

## Position Skill Needs Identification

The following pages guide observations and assessments of the student's position skills. They are designed to help the teacher and pupil identify needs and set specific goals for skill improvement. We will use a Likert Scale to assess a degree of need. The scale used is 1-3 where (1) represents a low degree of need and (3) a high degree of need based upon interference with relaxation and/or movement control for fluent legibility.

As you make observations you will identify clear goals for coaching. Each (3) rating should be targeted for constant reinforcement during practice and more importantly, during all independent work.

Pupils can achieve improvement with specific practice and constant coaching. The opportunity and need for motivation and reminder is greatest during the work day once specific goals have been identified for practice. Remember, we are trying to create a new "habit." The established "habit" will be used without thinking. We need to help the student think about the **new goal** until it becomes habit.

If we do not reinforce good position skills constantly, independent work will usually be practice of poor process habits. Please correlate position skill objectives as well as legibility into all writing activities for real success. Our Legibility Subskill Posters (six letter-size pages) can make correlation of specific legibility goals much easier. The PDF files can be printed from Acrobat Reader.

**Student** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

## **Position Skills And The Desk**

**Desk Height** - to what degree does the height of the desk retard the writing process?      3      2      1

Best height = bottom rib. Rate as (1) Low Degree. Added height forces elbows away from body. If elbows are forced far away from the body rate as (3) High Degree. Adjust the desk height to make the goals below easier to achieve.

**Paper Holding** - to what degree does paper holding retard lateral movement?      3      2      1

Children place the paper near body midpoint. Rotating the paper allows good writing arm entry. The need for rotation increases as desk height increases. The paper-holding hand should be at the top of paper. The paper should be high enough on the table to allow the forearms to be on the table surface.

**Writing Arm Placement** - to what degree does arm positioning retard lateral movement?      3      2      1

Some pupils rotate the paper, but place the writing arm in the wrong position. The writing arm should enter from the bottom of the page. If the arm enters the page from the side, easy lateral movement along the lines is blocked. This may not seem to be problematic at early levels because the child is making one letter at a time. The pupil will face processing problems when fluent words and sentences become the goal.

**Student** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

### **Pencil/Pen Grip Observations**

Finger positions can block line of sight, easy lateral movement and cause poor posture. If the pupil slumps over or leans the head sideways, check grip position closely. If grip posture causes the writing hand to cover the image area, how can the child learn how to look ahead for good size and spacing with any sort of fluency?

**Grip and Posture**- to what degree does the grip habit contribute to poor sitting posture?

3      2      1

**Grip and Fatigue** - to what degree does the grip habit portend writer's cramp when sustained writing activity is required? (Finger/thumb positions cause pinching and/or pressure.)

3      2      1

**Grip and Vision** - to what degree does the grip habit block effective use of goal-oriented, fluent movement by covering the image area?

3      2      1

**Grip and Wrist** - to what degree does the pencil grip contribute to poor writing hand/wrist position?

More than one finger on top of the pencil contributes to wrist rotation and/or pronation putting the writing hand in the image area. The hand position blocks vision and lateral movement. The child may produce strokes with wrist muscles.

3      2      1

## An Example Analysis:

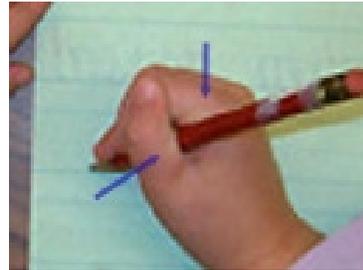


**Desk Height:** Note that the upper arms are parallel to the floor. The desk surface is at armpit height.

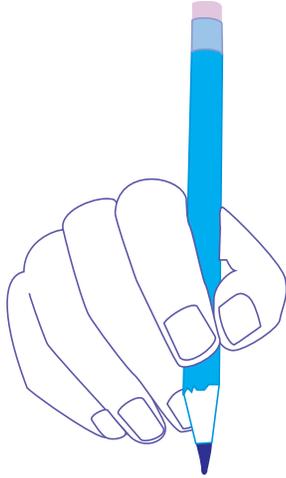
**Paper Position:** Note that the child has tried to rotate the page on the desk - then turned her body to get the paper back into reading position. The writing arm enters from the right side. If the child did rotate the paper to allow proper arm entry, the lines on the paper would run almost perpendicular to the name tag - parallel to the white arrow.

**Lateral Movement:** The white arrow indicates the direction the arm could move easily. It is determined by the desk and the arm position on it. Movement along the lines on the paper is at best greatly retarded - even if the pencil grip were better.

**Blocked Vision:** The grip above causes the writing hand to cover the spaces being used for writing and would do so even if the arm entry were better. Eye training needed for fluency - learning to look ahead to goals - is blocked by the hand. Note that the tip of the pointer is almost touching the lead. The thumb-wrap closes the grip into the fist. Note pressure points indicated by the blue arrows in the close up view. The writer at the right is touching the pencil in almost the same spot on the page as the pupil at the left. Note that arm entry and grip put the writing hand completely under the image area and easy arm movement will travel along the lines on the paper.



## Good Position Skills Make A Difference



### The Pencil Song

One finger on top.  
Stay back on the paint.  
Don't Pinch.  
Don't squeeze.  
Don't press down hard.

Pointer on the paint.  
Thumb on the side.  
Curve the other fingers,  
so they can slide.

