

## The Book of Adapted Handwriting Paper

with Activities & Games by Karen M. Stordeur, MOT, OTR/L



### Introduction

Do you work with children who have difficulty developing writing skills? Are you tired of constantly adapting handwriting paper to suit your children's individual needs? Do the children you work with get overwhelmed by or have difficulty following verbal instructions? If you answer yes to any of these questions then "THE BOOK of Adapted Handwriting Paper" may just be what you're looking for. Perfect for children with Autism, PDD, LD, and other difficulties that affect learning, comprehension and motor skills. Children who have difficulty processing and understanding language or verbal instructions, tend to benefit from non-verbal strategies, especially visually guided methods. THE BOOK of Adapted Handwriting Paper is the perfect solution for combining visual cues with ease of motor control and is sure to be a hit in the classroom, home or clinic.

### Product Use

There are several keys to successfully develop handwriting skills. They include starting at the right place, the use of proper strategies to aid in skill acquisition and motivation to engage in the activity. Children will be motivated when allowed to experience success in an activity that is challenging, but not frustrating. Using the proper strategies will help the child experience success without frustration. This book contains secrets to successfully help your children develop handwriting skills. The first secret is the use of contrast to provide visual guidance. The book begins with a white writing area (blocks, lines) on a black background. This sharp contrast allows the child to focus their attention on the exact spot where they are expected to write, eliminating confusing lines and extraneous visual information. By providing visual guidance, you also reduce the need to give verbal instructions that often confuse and frustrate children. The second secret is in the progression of the pages. The first three levels have different backgrounds (black, dark gray, light gray and white with black outlines). The fourth level varies in boldness of the lines. By changing the background and boldness of the lines, you can gradually fade the visual guidance. All levels also progress in size of the writing area from large to small. Therefore, the child has the opportunity to progress through each of the four levels, as well as within each level.

## Product Use

**Level 1:** consists of white blocks, is helpful in teaching those children who truly have a difficult time with attention, motor control and sizing. The white rectangular block provides a nice contrast and allows the child to learn to draw anything from simple shapes (line, circle, cross, x) to upper case letters and numbers. They can focus on developing motor control and proper formation without confusing lines or extraneous visual information. If the child continues to have difficulty, but is making progress staying in the block, progress to lighter backgrounds. Once the child has developed good motor control, you can progress to smaller blocks or the next level.

**Level 2:** consists of white lines and can be used just like the blocks. These pages are useful for children who are ready for the challenge of spacing items on a line. This paper should be used mainly for drawing simple shapes (line, circle, cross, x), upper case letters and numbers. Again, you can increase the challenge by moving on to smaller lines or lighter backgrounds.

**Level 3:** consists of dotted lines with contrasting backgrounds. Here you can work on writing upper case letters, lower case letters, names, words and sentences as you would with typical paper. Again, the contrast of the white line with the dark background helps to focus the child's attention and eliminates extraneous visual information, which may confuse and distract the child. It is recommended that you use the light gray or white backgrounds for letters that extend below line, such as g, j, p, q and y. When your child can space letters and words appropriately in section 3, progress to section four or typical paper.

**Level 4:** is for children who have either mastered one of the other levels or who has higher-level skills, but continues to have difficulty writing on traditional paper. This level consists of bold lines of various thickness and different sizing between the lines. The bold lines give more visual feedback than traditional paper, which helps the child focus on the appropriate place to write.

## Modifications

For children who need extra writing practice, use clear plastic pages such as a report cover or laminate the page and use with wipe off markers.

Working on writing skills for extended periods is not recommended. This may cause the child to fatigue, become frustrated or bored. Increasing a child's frustration and fatigue will cause the child to be less motivated to write on subsequent occasions. Writing can be an arduous task for many children; the therapist should take care not to make the task too overwhelming.

## Recommended Products

If you have found THE BOOK of Adapted Writing Paper helpful, then check out these other great Abilitations products:

- Abilitations Hi-Write Paper: 089661 (Beginner 1)  
089662 (Beginner 2)  
089663 (Intermediate 1)  
027323 (Intermediate 2)
- Raised Line ColorCue Paper: 031473
- Grip2Write: 1319079

## Appendix A: Quick Reference Decision Making Guide

<b>Areas to Assess</b>	<b>Skill Deficits</b>	<b>Needs</b>	<b>Where to Begin</b>
Visual Perceptual & Visual Motor Skills	<p>Difficulty forming, sizing, spatial orientation, etc.</p> <p>*If visual deficits are present, consider referring to an eye specialist.</p>	Sharp contrast for visual guidance to help focus visual attention on a particular location.	<p>Section 1: Blocks -</p> <p>Begin with black contrast and progress through this section until skills improve and child can work on spacing on a line.</p>
Motor Control	<p>Child may have reduced postural control, upper extremity strength and poor distal motor control.</p> <p>*Consider seating, set up and other adaptations that may be needed.</p>	Determine the amount of control the child has for forming shapes or letters of a particular size. Children with poor control may need to work on a chalkboard, dry erase board or other surface before they have enough distal control to write on paper.	<p>Section 1: Blocks-</p> <p>Begin with larger blocks and progress to smaller blocks with improved distal control.</p>
Attention	<p>Child has difficulty focusing and maintaining attention on paper and pencil tasks.</p> <p>*Talk to classroom staff, parents and other professionals working with the child to determine the best strategies to keep the child focused and on all he/she may be required to perform.</p>	Some children appear to have impaired visual perceptual, visual motor or motor control skills, but truly have a difficult time attending. All factors should be considered.	You may begin at any section in this book. Children with significant attention deficits and other deficits should begin in Section 1. Then progress within or to other sections. Children with good motor control, visual and perceptual skills may benefit from starting in sections 2, 3 or 4.

\* These are only suggestions and not intended to diagnose a particular problem.

## Appendix B: Preparation Activities for Developing Pre-Writing and Writing Skills

Some children benefit from activities and exercises that help get their bodies ready to perform. Other children need to work on pre-writing skills with additional modifications. Here are some general suggestions and remember that care and caution must be used to ensure safety. Never push a child to perform any activity that causes discomfort of any kind.

- Perform movement-based activities that prepare the child for writing, particularly those activities that facilitate posture or improve body awareness. Get the child up and moving against gravity. Activities that involve using the entire body in playful activities are great. Always be cautious as some children can be easily overwhelmed by changes in head position and may become disoriented.
- Have the child imitate postures and movements performed by you or another child. Talk about directional concepts if appropriate for the child. For example talk the child through moving their arm “up then down” or “across their body”. Have them touch the “top” of their head then reach down to the “bottom” of their bodies to touch their feet or toes. Have the children draw large shapes, letters or numbers in the air with their arm. These are just some of a few examples, which can prepare the child for learning directional concepts that help when forming shapes, letters and numbers.
- Have the children practice writing on a chalkboard or an easel. Working on different surfaces have many benefits including the following:

\*Attention: Some students focus well on a vertical surface. A child who fidgets or has postural difficulties may benefit from getting out of their seats and standing at the board or an easel.

\* Strengthening: Working on this surface also helps improve upper extremity strength. This is consequently more physically challenging thus should be used cautiously. When working on these surfaces you may need to decrease the challenge of the activity. Don't focus on writing small letters. Allow the child to use a large area to explore with different writing instruments. Always look for the improper posture, compensatory or abnormal movement patterns and correct the child.

\* Draw large shapes or letters and can have the child erase them. You can have the child use various items to improve numerous skills. The child can use wet paper, a sponge or paintbrush. This can help the child with grasp patterns in addition to learning the directions and movements on a larger scale.



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