



Early handwriting

In order that children eventually acquire a legible, fluent and fast handwriting style, they need to develop skills including:

- good gross and fine motor control
- a recognition of pattern
- a language to talk about shapes and movements
- the main handwriting movements involved in the three basic letter shapes as exemplified by: l, c, r.

What kinds of letter patterns do we teach?

When we introduce patterns for writing to children, we focus on recurring features in letter formation. Therefore we focus on patterns which build on the four basic letter shapes:

- l, for the long ladder letters
- c, for the curly caterpillar letters
- r, for the one-armed robot letters
- z, for the zig-zag letters

Using 'shape families' to teach letter formation

For simplicity, most letters of the alphabet are sorted into four main movement groups. Some letters have different forms – b, k, y, v, and so these fall into two groups.

Some letters e.g. f, s, have some affinity with a group but are taught separately.

The advantage of aligning letters with a key letter is to help children to remember the starting point and subsequent movement of the letter. This is particularly effective in discriminating b from d.

The four groups are:

- down and off in another direction, exemplified by the letter l (long ladder): letters i, j, l, t, u (v, w with rounded bases) A video explanation can be found [here](#).
- down and retrace upwards, exemplified by the letter r (one-armed robot): letters b, h, k, m, n, p, r; (numbers 2, 3, 5 follow a clockwise direction) A video explanation can be found [here](#).
- anti-clockwise round, exemplified by the letter c (curly caterpillar) letters: c, a, d, e, g, o, q, f, s; numbers: 0, 6, 8, 9. A video explanation can be found [here](#).
- zigzag letters: letters: v, w, x, z; numbers: 1, 4, 7. A video explanation can be found [here](#).

There is also a useful video on the development of handwriting in younger children which can be found [here](#).