

SEND programme: Teaching letter formation

It is important to teach children correct letter formation from the outset as it is much harder to undo incorrect letter formation afterwards. For many children, forming the letter using pencil or pen on paper is great practice. It helps them to think about the letter shape and its sound, as well as giving them the skill to write that letter in words. Some children following the SEND programme will benefit from a multi-sensory approach, and they will get feedback from forming letters in different mediums such as foam, sand, using paints, chalks and a variety of surfaces.

- Teach letter formation using the formation phrases below.
- Teach the letters that the child is learning in their phonics lessons.
- Use your judgement as to the timings of these sessions.
- Consider the appropriate adaptations for each child.
- Use the Letter formation practice sheets if appropriate.
- Children can be taught to read and write capital letters towards the end of Phase 2 once they have learned a sound for each letter of the alphabet. Use the document 'How to write capital letters' for guidance about letter formation.

Some children will not form letters and will be mainly communicating using AAC technology. These children do not need to follow this part of the programme.

How to write letters

Use the formation phrases to ensure correct letter formation when you are teaching children to write letters.

Mnemonic	Grapheme	Formation phrase
	S	Down the snake from head to tail.
	a	Around the astronaut's helmet and down into space.
	t	Down the tiger and across its neck.
	p	Down the penguin's back, up and around its head.
	i	Down the iguana and dot the leaf.
	n	Down, up and over the net.
	m	Down, up and over the mouse's ears.
	d	Round the duck's body, up to its head and down to its feet.

Mnemonic	Grapheme	Formation phrase
	g	Round the goat's face and curl under its chin.
	o	All around the octopus.
	c	Curl around the cat.
	k	Down the kite, up to the top corner and down to the bottom corner.
	ck	c Curl around the heel of the sock. k Down the sock, up and back down to the toe.
	e	Around the elephant's eye and down its trunk.
	u	Down the umbrella, around and back to the ground.
	r	From the cloud to the ground and over the rainbow.
	h	Down, up and over the helicopter.
	b	Down the bear's back, up and round its tummy.
	f	Down the flamingo to its foot and across its wings.
	l	Down the lollipop stick.
	j	Down the jellyfish and dot its head.
	v	Down to the bottom of the volcano and back up to the top.

Mnemonic	Grapheme	Formation phrase
	W	Down and up and down and up the waves.
	X	From the top, across the box to the bottom. From the top again across the box to the bottom.
	y	Down, around the yo-yo and curl round the string.
	z	Across the top of the zebra's head, zig-zag down its neck and along.
	qu	q Round the queen's face, down her robe and a flick at the end. u Down and around the umbrella and back to the ground.