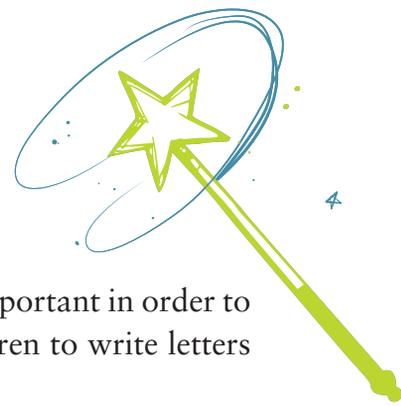


Handwriting Wizards



Every child needs and deserves to have a legible handwriting because it is important in order to communicate effectively. *Handwriting Wizards* is a program to teach children to write letters easily and legibly in print and cursive.

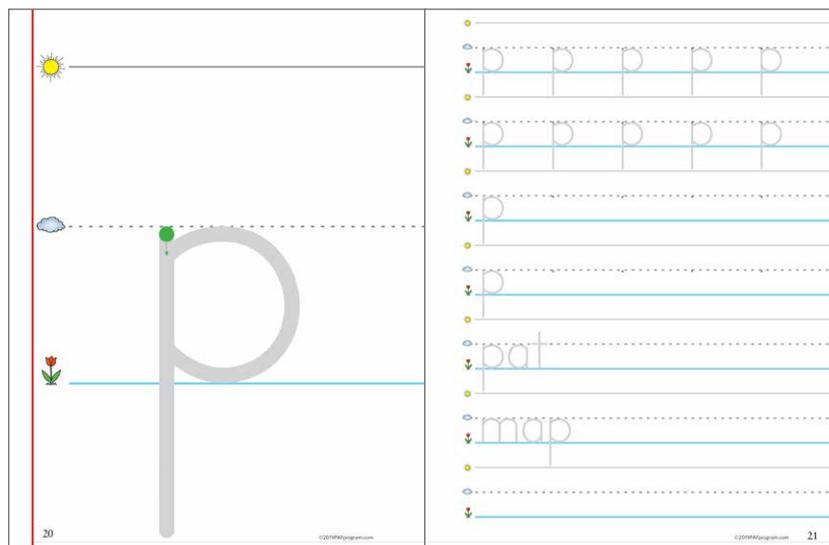
If you are teaching the sounds of the letters as you teach the motor pattern, ask the children to say the sounds as they write each letter. Until they can form all letters accurately and automatically, provide ongoing instruction and opportunities for supervised practice. The following pages contain specific instructions to teach print and cursive.

Basic Principles

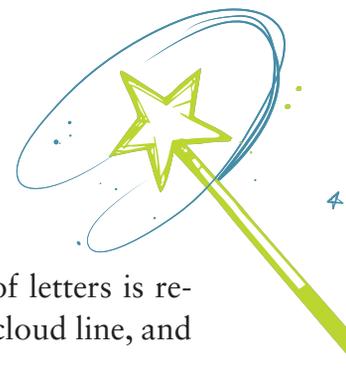
There are five basic principles of handwriting instruction:

1. Handwriting is taught and practiced under the direct supervision of the teacher who provides immediate feedback and models correct letter formation. Handwriting is never assigned as independent work or homework.

2. New letters are always introduced using a large model of the letter. This helps the children feel the directional changes necessary to form each letter (b/d), and feel the subtle differences between some letters (n/m). It is not unusual for young children to confuse letters that are similar to one another. The students can also practice their letters by skywriting, using their extended arm to create a letter in the sky. Large muscle memory is extremely powerful and using their body (not hand and wrist) solidifies the letter pattern.



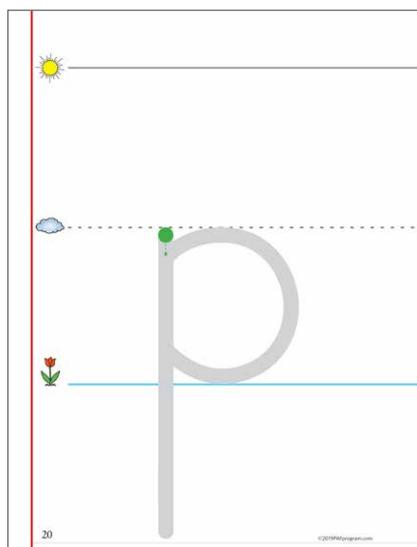
3. The instructional sequence to teach handwriting is trace, copy, and write from memory. The children trace the letter, copy the letter, and then write the letter from memory, all under the direction of the teacher. In every instructional handwriting page, the last line has been left blank so the children can spell the words dictated by the teacher.



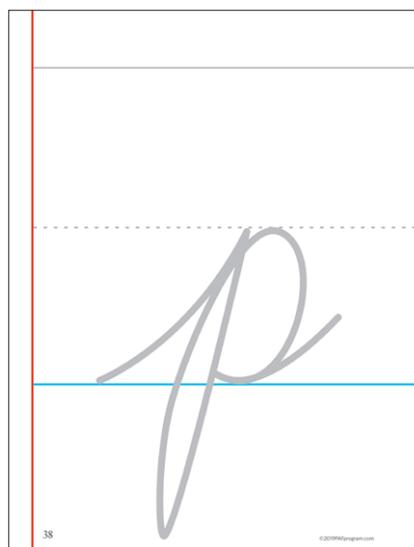
4. Letters are grouped according to motor patterns. For example, one group of letters is referred to as *curvy letters* because they start on the green dot, slightly below the cloud line, and curve toward the red line. The *curvy letters* for print are c, a, d, g, qu, s and f.

5. Language is used to teach and reinforce handwriting by having the teacher verbalize instructions to form each letter. Children need to be told how to move their hands to produce the letter forms. Often children cannot learn the motor patterns for writing by simply copying letters. To help give verbal instructions on how to form the letters, establish reference points in your classroom. First, have all the desks face forward the board. Next, using cloth tape, place a vertical red line on the left side of the board and on each child's desk. In classrooms with group tables, give each student a 12-by-18-inch oaktag mat with a vertical red line on the left side. Then when giving verbal instructions, tell the students to move their hands toward or away from the red tape, rather than to the left or right.

Also, to help give verbal instructions, the writing lines have been given names. In the handwriting pages for print, the three writing lines are: *sun line*, *cloud line*, and *flower line*. In the handwriting pages for cursive, the three lines are: *black line*, *dotted line*, and *blue line*. By teaching these names and referring to them in verbal instructions, you will help children form letters with proper size and placement. For example, when teaching print, you may instruct the students: *Place your pencils on the cloud line and pull down to the flower line*. Be sure that your classroom board is marked with the same three writing lines and with a red line on the left.



Print writing lines



Cursive writing lines

Although the exact wording of the verbal instructions may vary from teacher to teacher, it is important that your own instructions remain consistent. As your students begin to form letters accurately and automatically, you can give less detailed instructions. Eventually, stop giving instructions altogether.

If any of the students have difficulty with the spacing between two words, they can use their



index finger and middle finger of their nondominant hand (*two-finger space*) to help them space words properly. For left-handed students, the teacher will need to model how to place the pencil where their fingers are, then lift their fingers and continue with their writing.

Finally, it is important to set and keep expectations for neatly written work. Praise the children's good work. The students who are struggling with fine- or visual-motor organization need not only encouragement, but also direct support through continuous modeling with feedback to help produce better results over time.

Teaching Print

Teach the students to hold their pencils about one inch from the point and at a forty-five-degree angle to the table. The proper three-finger grip is to hold the pencil between the thumb and the index finger and support it with the middle finger. When the children are first learning to write, you may put molded finger grips on their pencils to help them learn the correct finger positions. Also, teach the students that writing requires both hands: one to hold the pencil and the other to hold the paper.



Once the students can write all the lower-case and capital letters clearly and automatically, you no longer need to teach handwriting on a daily basis. Instead, provide handwriting lessons as needed, when you see weaknesses in students' written work. Be sure that your class understands that you expect good handwriting in all writing assignments, and be consistent in holding the students to this expectation.

Lower-Case Print Letter Groups

It is important to teach the students to print letters using one stroke, since this will facilitate learning to write in cursive. For example, a child who learns to form a *d* using one stroke and practices this motor pattern in the primary grades will have no problem learning to form a cursive *d*, as the motor patterns are nearly identical. The only printed letters that cannot be taught in one stroke are *t*, *f*, *x*, and *k*.

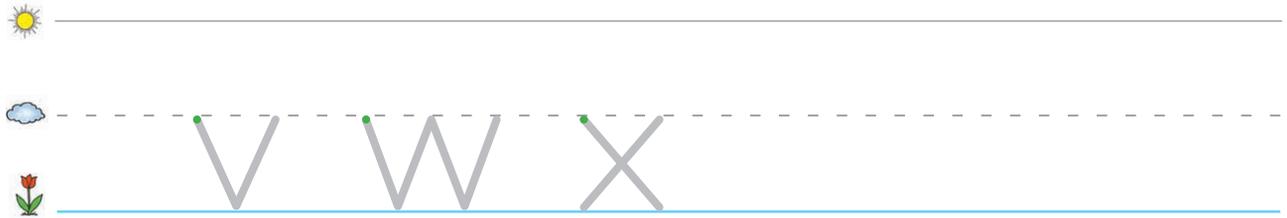
As mentioned, before you teach your class to form the letters, explain that each of the lines (*sun*, *cloud*, *flower*) on the paper has a name. By using the names of the lines and the red line as reference points, you will be able to describe your hand movements as you demonstrate how to write each letter. For example, while teaching the letter *v*, you might say: *Put your pencil on the cloud line, slant away from the red, and then slant up*. Try to use language that guides children in forming their letters.

You will find the verbalizations for the print letters in the *Teacher Resources* at pafprogram.com.



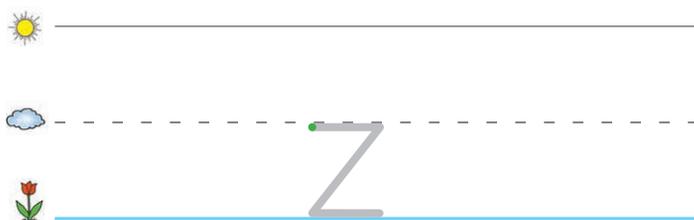
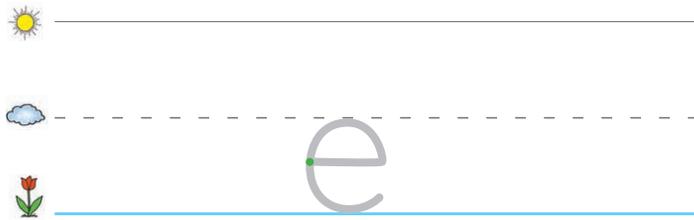
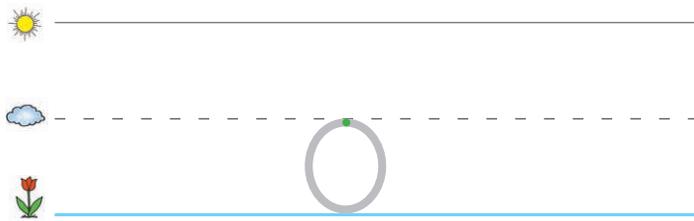
Slanty Letters

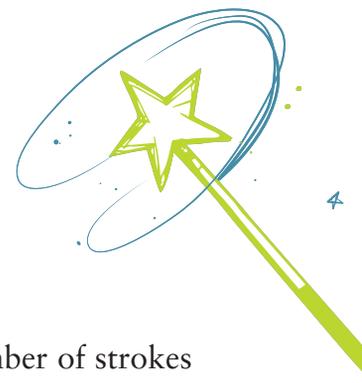
Tell the students that when they hear *slanty letter*, they should put their pencils on the cloud line and slant down and away from the red.



Letters That Are Not in a Group

The letter *o* is not taught as a *curvy letter* in order to form it the way the letter is written in cursive. The letters *e* and *z* begin with a line that goes away from the red.

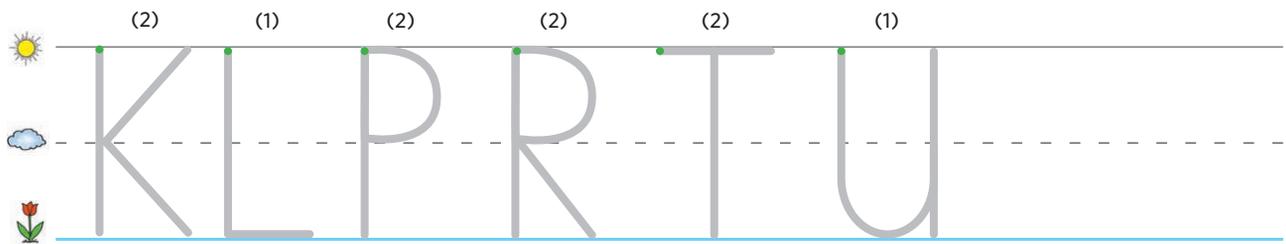
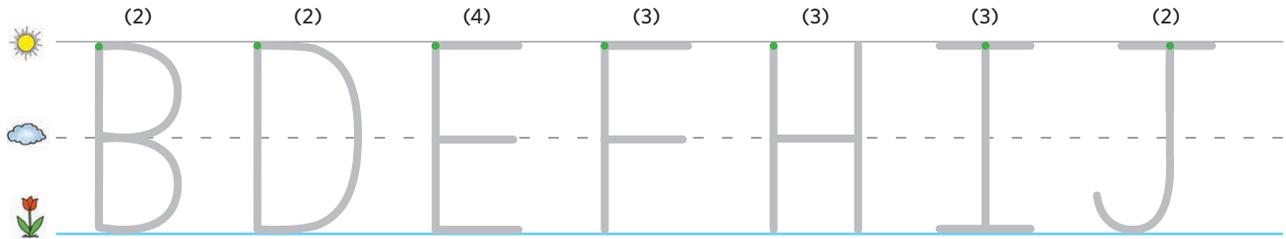




Capital Print Letter Groups

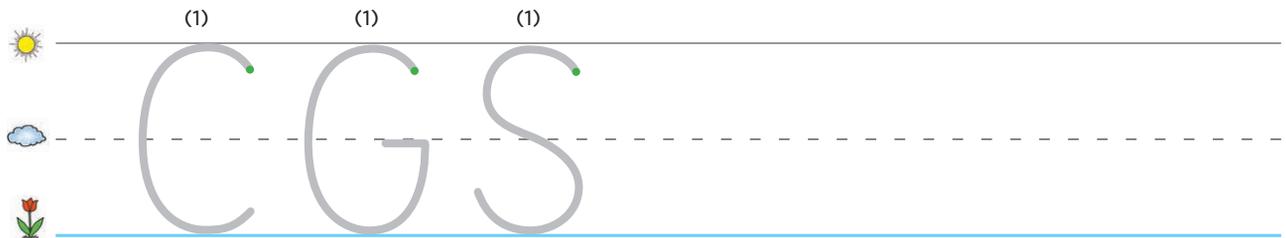
Capital Tall Letters

Most *capital letters* begin with a straight line down from the sun line. The number of strokes is indicated in parentheses over each letter.



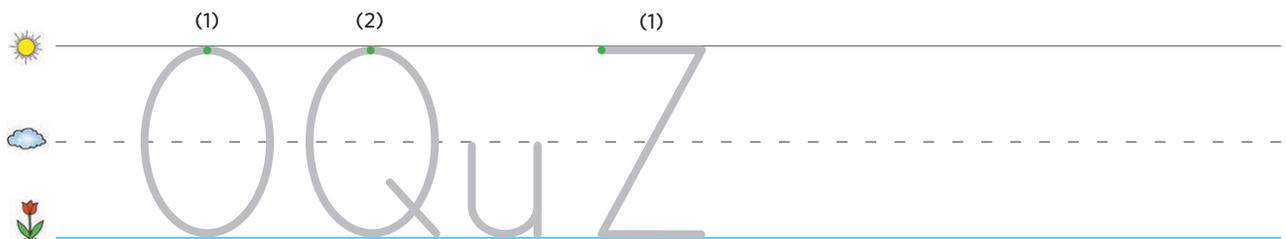
Capital Curvy Letters

Tell the children to put their pencils slightly under the sun line when they hear *curvy* for a capital letter.



Capital Letters Not Taught in a Group

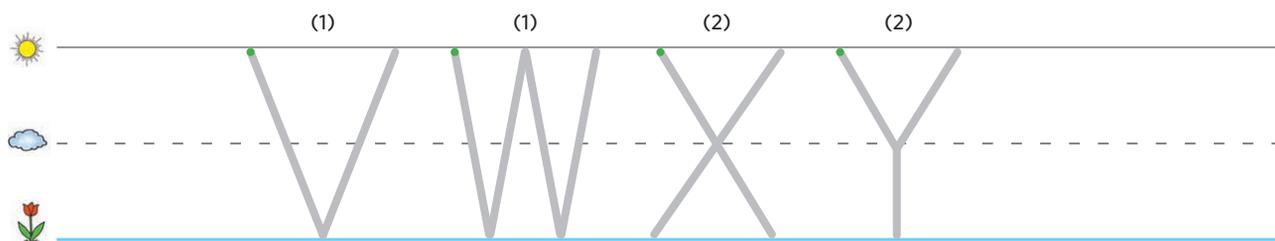
Tell the children to put their pencils on the sun line when they hear one of these capital letters.





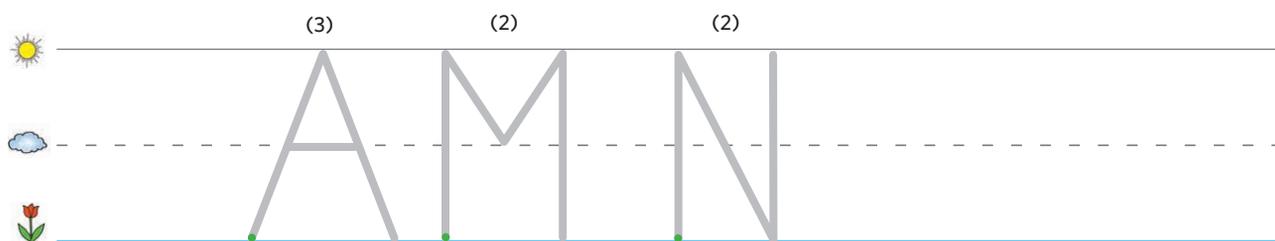
Capital Slanty Letters

Tell the children to put their pencils on the sun line and slant away from the red when they hear *slanty letter* for a capital.



Capital Letters that Start on the Flower Line

Tell the children these are the only three *capital letters* that begin on the flower line.



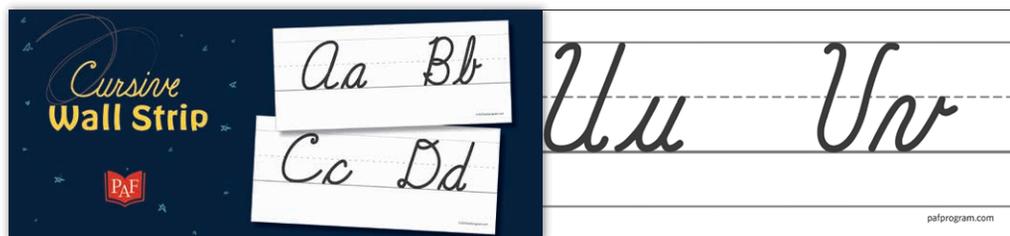
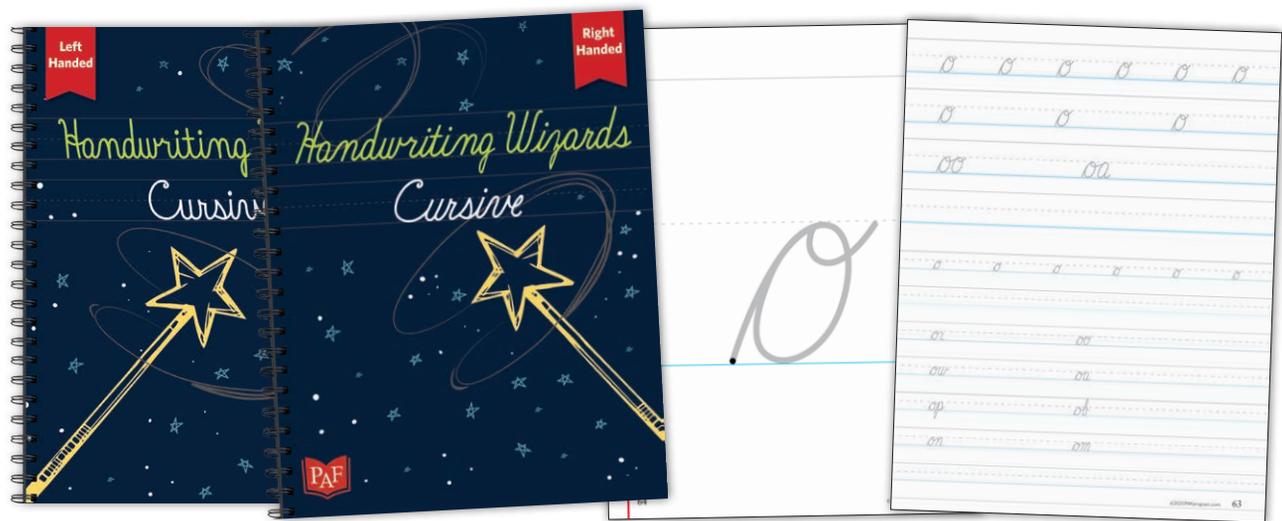


Teaching Cursive

The *Handwriting Wizards Cursive* is designed to be used in the regular classroom. Most schools introduce cursive in third grade. Students are usually very excited to start using cursive, which they view as a *grown-up* form of writing.

Most basic principles used in teaching print apply to teaching cursive as well: students should work under the supervision of a teacher; teachers should group letters by motor pattern; introduce the letters by having students use large muscles; give verbal instructions and have children trace, copy, and then write the letters from memory.

As when teaching print, arrange all the desks in your classroom facing forward, and be sure students use proper posture and pencil grip. Have them orient their papers at a forty-five-degree angle from the edge of their desks and parallel to their writing arms. Most right-handed children produce letters slanting toward the right-hand corner of the page; most left-handed children produce letters slanting toward the left-hand corner. The direction of the slant of the letters is less important than its consistency: always to the right corner or always to the left. To accommodate the needs of both your left- and right-handed students, the *Handwriting Wizards Cursive* books are available for right- and left-handed students. The books are identical except for the slant of the letters.





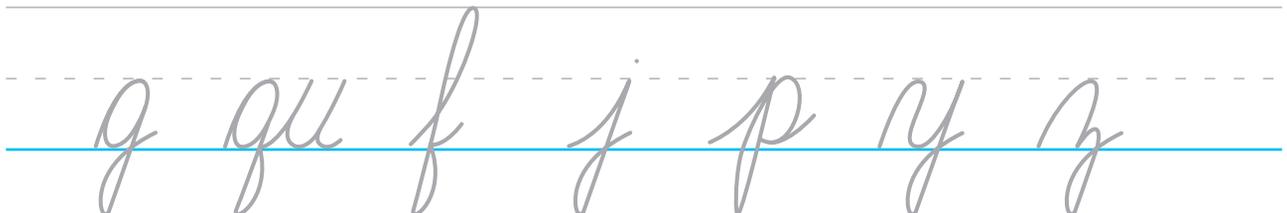
The sequence in the cursive books is not in alphabetical order, but rather is organized into four groups: *Curvy*, *Tall*, *Rocket*, and *Hill*. Each group represents the initial direction the hand moves to begin making the letter. Usually all the letters within a group are taught together with two exceptions. After the introduction of the first four letters in the *Curvy* group (*c*, *a*, *d*, *g*), three letters from the *Rocket* group are then introduced (*i*, *u*, *t*). These three letters provide additional common letter combinations that occur frequently when spelling and writing. The other exception is the lower-case letter *o*. Although the initial movement for the lower-case is similar to the *Curvy* letters, it is not introduced until the bridge letters are taught.

The handwriting books begin by teaching the twenty-six lower-case letters. While the students are learning these letters, they should use 3/8" ruled paper for extra practice. Once the students know all the lower-case letters, they should begin doing all their written work in cursive, using 3/16" ruled paper. The students can print the capital letters until they have learned the motor patterns.

While the children are making the transition from print, you can give them homework in which they copy printed text into cursive. You can supply a short paragraph or non-phonetic words for them to copy. Be sure to give them the 3/16" paper for this practice.

Lower-Case Cursive Letter Groups

All lower-case letters start on the writing line, and all but four bridge letters (*b*, *v*, *w* and *o*) end on the writing line. Because bridge letters do not end on the writing line, they are difficult to connect to the next letter and require special emphasis. Connecting bridge letters to rocket letters, such as *i* or *u*, is particularly difficult. Teach the children to come down so the bridge sags (*b*), rather than going straight across the dotted line (*b*). In this way, they will approach the next letter from the usual direction, from the bottom up. Both large and small models of specific bridge connections are provided in the handwriting books. Finally, for all lower-case tail letters (*g*, *u*, *f*, *j*, *p*, *y*, *z*), teach the children that the tail only goes halfway down the empty space between the blue line and the black line in the next handwriting line.



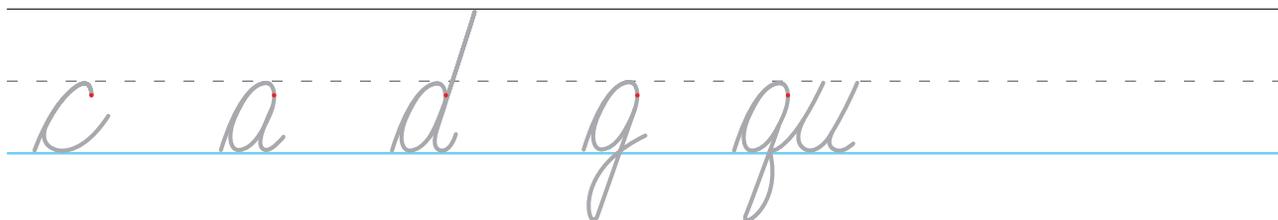


Before you teach the class to form the letters, explain that each of the lines (*black, dotted, blue*) on the paper has a name. By using the names of the lines and the red line as reference points, you will be able to describe your hand movements as you demonstrate how to write each letter. *Curvy letters* also have a red stopping dot to indicate a change of direction toward the red line. For example, while teaching the letter *a*, you might say: *Put your pencil on the blue line, curve up toward the red dot, stop and change direction, close the circle and sit on the blue line.* Try to use language that guides children in forming their letters.

You will find the verbalizations for the cursive letters in the *Teacher Resources* at pafprogram.com.

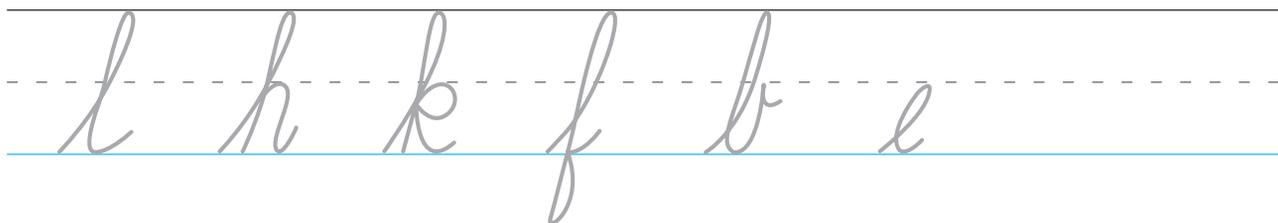
Curvy Letters

Teach the children that when they hear *curvy letter*, they should swing up and over to the red stopping dot, stop, and go back toward the red line.



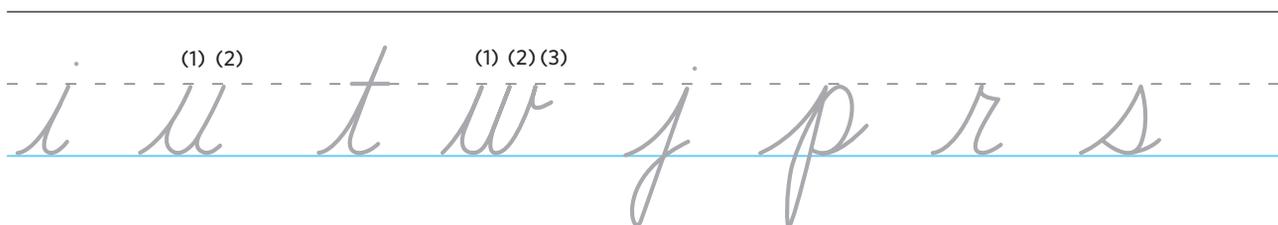
Tall Letters

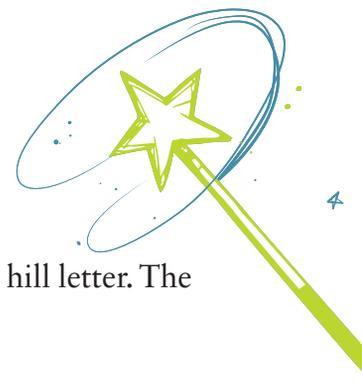
Teach the children to make a curved line up to the black line and pull straight down when they hear *tall letter*.



Rocket Letters

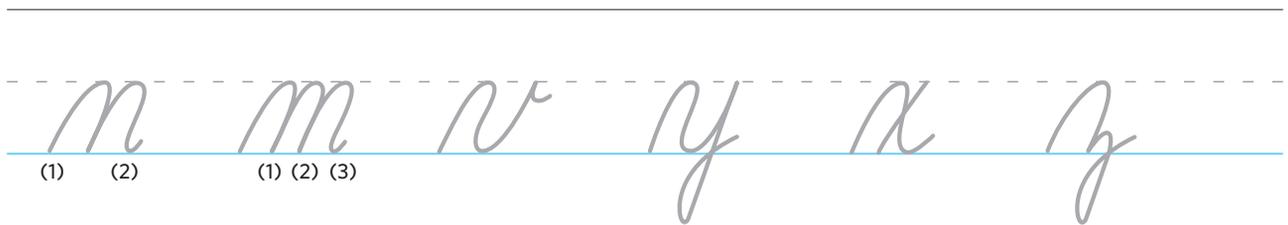
Teach the children to swing to the dotted line and to come down on the same line when they hear *rocket letter*. The numerals indicate the number of times that the pencil hits the dotted line.





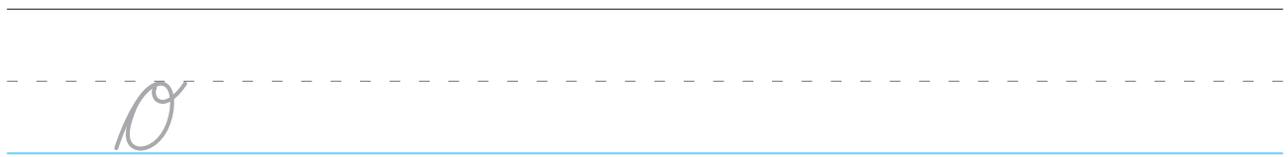
Hill Letters

Teach the children to swing up to the dotted line and make a hill when they hear hill letter. The numerals indicate the number of times that the pencil hits the blue line.



Odd Ball o Letter

Teach the children to swing up to the dotted line and turn back to the red.



o = swing to the dotted line, turn back to red, close the circle and loop



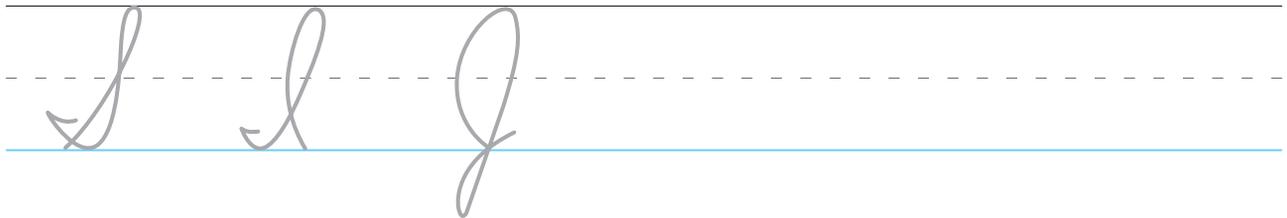
Capital Cursive Letter Groups

All capitals are connected to the next letter except *D, O, P, U, W* and *X*.

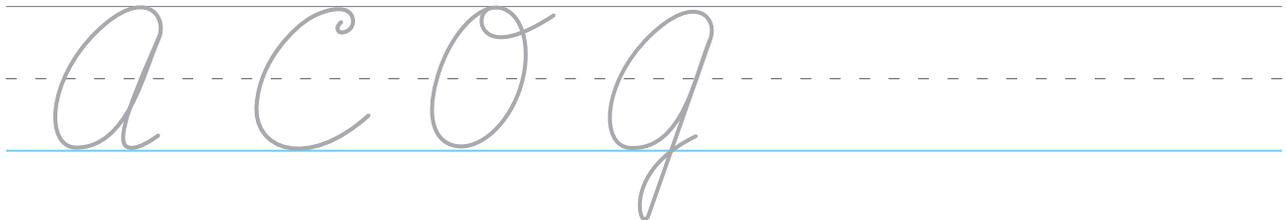
Several capitals end like a boat bottom. Demonstrate this association to facilitate the verbalization *make a boat*.



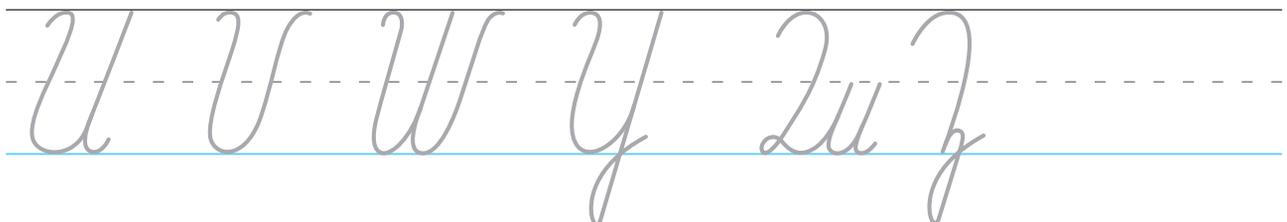
All capitals begin at the top except these:

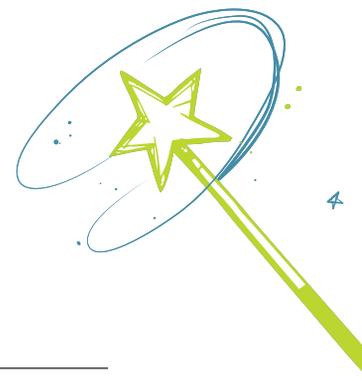


These four letters have the same motor patterns as their lower-case partners.

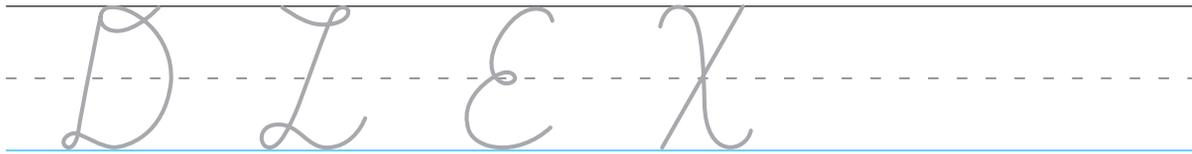


The following letters are grouped for similar motor patterns.

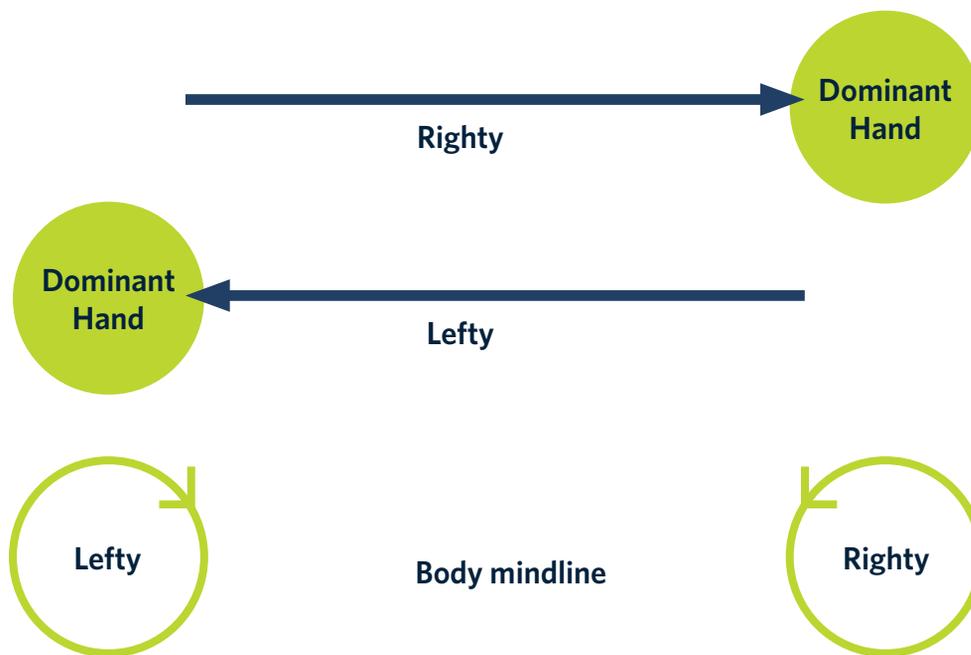




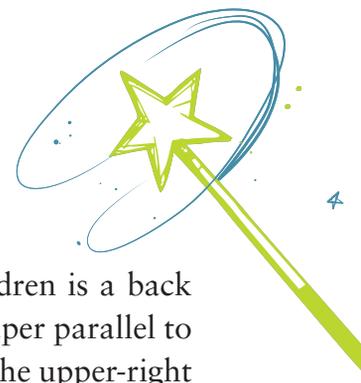
Each of the remaining letters has its own motor pattern.



Left-handed children make certain instinctive movements when learning to write, different from those made by right-handed children. For example, most left-handed children, or lefties, draw horizontal lines from right to left rather than left to right. This is because all children draw horizontal lines by starting on their nondominant side and moving toward their writing hand. Likewise, most lefties draw circles clockwise rather than counterclockwise. This is because all children draw circles by beginning with an upward stroke that moves toward the body midline. For lefties, these movements feel as normal and comfortable as the more familiar writing movements feel to righties.



Left-handed children also have a natural tendency to scan pages from right to left, rather than left to right. They must overcome this inclination in order to read and write successfully. Beginning in preschool, lefties should be trained to work automatically from left to right. Mark the left side of the board and the students' desks with a vertical red line as a reference point for where to begin work. Be sure to include specific instructions to draw horizontal lines from left to right (away from the red) and to draw circles in a counterclockwise direction (toward the red). Teaching children to make circles with a counterclockwise movement will reduce the frequency of reversing the *curvy letters*.



One of the most natural movements in the cursive writing of left-handed children is a back slant. Most children produce cursive letters at a slant by placing their writing paper parallel to their writing arm. For righties, the result is a forward *slant*, or letters leaning to the upper-right corner of the page. For lefties, the result is a back *slant*, or letters leaning to the upper left.



Although the left-handed back slant is less common than the forward slant, it is equally acceptable and does not need to be changed. Instead, teach lefties to use their natural back slant by displaying a left-handed cursive alphabet in your classroom and by giving them appropriate letter models to trace from the *Handwriting Wizards Cursive*. Some children—both lefties and righties—prefer to hold their writing paper perpendicular to the desk and write with no slant to their letters. You should allow students to select whatever paper position and slant is most comfortable, as long as they are consistent. Under no circumstances, however, should you encourage lefties to write with a forward slant, as this can result in undue strain and hooking of the wrist, a source of muscle tension and fatigue. Finally, be aware that smudging is often an unavoidable consequence of writing with the left hand.

Left-handed Alphabet

