

Teaching Letter Formation

Welcome to this weeks curriculum post, which is all about letter formation.

What is letter formation?

Letter formation is the ability to form letters of the alphabet correctly. At Norcot we are focusing on supporting the children to form letters accurately, so that they do not need to 're-learn' how to write them when they go to school. Correct letter formation means that children will be able to write with more fluidity as the letters will lead into each other naturally. Once children can form letters accurately and without thinking about how to write them, it frees space in their brain to think about the spelling or the next word in the phrase they want to write.

Many letters 'move' from left to right so that the pen finishes in the correct place to write the next letter. Starting and finishing letters in the correct place also means that when children are ready to join their handwriting they can do so more quickly.

Additional Information

Home Involvement:

There are many ways you can help your child to learn accurate letter formation. The most important thing to remember is that letter formation must be taught and then practised. To begin with you will need to watch your child to make sure they know the correct way to write a letter. Writing over letters can be a good way to practice, but it is important that your child is practising the correct formation - not just drawing over the lines.

- Check that your child is in a comfortable and stable position to learn letter formation; this may mean that they are lying on their tummy or standing up (not just sitting down).
- Check that the pen/pencil/chalk they are using is in a comfortable and practical finger grasp e.g. not whole hand grasp. You may want to work on finger grasp before moving onto letter formation.
- Ensure that your child has plenty of practice looking at the written word e.g. read lots of books to them; encourage your child to have conversations with you and help them get a good grasp of language and sounds. Do not expect your child to form accurate letters if they have difficulty with reading and talking; these skills should be in place first.
- It's worth remembering that most people learn best when they are happy and motivated; also 'little and often' can be the best way to approach learning a new skill. Writing their names in cards is a good motivation for children.

Teaching: • Begin with teaching lower case letters first (with the exception of the starting letter of their name) • A child will not know how to form a letter by just looking at it; so it is essential to show them how to form the letter first. Ensure that

your child forms the letter correctly and does not just 'copy' a letter. Don't worry about the size of the letters formed to start with; accurate formation is all that matters at this stage. This video can help if you're not sure how to form any letters: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TYYSBProJH4> (please supervise your children when online) • There are lots of fun and motivational ways to teach letter formation: you can use different materials e.g. crayons, chalks, pastels, and paint; use different paper, and surfaces (e.g. bath crayons, forming letters on steamed up windows, writing letters on someone's back, writing letters in the air and writing letters with eyes closed). • Some children may need you to show them how to form the letters many times before they get it right for themselves. Holding your hand over theirs can help them feel the pattern of the letter. • Offer your child specific and immediate feedback following an attempt to form a letter; help them to see where they may have made a mistake and also where they were successful. • There are many teaching handwriting schemes on the market and the National Handwriting Association has recently completed a review of them which is available through their website www.nha-handwriting.org.uk. • Doodles, fluency patterns, drawing and colouring, and pen and paper games are all good ways of helping a child to develop the skills and abilities needed for letter formation and handwriting.