

Part 1 'S' Factors as a GUIDE TO TEACHING handwriting

Once a child is ready to write, the first important task is to learn how to form the letters correctly – best taught as a motor skill. (This will save many problems at later stages.)

- 1 Watching the letters being made and hearing a simple patter.
- 2 Making the letters themselves in developmentally appropriate ways using just fingers – sand, paint, sandpaper, air-writing etc. – before pencils.

1

Shape

EYFS: Reception
NC: KS1

Letters can be put into groups or teams according to the movement needed to make them. When children learn to write a new letter, the 'lead' letter of its team will help them to start.



N.B.

These letters have exit flicks to support joining but **no entry strokes** which complicate the basic letter shapes and use diagonal lines that many young children find difficult at this stage.

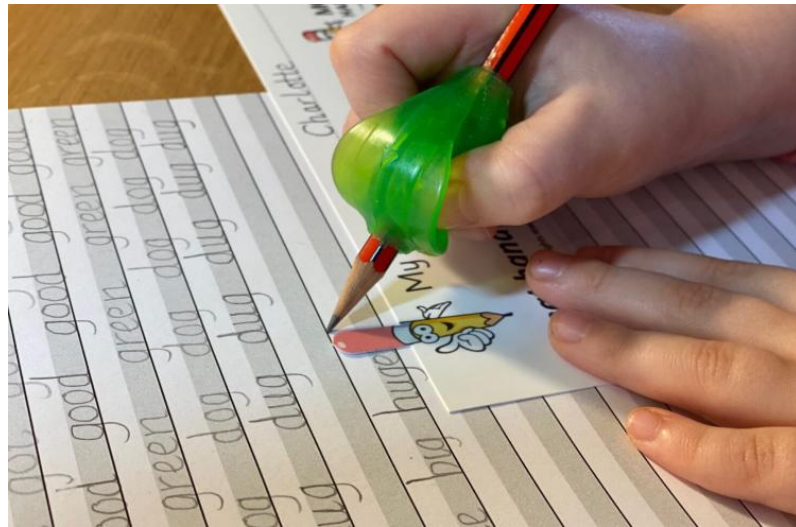
Children need to understand that spaces need to be left between words so they can be easily read.

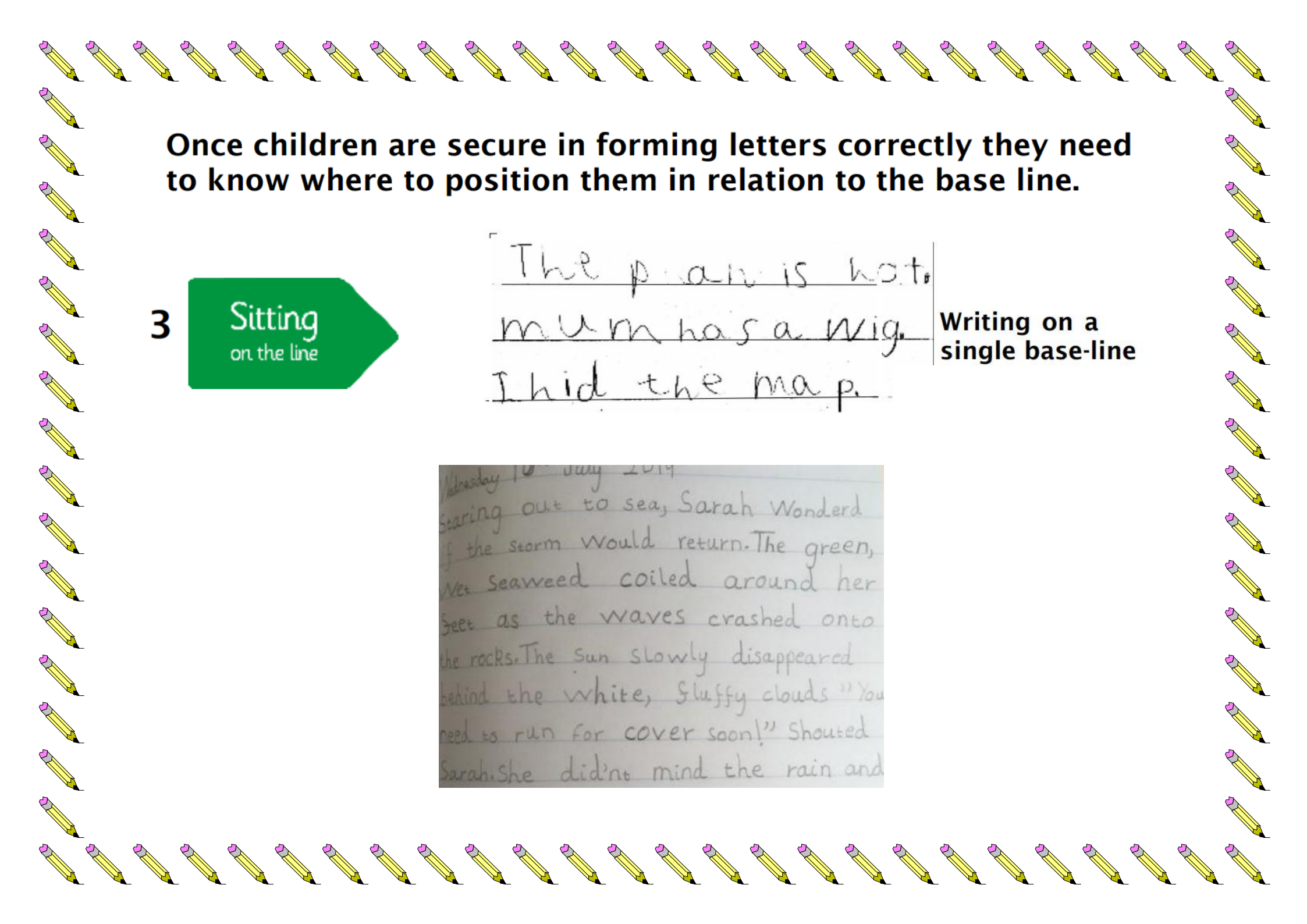
2



NC: KS1

Gradually, they need to learn to leave an appropriately-sized space – about the size of 1 or 2 letter ‘o’s. Lolly sticks make good spacers for beginner writers, followed by coffee stirrers if necessary later. These work much better than the traditional finger-spacing. (Fingers grow bigger while writing becomes smaller so are ineffective when the child is older. Finger spacing is also difficult for left-handers to use).





Once children are secure in forming letters correctly they need to know where to position them in relation to the base line.

3

Sitting
on the line

The plan is hot.
mum has a wig.
I hid the map.

Writing on a
single base-line

Wednesday 10 July 2014
Scaring out to sea, Sarah wondered
if the storm would return. The green,
wet seaweed coiled around her
feet as the waves crashed onto
the rocks. The sun slowly disappeared
behind the white, fluffy clouds "You
need to run for cover soon!" Shouted
Sarah. She didn't mind the rain and

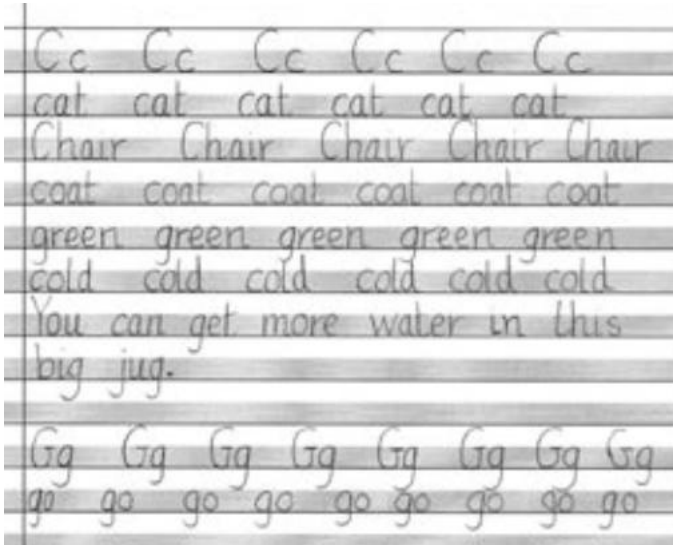
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Size

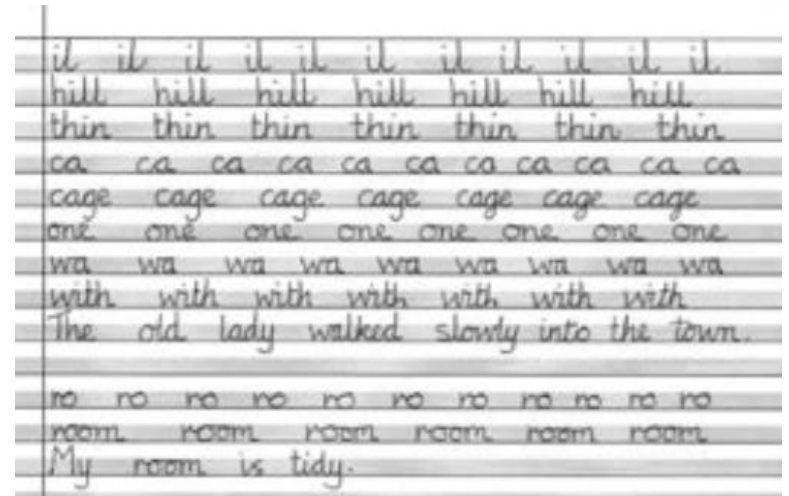
NC: KS1

... and also to their relative sizes:

While children are learning about size it is helpful to use paper marked with a base-line and a second line above for the tops of a, e, s, o etc. The tall letters and tails are written at about twice that size.



Beginner writers, especially, need widely spaced lines to avoid cramping letters and all children need some flexibility in line spacing rather than 'one size fits all'.



5

Stringing together

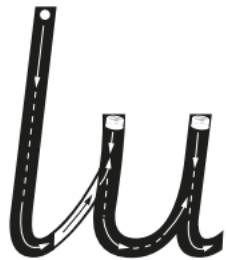
NC: KS1 & KS2

Basic joins.

The NC states that children 'should be taught a joined style as soon as they can form letters securely with the correct orientation' and 'understand which letters, when adjacent to each other, are best left unjoined.'

Level 1 : Baseline Joins

Date _____



Look at the letters above. Write over the letters below.

lu lu lu lu lu
lu lu lu lu lu

Write over the letters below. Now practise writing the letters below.

lu lu lu lu
lun lun lun lun

Write over the letters below. Now practise writing the letters below.

lun lun
lun lun

Level 3 : Top Joins

Date _____



Look at the letters above. Write over the letters below.

we we we we we
we we we we we

Write over the letters below. Now practise writing the letters below.

we we we we
wer wer wer wer

Write over the letters below. Now practise writing the letters below.

wer wer
wer wer

Date _____



Look at the joins above. Write over the words below.

limit limit limit limit
limit limit limit limit
limit limit limit limit

Write over the word below. Now practise writing the word below.

utility utility utility
utility utility utility
utility utility utility

Write over the word below. Now practise writing the word below.

thumb thumb thumb
thumb thumb thumb
thumb thumb thumb



6

Slant

NC: KS 2

A consistent slant helps the appearance of handwriting.

Test

Use a coloured pen to make all the down lines longer so inconsistencies are easy to see. (Ignore rounded or diagonal letters)

Jan and Eder were going to fast and they

During yesterday's football match, both of the young players scored three goals in the second half before the heavy thunderstorm stopped the game. The huge crowd patiently waited until the players returned onto the muddy, rain-soaked pitch.



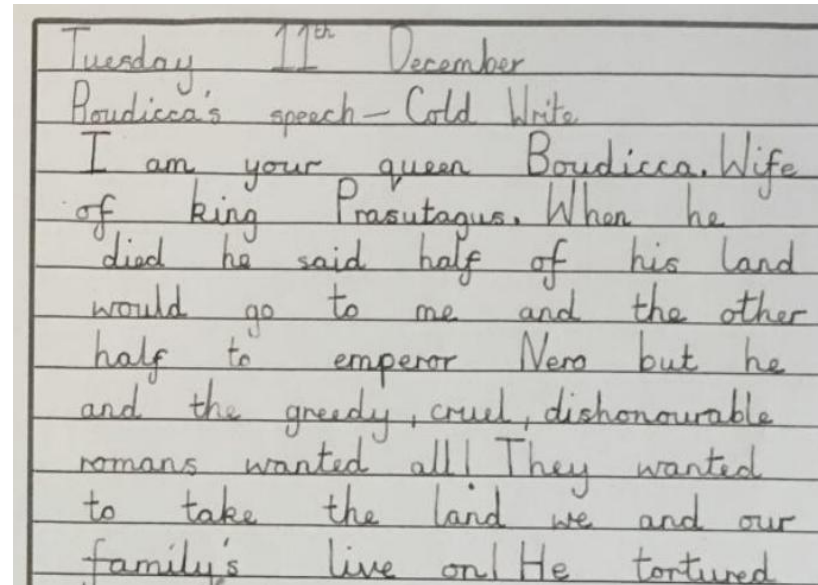
7

Speed

NC: Y5+

Students in KS2 & 3 need to be able to write legibly and quickly.

Students need help in understanding that increasing speed changes writing: it can improve rhythm and fluency but can cause illegibility if allowed out of control. It will help students if they are encouraged to gradually build up the speed of legible writing by repeating words, then phrases, sentences & paragraphs in short regular periods of practice. (See *Tips for Teaching: Speeding up*)



Tuesday 11th December
Boudicca's speech - Cold Write
I am your queen Boudicca. Wife
of king Prasutagus. When he
died he said half of his land
would go to me and the other
half to emperor Nero but he
and the greedy, cruel, dishonourable
romans wanted all! They wanted
to take the land we and our
family's live on! He tortured

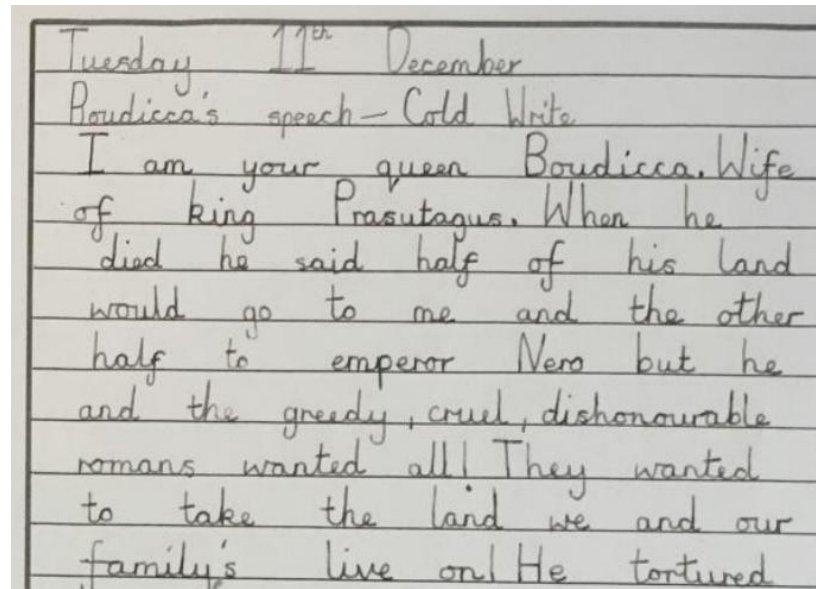
8

Style

NC: Y5+

Students should be encouraged to develop a style of writing that works for them.

N.B. They should also be aware of occasions when an unjoined style is appropriate: for labelling diagrams/data, e-mail addresses etc. and be able to use capital letters for form-filling.



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Part 2 'S' Factors as a CHECKLIST FOR QUICK EVALUATION of handwriting by a student or teacher (see also Part 1)

This is an effective way of giving older students (Y5+) the knowledge of elements of good handwriting and so enable them to make improvements in their own writing.

A good way to begin is for the students to write a few lines or a pangram (a sentence that contains all 26 letters) e.g.

The five boxing wizards jump quickly.

Test

The students look carefully at their writing, and consider each 'S' factor in turn by answering the question. They give themselves a grade for each 'S' Factor separately.

Action

The students, with the guidance of the teacher, might:

- Repeat the sentence, trying to improve their score for that particular 'S'.
- Set up some practice activities, perhaps repeating a word or phrase to improve the 'S' that needs attention. To be effective, these are best practised in short, frequent sessions.
- Gradually use the improvement in regular school writing.
See also [Tips For Teaching: Helping the Older Student](#)



Size


Q1 Are the letters written at the correct size and position?

Notes (see the 'Size' section in Part 1)

Many children who understand the rules write particular letters too large or small; common faults being k and s written too large and letters at the end of a word written too small.

Test

Draw a line along the top of the small letters to show the evenness of size:

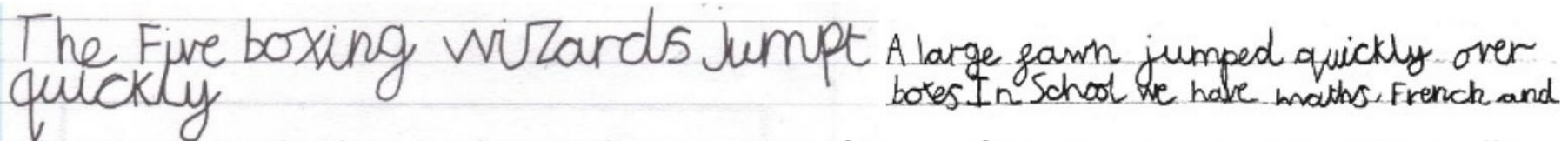


capsized and there canoe went on

Q2 Is the writing a suitable size?

Notes

Some children write minutely small, some write too large for the space so the ascenders and descenders of the letters touch the writing above and below and become less legible. Most students, given encouragement and flexible resources, e.g. paper with different line spacing, can develop an acceptable size.



The Five boxing wizards jump quickly A large gawn jumped quickly over boxes. In School we have maths, French and

This was written by the same boy on the same type of paper after encouragement to write smaller.



Space

Q1 Are letters spaced evenly without bumping together?

Notes Letters that touch each other are difficult to read (see below). Irregularly spaced writing does not look good.

*I'm so glad I found you
I'm not gonna lose you*

Space cont, Q2 Is the space between words consistent?

Notes

Too little or too much space between words can make reading more difficult.

A simple rule that works for any age and both left and right-handed writers is to leave enough space for 1 or 2 letter 'o' s between words.

Test

Children can test the evenness and size of their spacing by using a contrasting colour to draw in as many o's as will fit between words. (see right)

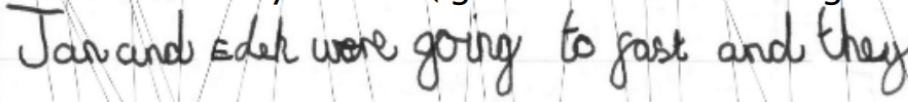
*Once oooooo or ooooo twice ooooo month
dads worth and meet a team
then set of is a van and*

Slant

Q Is the writing slanting/sloping in a consistent direction?

Test

Use a coloured pen to make all the down lines longer so inconsistencies are easy to see. (Ignore rounded or diagonal letters)



Action

Practise writing small words using letters **l,h,b,l,u,y**: hill, little etc. and concentrate on parallel down strokes.

Speed

Q Is the writing fast enough for the student's needs?

Notes

Trying to speed up poor writing can create real problems. It is therefore advisable to address the first six 'S' Factors and achieve as high as standard as possible before attempting to speed up the writing. (see 'Speed' in Part 1)

Test

Students can time themselves for 1 or 2 minutes or longer when writing words or phrases.

Action

Increasing the speed of functional, legible writing requires regular practice. (See 'Speed' in Part 1)
Other ideas can be found in *Tips for Teaching: Speeding Up*.

Style

Q Is the writing consistent and fluent? (See Style in Part 1)

Other *Tips for Teaching* that might be of use: *'P' Checks, Above Year 4, Basic Steps, Speeding Up, Helping the Older Student, Patterns*