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# The British School of Gran Canaria **Handwriting Guidelines and Expectations** Policy Document

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# THE BRITISH SCHOOL OF GRAN CANARIA

## HANDWRITING GUIDELINES AND EXPECTATIONS

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### 1. Scope

The document applies from Nursery to Year 6, within the South and Tafira Primary. The school's curriculum is based on the National Curriculum for England and Wales 2014, with minor adjustments to ensure recognition of Spanish handwriting practices.

### 2. Definitions

Throughout this document the following words, terms and phrases have the following meanings:

**Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)** – Refers to the Nursery and Reception pupils in school.

**Key Stage One** – refers to pupils in Years One and Two.

**Key Stage Two** – refers to pupils in Years Three to Six.

**National Curriculum** – Refers to the National Curriculum for England and Wales 2014.

**Letterjoin Handwriting** – refers to a specific handwriting scheme purchased by the school.

**ReadWriteInc** – refers to a specific reading and writing programme followed by the school.

**Write Dance** – refers to a specific programme for gross motor development purchased by the school.

### 3. Rational

Handwriting is a means of recording language on paper, using a generally understood system of symbols. It is an important life skill as a functional tool for expressing language and as part of self-image and expression of personality. Despite the increased use of computers for writing, the skill of handwriting remains important in education, employment and in everyday life and it has been proven that writing by hand requires more brain activity than using a keyboard. As a school, we recognise that children's ability to write well for the rest of their lives depends on firm foundations of taught skills in their primary years.

The aims and objectives of this document are to ensure a consistent and whole school approach towards the teaching of handwriting, in order to:

- Unify handwriting across the two Primary school sites and communicate a consistent style of handwriting across the Primary age range.
- Help children to handwrite with ease and comfort, which will ultimately result in producing a neat, legible cursive style with correctly formed letters.
- Develop the fluency, flow and speed of handwriting to support other aspects of the writing process, including spelling and ease of composition (there is a strong correlation between developing fluency in handwriting and the ability to produce high quality written texts).

#### **4. Handwriting Principles**

Handwriting is a complex skill to learn and starts well before a child is ready to pick up a pencil and make marks on paper. To develop good handwriting, you need to:

1. Have good whole body strength and dexterity
2. Understand direction, movement and position
3. Remember and recall how to form the different shapes of the letters
4. Sit correctly
5. Hold a pencil appropriately
6. Control the pencil
7. Tilt and move the paper on the desk
8. Refine letter formation and position
9. Join the letters to form words

The points above show that, handwriting requires the integration and maturation of a wide range of cognitive, perceptual, and motor skills including:

- Gross motor skills
- Fine motor skills
- Visual-motor control
- Hand-eye co-ordination
- Cognitive and perceptual skills
- Tactile and kinaesthetic sensitivities
- Behaviour, concentration and motivation
- Spatial awareness

All of these skills and strengths develop at different rates in different children. A weakness in any of the key skills areas can affect a child's handwriting skills. Awareness of this complexity informs the curriculum and teaching progression across the school. It also underpins any intervention programme when children experience difficulties.

From Early Years onwards, staff and children understand that handwriting is a 'whole body' activity.

## **5. Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Laying the Foundations of Handwriting Skills**

“The first handwriting lessons are vital and the most important issue is to ensure that the children we teach learn to form the letters of the alphabet with the correct sequence of strokes from the beginning. Children who have been allowed to invent their own ways of forming letters will find it harder to change the longer they are allowed to persist, but unless these habits are 'unlearned' (often at great effort since the movement memory is very retentive and will tend to revert to old habits) it will be impossible for them to learn a fluent, joined hand. The correct formation of all letters needs to become quite automatic and may require a lot of practice.”

(Suzanne Tiburtius, National Handwriting Association)

At BSGC, pupils in the EYFS get ready to write by undertaking a wide variety of gross and fine motor activities (see Appendix B for a sample of activities). They also prioritise the exploration and manipulation of different tools and materials in order to mark-make.

Pupils in the EYFS follow specific programmes that help to develop the key skills mentioned previously, as a precursor and basis for handwriting. These include:

- Write Dance
- Handwriting as taught by the Read Write Inc scheme
- Warm up games and patterns from the LetterJoin Programme
- Handwriting shapes and patterns from a variety of different sources

In Reception, children begin to learn individual letter formation using a precursive print, with no lead in strokes, but with a 'flick' out (see Appendix C). Manuscript print (ball and stick) should not be taught as a handwriting style, but may well be seen in the environment. Teachers will use the 'handwriting patter' such as 'around the apple, down the leaf' to aid correct letter formation (see Appendix D). Teaching the correct formation of all letters must be given high priority and this should be achieved before pupils make any attempt at joining. When beginning to form letters, pupils will use plain paper to encourage correct formation over size/ neatness. Capital letters will be taught when lowercase letters have been mastered. Felt-tip pen to trace over should not be used as

a matter of course and should only be used if the letter formation is being closely monitored.

## 6. Key Stages One and Two

Handwriting is taught progressively and in-line with the requirements of the National Curriculum (see Appendix A), therefore, building on the Foundation Stage, pupils in Year 1 continue to work in a similar way. Fine and gross motor skill practice are still a priority and the RWInc phonics and writing programmes form the basis of the teaching. During Year 1, handwriting sessions will become more formal and the use of wide lined paper is encouraged, moving towards specific handwriting manuscript paper. This continues into Year 2 and joins begin as dictated by the RWInc curriculum.

The four basic handwriting joins are:

1. diagonal joins to letters without ascenders e.g. ai, ar, un;
2. horizontal joins to letters without ascenders e.g. ou, vi, wi;
3. diagonal joins to letters with ascenders e.g. ab, ul, it;
4. horizontal joins to letters with ascenders e.g. ol, wh, ot

During Year 2, it is at the teacher's discretion (with advice from the English co-ordinator) to move towards whole class formal handwriting sessions using the LetterJoin Handwriting scheme. BSGC use the **cursive font with no-lead in stroke** (see Appendix E).

From Year 3- 5, all teachers follow the LetterJoin handwriting scheme and the materials are also used to support the teaching of spelling lists and word banks. Formal handwriting sessions take place 2-3 times weekly for 15-20 minutes, with a greater emphasis placed on handwriting in the Autumn Term of every academic year. In Year 6, one 15 minute session should be taught formally but some children may need more support (see Equal Opportunities). Letter formation is displayed in every classroom and small prompt cards will be easily accessible by the pupils.

### *Pen Licences*

Once a child has developed a consistently fluent, legible style of handwriting, with letters correctly formed and of the same size, the teacher can award a 'pen licence'. This is a certificate that means that the pupil can use a pen, instead of a pencil, for writing. A pen

licence can be given out from Year 4 onwards and the vast majority of pupils should have gained this by the end of Year 5.

### *Handwriting in Spain/ Gran Canaria*

At BSGC we recognise that different types of cursive handwriting are highly present in Spanish textbooks and reading books of Primary aged children. Pupils in the school are encouraged to read these scripts and learn to internalise their different nuances, as with all other types of font. However, due to timetable constraints and to avoid confusion, the handwriting font outlined in this document should be the only font taught in all classes, including Spanish lessons.

## **7. Equal Opportunities**

All children must have the opportunity and the encouragement to reach their full potential. Where appropriate, children with additional learning needs or disabilities will be provided with modifications or specialist equipment such as pencil grips, sloping surfaces or wider ruled lined paper. Intervention is available for children who experience significant difficulties to practice pre- writing skills and fine motor coordination. If a pupil is struggling in Upper Key Stage 2 they will be given additional handwriting sessions and parents will be informed and given resources to support at home, if appropriate.

Equally, if a child has attended another school or has been taught a variation of cursive script at home and already has a confident, legible, fluent style then they should not be forced to change to the BSGC preferred font style.

## **8. Provision for Left Handed Children**

All teachers must be aware of the specific needs of left-handed pupils and make appropriate provision. Left-handed children should sit to the left of right-handed children to avoid their writing arms from clashing. Left-handers should be encouraged to sit and tilt their work clockwise so they can see what they have written. This will prevent them smudging their work and allows the pencil to move more freely. A left-hander may also benefit from holding the pencil higher up.

Teachers must take into consideration that it is very difficult for left-handed pupils to follow handwriting movements when a right-handed teacher models them. Teachers should demonstrate letter formation to left-handers on an individual or group basis.

## **9. The Role of Parents and Carers**

Parents and carers are introduced to the handwriting style via the school handbook. The EYFS team play an important role in communicating handwriting work at an early stage, to ensure that parents are informed and encouraged to offer good models to their children by using only capital letters for the beginning of their names. Letterjoin can be accessed at home once it is introduced in Year 2 and to classes in Years 3-6. Parents are informed if their child is having difficulties with their fine motor skills or handwriting so that they can support as appropriate.

## **10. Assessment, Monitoring and Moderation**

It is vital that children know what they are doing correctly and what they need to improve upon. Children within the EYFS are assessed on an on-going basis through observation and handwriting informs part of this. Within Key Stage One and Key Stage Two, handwriting is assessed formally, as part of children's writing assessments on a termly basis.

Teachers will assess handwriting and presentation as part of their normal marking in line with the BSGC Marking Guidelines. Generally, verbal feedback is given and assessments are used to inform future planning. A specific handwriting target may be appropriate for individual children.



## APPENDIX A – EYFS AND NATIONAL CURRICULUM REQUIREMENTS

All areas of learning in the EYFS are integrated, but specific references to handwriting skills are found in:

- Physical Development (movement and growing)
- Literacy (writing)

Other areas which support handwriting development include:

- Communication and language development
- Personal, social and emotional development
- Expressive arts and design

The most specific reference can be found in the following Early Learning Goal:

### Early learning goals - Writing

Children use their phonic knowledge to write words in ways which match their spoken sounds. They also write some irregular common words. They write simple sentences which can be read by themselves and others. Some words are spelt correctly and others are phonetically plausible.

### Typical behaviours that relate to handwriting for this learning goal:

- Uses some clearly identifiable letters to communicate meaning, representing some sounds correctly and in sequence
- Write own name and other things such as labels and captions
- Attempt to write short sentences in meaningful context

### Core learning skills for handwriting:

- Use a pencil and hold it effectively to form recognisable letters, most of which are formed correctly.

*'Early Years Outcomes'* Department for Education, 2013

*'Statutory framework for early years foundation stage'* Department for Education, 2014

Detailed requirements for Years 1-6

#### Key stage 1 Year 1

Pupils' writing during year 1 will generally develop at a slower pace than their reading. This is because they need to encode the sounds they hear in words (spelling skills), develop the physical skill needed for handwriting, and learn how to organise their ideas in writing.

Programme of Study (statutory requirements)

Notes and Guidance (non-statutory)

<p>Pupils should be taught to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sit correctly at a table, holding a pencil comfortably and correctly</li> <li>• begin to form lower-case letters in the correct direction, starting and finishing in the right place form capital letters</li> <li>• form digits 0-9</li> <li>• understand which letters belong to which handwriting 'families' (i.e. letters that are formed in similar ways) and to practise these.</li> </ul>	<p>Handwriting requires frequent and discrete, direct teaching. Pupils should be able to form letters correctly and confidently. The size of the writing implement (pencil, pen) should not be too large for a young pupil's hand. Whatever is being used should allow the pupil to hold it easily and correctly so that bad habits are avoided. Left-handed pupils should receive specific teaching to meet their needs</p>
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**Key Stage 1 Year 2**  
 In writing, pupils at the beginning of year 2 ... should be able to form individual letters correctly, so establishing good handwriting habits from the beginning.

<p>Pupils should be taught to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• form lower-case letters of the correct size relative to one another</li> <li>• start using some of the diagonal and horizontal strokes needed to join letters and understand which letters, when adjacent to one another, are best left unjoined</li> <li>• write capital letters and digits of the correct size, orientation and relationship to one another and to lower case letters</li> <li>• use spacing between words that reflects the size of the letters.</li> </ul>	<p>Pupils should revise and practise correct letter formation frequently. They should be taught to write with a joined style as soon as they can form letters securely with the correct orientation.</p>
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**Lower key stage 2 Years 3-4**  
 Joined handwriting should be the norm; pupils should be able to use it fast enough to keep pace with what they want to say.

<p>Pupils should be taught to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• use the diagonal and horizontal strokes that are needed to join letters and understand which letters, when adjacent to one another, are best left unjoined</li> <li>• increase the legibility, consistency and quality of their handwriting, e.g. by ensuring that the downstrokes of letters are parallel and equidistant; that lines of writing are spaced sufficiently so that the ascenders and descenders of letters</li> </ul>	<p>Pupils should be using joined handwriting throughout their independent writing. Handwriting should continue to be taught, with the aim of increasing the fluency with which pupils are able to write down what they want to say. This, in turn, will support their composition and spelling</p>
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**Upper key stage 2 – Years 5-6**

<p>Pupils should be taught to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• write legibly, fluently and with increasing speed by:</li> <li>• choosing which shape of a letter to use when given choices and deciding, as part of their personal style, whether or not to join specific letters</li> <li>• choosing the writing implement that is best suited for a task (e.g. quick notes, letters).</li> </ul>	<p>Pupils should continue to practise handwriting and be encouraged to increase the speed of it, so that problems with forming letters do not get in the way of their writing down what they want to say. They should be clear about what standard of handwriting is appropriate for a particular task (e.g. quick notes or a final handwritten version). They should also be taught to use an unjoined style (e.g. for labelling a diagram or data, writing an email address, or for algebra) and capital letters (e.g. for filling in a form).</p>
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## **APPENDIX B – EXAMPLES OF GROSS AND FINE MOTOR CONTROL ACTIVITIES**

**Gross Motor Control** is the term used to describe the development of controlled movements of the whole body, or limbs such as the legs or arms. Of particular importance in relation to handwriting is the development of good posture and balance.

Activities such as:

- Dancing and skipping
- Running and jumping to music
- Use of small apparatus e.g. throwing, rolling, catching, kicking and bouncing balls
- Cycling
- Gripping climbing frames
- Building with large-scale construction kits
- Hammering
- Consolidate vocabulary of movement by talking about movements such as, going round and round, making curves, springing up and sliding down, making long, slow movements or quick, jumpy movements
- Make large movements in the air with arms, hands and shoulders with dance ribbons

**Fine Motor Control** is the term used to describe smaller movements, usually of the hand and fingers (or of the feet and toes). Activities and exercises to develop Fine Motor Control:

- Folding paper
- Cutting out shapes from paper and card
- Fitting things into frames like geometric shapes
- Model making
- Construction toys
- Screw toys and wood working tools
- Pegboards
- Modelling with malleable materials like Playdoh, plasticine and clay
- Drawing in sand and water play in general, including sieving, pouring and picking up toys using tools e.g. fishing rods and cranes
- Sewing and weaving
- Tracing and stencils
- Chopping and peeling when cooking
- Develop the pincer movement by using tweezers to pick up sequins, beads and feathers, sprinkling glitter, sand and salt
- Mark making and drawing with chalk, dry wipe pens, felt tip pens and paints on small, large boards and easels and on small and large paper
- Puzzles
- Finger and counting rhymes
- Sky writing
- Sticks in sand

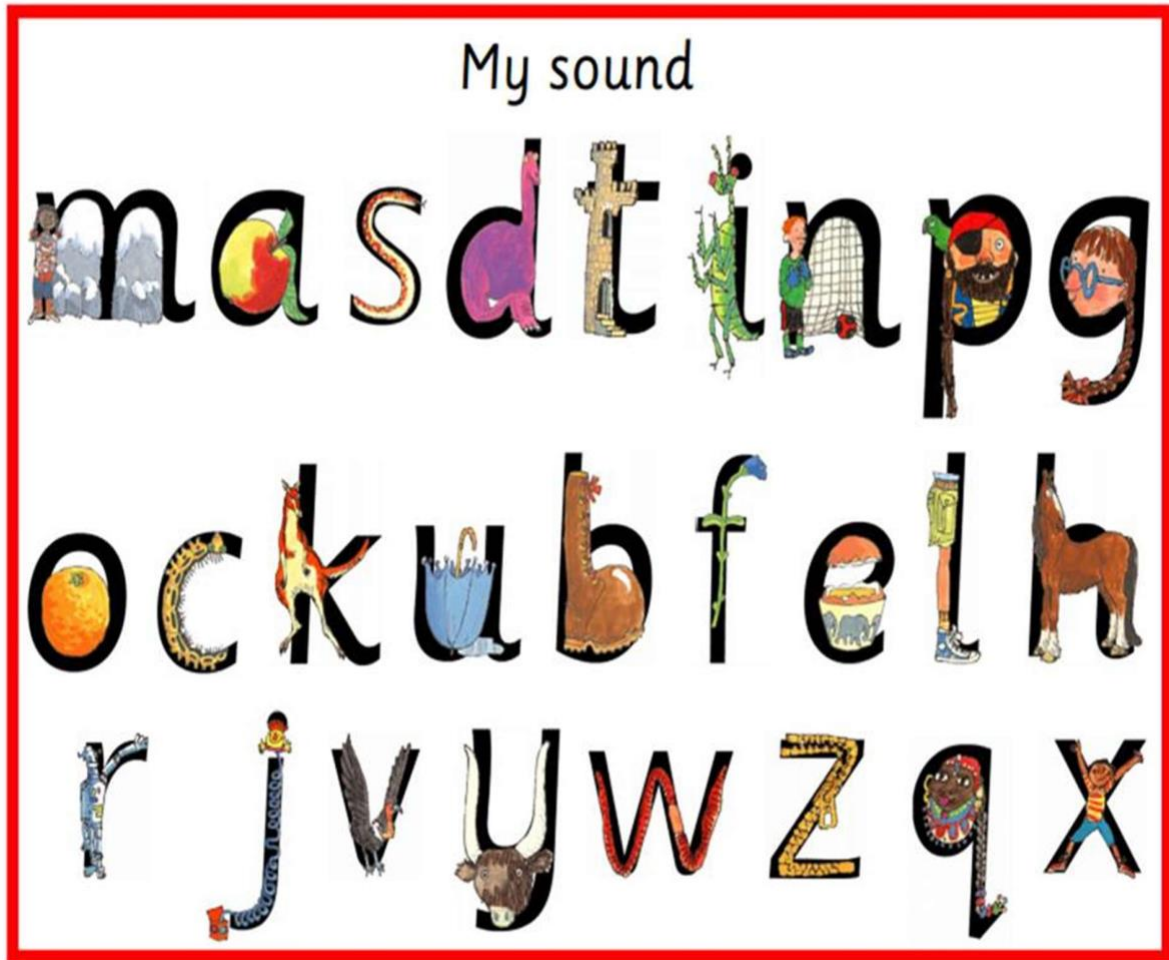
APPENDIX C – PRECURSIVE PRINT (NO LEAD-Ins)

a b c d e  
f g h i j k  
l m n o p  
q r s t u  
v w x y z

**APPENDIX D – INTRODUCTION TO LETTER FORMATION USING THE READ WRITE INC MNEMONIC PATTERN**

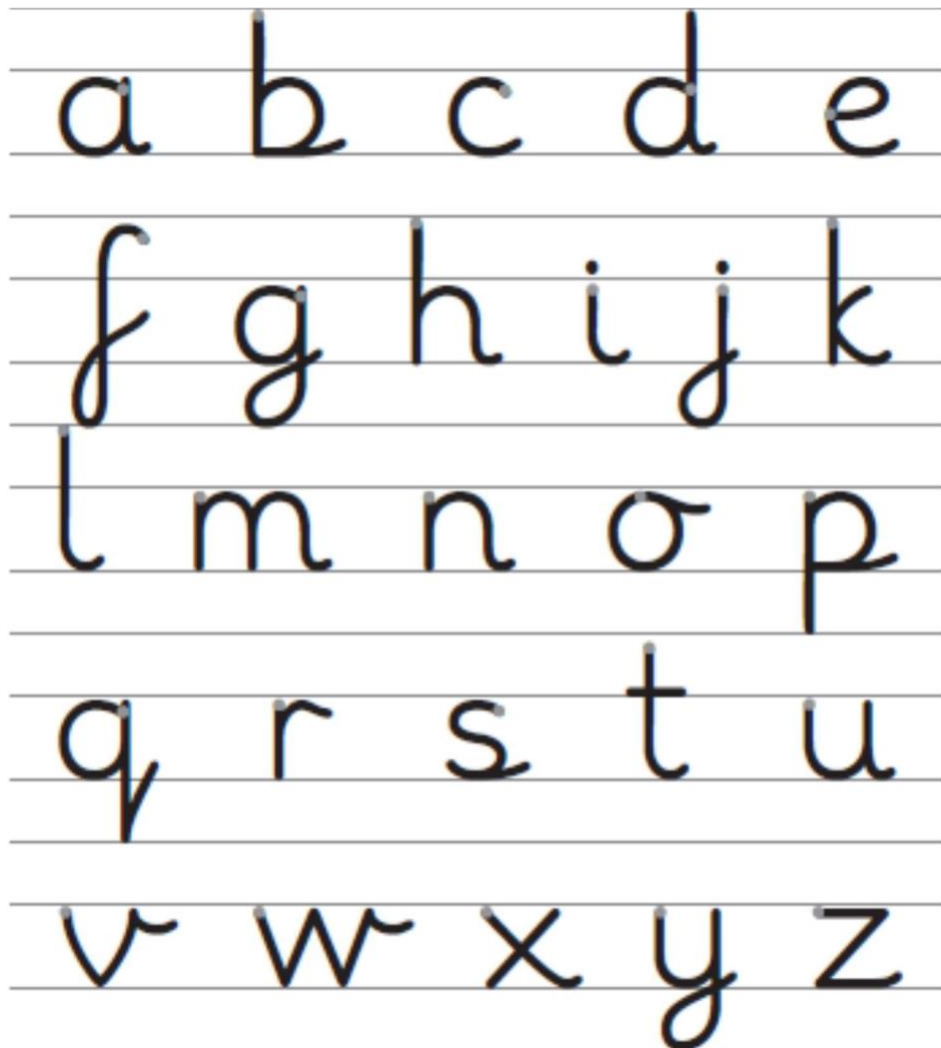
a	Round the apple and down the leaf	j	Down his body, curl and dot	s	Slither down the snake
b	Down the laces to the heel, round the toe	k	Down the kangaroo's body, tail and leg	t	Down the tower across the tower
c	Curl around the caterpillar	l	Down the long leg	u	Down and under, up to the top and draw the puddle
d	Round his bottom, up his tall neck and down to his feet	m	Down Maisie, over the mountain, over the mountain	v	Down a wing, up a wing
e	Lift off the top and scoop out the egg	n	Down Nobby, over his net	w	Down up, down up
f	Down the stem and draw the leaves	o	All around the orange	x	Down the arm and leg and repeat the other side
g	Round her face, down her hair and give her a curl	p	Down his plait and around his head	y	Down a horn, up a horn and under his head
h	Down the head to the hooves and over his back	q	Round her head, up past her earrings and down her hair	z	Zig – zag- zig
i	Down his body, and a dot for his head	r	Down his back, then curl over his arm		

APPENDIX E – IMAGES ASSOCIATED WITH READ WRITE INC PATTERN FOR PRE CURSIVE HANDWRITING



APPENDIX F – CURSIVE

Handwriting-Letterjoin Cursive with No Lead-In



The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.



## APPENDIX G – CORRECT SITTING POSITION AND PENCIL GRIP

### Correct posture and pencil grip for handwriting

Pupils should be taught to sit correctly at a table, holding a pencil comfortably and correctly.

#### SITTING POSITION



Paper position for right-handed children

#### THE TRIPOD PENCIL GRIP

Both right and left handed children should be encouraged to use the tripod grip which allows the pen/pencil to be held securely whilst allowing controlled movements of the pen/pencil nib.

1

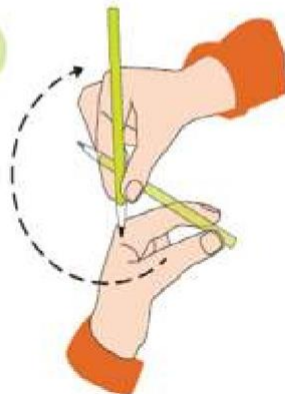


1) Grip the pencil with your index finger and thumb with the nib pointing away.

2) With your free hand, spin the pencil from underneath.

3) Use your middle finger to support the underside of the pencil.

2



3

