

Guided Walks for the Hand

This procedure is basically the same as “guided walks”, pg. ____, except we’re working on handwriting. *Note, if writing is your primary interest, be sure to read “conditioning writing as a reinforcer”, pg. _____. It is preferable to condition writing as a reinforcer, rather than resorting to extensive physical prompting.

“Guided walks for the hand” can also sometimes be used to help establish tolerance of physical prompting, in general. Patient tolerance of physical prompts for fine motor responses is the primary objective of “guided walks for the hand”, and we use it with a small number of clients whose resistance of physical prompts impedes development of fine motor skills.

Objective-Your student will learn to tolerate light physical guidance of his hand in repetitive writing/drawing motions. Also, your student will begin to orient visually and will eventually begin to trace independently.

Mastery criteria-You will be able to physically guide your student to trace any shape, letter, or word without any resistance for at least 5 minutes of guided writing, cumulatively. *You do not have to write for 5 consecutive minutes, but cannot have any resistance across several days of writing, until you have accumulated 5 minutes of guided writing.

*Note, long before you reach this criterion, you will begin to require your student to look at what he is tracing and will sometimes fade prompts to allow independent tracing.

Basic Procedure-Draw a circle, 3-4 inches in diameter, on a white board or piece of paper. Say “Let’s draw some circles.” Hand your student a writing utensil. Allow up to a few seconds for him to grip the utensil, but do not repeat your direction. If he does not grip the utensil within 3-5 seconds, repeat “Let’s draw some circles”, place the utensil in his hand, and lift his hand into a writing position.

Physically move his hand to trace over the circle at least a few times. Ideally, you will start by requiring at least 3 consecutive circles. In very difficult cases, you may start with a single circle.

Count for each consecutive repetition... “one, two (nice), three (good)”. Reinforce primarily by praising and releasing your student’s hand, but if your student did very well, it may not hurt to offer another positive reinforcer.

When your learner jerks his hand or protests verbally, pause and say something like “That’s not calm”. Continue to hold his hand, but do not resume tracing until your student is calm. (Ideally, further escalation is ignored and you will continue to wait until your student is ready to trace. If this is not possible, follow your behavior plan as written by a BCBA.)

Once your student has calmed, restart the tracing, counting over from “1”. Circles must be consecutive.

After your student has become consistently willing to calmly trace circles, you can move on to vertical lines, horizontal lines, “Lazy 8’s”, and perhaps letters. By the time your student is ready to write words, you will certainly no longer be using physical prompts for writing.

Finer points-As your student begins to consistently tolerate hand-over-hand guidance, begin to require visual orientation toward the targeted shape. You can do this by only moving his hand while he is looking, and pausing when he is not looking. When pausing for absence of visual orientation, I usually don’t restart from “1”, but instead continue from the number at which I paused. As our student becomes increasingly cooperative, and orients visually, you should begin to fade your prompt to allow independent tracing.

Dimensions Grid

<u>Easier</u>	<u>Harder</u>
Easy shapes	Hard shapes
Few repetitions required	Many repetitions required
No visual orientation required	Visual orientation required

Data-Gather frequency data on the number of pauses required before the targeted number of shapes were traced. Gather duration data, as well, to inform yourself of the average duration of pausing necessary.

Date	Shape/letter traced	# of consecutive tracings required	# of stops required	Total duration

Moving forward-For every 2 consecutive sessions without any stopping required, increase the level of challenge by using the dimensions grid above and/or consider fading your physical prompt.

Moving backward-For every 2 consecutive sessions in which 2 or more stops were required, decrease the level of challenge by using the dimensions grid above. Your first several sessions are exceptions to this rule, as your student may resist this new expectation.