

LETTER FORMATION

Letters are introduced individually in the following groups.

Straight letters

i l t u

2 o'clock's

c a d g q s

Tunnel letters

n m h b p

Top joiners

o r v w

Square letters

x z

Odd letters

f k j y e

This is the recommended order of introduction, but is open to individual interpretation. For example e can be taught earlier to give a wider variety of words for practice.

Letters are introduced using the following sequence.

Look: at the teacher who demonstrates the correct letter formation.

Trace: over the examples, repeating the sound/ name.

Copy: underneath the examples, repeating the sound/ name.

Write: from memory

Letters are practised using the following sequence.

Trace: over the examples.

Write: underneath the examples.

Copy: complete a row of examples.

Write: from memory.

Letter formation can still be practised through creative areas of the curriculum using examples given in the early stages. Some children have difficulty interpreting verbal or visual instructions. In these cases, the teacher can hold the writer's hand until he/ she becomes familiar with the movements.

As each group of letters is introduced, words containing those letters are practised. Children begin to make the link between handwriting, writing and spelling.

PENCIL HOLD, SEATING & PAPER POSITION

At this stage of development, there are important issues relating to physical environment.

- Children often find sitting at a desk or table to write a physical strain. It is important that they are taught to sit correctly. Children who fidget or cannot find a steady writing position may benefit from a sloping writing surface or tilted seat/cushion.
- They should be encouraged to use a correct pencil grip. If they find this very difficult, even after practising with a triangular pencil, try placing the pencil between the index and middle finger as an alternative pencil hold. If an incorrect grip is very well established in older pupils, and they can control the pencil

adequately, it may be best to leave their incorrect grip, but spend time on the letter formations.

- Left-handed children should sit to the left of right-handed children, to avoid their writing arms from bumping each other. The angle of the paper depends on the handedness of the pupil. Left-handers should sit with their body and paper at a slant to the right. This enables them to see their pencil tip, prevents them smudging their work with their writing hand and allows the pencil to move up and down without a feeling of having to continually push it. A left-hander may also benefit from holding the pencil further up the shaft.

MATERIALS

It is important to use appropriate writing materials at each stage of writing development.

- Very sharp pencils should be used at all times so that the child can see clearly what the pencil point is doing. In KS1 some teachers prefer to start with a chunky triangular pencil to encourage the correct pencil grip. Standard HB may then be used until the letters are well formed, completely joined, neat and fluent. A fountain pen with a

fine nib is then best as it grips the page and prevents loss of control often experienced when using roller balls and biros.

- Plain paper is best for the initial stages of writing patterns, progressing to paper that is ruled with wide-apart lines. Double lines are used to familiarize the pupil with the correct writing zones and the appropriate length of ascenders and descenders. These lines begin at about 10mm apart, reducing to 5mm and finally are ruled as single lines.

