# Paper placement; hand, arm and sitting position

Placement of paper, and hand, arm and sitting positions will differ for right- and left-handers. Teachers need to demonstrate paper placement consistently and appropriately for all students.

**Paper placement**

Proper paper placement assists the writer to see clearly what is being written and allows for freedom of movement when writing. The writing paper is sloped according to the angle of the writing arm and is off-centre from the body mid-line. The paper is placed to the right of the body mid-line for the right-hander and angled to the left.

For the left-handed writer, the paper is placed left of the body mid-line and angled to the right. While a greater tilt of the paper position is often helpful for left-handers, the actual angle will depend on the individual. By keeping the left arm almost parallel with the edge of the paper, a sharply bent wrist – which can result when left-handers ‘mimic’ the writing action of right-handers – may be avoided.

Placing left-handed students on the left of a table gives writers more space and reduces the incidence of elbow bumping!



Use of a mature pencil grasp and correct paper placement enable students to see clearly what they are writing and what they have previously written and will avoid hooked wrists and bad posture caused by leaning over to see writing. They also facilitate the correct spacing of letters in words, spacing between words and the rereading of written work and reduce the likelihood of smudging.

**Hand and arm position**

The writing arm is kept almost parallel with the edge of the paper, the forearm supported by the writing surface and the writing hand turned on its side so that the outer edge of the hand rests on the table. The writing arm should have freedom to move away from the body and not pivot from the elbow. The non-writing hand holds the paper steady.

Both right- and left-handed writers need to be instructed to have their writing hand below the actual line of writing, ideally at approximately 45 degrees between the central position of the torso and the writing line.

Once students are ready to join letters, they will be introduced to pen lifts. Pen lifts allow the support point of the hand to be moved along before the hand becomes compressed to the point that letters become distorted, so maintaining legibility as speed is encouraged. Left-handed students often use more pen lifts than write-handers.

**Sitting position**

For correct posture, it is suggested that students be seated at a table or desk suitable for their size. A table that is too high causes strain, a table that is too low causes slumping. Ideally the chair seat slopes forwards so the student may maintain a straight back even when leaning over work. For students who have established the understandings of directionality and return sweep, the use of A4 paper, placed in a ‘portrait’ rather than ‘landscape’ position, may reduce body leaning. Students must be encouraged to adopt a good posture at all times.



A writer should face the table squarely – or slightly to the right for left-handers and slightly to the left for right-handers. The non-writing arm takes any weight from the upper portion of the body while the non-writing hand holds the paper steady. When students lean forward to write, the movement should be from the hips rather than from the waist. The stomach doesn’t touch the table. Both arms are able to rest on the desk at elbow or slightly below elbow level.

When students write, both forearms may be slightly beyond the edge of the table. Ideally the eyes are between 20 and 40 cm from the paper. This eye distance can only be obtained if the student is leaning over the writing. For right-handers, each line of writing commences more or less in line with the centre of the body. For left-handers, each line of writing finishes more or less in line with the centre of the body.