. At Explore Learning we have supported over 175,000 to improve their writing. Some fun new stationery can help alongside trying a few of the following:

- Get your child to just write down what they think, get their ideas down and then they can always go back and edit it. You can proof read for spellings and grammar changes later, but if your child is too scared to make a mistake they won't want to write in the first place.
- Use story boards and graphic organisers to help your child to plan what they are going to write. Having an idea of where your story is going can be really helpful. JK Rowling says that she knew how Harry Potter was going to end and key points along the way, which helped her to write the books. You can find some downloadable planning sheets on the Explore Learning website <https://www.explorelearning.co.uk/schools/national-young-writers-awards/>
- Practise writing in small chunks, get your child to write out the shopping list and then think of an adjective to describe each item. Write thank you cards for presents they've received or postcards when you are away on a trip.
- Make it fun, pick a word at random from a book and then see who in family can write the most amusing/scary/shocking sentence and keep a tally of winners on the fridge.
- Not everyone is going to have the most beautiful handwriting, but a good thing for your child to aim for is that their friend, teacher or sibling can read what they've written. Give them a purpose for why they need to write legibly, not just because they have to.

In the 21st Century we absolutely need to embrace technology and the beauty of computers is they can adapt work for each child's ability, but the humble pencil is still one of the best human inventions. If Roald Dahl wrote all his stories using just that then maybe, just maybe, handing a pencil to your child could spark the imagination of the next greatest children's author. (He used to have 6 sharpened ready to write so probably best to get them a whole pack...and a sharpener).