

## Fine motor – printing

### General principles

1. Keep sessions short - five minute practice sessions are adequate and leave the child feeling they have accomplished something.
2. Consistency between all those involved is the key - teachers, parents, therapists, tutors, and any others involved should all teach the same methods.
3. Progress from:
  - I) having the child imitate you
  - II) to having the child copy a sample
  - III) to independent printing
4. A general rule of thumb is that children can imitate about six months before they can copy.
5. Printing should correspond to the way we read, top to bottom and left to right (note: some left handed children will make horizontal strokes by pulling right to left, and this is quite acceptable). No letters should start from the baseline (bottom). The only way to be fast and neat is to be consistent, and this top to bottom, left to right approach allows for this.
6. Don't forget the importance of a proper pencil grip, sitting posture, paper placement (for right handed children, the top right corner is higher, for left handed children, the top left corner is higher), and the use of the other hand to assist holding the paper still or adjusting it as necessary.

### Readiness for printing

- Hand dominance established
- Mature and functional pencil grasp
- Able to match, identify, and imitate the formation of a horizontal line, vertical line, and a curved line or circle

### How to start

In the Learning Without Tears method, capital letters are taught first, and lower case letters are taught only when all capitals are mastered. This is done for several reasons:

- All capital letters are the same height
- All start at the same place - the top
- All occupy the same vertical space ie.) None are below or above the lines
- Capital letters are more easily recognized and identified ie.) In lower case it is difficult to distinguish between some letters such as b, d, g, p, q
- Capital letters are big and bold

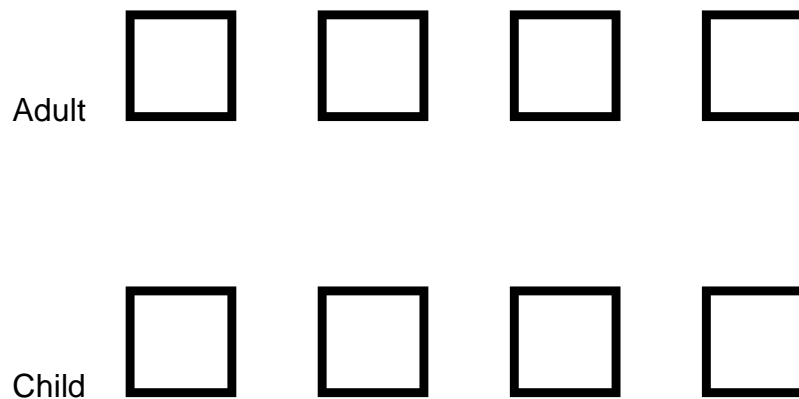
## How to start (continued)

To teach letters, often the letters of the name are the best to start with as this is most meaningful to a child and leads to a great sense of accomplishment.

You can start forming the letters from wood or heavy cardboard pieces (big lines, little lines, big curves, little curves) placed on a piece of paper with a smiley face or dot in the upper left hand corner (the "starting corner") as a cue of where to start the letters. The child should imitate your placement of the pieces as you demonstrate and describe each step.

Most letters start with a line "down" from the starting corner (B, D, E, F, H, K, L, M, N, P, R). Some letters start at the starting corner but do not go straight down (U, V, W, X, Y, Z). Finally, some letters are "centre starters" and should be taught last (A, C, O, Q, G, I, T, J, S). Follow the patterns on the attached handout.

You can progress to forming individual letters with chalk on a small slate board, or inside large squares drawn on a large chalkboard. The teacher should form the letters first in the top row of squares with the child imitating (then copying) the letters on the bottom row.



Move onto forming the individual letters in smaller squares on a piece of paper, and eventually eliminate the squares so the child forms the letters on their own.

This above is adapted from Learning Without Tears (1994), by Jan Z. Olsen, OTR. Please contact your therapist if you are interested in purchasing this book, or the associated printing workbooks.

<https://sites.google.com/view/schoolbasedot/fine-motor/letter-formation?authuser=0>