

Parent Guide



@twinklparents

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What is this resource and how do I use it?

A comprehensive guide for parents, explaining what letter formation is, why it's important, the different types of letter formation you may come across, when your child is likely to be introduced to letter formation and what games and activities you can do to support your child with their letter formation skills at home.

What is the focus of this resource?

Letter Formation

Handwriting

Fine Motor Skills

Advice for Parents

Further Ideas and Suggestions

If your child has started phonics at school, you might find this [Phase 2 Phonics Learning at Home Letter Formation Practice Booklet](#) helpful to support them with their letter formation. Is your child left-handed? Try our popular [Letter Formation Practice for Left Handers: Magical Theme booklet](#).

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Letter Formation Explained for Parents

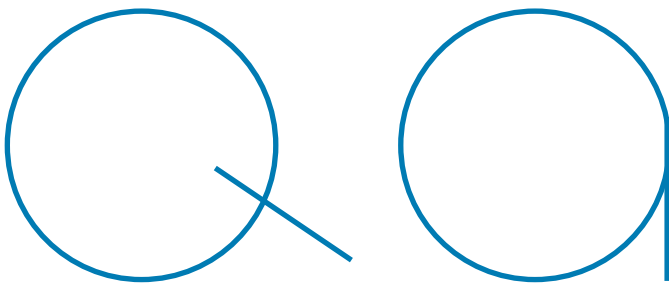
What is letter formation?

Letter formation is the ability to correctly form the letters of the alphabet. There are several steps and skills within letter formation, including making sure the pencil starts in the correct place to form a letter, moving the pencil in the correct direction and using visual discrimination skills to be aware of differences between letters (size, shapes, etc.) and the lines needed to form them.

Letter formation isn't exactly the same as handwriting, rather letter formation is part of handwriting. In order to develop legible and fluent handwriting (that will allow them to write comfortably and more 'automatically'), your child needs to be able to form individual letters correctly.

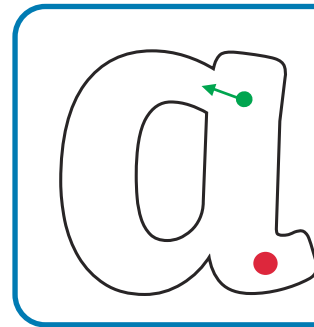
Why is letter formation important?

Let's look at an example. Many children begin to make 'letter shapes' before they have learnt correct letter formation - this is another important step in early writing and should absolutely be celebrated! They may draw an 'a' by drawing a circle and adding a stick on separately, like in these examples ...



While these shapes do resemble an 'a', the formation is not correct - they have started in the wrong place and lifted the pen off to add the line. Once your child has started showing an interest in letter formation or once they are in reception, you could start to gently show them how to correctly form their letters, like this...

Trace over the letter a. Start from the green dot, follow the line all the way around and back down and then finish on the red dot.



When your child begins to use correct letter formation in their writing, they will find it easier to form letters and begin to develop fluency with their writing. This means they don't necessarily need to think about how they are going to draw each letter as they are writing - their writing, therefore, becomes quicker. It can also help their writing become easier to read. This almost has a cyclical effect - it's such a confidence boost for them when you can read something they've written that they will want to write more, which helps them develop their letter formation even more!

Disclaimer: We hope you find the information on our website and resources useful. As far as possible, the contents of this resource are reflective of current professional research. However, please be aware that every child is different and information can quickly become out of date. The information given here is intended for general guidance purposes only and may not apply to your specific situation. Sensory activities can engage children in their play and learning, but supervising adults should check for allergens and assess any potential risks (such as the risk of choking from small objects) before the activity, and only proceed if it is safe to do so. We cannot be held responsible for the health and safety of those participating and cannot accept any liability. By using this resource, you acknowledge that it is the responsibility of supervising adults to ensure the safety of children in their care.

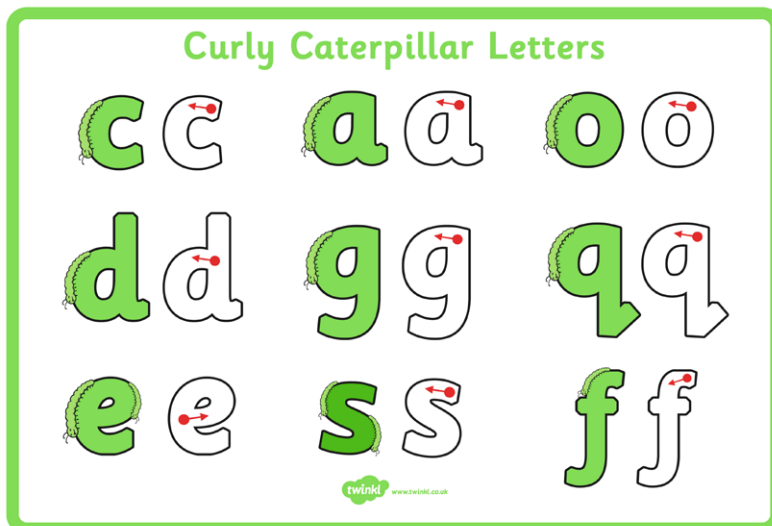
Letter Formation Explained for Parents

Types of Letter Formation

A key part of letter formation is knowing where to start when forming the letters and the direction the letters go in. Luckily, some letters are very similar in formation so you can group them into 'families', which can really help your child when they are working on their letter formation.

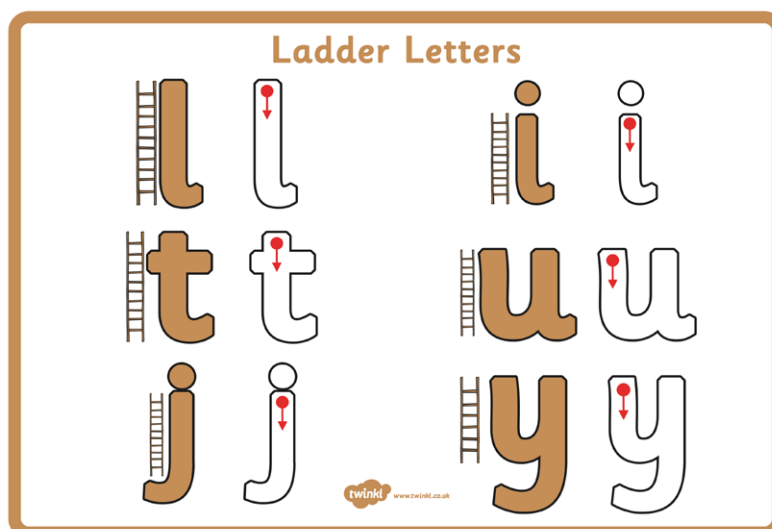
Curly Caterpillar Letter Family

This letter family includes: c a o d g q e s f



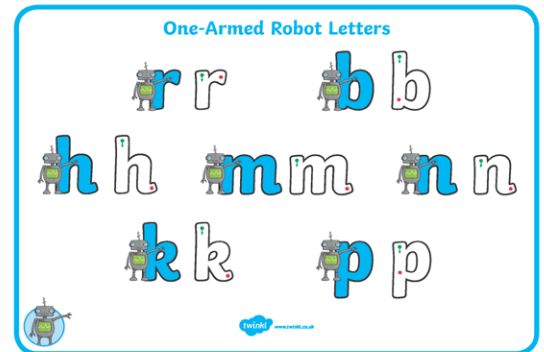
Ladder Letters Letter Family

This letter family includes: l i t u j y



One-Armed Robot Letter Family

This letter family includes: r b n h m k p



Zigzag Monster Letter Family

This letter family includes: v w x z



You will notice that none of the letters start from the bottom - this is important! When your child is starting to write more, they will need to develop fluency and speed - correct letter formation really helps with this.

Note: If your child is learning a precursive style of writing, their letter formation will start at the bottom. Again, this is important to know when you are supporting your child at home.

Letter Formation Explained for Parents

When will my child start learning how to form letters?

Although some children will start making letter-like shapes and 'writing' in preschool (around age three), most children will really start learning how to form letters correctly in reception (aged four or five). It usually goes alongside beginning to learn their letters and sounds in phonics. You will be able to find out more about your school's preferred letter formation style from your child's teacher.

Please bear in mind that although your child will be exposed to letter formation at around four or five years old, they still need to work on their gross and fine motor skills at this age. Some children may not be physically ready yet for more formal 'writing' so have fun playing physical games and doing sensory activities to try to support them with their physical development too.

How to Support Your Child with Letter Formation at Home

DIY Feely Letters

Make your own feely letters for your child to practise their letter formation with. Draw letters on paper or cardboard, then trace over them with hot glue. This will make the letters pop up off the page and then your child can trace the dried glue letters with their finger. This is really good to help them remember the letter formation. You could also use pipe cleaners to form the letters, then glue them onto some cardboard.

Go Big

Draw really large letters with chalk and challenge your child to walk along them, making sure they start and end in the right places and walk in the right direction. Can they jump from one letter to another and land in the right place to start the next letter? You might also want to use masking tape to make the letters but this is a bit trickier with the curved letters.

• Use a Sensory Bag

- Fill a sandwich bag with soap, foam, conditioner or hand gel and tape it to a hard surface. You can even tape the sensory bag onto a wall or window, which is great for your child's shoulder strength and mobility. Add in eco-glitter, sequins or anything you have to make your sensory bag even more interesting and enticing - making letter formation fun!

• Rough and Ready

- Yes, it's another sensory activity but trust us, sensory activities are fabulous for learning letter formation as it really helps your child build their muscle memory, which they need for writing! This time, we suggest using a resistive or rough surface to practise forming letters, either by tracing the letter shapes with their fingers or using tools to make marks. You could use:

- foam tray
- paper over a piece of sandpaper
- carpet
- corrugated cardboard
- textured tea towel

- For more ideas and resources you can use to support your child with letter formation at home, check out our [Early Years Letter Formation and Handwriting area](#).

Twinkl Top Tip: use lots of little bits of tape to make rounder curves!