

The following sentence provides an example:

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dogs.

The main joins to learn are as follows:

Diagonal joins:

ce ar na

Diagonal joins to ascenders:

ak el th

Horizontal joins:

ro wn ov

Horizontal joins to ascenders:

rk

We have three rules which everyone in our school follows so that our children always get the same message. These are:

Rule 1

The following letters do not join to the next one, either because they end below the line, or they end on the left-hand side. 'z' and 'x' are special cases which do not join at all.

b, g, j, p, q, s, x, y, z

For example:

bake, gate, join, plate, quite

snake, except, yellow, hazard

Rule 2

f is not joined to the preceding letter, it joins to the following letter from the cross, eg:

afraid, unfilled

s takes its full shape when joined to the preceding letter, eg:

fish, hissing

Eventually, children will develop their own style of handwriting, but teachers will expect this to be based on accurate letter formation, and provide a legible, joined and fluent (quick to write) style.

Supporting Learning 3

Foundation Stage

Key Stage 1

Key Stage 2



A guide to Handwriting



How we teach handwriting, and what you can do to support its development

In order for children to develop a legible and fluent style of handwriting, we teach letter formation and joined handwriting in a consistent way. This approach works best when it can be consistently supported by families at home and so this booklet tells you the letter shapes and joins that we use in school.

Letter Formation

The letter and number shapes that we use in school are shown below.

A a B b C c D d E e

F f G g H h I i J j

K k L l M m N n O o

P p Q q R r S s T t

U u V v W w X x Y y

Z z

1 2 3 4 5

6 7 8 9 0

At school we focus on teaching the lowercase letters first, along with the numbers. Capital letters are taught too, especially where they are part of a child's name, but as lowercase letters form the most of children's own writing these will be prioritised.

Four Groups of Letters

The 26 letters of the alphabet can be roughly arranged into 4 groups of similar formation. You should practise the letters in the same group together.

Group 1 – All these letters start at the top with a vertical down-stroke, like the letter l

i j l t u y

Group 2 – All these letters start at the top with a vertical down-stroke which is then retraced upwards at least partly, as in the letter r.

b h k m n p r

Group 3 – All these letters are formed in an anti-clockwise direction, most start in the same way as a letter c.

a c d e g o q f s

Many children, especially left-handers, can incorrectly learn letters such as o, a and g in a clockwise direction. In this case always practise these letters at the same time as a letter c which starts in the same anti-clockwise direction.

Group 4 – These letters are formed of straight lines which change direction sharply, like zigzags.

v w x z

Practising Letter Formation

All children need to practise letter formation when they first start to write, and most children will need periodic reminders throughout their primary school years until they have secured their own style of writing.

Young children need to make large letter shapes and so lots of practice with chalks, sand and paint work really well. Painting with water on walls and fences is also very effective. For older children, practise individual letters and short words between two lines similar to those shown above. Consistent letter size is an essential part of learning to write neatly.

Joined Handwriting

We start joined handwriting as soon as children have learnt the letter shapes given on the left-hand page because it helps children to secure their letter formation and helps with early spelling. In the past, children have had a difficult transition to joined writing around Year 2, so the sooner they start to use a joined handwriting style, the easier the transition from printing letters.