

Handwriting Wizards

Print



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

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 and feel the subtle differences between some letters (b/d). 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 whole arm (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. On every instructional handwriting page, the last line has been left blank so the children can write 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 to 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. The lines have been given names to give children reference points when forming the letters.



Teaching Print

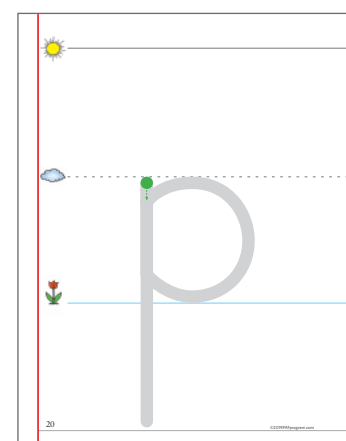
Teach the students to hold their pencils about one inch from the point and at a forty-five-degree angle to the desk. The proper three-finger grip is to hold the pencil between the thumb and the index finger and support it with the middle finger. When the children are first learning to write, you may 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 lowercase and capital letters clearly and automatically, you no longer need to teach handwriting. However, you may need to provide corrective feedback and model proper formation as needed.

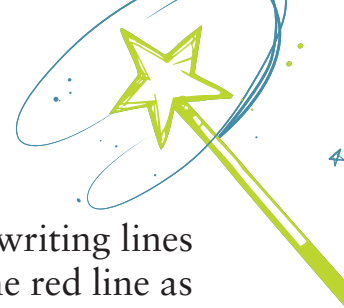
Lowercase Letter Instruction

As part of the verbalizations, the writing lines have been given names: sun line, cloud line, and flower line. By teaching these names and referring to them, you will help children form letters with proper size and placement. For example, when teaching *p*, you may instruct the students: *Place your pencils on the cloud line, pull down past the flower line, back up to the cloud line, away from the red, close the circle.*



writing lines

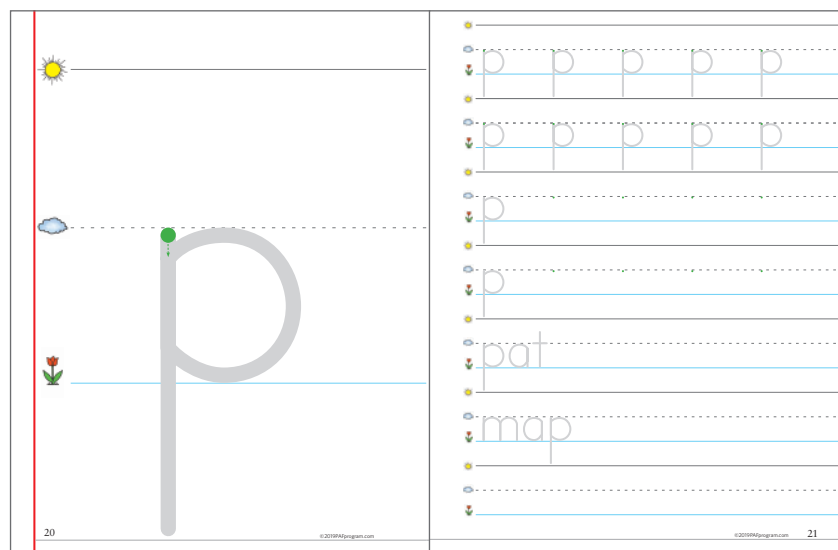
To help give verbal instructions on how to form the letters, establish reference points in your classroom. First, have all the desks facing the board. Next, place a strip of red tape down the left side of each child's desk. In classrooms with group tables, give each student a 12-by-18-inch oak tag mat or a manila folder with a vertical red line on the left side. Then when giving verbal instructions, tell the students to move their hands to or away from the red tape, rather than to the left or right. A starter dot has been provided so students know the starting point for each letter.



1. Be sure that your classroom board is marked with the same three writing lines and with a red line on the left. By using the names of the lines and the red line as reference points, **the teacher will model the motor pattern** for each letter.

2. The students will trace the large model of the letter in their handwriting books as the teacher provides the verbalizations. Then on the next page, children trace small models of the letter. Just use the verbal instructions when needed. Children do not need to say the verbalizations.

3. When children are forming their own letters, it is important to provide feedback before they complete the entire line. Ask the students to write the letter one time to make sure it is formed correctly before they continue.



If any of the students have difficulty with the spacing between words, they can use the index finger of their non-dominant hand (one-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 finger is, then lift their finger 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 encouragement, as well as continuous modeling with immediate feedback to help produce better results over time.

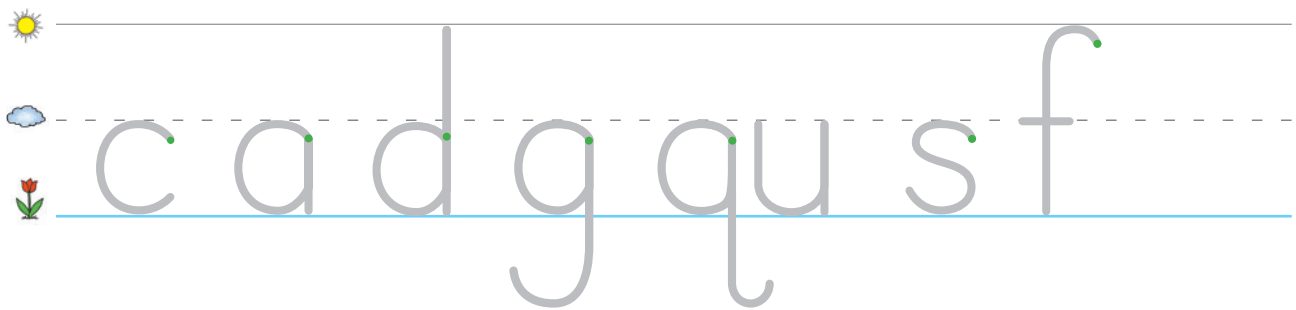
Verbalizations For Print Letters

The following verbalizations are suggestions for the lowercase print letters. You do not need to memorize them. When it comes time to teach the capital letters, use your own verbalizations. Just remember to always emphasize the starting line and directional changes for each letter.

Lowercase Letter Groups

Curvy Letters

Teach children that curvy letters begin slightly below the cloud line. The curvy letters are the only printed letters that do not begin on a line. Have the students put their pencils slightly below the cloud line and go up and curve to the red line. The *f* is the only curvy letter that begins slightly below the sun line.



Each verbalization starts with: *Put your pencil on the starter dot.*

c = up to the cloud line and curve to the red, sit it on the flower line

a = up to the cloud line and curve to the red, close the circle, back down to the flower line

d = up to the cloud line and curve to the red, close the circle, up to the sun line and back down to the flower line

g = up to the cloud line and curve to the red, close the circle, back down past the flower line, turn to the red

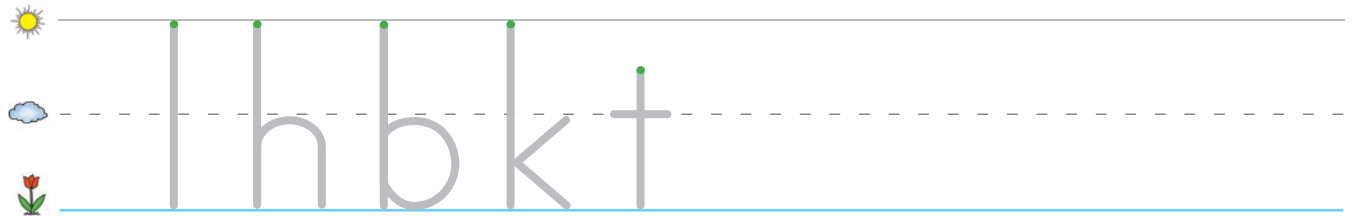
qu = up to the cloud line and curve to the red, close the circle, back down past the flower line, turn away from the red
The *q* turns away from the red to make a pocket for the *u*.

s = up to the cloud line and curve to the red, curve away from the red and then curve back to the red

f = up to the sun line and curve to the red, pull straight down to the flower line, cross on the cloud line

Tall Letters

Teach children that *tall letters* start on the sun line and pull down to the flower line. The *t* is a teenage letter, shorter than a tall letter, that begins between the sun and the cloud lines.



Each verbalization starts with: *Put your pencil on the starter dot.*

l = pull down to the flower line

h = pull down to the flower line, back up to the cloud line, away from the red and down to the flower line

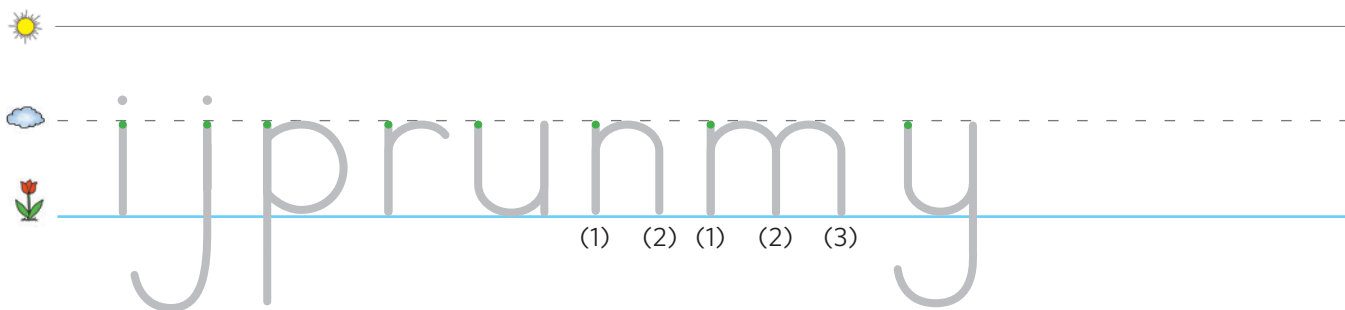
b = pull down to the flower line, back up to the cloud line, away from the red, close the circle

k = pull down to the flower line, lift, cloud line, in and out

t = pull down to the flower line, cross on the cloud line

Short Letters

Teach children that *short letters* start on the cloud line and pull down. The numerals indicate the number of times the pencil hits the flower line.



Each verbalization starts with: *Put your pencil on the starter dot.*

i = pull down to the flower line, dot

j = pull down past the flower line, turn to the red, dot

P = pull down past the flower line, back up to the cloud line, away from the red, close the circle

r = pull down to the flower line, back up to the cloud line, away from the red

u = pull down to the flower line, turn away from the red, up to the cloud line and back down

n = pull down to the flower line, back up to the cloud line, turn away from the red, and down
If children confuse n/m , you can say "1, 2" counting the number of times the strokes hit the flower line.

m = pull down to the flower line, back up to the cloud line, turn away from the red, down to the flower line, back up and over, and down

If children confuse *n/m*, you can say "1, 2, 3" counting the number of times the strokes hit the flower line.

y = pull down to the flower line, turn away from the red, up to the cloud line, back down past the flower line, and turn to the red

Slanty Letters

Teach children that *slanty letters* start on the cloud line and slant down and away from the red line.



Each verbalization starts with: *Put your pencil on the starter dot.*

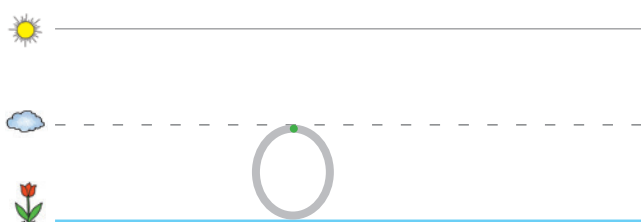
V = slant down away from the red, slant up to the cloud line

W = slant down away from the red, slant up to the cloud line, slant down, slant up

X = slant down away from the red, lift, cloud line, slant down to the red

Letters That Are Not Taught in a Group

The letter *o* is not taught as a *curvy letter* so that it is formed the same way the letter is written in cursive. Both the *o* and the *z* start on the cloud line, but the letter *e* starts in between the cloud and flower lines.

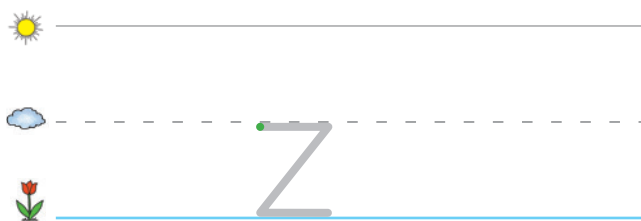


Each verbalization starts with: *Put your pencil on the starter dot.*

O = around to the red, close the circle



e = away from the red, up to the cloud line and over to the red, sit it on the flower line



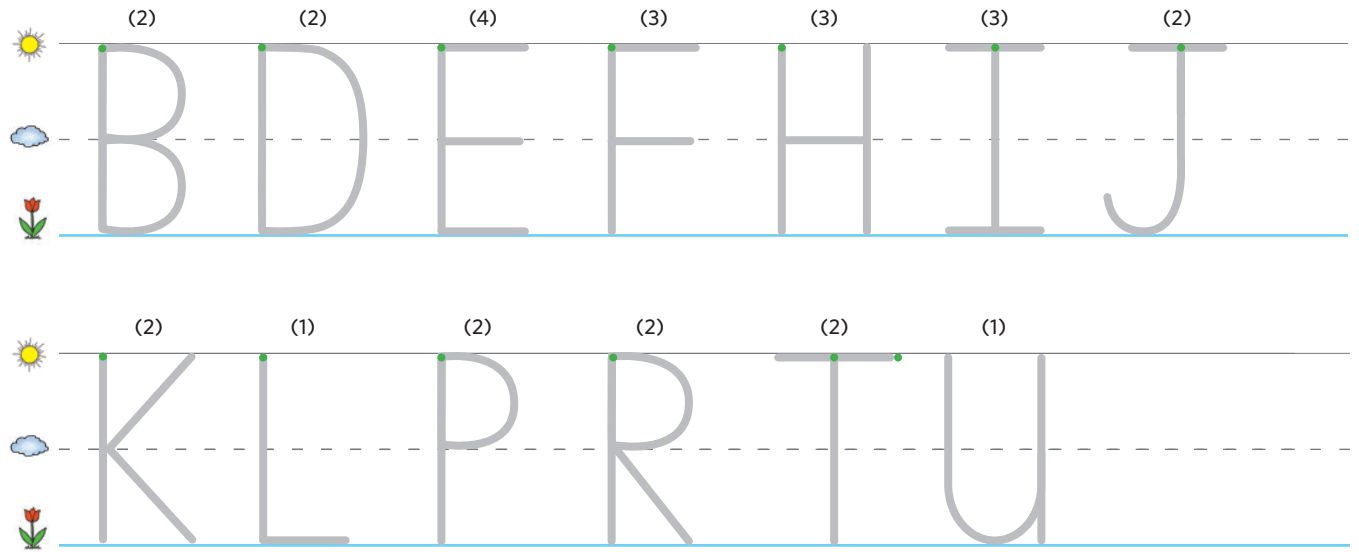
Z = away from the red, slant down to the red, away from the red on the flower line

Capital Letter Groups

No specific verbalizations are provided for the capital letters, but modeling with similar language as used with lowercase letters is suggested. The number in parentheses above each letter indicates the number of times a student needs to pick up the pencil to form the letter.

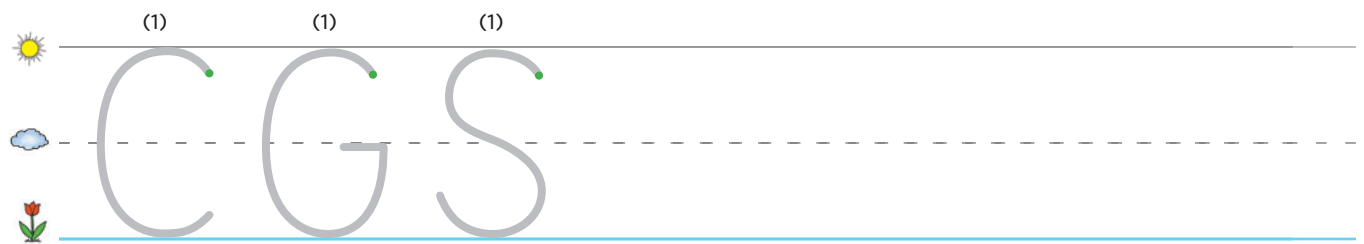
Capital Tall Letters

Teach children that *tall capitals* start at the sun line and pull down to the flower line.



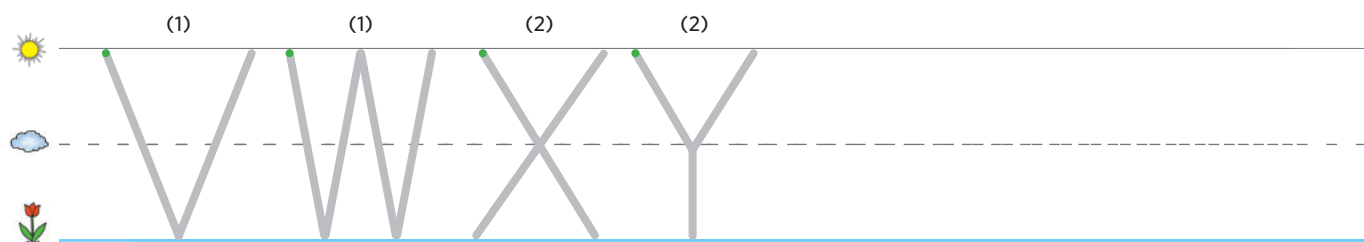
Capital Curvy Letters

Teach children that *curvy capitals* start under the sun line.



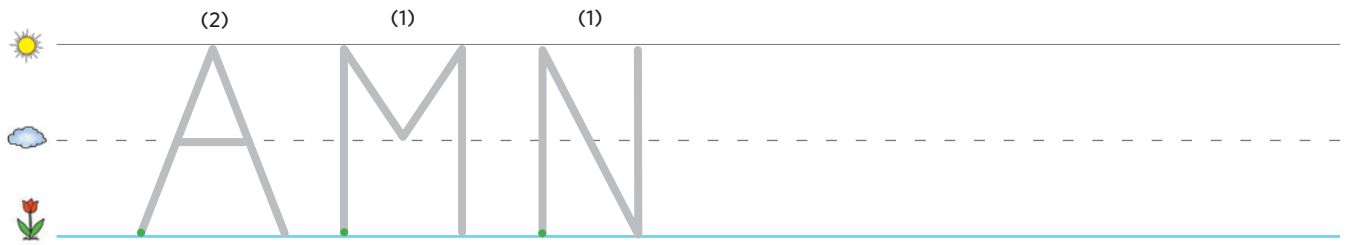
Capital Slanty Letters

Teach children that *slanty capitals* start on the sun line and slant away from the red.



Capital Letters that Start on the Flower Line

Teach children that these are the only three capital letters that start on the flower line.



Capital Letters Not Taught in a Group

Teach children that these three capital letters start on the sun line but do not pull down to the flower line.

