



## Letter Formation

Learning to form letters is important for fluency and speed of written work. It is important that children learn to form letters in one fluid stroke rather than forming letters in fragments.



Learn about the handwriting curriculum that is being taught to your child at school. If your child is struggling, ask the teacher for worksheets you can practice on at home. Letters in print should be written from top to bottom and from left to right.

A multi-sensory approach to learning is a great approach for all children. Prepare a tray or baking pan with a shallow layer of any impressionable substance (sand, sugar, salt, bird seed, rice, pudding, shaving cream, etc.)

Go slowly do not rush the child; handwriting can quickly become a source of anxiety and frustration to children. Practice a little and often to maximise results, for example, daily practice for 10-15 minutes is preferable to an hour a week.

### **Here are some activity ideas to help:**

Make raised letters on index cards to use for tracing with the index finger. Here's how to make them: use glue to form the letter, then cover it with sand or bird seed; puffy fabric paint; add food colouring to white glue and form letters in colour. Make sure to trace letters and numbers from top to bottom and from left to right.

Pre-write letters on paper and have the child trace over them with glitter glue.

Form letters by gluing beans, rice, seeds, etc. on paper.

Form letters with putty, play dough, clay, etc.

Write letters with a vibrating pen; this additional sensory input will enhance the child's memory for letter formation.

For letter recognition, have child read through a story at his/her reading level and circle all of the a's or b's, etc.

Write letters in the air with the pointer finger and large arm movements. Try it with eyes closed, then eyes open.

Write letters on your child's back and see if he/she can guess what letter it is. Write on each other's palms.



Use a green dot for where the letter starts and a red dot for where the letter should stop.

Cut simple letters out of cardboard or textured material such as sand paper and encourage children to feel or use as stencils

Use a thick coloured marker pen or chalk to draw out the letter and then ask the child to watch the movement and write over it using the same movement.

Have the child draw in a tray of sand/ rice/ lentils/shaving foam with finger.

Use Scratch art paper and scraper to form letters.

Think of new ways to describe the letters that are visually meaningful to the child.

Use steamed up windows on cold days to allow the child to write on.

Use chalk on an old roofing slate – if a very short piece of chalk is used then this will help with pincer grip.

Having the child stand upright for vertical writing and lying down on their fronts for horizontal writing allows for more trunk stability, crossing of midline and hand /arm dissociation. (Lying down for only very short periods as not easy to maintain).

Write a letter in chalk on a black board or dry marker on a whiteboard and ask the child to rub it out in the same direction in which it was formed.

Use the face of a clock to teach entry and exit points (ensure that the child is familiar with a clock face and can tell the time).

On lined paper, in the left margin draw a simple house: the roof (a triangle) is within the top half of the line, the house is a square within the bottom half, below the house is the basement. Remind the child to start letters in the attic or roof if capitals, tall lower case letters and numbers. Small letters stay in the house and start at the top of the box. Descending letters also start at the top of the box and live in the basement.

Write letters on your child's back and see if he/she can guess what letter it is. Write on each other's palms.

On a large chalk board or dry erase board, write large letters, always starting at the top. Turn them into "rainbow" letters by

going over them with different colours.

Write letters on paper that is placed over a textured surface, such as sandpaper, plastic craft canvas or rubbing plates. The tactile feedback from the bumpy surface will enhance the child's memory for correct letter formation.

Make use of highlighter pen to accentuate the base line, ascenders, word shape, descenders or x-height letters.

Always be clear and consistent in your terminology for forming letters ascenders/uppy bits/tower etc.

Use pipe cleaners, wickysticks, wire or cut up drinking straws to form letters.

Use an interactive whiteboard to demonstrate letter formation – this can be traced over by a child.

