# Resources for writing

All students will benefit from the opportunity to use a wide variety of writing implements and surfaces and the opportunity to experiment. However, teachers will give careful consideration to the suitability of writing implements and paper given to students for instructional and extensive use.

### Writing implements

Standard ‘adult’ writing implements support students’ handwriting development as they:

* help students develop a mature pencil grasp
* are thin enough for the point to be easily seen by the writer – this avoids leaning over work which detracts from good posture
* produce a fine line to enhance the detail of letter shapes.

However, younger children (both left-and right handers) may prefer pencils with a slightly large diameter as they are easier for them to hold, and triangle pencils help to promote the development of a mature grasp. Pencils with raised dots, indents, grooves and built in grips also encourage the development of a mature pencil grasp (Mackenzie & Spokes, 2024).

Students learning to write like to produce dark and contrasting lines so 2B and B standardised pencils and felt or nylon-tipped pens are recommended for both right and left-handed learners. Some thin-barrelled crayons may be appropriate. Some brands of felt-tipped pen are unsuitable if both sides of the paper are to be written on, since the ink penetrates the paper.

When students have developed a mature grasp and are forming letters efficiently and automatically HB pencils can also be used while. fluent writers can be introduced to the use of ballpoint pens and roller-ball pens.

While many students will find these implements appropriate, implements should be selected to meet students’ individual needs. Pens that smudge easily should be avoided with left-handers.

As students develop control and competence, usually during the middle years of schooling, fountain pens and calligraphy pens can be introduced and used in addition to the other writing implements.

### Pen holders and triangular-shaped pencils

For young children some standard holders may need to be shortened.

Moulded plastic devices designed to hold pens and pencils may assist students having trouble developing the precision grip, as may triangular-shaped pencils. However, as their purpose is to assist in developing pencil grasp, they are best viewed as a short-term measure, possibly only employed in Prep and Grade 1.

### Paper

While general recommendations can be made regarding paper and line sizes for handwriting instruction, paper should be selected to meet students’ individual needs.

Many students in Prep and Year 1 will find appropriate:

* blank A4 paper
* dotted thirds with a line depth of 24 mm (letter size 8 mm)

Blank                                                                     Lined

Resources for writing, paper, Victorian Modern Cursive Alphabet (A-Z), Blank and Lined

Many students beginning school will use blank paper for much of the year and be introduced to lined paper divided into thirds later in the year. The transition from blank paper to lined paper divided into thirds can be facilitated by having students learn to write letter bodies sitting on a single line or on the crease of a folded blank sheet. If beginning, emergent or early writers form letters with the letter body not sitting on the line, teachers can refer the student to their alphabet card to highlight letter placement or can model the correct placement on the student’s page.

Placing the paper in the ‘landscape’ position may assist students establishing the understandings of directionality and return sweep. Once these concepts are understood, A4 paper placed in a ‘portrait’ rather than ‘landscape’ position may reduce body leaning.

Many students in Years 2 and 3 will find appropriate:

* A4 sheets and exercise books divided into dotted thirds with a line depth of 18 mm (letter size: 6 mm)

Resources for writing, paper, Victorian Modern Cursive Alphabet (A-Z), Dotted thirds, 18mm

Many students in Year 4 will find appropriate:

* an introduction to 14 mm exercise books (letter size: about 5 mm)

Dotted thirds with a line depth of 18 mm (letter size 6 mm) may still be appropriate for some students.

Resources for writing, paper, Victorian Modern Cursive Alphabet (A-Z), 14mm

Many students entering the middle years – Years 5 and 6 – will find appropriate:

* an introduction to 8 or 9mm exercise books (letter size: 2 or 3 mm). Most of these students will no longer require dotted thirds.

A green dot can show the starting position, an arrow can indicate direction and a red dot can show where the movement is completed.

Resources for writing, paper, Victorian Modern Cursive Alphabet (A-Z), 8mm

### Publishing

When students are publishing writing to be shared with an audience, a range of writing implements and surfaces can be available for use. Through experimentation students will develop their own style and flair, and understandings about the effectiveness of different publishing formats.

### Models

The most effective model of handwriting is the dynamic model performed by the teacher in front of the student, showing the actual motions involved in forming the letter or join, including:

* the starting point
* the direction in which the letter is formed
* where the letter is completed or joined to the following letter.

However, alternate models and instructions will be necessary for left-handers for some letters (e.g. the direction of the stroke for many left-handers is from right to left for **t** and **f**)

Copying from alphabet cards showing Victorian Modern Cursive is also useful in supporting students’ writing, particularly if they show:

* the starting point of each letter
* the direction in which each letter is formed
* the point where the letter is completed.
* the alternate starting points and directions for left-handers for some letters.

The teacher must be observant to ensure that the starting points and direction of letters are followed carefully otherwise students may be practicing incorrect formations.

While students will be surrounded by a range of typefaces and styles of print, it is important that they have easy access to models of Victorian Modern Cursive. These may include alphabet cards and texts constructed by the teacher or students.