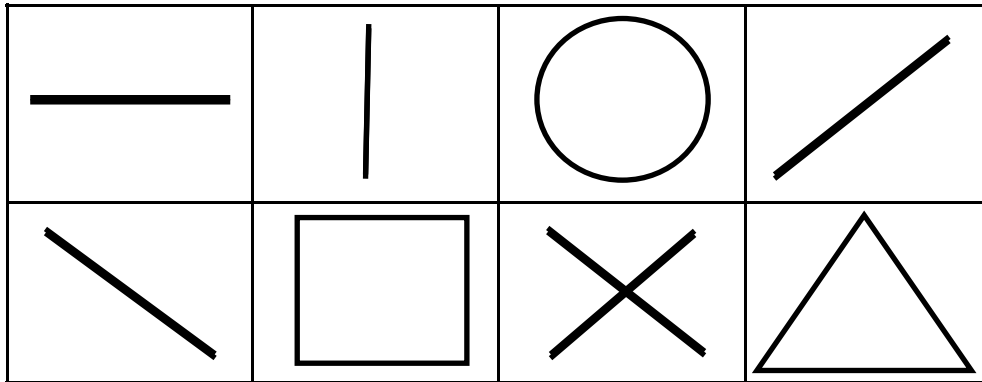


Multi-Sensory Approach to Writing

Some children find the act of drawing and writing letters challenging, and may avoid the task. Breaking down shape and letter formation and putting away the pencils, exercise books and worksheets can significantly reduce the pressure on the child.

A multi-sensory approach uses **varied media** to increase a child's interest in handwriting activities.

In order to prepare for handwriting, children must have developed the ability to form pre-writing shapes. It is anticipated that pre-writing shapes develop in this order:



After developing these pre-writing shapes, working on letters / shapes that are similar to each other helps to build on what has already been learned, for example:

o - c - a - g - d - q
l - i - t - h - n - m

Planning a range of sensory activities can grasp a child's attention while also developing their pencil / handwriting and concentration skills. The attached session planner and activity ideas below will assist with building an individual programme.

Select one or two gross motor warm ups, followed by:

- **Gross motor letters**
- **Sensory letter / shape activity**
- **Letter / shape practice.**

Gross Motor Warm Up's:

Mr T

Stand with feet slightly apart. Put arms out to sides at shoulder level. Keep elbows straight. Maintain position for a count of 10.

You can try and do the 'Mr T' exercises, with a small weight in each hand e.g. can of beans, bean bag, pencil case.

Twists

Stand with feet slight apart. Put arms out to sides at shoulder level, with your palms facing upwards. Twist arms (pronation/ supination), so that your palms face downwards and then upwards again (as if turning door handles).

Try and keep your elbows straight.

Windmills

Stand with feet slightly apart. Put arms out to sides at shoulder level. Keep elbows straight. Move both arms together in a circular movement. (Small circles / Large circles / Forwards / Backwards)

Wall Press Ups

Stand with feet slightly apart facing wall approx 2ft away.

Put hands flat on the wall at chest height and slowly bend elbows until nose nearly touches the wall. Push elbows back straight.

Half Press Ups

Lie face down on the floor / Place hands flat on the floor at shoulder level

Push up on arms, straightening elbows and keeping hips on the floor, slowly return to starting position

Keeping your hips on floor, support your body on straight arms

Gross Motor Letters / Shapes:

Think **BIG!**

Draw large shapes on a whiteboard / blackboard.

Making large shapes with a pointed finger in a sand tray / paint tray or just in the air.

Draw shapes and letters in the air with a finger, paint brush or torch.

Sensory Letters / Shapes:

Use your imagination and be guided by the child's likes and dislikes!

Tactile:

- Drawing/writing on **sand paper, plastercine, cornflour and water mix, sand, shaving foam**
- Draw around shape/letters / numbers before cutting out
- Using **string, pipe cleaners, sandpaper, glitter** to form the letter shapes. Stick onto thick card. Encourage children to trace over the letters with their fingers whilst spelling words
- Use **cooked spaghetti or noodles** to form the letter shapes on a tray
- Roll **play doh** out into long worm like shapes and use these to form letters.

Proprioceptive:

- Draw **letters in the air** with elbows straight.
- Use a **scarf** to make circles in the air
- **Weighted writing** tools
- **Squeeze water** from a washing up bottle to form letters

Visual:

Paint bags

Fill sealable bags with paint or hair gel (just a couple of squirts). Seal top closed with tape. Use fingers or a cotton bud to draw on top of the bag. Practice writing pre-printing shapes, letters, sight words, spellings.

Stamping: Use paint on the base of magnetic letters to create stamps for printing letter shapes.

Kinaesthetic Media:

Lego alphabet (from you clever monkey and "The Unofficial Guide to Learning with Lego. Write letters on the long side of Duplo size bricks and build blocks as spelling out words.

Letter lacing cards: Draw letters / shapes on stiff coloured or patterned card. Cut shapes out and punch holes along length of card. Encourage student to thread lace through the holes to create letter shape.

Letter Practice:

While we automatically think of letter writing as happening on lined paper with “correct” spacing and layout, when developing appropriate skills we can be much less restrictive. Be creative and consider some of the following ideas:

- Complete letter formation worksheets. Examples can be found at www.sparklebox.co.uk www.twinkl.com
- Mark out 2-3 lines on a plain page to write a series of the letter / shape, working towards forming them in a smaller space
- Draw out the shape / letter / number with a series of dots for the child to trace.
- Cut out squares of coloured paper or Post-It notes, drawing a letter / shape on each.
- Form the letter / shape on a whiteboard or blackboard
- Practice shapes, letters and numbers with chalk, paint, finger paint

Sample Timetable

	Gross Motor	Sensory Shapes	Letter Practice
Session 1	Big Write / Shapes in the air	Drawing with finger in shaving foam	Tracing through tracing paper
Session 2	Shapes while standing at the blackboard	Fingers in dry sand	Letters on Post It notes
Session 3	Painting with water on the wall (outside)	Drawing with finger on wet sand	Large letters on coloured card