

The Path to Reading and Spelling

Hosted by
The Dyslexia Initiative

<https://www.thedyslexiainitiative.org/the-parent-sessions>

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Session 16: Letter Formation/Handwriting

February 3, 2022

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Purpose of Today's Session

- **Explain** why handwriting is critical to a child's brain development.
- **Watch** a video on how letter formation is taught.
- **Explain** why proper letter formation is important.
- **Share** a document you can use to teach letter formation.

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Why Handwriting is Important

Children who learn to write by hand:

- Demonstrate improved visual memory of letters.
- Show improved reading and spelling skills
- Retain information better
- Generate **ideas** easier

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Why Handwriting is Important

Putting pencil to paper stimulates circuits in the brain involved with:

- Memory
- Attention
- Motor skills
- Language

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Hand/Brain Circuitry

Good penmanship showed increased activation in the reading and writing brain circuitry.

- Developing a strong connection between the use of the hand and the neural circuitry is important.
- This circuitry makes learning easier.
- Writing by hand helps children formulate thoughts, remember topics, and comprehend better.
- Legible penmanship improves writing fluency.

Efficient and automatic letter formation leads to fluent writing composition, as automaticity with decoding leads to fluent reading.

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**Study shows handwriting better than
typing for learning, memory:**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l69-
wKYn_Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l69-wKYn_Y)

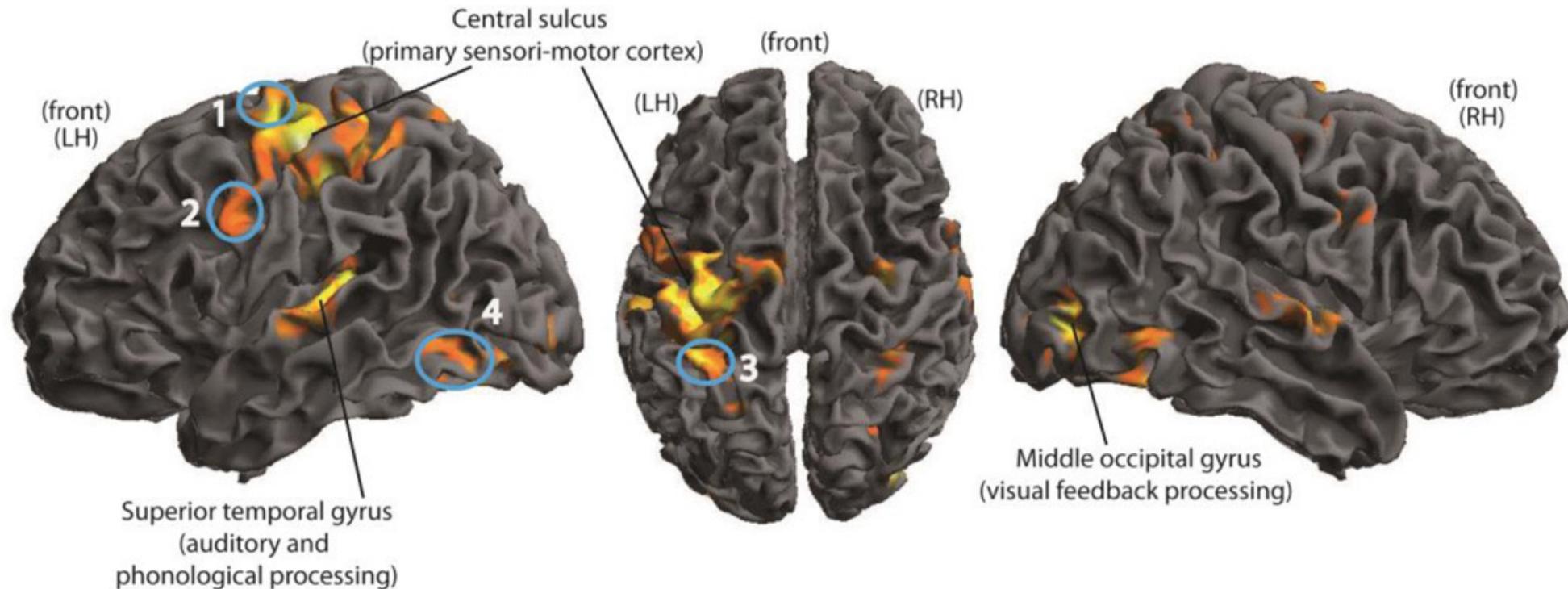
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The Importance of Handwriting:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EJa8wVce5WE>

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Neuroanatomy of Handwriting



The left panel represents a lateral view of the left hemisphere (LH), the middle panel a top view of the brain, and the right panel a right view of the right hemisphere (RH).

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5297261/>

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Effects of Labored Handwriting

Labored handwriting creates a drain on mental resources needed for composition. This includes:

- Attention to subject matter
- Organization
- Flow of ideas
- Elaboration

Poor handwriting can affect every aspect of a student's learning.

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Handwriting Instruction Includes:

- Pencil grip
- Paper position
- Letter formation
- Legibility
- Automaticity

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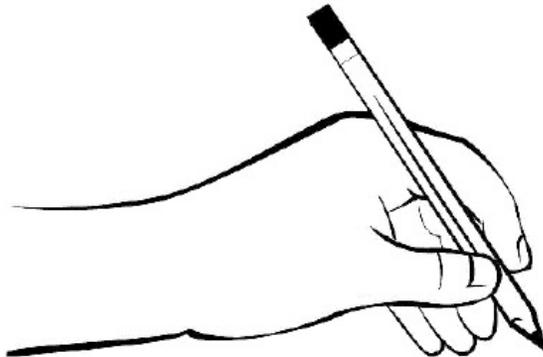
Basics of Handwriting Instruction

1. Pencil grip:

Hold pencil with a light grip.

1. Thumb holds pencil.
2. First finger rests on top of the pencil.
3. Pencil rests against third finger.

Left hand



Right hand

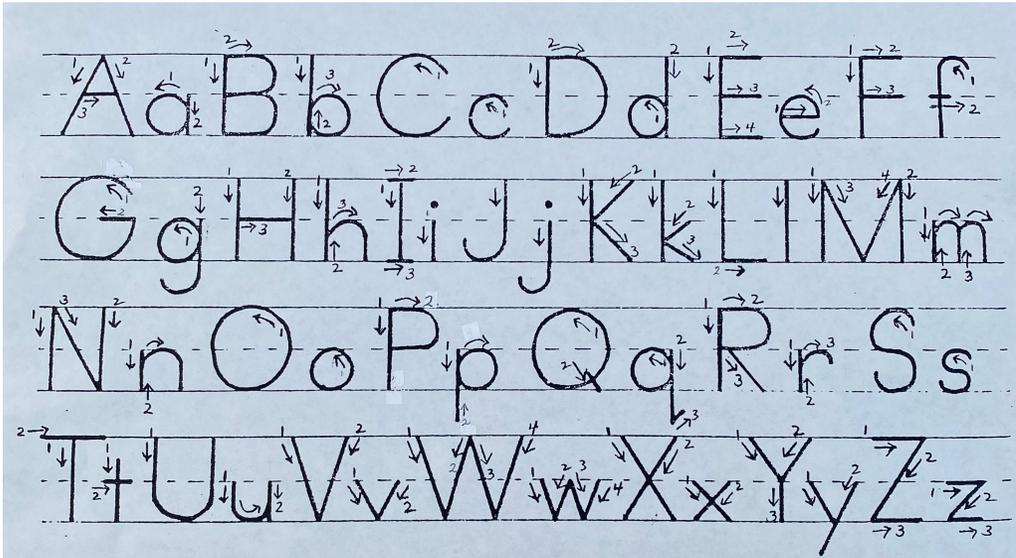


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2. Letter formation:

Manuscript uppercase letters are easier to write than lowercase letters. While teaching letter formation:

- Demonstrate and explain in detail how a letter is written.
- Explain all uppercase and some lowercase letters start at the top line.
- Many lowercase letters start at the midline.
- Several start just below the midline.
- All letters (except lowercase j) sit on the bottom line.



Watch where the child begins writing each letter. This is called “the starting point.”

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Basics of Handwriting Instruction

2. Letter Formation (continued):

- Some programs teach similarly formed letters at the same time (*a, d, o, g, s,* and *q* start like *c*).
- Letters likely to be confused or reversed (*b* and *d* or *p* and *q*) are taught separately.
- Include freehand writing once children understand how a letter is formed.

Children who write letters freehand exhibit increased activity in the same three areas of the brain that are activated when adults read and write. To avoid incorrect letter formation, it's important to be present while a child is practicing.

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Basics of Handwriting Instruction

2. Letter Formation (continued):

Children can practice letter formation in a variety of ways. Have them write letters:

- In the air (Skywriting)
- On the palms of their hands
- In shaving cream
- In playdough
- On sandpaper
- On your child's back.

Multisensory approaches are helpful and fun.

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Basics of Handwriting Instruction

3. Legibility:

Factors causing legibility issues include:

- Writing above (not on) the line
- Irregular or no spacing between letters and words,
- Incorrect letter size (such as oversized lowercase letters)
- Pressing too hard on the paper.

There is little evidence cursive is easier to learn than manuscript. Learning both forms is important.

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Basics of Handwriting Instruction

4. Automaticity with letter formation:

Children need to be able to form letters legibly and from memory:

- Writing fluency makes classroom homework, note- or test-taking more efficient.
- Pressing too hard causes fatigue and reduces the rate of letter production.
- Pressing too lightly may be a sign of weak muscles or poor pencil grasp.
- Writing with a variety of materials helps children learn to adjust grip pressure.

There are no short cuts to effective handwriting instruction.

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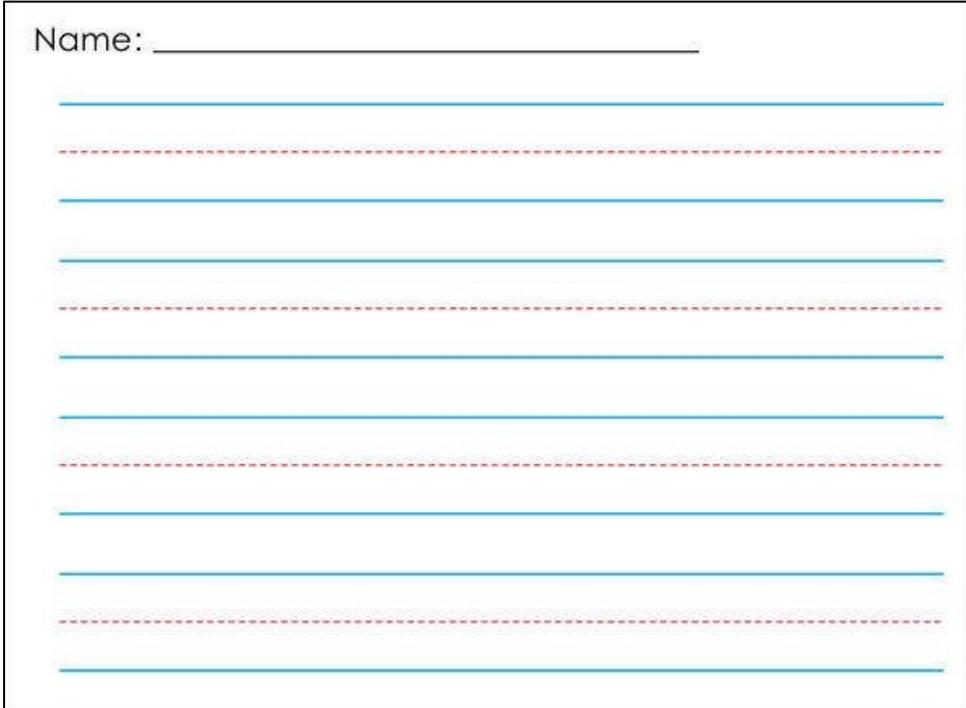
**Monday Mornings with Miss Marisa:
Sound Spelling Cards:**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R9tM2k_7QCg

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Primary Lined Paper

Name: _____



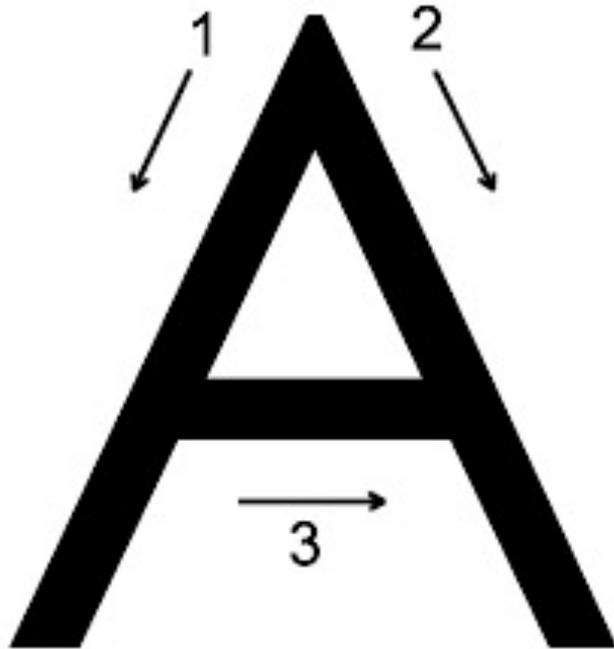
Pencil and Paper Position for Right handers:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w5DLE4dwrL4>

How to hold Pencil and Paper for Left handers:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fRk_t49dZ2Q

<https://www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=Free+printable+primary+writing+paper+pdf&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8>

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Directions for Writing Uppercase A



- Start at the top line
- Slant line down left
- Go to the starting point
- Slant line down right
- Draw a line across the midline
- Uppercase A

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Directions for Writing Lowercase a.



- Start below the midline
- Curve up and around left
- Down to the bottom line
- Curve up to make a circle
- Straight line down
- Lowercase a

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Lesson Tips

After modeling how to write the letter, the children:

- Write the same letter 5-8 times.
- Circle or draw a star above their best attempt and explain why a letter was circled or starred.
- Draw a line through the letter they like least and explain how it could be improved.
- Are initially taught to leave a “finger space” between letters.

Proper spacing affects legibility. Once children can reasonably form letters well, it’s time to work on automaticity.

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Letter Writing Directions

A	Start at the top line, slant line down left. Go to starting point, slant line down right. Straight line across the midline. Uppercase A	a	Start a little below the midline. Curve up around left, then right and up to make a circle. Up to midline, straight line down touching the circle. Lowercase a
M	Start at the top line, straight line down. Go to starting point, move a little to the right, straight line down. Go to left starting point, slant line down right. Go to right starting point, slant line down left. Uppercase M	m	Start at the midline, straight line down. Back up, curve right, touch midline, straight down. Back up, curve right, touch midline, straight down. Lowercase m
T	Start at the top line, straight line down. Go to top line a little left of starting point; straight across. Uppercase T	t	Start a little above the midline, straight line down. Go a little left of the midline, short line across. Lowercase t.
H	Start at the top line, straight line down. Go to starting point, move a little to the right, straight line down. Go to midline, straight line across. Uppercase H.	h	Start at the top line, straight line down. Back up to midline, curve around right, straight down. Lowercase h.
S	Start a little below the top line, curve up and around left. Curve down to the right, curve around left and up. Uppercase S.	s	Start a little below the midline, curve up and around left. Curve down to the right, curve around left and up. Lowercase s.

Lesson Sequence/Routine

Session 15 explains how sound/spelling correspondence is taught. There are two downloadable PDFs on The Dyslexia Initiative's website to support teaching these skills:

- Introducing the ***Alphabet Sound Card Routine*** (K)
- Introducing the ***Sound/Spelling Card Routine***

Today's Session 16 on letter formation continues the language arts lesson. After a sound/spelling has been taught, teachers show how the letter is written.

- To support teaching letter formation, download the PDF titled ***Letter Writing Directions*** on The Dyslexia Initiative's Website.

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colorful-wrapped-gift-box-icon-
red-bow-colorful-wrapped-gift-
box-icon-presents-decoration-
flat-design-christmas-surprise-
bow-138984165.jpg

Proper letter formation and handwriting:

- Improves visual and muscle memory, reading and spelling, and the ability to generate ideas.
- Activates the reading and writing brain circuitry.
- Leads to fluent writing composition, just as automaticity with decoding leads to fluent reading.
- Improves when children are asked to analyze their own work.

Teach children to consistently make the same strokes for each letter.

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Recommendations:

1. Visit The Dyslexia Initiative website.

- <https://www.thedyslexiainitiative.org>
- Choose "Recorded Sessions" in the menu.
- Click on "The Parent Sessions."

2. Download and use the Sound/Spelling Routine Cards and Letter Writing Directions (available next week).

2. Provide ongoing practice and review of writing previously taught letters.

Dysgraphia is the topic for Session 17.



<http://clipart-library.com/people-talking-cliparts.html>

Chat

- Get to know each other
- Make comments
- Ask questions