
Penmanship as a Means of Teaching Reading/Spelling Skills

About the only thing that most learning-to-read theorists agree upon is that writing should be involved. Some involve writing more than others. But writing (whether original or group composition) always assumes the ability of your children to make the letters.

What AVKO is trying to do is to use the **legibility** approach to handwriting as a means to improve reading and spelling skills. Handwriting does not have to be pretty to be understood. But handwriting must be **legible** in order to be correctly read.

This set of AVKO Sequential Handwriting books (*Let's Write Right* plus *Rimes and More Rhymes*) may be used as a complete course in and of itself.

However, we believe it will be most effective as a part of whatever language arts curriculum is already in place.

We believe that if you, the parent, devote just the first ten minutes of every class hour to AVKO Sequential handwriting, your children will learn to read and write English using their regular texts much faster.

As long as practice is necessary to achieve what Professor Downing described as "automaticity," we might as well learn something besides just letter formation along the way. For example, sloppiness in handwriting can cause confusion between the words *dear* and *clear*. If the *cl* is too close together it looks like the letter *d*. If the upstroke of the *d* doesn't cross through the end of the beginning stroke then the *d* will look like a *cl*. So, when we practice writing *d* and the *cl* combination, we could be practicing the spelling or the reading of the *cl* consonant blend as well.

We know that if children are told to write a word fifteen times to learn how to spell it, it doesn't work. But through the magic of misdirection, if children are practicing *cl* - and *d* - knowing they are going to be graded on the legibility they tend to concentrate more. The following is a sample exercise to illustrate this point.

cl -

d -

<i>clay</i>	<i>day</i>
<i>clam</i>	<i>dam</i>
<i>cling</i>	<i>ding</i>
<i>clear</i>	<i>dear</i>
<i>clean</i>	<i>dean</i>
<i>clapper</i>	<i>dapper</i>
<i>close</i>	<i>dose</i>
<i>clam</i>	<i>dam</i>
<i>clicker</i>	<i>dicker</i>
<i>clip</i>	<i>dip</i>
<i>club</i>	<i>dub</i>
<i>clone</i>	<i>done</i>

General directions for the above exercise: Tell your children to fold their paper in half lengthwise so there are two columns. At the top of the first column they write the letters cl. At the top of the second column they should write the letter d. Then give the word "clear." Your children must choose the right column in which to write the word. Some might misspell the word as "cleer" or "cler" or "clere." Immediately after your children have attempted writing each word, you should write the word on your dry erase board. Besides providing your children with visual modeling, you will be giving your children the opportunity to learn by immediate self-correction. Immediate child self-correction has been well established by research as probably the most important part of the learning-to-spell process.

When you give the word, they will be hearing (**A**udio) the initial sound (called an onset). As they write it, they will be seeing the sounds of the word as they write it (**V**isual). They will be using their muscles (**K**inesthetic memory) to write. Even if they don't say the words and the letters aloud (which we recommend) they will be still saying them under their breath (**O**ral). Using the AVKO multi-sensory approach (or Orton-Gillingham, Slingerland, etc.) your children will, through the magic of misdirection, help program their own computer brains into locking into the letter/sound patterns that make up words.