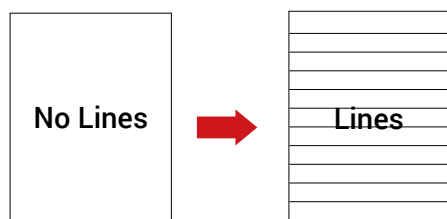


Which Paper and Pencils to Use with Early Writers?

There are a variety of different papers being used in grade 1 classes. They include

- blank paper,
- 18mm spaced lined paper,
- paper with only one bold line,
- dotted third lines at 24mm
- 24mm spaced lined paper,



There is also paper commonly called Earth Paper, being introduced into classrooms. This paper has three lines; a blue line at the top representing the sky, a green line in the middle, representing the grass and a brown line at the bottom, representing the ground. To date these have been used more frequently in Occupational Therapy clinics with children with handwriting difficulties. However Earth paper has been found to be very useful for children who are just beginning to learn letter sizing and placement; assisting them in placing their letters correctly on the lines and in controlling letter size and proportion.

It is suggested that in the early stages of learning letter formation children have the opportunity to work on blank paper. This ensures the movement pattern is learned correctly without the added complication of trying to fit the letters anywhere. However as soon as the movement pattern is mastered, children then need to be guided to start placing letters on the line. It is only through the opportunity to rehearse and practice that children are able to achieve pencil control and mastery.

Which Paper to Choose?

There is no research or evidence currently available to help us determine which type of paper to use and when. Children who are competent writers are usually able to use any type of paper. It is often helpful to consider the skill levels of the children in considering your selection. Utilise the pre writing, letter formation and pencil control accuracy tasks to determine the best paper match for the child.

Plain Paper

This is great for beginner writers who are in the early stages of acquiring skills in letter formation. It allows rehearsal without adding another demand. However once the early skills are mastered it is preferable to introduce lines to begin to confine letter formations and demand increased pencil control from the writer.

Single Lines

Single lines are generally used in handmade worksheets (written or computer generated). The introduction of the single line is great for allowing children some room to form their letters but begins the process of addressing letter placement. It does however not give clear indicators where letters should start or how long they should be in relation to each other.

24mm/18mm Lined Paper Example found on pages 3 and 4.

These papers offer continuous lines spaced down the page. They allow children to be able to gauge where to start and finish letters. The continuous pattern does not leave a lot of room for editing work but there is more space available than with dotted thirds paper. Children can be encouraged to leave a line in between, as they are developing their independent writing.

Dotted Thirds Example found on pages 5

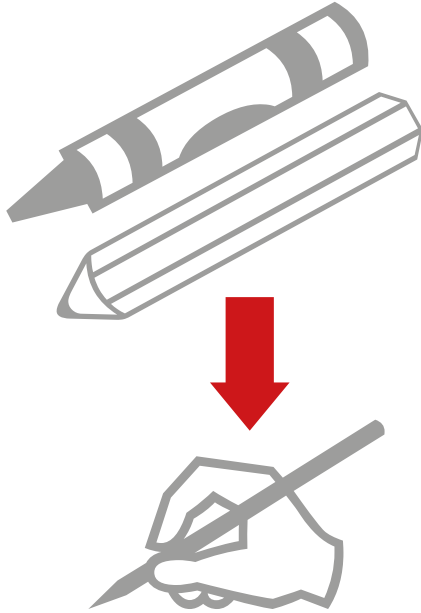
This type of lined paper is great in principle for giving clear indicators for starting and finishing points for letters. Unfortunately the many lines of the dotted thirds are often visually complicated for the beginner writer, whilst they are still mastering remembering letters and their formations. In addition the current style of page with a continuous pattern down the length of the page doesn't allow room for editing work. If you choose to use dotted thirds encourage children to leave out a row between writing, or create your own sheet with gaps in between each section of dotted thirds

Earth Paper Example found on pages 6 and 7.

This paper is colour coded for starting and finishing points of letters. Once formations are mastered and letter placement is being addressed the colours give clear indicators. There is also space on these sheets for editing if required. However this paper is expensive per sheet and children will need to be supported to transition to other types of paper.

It may be useful to review the types of paper used at each grade level within the school and determine if they follow a methodical sequence that matches the writing demands of each year level and allows for a smooth transition between paper types. See over for *What Pencils To Choose?* and recommended resources.

Which Pencils to Choose?



There is considerable research in the area of developmental hand function that indicates that children's hands are not sufficiently developed to manipulate small tools in a controlled manner. The very fine muscles in the hand that assist with very fine smooth movements are still maturing. To this end wide diameter pencils, crayons and pens are recommended.

In addition it is very common for a child who has begun to use a tripod grasp to manipulate pencil to revert to a poor grasp when struggling to control the pencil to form letters. A large grip writing tool helps the child's to maintain a good grasp of the pencil whilst they learn and master letter formations. They also help prevent fatigue in the hand as the writing demands increase.

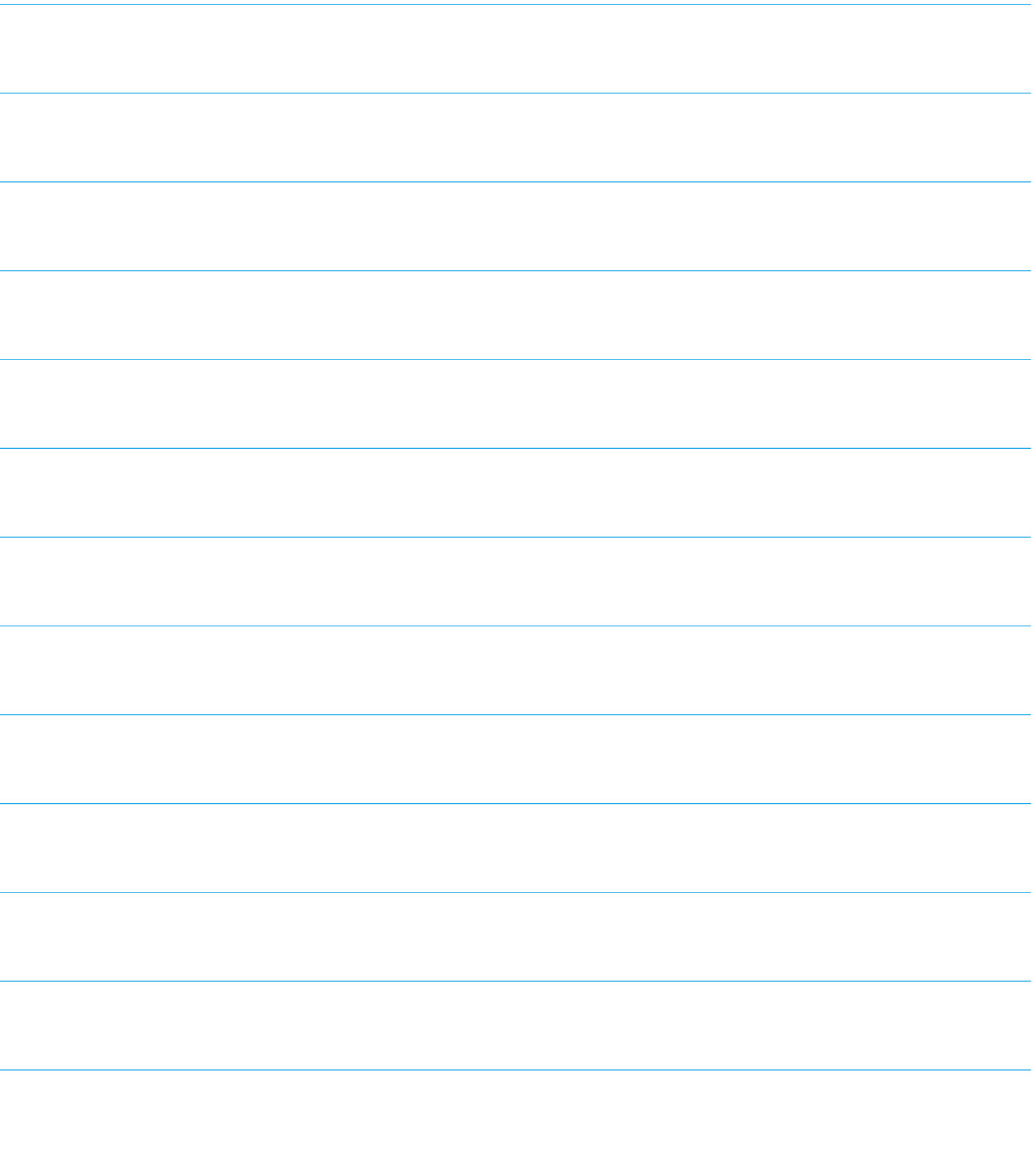
If large width pencils are not available consider purchasing pencil grips to expand the diameter of the child's pencil.

Paper Choices

The following pages present examples of:

- 24mm Spaced Lined Paper
- 18mm Spaced Lined Paper
- 24mm Dotted Thirds
- 24mm Earth Paper
- 18mm Earth Paper

PLD's programs that develop the above skills can be viewed by searching the codes: DSPPf/DSPPc, DSY1f/DSY1c, Phw, Mpw, WBpw, Ppw, Mhu4, Mprd, Mlff/Mlfc available from www.pld-literacy.org mail@pld-literacy.org Phone: +61 (08) 9227 0846
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Handwriting practice area with 10 sets of horizontal lines. Each set consists of a solid top line, a dotted middle line, and a solid bottom line, providing a guide for letter height and placement.

Handwriting practice lines consisting of multiple sets of three horizontal lines (top blue, middle green, bottom red) for letter formation.

Handwriting practice lines consisting of 10 sets of three horizontal lines (top blue, middle green, bottom red).