



DYSGRAPHIA AND TYPING

Dysgraphia is a deficiency in the ability to write, regardless of the ability to read, not due to intellectual impairment. It is known to be associated with an autism spectrum disorder (specifically Asperger Syndrome) and ADHD. Some key facts about children with Dysgraphia:

- Can usually write on some level, but often lack motor coordination.
- May find other fine motor tasks such as tying shoes difficult, though often does not affect all fine motor skills.
- Can lack basic spelling skills (for example, having difficulties with the letters p, q, b, and d).
- Often will write the wrong word when trying to formulate thoughts (on paper).
- Generally emerges when the child is first introduced to writing. The child may make inappropriately sized and spaced letters, or write wrong or misspelled words despite thorough instruction.

For children with an autism spectrum disorder it can take a HUGE amount of energy and effort to write. It can be extremely frustrating for them as they know what they want to write and how it should look but they do not have the skills to put it on paper as fast as their brain works!

Children frustrated by lack of control of their pencil will start to avoid writing and start using inappropriate behaviours to 'get out of' doing their work. Anything we can do to improve fine motor control, build strength and reduce the frustration of the child is essential – and Pencil Grips are one way of doing this. The Pencil Grip is a sought after range of ergonomic designed writing aids suitable for any user or writing instrument, whether for right or left handed use, these grips position the fingers comfortably and correctly position for easy writing.

The other solution is to allow children to use computers and put in place the appropriate supports for fine motor skills. Often children with an autism spectrum disorder get so tired and frustrated when doing writing tasks, they prefer computers because less fine motor skills are required.

Typing is a useful skill for children to learn from an early age with the long term goal of children being literate and able to communicate through written words if speech does fail to come. You can start teaching typing by having the child find letters of the alphabet on the keyboard. Build up to two, three and four letter words – using words of familiar or favourite things.

Literacy combined with typing opens up the world of communication for older children. Once literate, even a non-verbal child can freely communicate their thoughts, feelings and questions if they have a keyboard available. Simple portable keyboards made of paper or card can be transported anywhere.

Recommended Resources (available online at www.suelarkey.com):

**Practical
Communication
Programmes**
*By Jo Adkins and
Sue Larkey*



The Pencil Grip



**Cross-over Pencil
Grip**



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