

TECHNIQUES FOR TEACHING LETTER FORMATION

Techniques for teaching letter formation

- Provide demonstrations when introducing and teaching letter shapes. The *Nelson Handwriting* online teaching software is useful for this; you can also use whiteboards or flipcharts.
- Observe individuals as much as possible while they practise. This enables the teacher to recognise and correct bad habits as they arise.
- Talk the children through the process using appropriate language.
- Encourage children to verbalise what they are doing from time to time. This gives a window into the thought processes they are using as they write.
- Writing involves visual and motor skills. Use the following ideas to reinforce the teaching of letter shapes:
 - Encourage children to form letters by drawing them in the air.
 - Finger trace over tactile letters, on desk or table tops.
 - Write over dotted or 'shadow' writing.
 - Draw round templates.
 - Write in sand with a finger or stick.
 - Write with chalk on a chalkboard.
 - Write letters boldly with a wax candle and then apply a colour wash.
 - Form letters with pegs on a pegboard or with beads in Plasticine.
 - Finger trace the outline of a letter on the back of the person in front of you.
 - Form letters with fingers and/or bodies, individually and in groups.
- Draw attention to the connection between letters and the related writing patterns. Encouraging children to use the basic handwriting patterns both for practice and for decorative purposes is a valuable technique for fostering fluency and rhythmic movement.

THE LANGUAGE OF LETTER FORMATION

It is helpful if all staff and parents use a clear, consistent set of instructions for describing the correct letter formation. Some schools will have developed their own set of instructions and will feel comfortable using. A suggested set of instructions is given below. These instructions are used on the teaching software for Starter Level and Book 1A and 1B, and on the flashcards.

Letter/number	Audio
0	Start at the top and go round.
1	Start at the top and go down.
2	Start at the top, curve round and down, and across.
3	Start at the top. Go round, and round.
4	Start at the top. Go down, across, lift your pencil and go down.
5	Start at the top. Go down, and round. Lift your pencil up to the top, and across.
6	Start at the top right. Curve down, up, and in till you touch.
7	Start at the top, across, and diagonally down.
8	Start at the top, go round, and curve back the other way, and up, cross, and up till you touch.
9	Start near the top. Go round, up and down.
a	Start at the top. Go all the way round, up to the top, down and flick.
A	Down, lift, down, lift and across.
b	Start at the top. Go straight down, back up, and all the way round.
B	Down, lift, and round till you stop, and round till you stop.
c	Start at the top, and go round.
C	Round.
d	Start at the middle. Go all the way round, all the way up to the top, straight down, and flick.
D	Down, lift, and round.



e	Start near the bottom. Go up, around, and down.
E	Down, and across, lift, across at the top, lift, across in the middle.
f (print)	Start at the top. Go round, and straight down. Lift your pencil, and cross the 'f' in the middle.
F	Down, lift, across at the top, lift, across in the middle.
f (cursive)	Start at the top. Go round, straight down, and round. Lift your pencil, and cross the 'f' in the middle.
g	Start at the top. Go all the way round, up to the top, straight down, and round.
G	Round, up, and down.
h	Start at the top. Go straight down, up and over, down, and flick.
H	Down, lift, down, lift and across in the middle.
i	Start at the top. Go straight down, and flick. Lift your pencil and put a dot at the top.
I	Down.
j	Start at the top. Go straight down, and round. Lift your pencil and put a dot at the top.
J	Down, and round.
k (print)	Start at the top, and go straight down. Lift your pencil and place it next to the middle. Go into the middle, out from the middle, and flick.
K	Down, lift, out from the middle up, lift, out from the middle down.
k (cursive)	Start at the top. Go straight down, back up, over and round, down and flick.
l	Start at the top. Go straight down, and flick.
L	Down, and across.
m	Start at the top. Go down, up and over, down, up and over, down, and flick.
M	Down, lift, down and across, up and across, and down.
n	Start at the top. Go down, up and over, down and flick.
N	Down, lift, down and across, and up.
o	Start at the top, and go all the way round.
O	Round.
p	Start at the top. Go straight down, up to the top, and all the way round.
P	Down, lift, and round till you stop.
q	Start at the top. Go all the way round, up to the top, straight down, and flick.
Q	All the way round, lift, and down.
r	Start at the top. Go straight down, back up and over, and flick.
R	Down, lift, and round till you stop, out from the middle, and down.
s	Start at the top. Go round, down, and back round.
S	Round, and back round.
t	Start at the top. Go straight down, and round. Lift your pencil, and cross the 't'.
T	Down, lift, and across.
u	Start at the top. Go down, round, back up to the top, down, and flick.
U	Down, round, and up.
v	Start at the top. Go down, and back up to the top.
V	Down, and up.
w	Start at the top. Go down, back up to the top, down, and back up to the top.
W	Down, up, down, and up.
x	Start at the top. Go down to the bottom. Lift your pencil to the top, and down across the other way.
X	Down and across, lift, down and across.
y	Start at the top. Go down and round, back up to the top, then straight down, and round.
Y	Down and across, lift, and all the way down and across.
z	Start at the top. Go straight across, diagonally to the bottom, and across.
Z	Straight across, down and across, and straight across.

