

A Year-Long Guide for Kindergarten-Friendly Handwriting

Multisensory • Differentiated • Authentic • Integrated



You Can Teach 17 of the Most Commonly-Used Letters (including vowels) by teaching 16 (high-frequency) pink "heart words" with good handwriting
(95% of children's writing is lowercase letters: That is our main focus!)

Begin at **Spring Registration with Parents as Partners**. Kindergarten Round-Up is the best time to **give parents actionable ways** to help their child build fine motor skills, develop efficient pencil grip, and learn to print their name. **Together** we build the reading and writing brain!

(August/September) Handwriting Goals (Begin *30 Essential Handwriting Lessons* and name writing. Practice 16 pink "heart words" that teach a, c, d, D, e, g, h, i, k, l, m, M, o, s, t, u, v, w, y)

- **Teach how to hold a pencil.** Expect efficient tripod or quadruped pencil grip.
- **Daily Name Ticket practice with fingerspelling:** high expectations for each child to fingerspell, name, and form each letter accurately. Study students' Name Tickets!
- Families practice **ABC Phonics: Sing, Sign, and Read!** with accurate fingerspelling using free online videos, and they practice daily name writing at home.
- **Begin 30 Essential Handwriting Lessons:** Daily Multisensory Practice.
- Share **songs and rhymes that teach student names:** Expect every child to know every name. Use "I See My friends" little books to practice name writing!
- Teach students **how to draw and label:** boy, girl, dog, cat, house.
- **Teach handwriting/drawing motions** with engaging lessons: stars and "O Dance."
- Children copy and write the first power sentence every day: **I love you** (Teach spacing between words and expect each letter to be written correctly. Use a writing model).
- **Teach "I Can C-a-n" chant!** Develop a growth mindset throughout the day.
- Teach **16 pink 'heart words'** with multisensory strategies: Use *Sing, Sign, Spell, and Read!* CD, "I Can Read" pages, and word/fingerspelling cards. (Handwriting practice with pink "heart words" **teaches 17 lowercase letters—and ALL the vowels!**)
- Students **begin practicing a, b, c, d (brain exercises)** and challenging themselves to write a-d without a model.
- Honor students with **"Helper of the Day" song** and fingerspelling ritual.
- Fingerspell throughout the day: Build fingerspelling mastery. **Hold children accountable for accurate fingerspelling** of a growing number of letters. (*Show me a, b, c, d before recess!*)
- Intentionally teach concepts of letter, word, and sentence with handwriting practice.
- What does **good handwriting look like?** Create an **Anchor Chart**.

- **Writing Workshop is where phonics skills** (encoding sounds to print) **are practiced in an authentic context.** Heterogeneous groups of 5-6 students is optimum.
- **Assess for fluency in name writing** and handwriting a, b, c, d without a model. (Less-experienced students may need a model and more multisensory practice for several months.)

(October/November) Handwriting Goals (30 Essential Handwriting Lessons and Bonus Lessons: Sing, sign, read, and write the next set of high-frequency purple "heart words." Provide authentic practice with real words: Especially notice the correct formation of b, B, f, F, r, n, N, p, P)

- **Continue name writing every day** using the Name Ticket model. Identify those students needing extra support. Expect mastery! Use student names to practice capital letters and beginning sounds. Provide white board lessons encoding initial sounds to print.
- **Practice brain exercises for fluency at least once a week:** a, b, c, d, then e, f, g. (Students may use back of name ticket or white board for practice.) More proficient writers will love the challenge of practicing so they can write the entire alphabet!
- **Review the b/d lesson** as needed: This lesson is VITAL to prevent reading failure.
- Integrate multisensory handwriting practice with pink and purple **"heart words."** Use student white boards.
- Students understand there are **two kinds of words:** word they write "by heart" with adult spelling and phonetically-spelled words.
- After a word has been introduced and rehearsed, **place the word on the class magnetic word wall** as well as a "heart word" tray. Expect all students to write new heart words conventionally and legibly. (Notice: Book, by, the end, From, from, thank, Dear)
- Teach **Pop! Boo! Wow!** and speech bubbles (Bonus lessons). Develop awareness of capital and lowercase letters that look the same (Notice: **Capital letters are always tall!**): Pop! Wow!
- Use Independent Writing Totes: **Make Skinny Books and Rubber Band Books:** Teach "My Book," "by _____." "the end" Encourage children to begin writing "I see the ..."
- Draw an Animal: Make a Book: Practice book writing words and sentences.
 - My book, by _____
 - I love..., I see the..., I like my..., I can see the..., I have a..., This is my
 - the end
- Continue teaching.... 30 Essential Handwriting Lessons and bonus lessons.
- Independent Writing Centers include writing **messages to and from friends** and "We Love Lists!"
- **Teach "Thank you!"** Sing the Thank You song to principal and visitors. Write thank you notes to family and friends.
- **Celebrate name writing experts** with communal or individual rituals such as a crown, award necklace, or Handwriting Experts folder.
- Optional: **With more proficient writers you may teach "because"** earlier in the year.
- **Sing vowel songs:** "a, e, i, o, u" such as Vowel Bat. Write vowels. Notice vowels in words.



- Assess for handwriting fluency a, b, c, d and e, f, g. (Children will have memorized the sequence of letters by singing and fingerspelling the traditional ABC song.)

(December/January) Handwriting Goals (Intentionally teach words with the least common letters: j, q, x, z)

- Daily name writing and **at least 3 "heart word" sentences**. Challenge students to add "because" for compound sentences. Students mastering all 5 sentences with fluency may create their own personal sentences.
- Make word family houses (at, op, ing): First fingerspell to feel the beginning sound (onset) and ending (rime), and then write the words.
- Review **Anchor Chart**: What does good handwriting look like?
- **Study name writing** at least once a week: Are all students ready to practice last names?
- **Write first and last name**. *Children: you get to print your last name because you taught your brain to print every letter in your first name with good handwriting!* Invite "Parents as Partners" to continue name writing practice at home if needed.
- **Sing traditional alphabet song**. Challenge children to see how far they can first sing and fingerspell the alphabet, and then write the alphabet from memory: a,b,c,d e,f,g h,i,j,k...
- Continue writing **messages** to friends and lists, and drawing and **making books**.
- **Expect handwriting to be smaller**. Students will meet your expectation.
- Choose to review *Essential Handwriting Lessons* as needed. Decide whether to **start individual student practice books** *Kindergarten-Friendly Handwriting, Phonics, and Word Work* with some or all students. Provide more intensive handwriting coaching for developmentally younger students or students needing intervention. Train volunteers.
- Teach **speech bubbles (again)** and more exclamation words: Pop! Boo! Wow! Hi! Stop! No! Notice text features in *Elephant and Piggie* books by Mo Willems.
- Provide multisensory **CVC word practice** with good handwriting emphasizing one beginning consonant at a time. Review handwriting for words containing p, f, b, and r. (Pop! fun, ran)
- **More proficient students may have mastered all 62 pink, purple, yellow, and green words** by January. They get to start on first grade words - blue, apricot, teal, and silver words (or whichever colors you choose!) **only after they can fluently write** the first 62 "heart words." (Not just read!)
- Expect students to write at least **3 or more "heart word" sentences fluently**. (I love... I see... I like..., I can..., I have...) Some students may still need to see a model; others will have developed brain power and writing proficiency (speed and accuracy) with good handwriting.
- Sing, sign, spell, and write the word "happy." Talk about story endings.
- **At least once a month, take student writing journals home**. Study use of "heart word" sentences, phonetic spelling, and handwriting. Plan future large and small group minilessons.

(February/March) Handwriting Goals (Finalize *Essential Lessons* and begin self-editing)

- Daily name writing. Daily “heart word” sentences (Adding personal sentences using “ing,” “because,” and “favorite”).
- Complete *30 Essential Handwriting Lessons* and Bonus Lessons. Review as needed. Focus on transferring skills to writing workshop where **children are writing informational stories**.
- Continue to **honor name writing experts!** Display Name Tickets showing mastery of first and last names.
- Provide “**Playing with Punctuation**” lessons.
- Continue **CVC practice** on white boards.
- **Expect good handwriting** on all writing.
- **Self-editing includes** capitals, spaces between words, punctuation, and good handwriting. (Use the form provided.)
- Some students may benefit from more small group a-z practice book lessons.
- Notice capital letter writing and provide group lessons as needed.
- Make sure all children can sing/say the ABC song from memory. Prepare students: Brain exercises for fluency: writing 40 lowercase letters in one minute. (Provide visual support for less experienced learners.)

The more we practice— good handwriting The better we get at— good handwriting!

(April/May) Handwriting Goals (Brain exercises for fluency and publishing student books)

- Daily name writing and creative, compound “heart word” sentences!
- Can students **fluently write 5 “heart word” sentences including “I have...” and “This is...?”**
- Write “**My favorite book is _____ because...**”
- **Brain exercises** for fluency A - Z (speed and accuracy).
- Write **letters to first grade teachers**.
- Narrative, Opinion, and Information stories **edited and polished** during Writers Workshop.
- **Publishing student books:** Children re-illustrate and rewrite stories with best handwriting.
- **Authors’ celebration:** Children read their books to parents, classmates, and older students. (Give them practice with volunteers so they really shine!) Make color copies of some books as mentor text for next year.

Kindergarten-friendly handwriting instruction develops a growth mindset: focus, hard work, perseverance, goal setting, and writing power to express the unique voice of a younger writer. It gives ALL students intellectual challenge and builds pride in doing quality work. Our kindergarten-friendly approach to handwriting builds motivation, stamina, and fluency for writing workshop. This is how we build the reading and writing brain for rigorous, achievable ELA Common Core Standards.

Prevent reading failure: Teach handwriting!