



Grade-Level Handwriting Expectations

This chart outlines typical handwriting expectations by grade level. It can be used by occupational therapists, teachers, and school teams during screenings, IEP meetings, or RTI planning.

Grade	Key Handwriting Expectations	
Preschool (Pre-K)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Scribbles with intention - Imitates lines and shapes (, —, O) - Begins writing letters (especially name) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Whole-hand grasp (may start tripod) - Pre-writing focus: fine motor, directionality
Kindergarten	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Writes uppercase and lowercase letters (inconsistently) - Writes first/last name legibly - Starts correct letter formation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Begins using finger spacing - Uses more refined grasp - Writes simple CVC words, phrases
1st Grade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Forms all letters correctly and legibly - Self-corrects some reversals (b/d, p/q) - Uses consistent spacing between words 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Writes complete sentences - Writing is large but aligned - Functional grasp is typically established
2nd Grade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Letter formation is automatic - Consistent size, spacing, and alignment - Writes organized paragraphs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Begins cursive (if taught) - Writing speed and fluency improve
3rd Grade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fluent, legible print or cursive - Sustains writing for multiple sentences - Spacing, alignment, and punctuation improve 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Writes to support academics (notes, responses) - Cursive improves if taught
4th Grade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mastery or near mastery of cursive (if applicable) - Writes multiple-paragraph pieces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Handwriting doesn't limit expression - Maintains consistent letter size and neatness
5th Grade & Up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Handwriting is fluent and automatic - Chooses between print and cursive - Maintains legibility during long tasks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Writing supports test-taking, note-taking - May use tech more often for writing