

# Literacy Development – Eight's too Late

## Questions and Answers

**There is a viewpoint by some that google can do talk to text. Any research on the effect on using this too early?**

This is a useful tool for older children who have got to the stage of creating their own stories. We would recommend a bit of caution with very young children, but it can be a fantastic tool for age 8 upwards, who would otherwise be frustrated with not being able to put their ideas down on paper.

**Pencil verses Pen - I find using pencils seem to give more control, what are your thoughts, when should the use of pen start for writing?**

We would recommend using pencils, to be honest. A pencil gives better kinaesthetic feedback. Our recommendation would be the slightly thicker ones which are triangle shaped. Often better for small hands than the rather chunky pencil grips you can get.

**Any tips to develop pencil control/tripod grip? Any suggestions gratefully appreciated!**

Actually, the old-fashioned colouring-in activities are great for this. Also, activities which involve following (drawing over) a line or pattern. One problem nowadays is that children are often too entertained by screens and have abandoned the old-fashioned hands-on activities which were great for fine motor skills.

There's a blog on our website which you might find useful. You'll find it here:

<https://blog.stepsweb.com/seven-tips-to-help-your-child-with-handwriting-difficulties>.

**We were very interested in your comments about picking struggling learners up at an earlier stage. We can see the logic in that, but there were some concerns expressed about children feeling that they are failing if they get special attention. What is your feeling about that?**

Of course that's a genuine concern, so thanks for raising the question. However, children are very aware themselves that they're not doing well at reading – from the very earliest stages. There are a few key points we'd like to make here.

Firstly, if we're providing the right kind of structured literacy approach for all learners, fewer learners will feel that they're struggling in the first place. Secondly, extra reinforcement activities can be incorporated in quite large groups in the early stages and younger children are unlikely to ever notice that their group aren't always doing exactly the same as others. If every learner is progressing at their own individual rate, they don't necessarily need to be in defined groups anyway, other than for selected activities (phonological, for example).

Also, where difficulties do become more apparent and children need a more targeted approach (our Tier 3's for example), it can reassure children to be told that some people just learn to read a bit differently. It might seem to take a bit longer in the early stages, but there's absolutely no reason why they shouldn't do just as well at reading. As they start to see their own progress, they grow in confidence anyway.

If things go to plan, in the early school years you'll have quite a few Tier 2's, a medium-sized group of Tier 3's, but very few Tier 4's. With the right intervention at that stage, most of your Tier 3's will become your Tier 2's, who need less and less support over time.