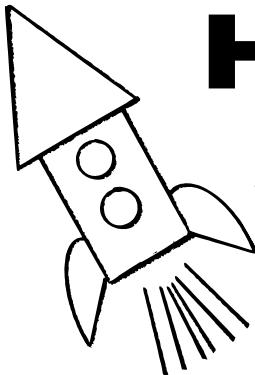


Handwriting Paper Accommodations

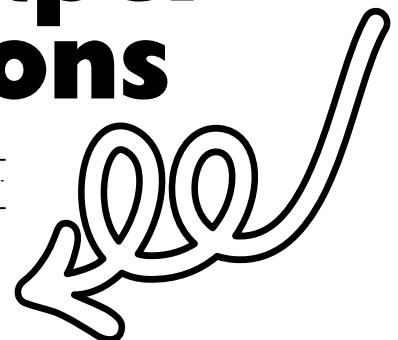
**A TEACHERS GUIDE TO
ADAPTED PAPER**

ABC



Handwriting Paper Accommodations

A TEACHERS GUIDE TO ADAPTED PAPER



Dear Educators,

As a school-based occupational therapist I work closely with student who have IEPs and teachers who implement them. I often see “adaptive paper” listed as an accommodation on IEPs, but without clear guidance on what that actually means or how to use it effectively. This handout was created to bridge that gap.

The goal of this handout is to help you understand the why and how behind different types of writing paper so that you can confidently choose and use the right supports for your students.

Inside, you’ll find explanations of common adaptive paper types (such as raised line, double-lined, and highlighted paper), examples of how and when to use them, and simple teacher-friendly language you can use when introducing the paper to students. Plus you’ll have a blank PDF copy of most of the types I describe so you can print your own to try out with your students.

Thank you for the work you do every day to make learning accessible and meaningful for all children. Your collaboration and curiosity are what make inclusive education possible.

With appreciation,
Sarah Selznick, MS, OTR/L
Occupational Therapist
Sensory Explorers

Who is adaptive paper for?

Adapted paper supports students who are learning to write letters, or students struggle with handwriting. Adaptive paper reduces barriers related to motor control, visual organization, and sensory processing. Many IEPs list “adapted paper” as an accommodation, but the reasons behind it and the specifics of paper types are often not clearly explained.

A student may benefit from adapted paper if they:

- Write with uneven letter sizes or have trouble staying within lines.
- Have difficulty organizing words or sentences on the page.
- Press too hard or too lightly with a pencil.
- Show poor spacing between letters or words.
- Experience visual fatigue or glare from white paper.
- Have fine motor or motor planning challenges that make it hard to control letter formation.
- Need extra visual or tactile cues to understand where letters start and stop.
- Benefit from structure and predictability to reduce cognitive load when writing.

Adapted paper gives the child’s brain and body more sensory and spatial feedback, allowing them to focus on content rather than the mechanics of writing.

It’s important to note: adapted paper is not a “crutch.” It’s a tool for access. Like glasses help with vision, adapted paper helps a student “see and feel” the writing boundaries more clearly until those skills become internalized.



What is Adapted Paper?

Adapted paper refers to any writing surface that has been modified in:

- Size
- Spacing
- Color
- Texture
- Layout

to make handwriting more accessible and functional for the student. This can be specific store bought paper or as simple as a teacher highlighting the baseline of where letters should fall.

Instead of expecting all students to succeed with the same lined notebook paper, adapted paper meets learners where they are developmentally and physically.

The goal is to help making writing opportunities successful by providing the right kind of structure and sensory feedback.

Types of Adapted Paper and Example Verbal Cues

The following pages have common types of adaptive paper you can print. There are examples of how letters are formed using these papers, and teacher cues to support your learners.

Wide-Ruled Paper

Best for: Students who need extra space to form letters or have large handwriting.

Description: The lines are spaced farther apart than college ruled to allow more room and reduce visual crowding.

Teacher cue: “Keep your letters sitting on the bottom line – don’t let them float above the ground!”

A B C D E F

azsxweruocvnm

b t f l i h g j y p

Primary Three-Lined Paper (Sky, Grass, Ground Paper)

Best for: Writers who are learning where letters start and stop. Writers who need help for letter placement.

Description: Features three distinct lines (often blue, red, or green) that visually separate letter zones – tall, short, and descending.

Teacher cue:

“Tall letters touch the sky, small letters stay in the grass, and fall letters go under the ground.”

A B C D E F

a z s x w e r u o c v n m

b t f l i h

g j y p

Raised-Line Paper

Best for: Students who need extra tactile input to control their writing or to know when they've hit a boundary. Students who continue to have difficulty with letter placement after use of three lined paper and direct handwriting instruction. Students with vision needs.

Description: The lines are slightly embossed or textured so the child can feel where letters start and stop.

Teacher cue:

"Feel the bump – that's where your letter stops. Let your pencil touch the line and feel it before you move on."

You can make your own paper by placing a wiki stick at the base line or using puffy paint to make a line.

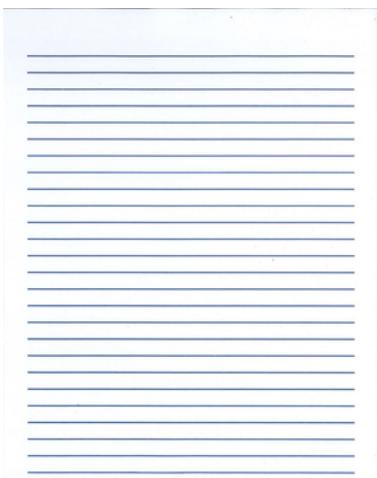
Here are links to pre-made raised line papers:



[Abilitations 4-Color Raised ColorCue Paper, Pack of 50](#)



[Pacon® Multi-Sensory Raised Ruled Tablet,](#)



[Heavy Raised Line Paper, 125 pages](#)

Double Lined Paper

Best for: Students who need simplified visual cues without the clutter of three lines.

Description: Only two lines – a top and a baseline – are provided. This helps children focus on letter size without being overwhelmed.

Teacher cue:

“Tall letters go above the top line; small letters stay in between. Fall letters dangle below”.

A B C

Tall: thifkib

Fall: qypg

SMALL:

weruoaszxvcvnm

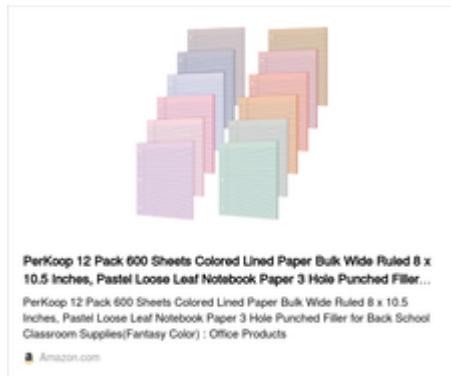
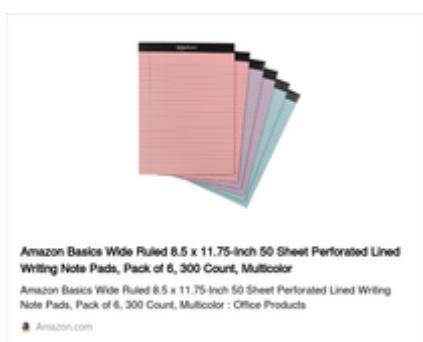
Colored or Tinted Paper

Best for: Students sensitive to glare or who lose their place easily.

Description: Light pastel-colored paper (blue, green, yellow) can reduce eye strain and help with visual tracking. You can use any of the other types of paper and print on colored paper.

Teacher cue:

“See how your words pop on this paper?” “This color helps your writing pop!”



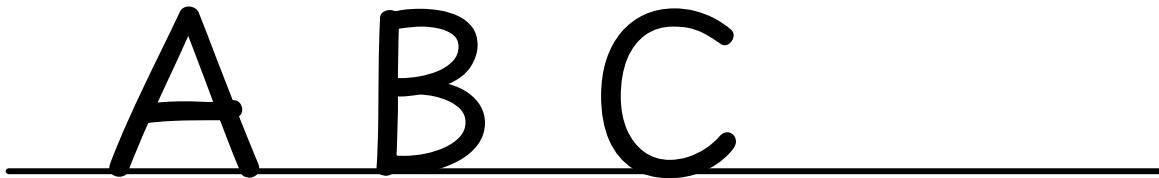
Single-Lined Paper

Best for: Students transitioning to mature handwriting and internalizing spatial awareness. Student who write letters larger than standard size paper and need more room.

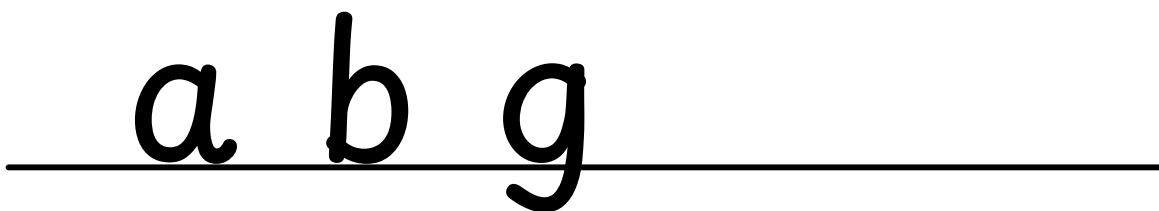
Description: Only one line per row; students must judge letter height and placement independently. Focus can be isolated to “hitting the baseline”

Teacher cue:

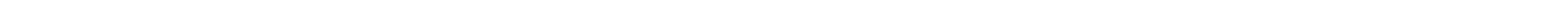
“Keep all your letters walking on the line. Don’t let them float or fall through.”



A B C



a b g



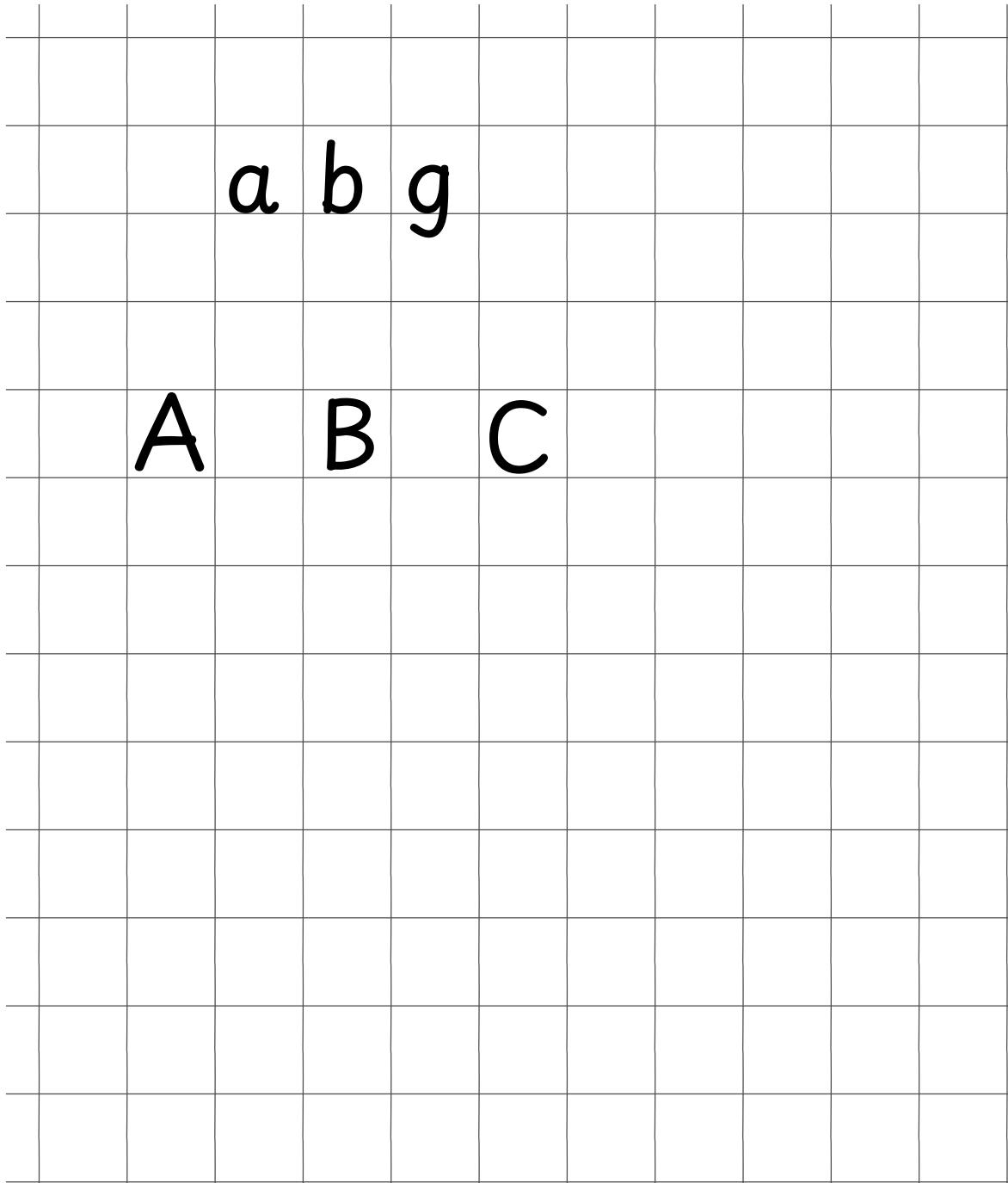
Graph Paper

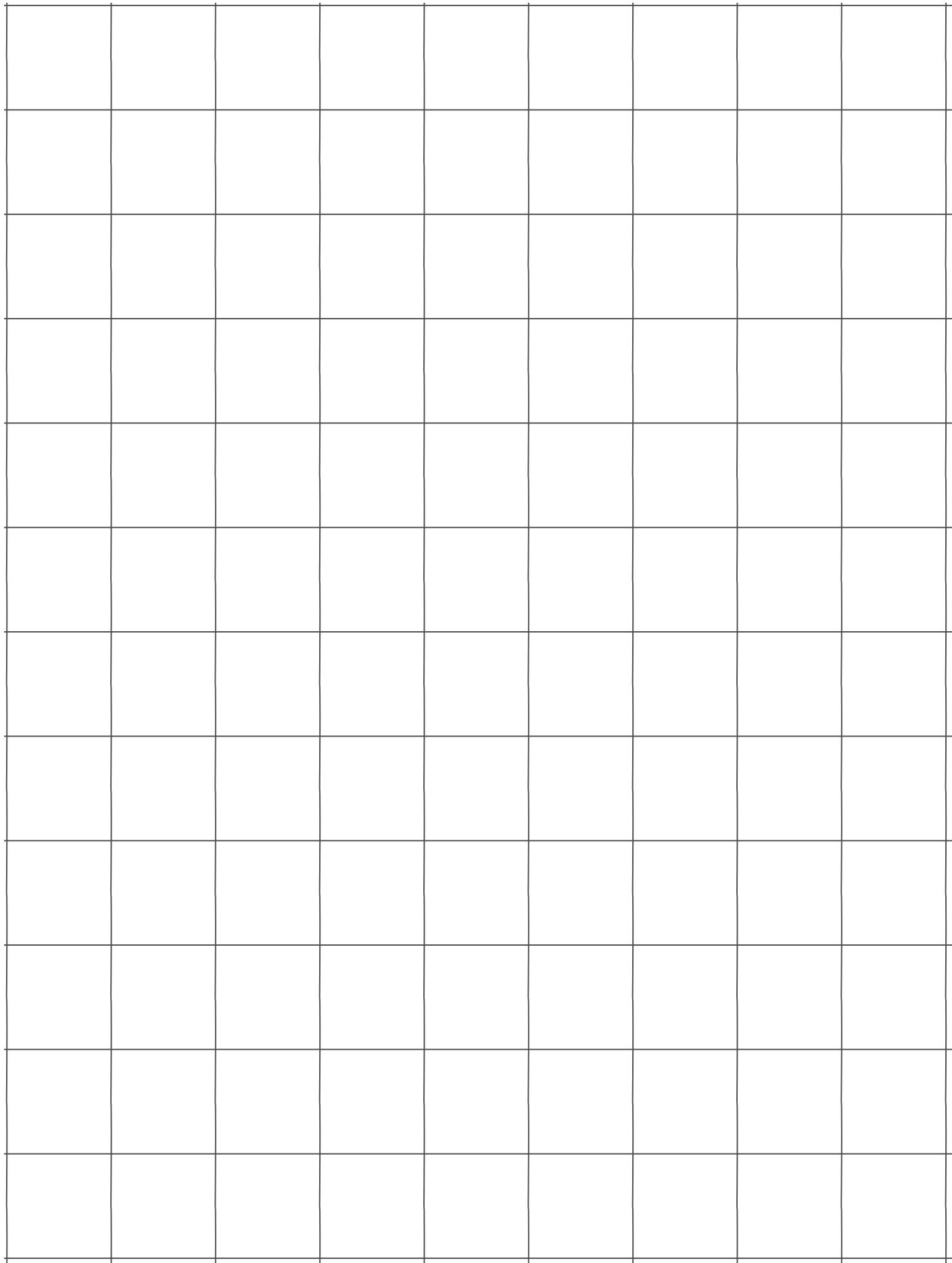
Best for: Students who need help with spacing between letters, words, or math alignment.

Description: Evenly sized boxes provide a clear spatial boundary for each letter or number.

Teacher cue:

“Each letter gets its own box – stay inside your square.”





High Lighter or High-Contrast Paper

Best for: Students with visual processing, attention, or tracking difficulties.

Description: The lines are brightly colored or shaded (often yellow or blue) to create stronger contrast and guide visual attention.

Teacher cue:

“Use the yellow line as your landing strip – that’s where all your letters should sit.”

A B C D E F

a z s x w e r u o c v n m

b t f l i h

g j y p

