



From Mark Making to Confident Writing in Year 1

Understanding Early Writing
Development from EYFS to Year 1

Darlinghurst

ACADEMY



Why Early Writing Matters

Writing doesn't suddenly begin when children pick up a pencil to form letters. It starts much earlier; through the marks they make as they explore the world. These early marks show us how children think, communicate, and express ideas. Your support at home plays a huge part in building their confidence and enthusiasm for writing.





What Is Mark Making?

Mark making is the very first step in the writing journey. It includes scribbles, dots, lines, circles — anything a child creates using a tool or even their fingers. At this stage, children are experimenting, exploring, and discovering what happens when they move their hands. This builds the foundations for later writing skills.



EYFS Writing Development: Typical Stages

In the EYFS, children move through several stages. First, they make random marks — just enjoying the movement. Then they begin to control their marks, creating lines and shapes.

Next, their marks start to carry meaning — they might tell you a story about their picture.

Eventually, they create letter-like shapes and often begin to write their name.

All of these stages are completely normal and important.



Pre Writing Shapes



1-2 years



2-3 years



3 years



3 years



4 years



4 years
4 months



4 years
6 months



4 years
7 months



4 years
11 months



5 years
3 months

www.SensoryLifestyle.com

Stages of Writing

Stage	Description	Example
Drawing/scribbling	Scribbles look random but are purposeful for the child. Represent ideas	
Wavy scribbles or "pretend writing"	Imitates writing from left to right or pretending to write words	
Drawing and letter strings	Draws pictures and writes strings of random letters from left to right	
Copying words and early phonetic spelling	Draws pictures, copies words and adds in phonetic spelling (using letters-mostly just consonants- to represent each sound they hear)	
Phonetic spelling	Writes words by using letters to represent EACH sound that is heard	
Phonetic spelling with sentence writing	Writes sentences with phonetic spelling. Most words have spaces between	
Conventional spelling with sentence writing	Writes with complete sentences with (mostly) correct spelling	

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The Role of Physical Development

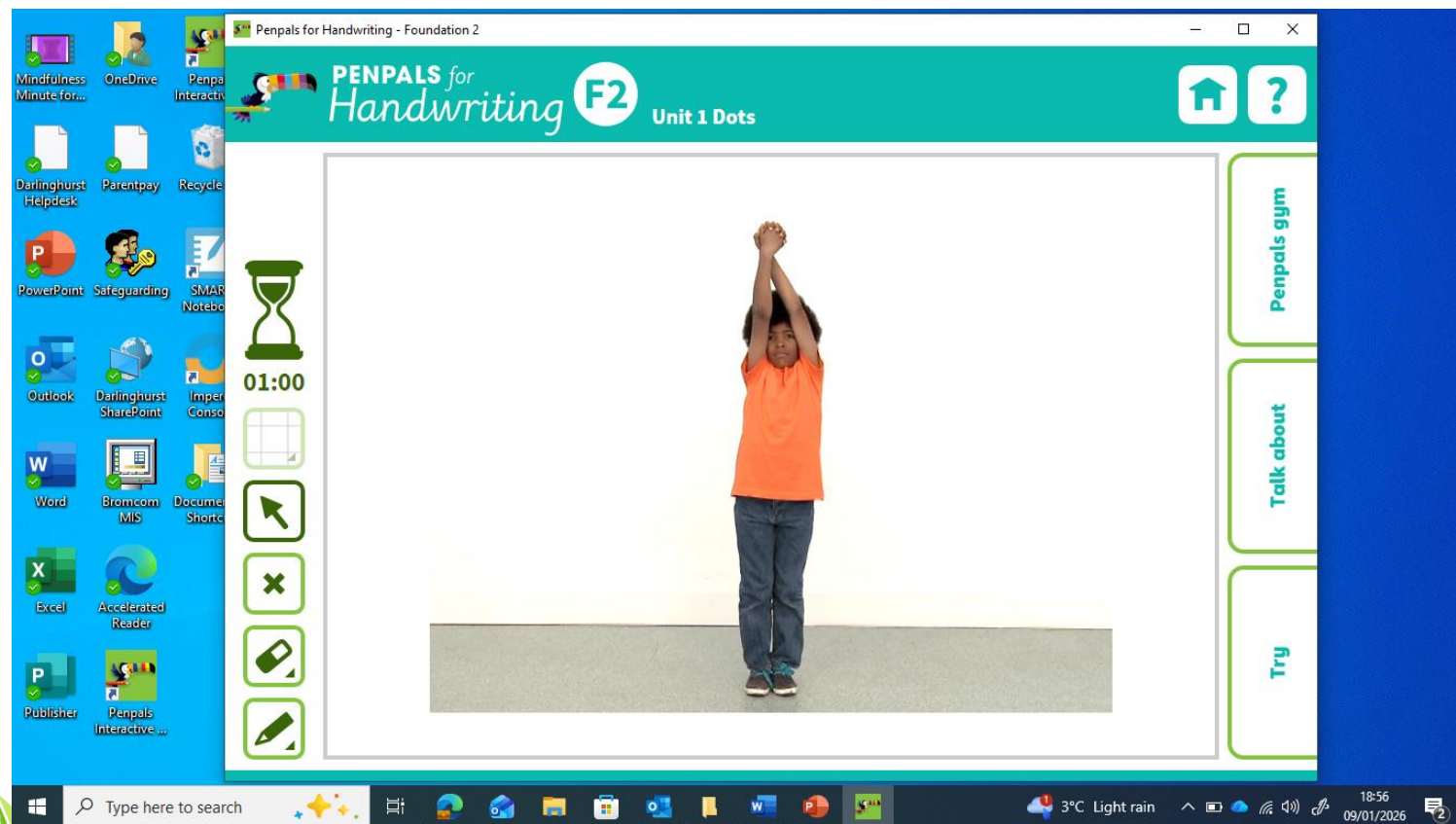
Writing relies on physical strength and coordination (fine motor skills).

Before children can hold a pencil well, they need strong shoulders, arms, hands, and fingers (gross motor skills)

Activities like climbing, pushing, pulling, threading, using playdough, or even helping in the kitchen all help build these muscles. Fine motor play is just as important as practising letters.”












































PENPALS



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How Phonics Supports Writing

Phonics gives children the tools to turn sounds into letters. They start by hearing the first sound in a word, then move on to breaking words into separate sounds. This helps them write simple words using the sounds they know. It's not about perfect spelling — it's about using phonics to make plausible attempts.

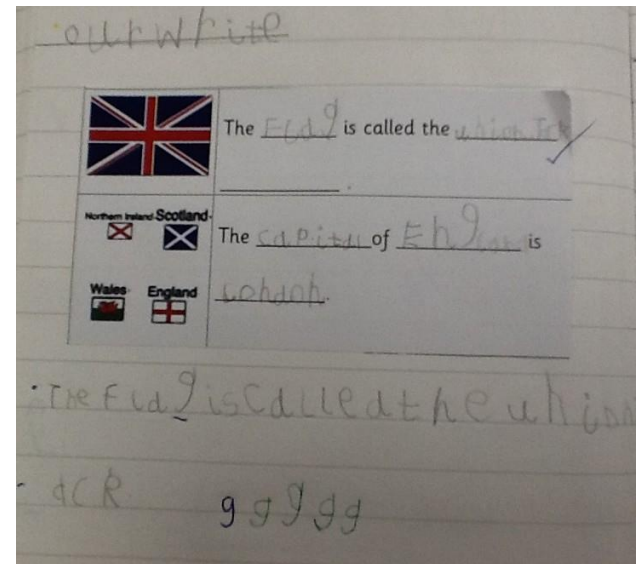
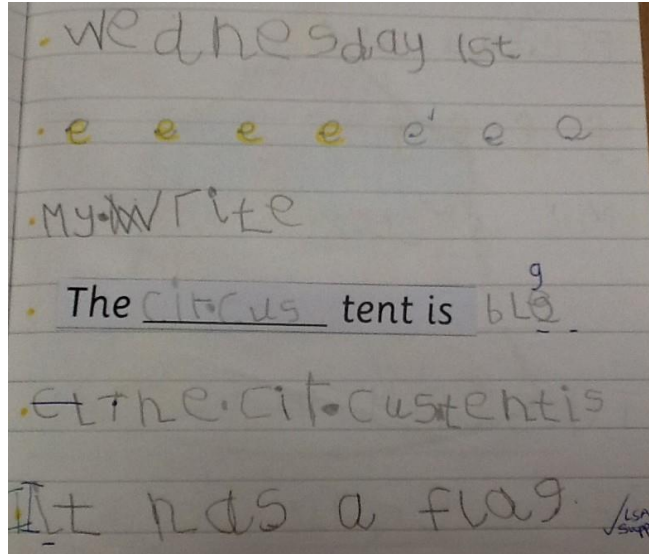
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Transitioning into Year 1 Writing

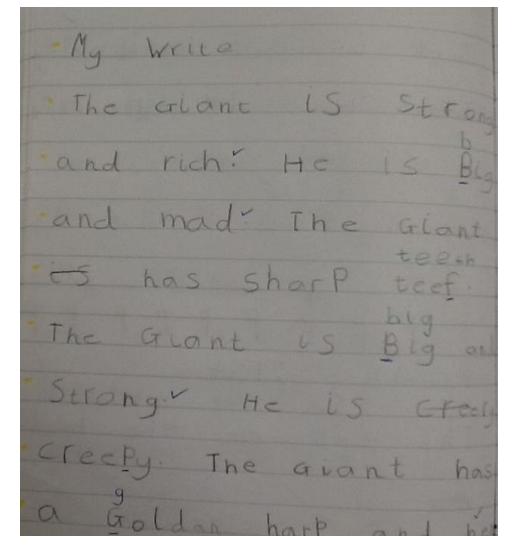
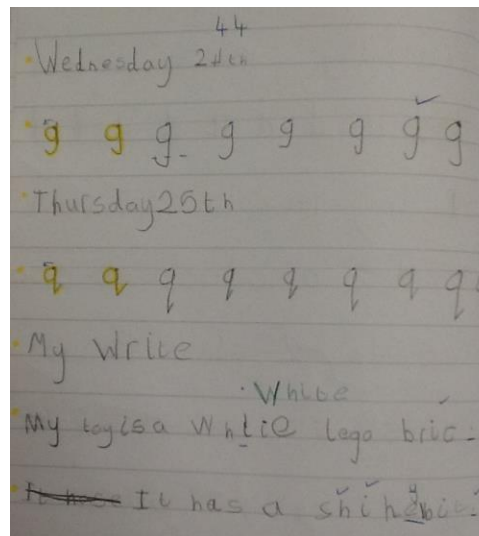
Consolidation of EYFS writing skills is paramount at the start of Year 1. Children continue to strengthen their fine and gross motor skills using the PENPALS programme.

We build on the writing skills taught in EYFS, supporting through scaffolding, phonics sound mats and common exception word mats.



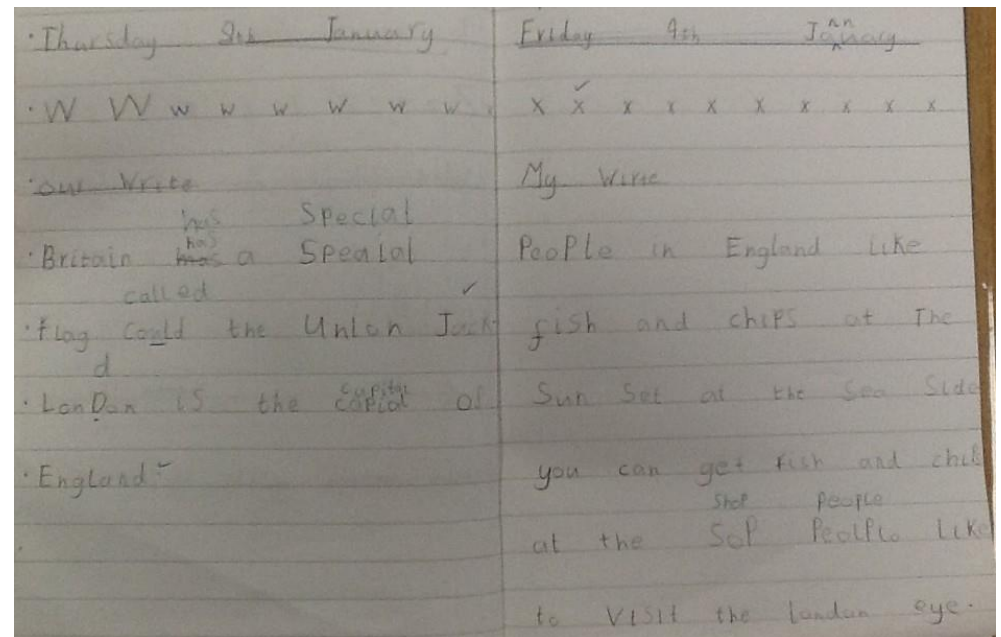
Year 1 Writing

As children move through Year 1, their writing becomes more consistent. They begin forming letters more accurately, writing simple sentences, and using phonics to spell unfamiliar words. They also start using capital letters, finger spaces, and full stops. Their stamina grows too — they can write for longer and with more independence.



What Writing Looks Like in Year 1

In Year 1, writing becomes more purposeful. Children write sentences that make sense, attempt punctuation, and use phonetic spelling confidently. They start writing for different reasons — stories, lists, labels, recounts, and more. It's a year of huge growth and increasing independence.



Handwriting

The 2025 Writing Framework places handwriting and transcription skills at the ***heart*** of early writing development.

Clear, fluent handwriting supports spelling, sentence construction, and overall writing confidence.



Explicit, precise, and regular teaching of handwriting from Reception onwards.

Correct Letter Formation

Children are taught to form letters using **consistent starting points**, correct directionality, and appropriate pencil grip.

Emphasis on **lowercase letters first**, grouped by movement patterns (e.g., c-family, ladder letters).

Capital letters and joins introduced only when children have secure foundational formation



Long Ladder Letters

ll ii tt

uu yy

jj

Zig-zag Monster Letters

xx ww

zz vv

Curly Caterpillar Letters

cc aa dd oo

gg qq ee ss ff

One-armed Robot Letters

rr nn mm

hh bb pp

kk



What This Looks Like in Practice

Daily short handwriting sessions.

Modelling by adults with clear verbal cues.

Opportunities to apply handwriting in meaningful writing tasks.

Supportive adaptations for children with SEND to ensure inclusion



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How Parents Can Help at Home

You can make a big difference at home with simple, everyday activities.

- Encourage drawing, colouring, and craft — these all strengthen the muscles needed for writing.
- Offer different writing tools and surfaces: chalk outside, pens, crayons, whiteboards.
- Model writing by making lists or notes where your child can see.

REMEMBER: Letter formation

Play phonics games and, most importantly, celebrate effort rather than perfection



Final Thoughts & Questions

Writing is a journey, and every child moves at their own pace.

By working together — home and school — we can help children feel confident, capable, and excited about writing.

Thank you for listening.



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