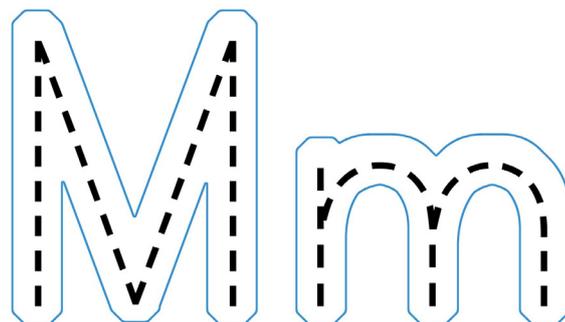


How can I support my students to develop early writing skills?



Who is this information for?

Teachers, teaching assistants, parents (for support with homework).

Which students may need support with this?

Students who are at the early stages of pencil skills and students who are learning to form letters and numbers. This is typically for the student under 7 years old or for older students with a learning disability.

For children who have mastered forming letters please see our information on:

- 'How can I support my students to write with ease'
- 'How can I support my students to form letters and present their work'

What can I do and how will this help?

Students need to recognise numbers and letters if they are to form them in a meaningful way. Research recommends a multi sensory teaching method. This involves **teaching a letter or number** in many different ways with the **goal** of working towards the student forming their letters. **Students should practise** using big movements to help understand how letters are formed. **Be creative** - use a stick in the sand, a finger in shaving foam, or a paint brush and water outside on the ground. Use different and fun ways to help make learning more enjoyable!

■ Does the student need you to demonstrate the letter formation?

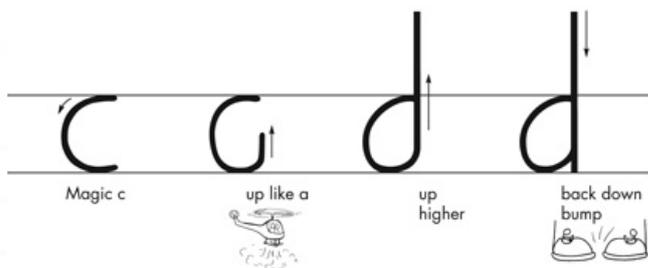
Draw the shape in the air, or on a whiteboard first, then practise on paper. Research suggests a **minimum of 20 practice sessions** are needed to develop this skill. Practise little and often.

■ Does the student need to feel the direction of the letter formation?

Practising tracing over raised letters with the finger can help learn letter formation. Making letters from different textures such as sandpaper, string, or in the groove of a cut out letter or stencil can all be useful.



■ Does the student need to talk through the letter formation?



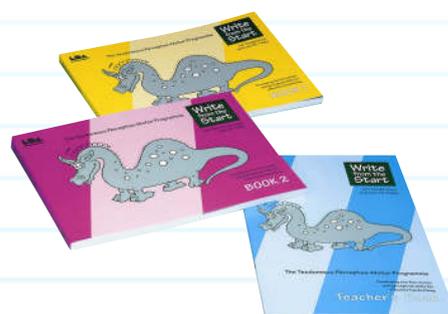
Talking through the direction of the movements as **students practise** letter shapes, i.e go 'up around and down' will help the student to remember. Making up rhymes or words to help remember the formation can be useful.

■ Does the student need opportunities to recognise and pick out letters?

Look around the classroom trying to find as many shapes, letters or numbers like the ones they are **practising** to help them remember the shape.

■ Does the student need opportunities to develop pencil control?

Students with early writing skills need time to learn how to control their pencil to make meaningful shapes **practising with pre-writing patterns**. A programme which builds on this is 'write from the start'.



Where can I get more information?

To get resources to help students with developing early writing skills check out the following websites or search the internet for other similar resources.

For tactile letters see:
www.specialdirect.com

For write from the start see:
www.ldalearning.com

The 'Write from the start' programme focuses on early pencil control along with the later part of the book focusing on letter formation.

For squidgy letters see:
www.specialdirect.com

For further advice and guidance on teaching early writing skills see www.canchild.ca and look for pre-printing resources in the DCD (Developmental Co-ordination Disorder) resources.

Contact us for further advice and to tell us what you think of this information:

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Integrated Children with Additional
Needs (ICAN)**
Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust
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Headingley Office Park
Victoria Road
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