Handwriting Program For Cursive

— INSTRUCTIONS —

a **PAF** program

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Handwriting is a basic skill that needs to be systematically taught so that children can learn to use written language to communicate their knowledge and express their ideas. It must be automatized so that children can concentrate on what they want to say rather than on how to transcribe it. Handwriting must be sufficiently legible to enable the reader to understand the ideas expressed. Although this particular handwriting program was designed to be used in conjunction with PAF,* an Orton-Gillingham-based reading program, it can be used as part of any language arts program.**

There are four basic principles for teaching cursive.

- **Handwriting is taught and practiced under the direct supervision of the teacher,** who provides immediate feedback and models the correct letter formation. Handwriting is not assigned as independent work or homework until the students have learned the lower-case letters and are transitioning from print to cursive.

- **The instructional sequence for teaching handwriting is trace, copy, and write from memory.** Students trace the letter, copy the letter, and, to complete the lesson, write the letter from memory, all under the direction of the teacher.

- **Motor patterns are always introduced through the large muscles of the arm and shoulder** rather than through the small muscles of the hand. Using large muscles helps students feel the changes in direction necessary to form each letter. Also, using large muscles helps students remember the formations, because large muscle memory is extremely powerful. You never forget how to ride a bike or swim.

- **Language is used to teach and reinforce handwriting** by having the teacher verbalize instructions for forming each letter. Students are told how to move their hands to produce the letterforms. Because many students cannot learn the motor patterns for writing by simply copying letters, they must also receive verbal instructions.

In order to give verbal instructions, you will have to establish certain reference points in your classroom. First, try to have the desks face forward. Next, using cloth tape, place a red line on the side of the board and on every desk. In classrooms with group tables rather than individual desks, give each student a 12-by-18-inch oaktag mat and place a red line on the left side. When giving verbal instructions, you will be able to tell your students to move

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* *Preventing Academic Failure* by Phyllis Bertin and Eileen Perlman. Published by Educators Publishing Service.

** If you are teaching cursive as part of the PAF program, follow the instructions in the Teacher Handbook, rather than those in this booklet.

their hands toward or away from the red, rather than to the left or right. The red line represents the red margin on writing paper.

Before the first motor pattern is taught, the students must learn the names of the lines used in writing: top, dotted, writing, and bottom lines. The lines are given names to make it easier to describe the proper letter size and placement.

For example, h curves up to the *top* line and pulls down to the *writing* line. The writing lines have been marked with X's to help reinforce the letter placement.
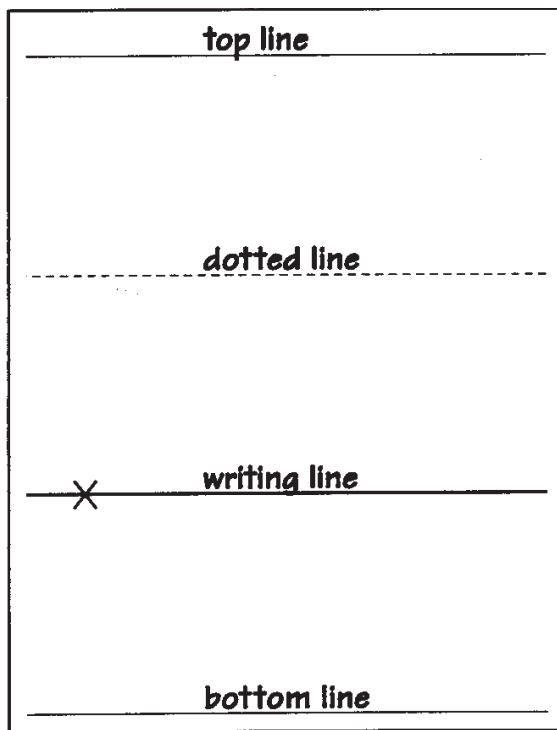

Although the exact wording of the verbal instructions may vary from teacher to teacher, it is important that your own instructions remain consistent. As your students begin to form letters accurately and automatically, you can give less detailed instructions. Eventually, stop giving instructions altogether. If you would like examples of the verbal instructions, you can download them at PAFprogram.com.

Be sure that your students use proper posture and pencil grip. Have them orient their papers at a forty-five-degree angle from the edge of their desks and parallel to their writing arms. Most right-handed children produce letters slanting toward the right-hand corner of the page; most left-handed children produce letters slanting toward the left-hand corner. The direction of the slant of the letters is less important than its consistency: always to the right corner or always to the left. To accommodate the needs of both your left- and right-handed students, the *Handwriting Program for Cursive* books come in two versions. The books are identical except for the slant of the letters.
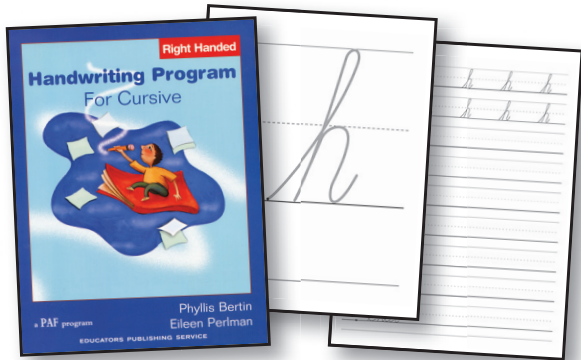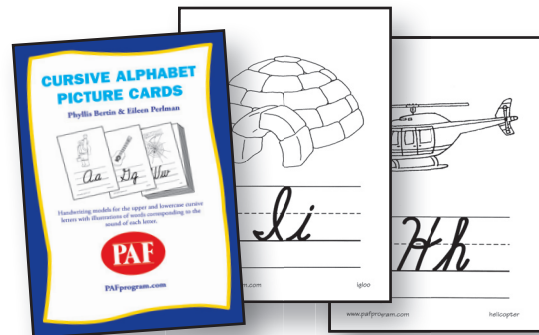

#5127 Right-Handed
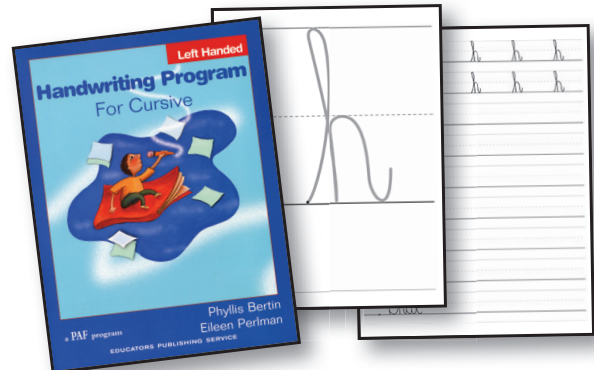
#5129 Left-Handed

Display the Cursive Wall Strip (#5135) in your classroom. If you are teaching cursive to remedial readers, you may prefer to use the Cursive Alphabet Picture Cards (#5138). These cards include images to facilitate teaching the sounds of the letters.

#3135 Cursive Wall Strip

#3135 Cursive Alphabet Picture Cards

Begin the lesson by drawing a large letter on a board on which the writing lines have been drawn. Demonstrate how to form the letter and verbalize the instructions to accompany the movement. *This is the letter c. Swing up to two o'clock, over to the red line, and sit it on the writing line.*

Have the students turn to page 2 in their books. Tell them to write the letter *c.* They repeat the name of the letter and trace the model as you repeat the instructions. The goal is an automatic response between the name of the letter and the motor pattern, facilitating the translation of oral language to written language.


After the students have traced the large model several times, they repeat the tracing on the following page of their books, using the small letter models. Finally, the students copy the letter, using the blank lines provided.

In both cases, whether tracing or copying, the students should wait for you to give the oral instruction, *Write* c, and they should repeat the letter name as they begin writing. They work from oral to written language under continual teacher supervision. They must receive immediate feedback after each attempt to write a new letter in order to ensure constant improvement in their work.

Cursive connections are practiced by writing the new letter in combination with other letters or in words. For letter combinations, such as *ck,* tell the children to write c, k, naming the letters. For words, simply say the word: *Write* kick. The students trace the model, saying the letter names or word. Next, they copy the model on their own.

After each initial attempt to write, whether it is a letter, letter combination, or word, check each student's work. If the attempt was good, the student can finish the line in his or her book independently while you help other students. If the attempt was unsatisfactory, have the student watch as you draw a model on the paper and explain how to improve the work. For example, *Be sure you sit the* p *on the writing line* or *Make sure the* h *hits the top line.*

The handwriting program begins by teaching the twenty-six lower-case letters, and then the capitals. While your students are learning the lower-case letters, through page 67, use 3/8-inch ruled paper for additional practice. Beginning on page 68, where students learn to reduce the size of the letters, use 3/16-inch ruled paper or copies of the blank practice sheet on page 128.
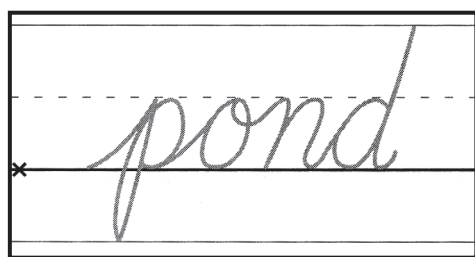
3/8-inch ruled paper
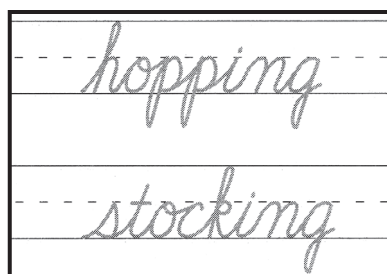
3/16-inch ruled paper

Once the students know the twenty-six lower-case letters, they should be required to do their work in cursive. The capital letters can be printed until they learn their cursive forms. If students are allowed to choose between using print or cursive, they will usually choose print, because they are accustomed to it, and their cursive will never become automatized. While the students are making the transition from print, you can give them independent work or homework in which they copy printed text into cursive. Simply supply a short paragraph for them to copy. At the same time, you should begin to use cursive in order to provide your students with practice in reading it. After all fifty-two letter forms have been taught, continue handwriting lessons on an interim basis, targeted toward specific problems observed in class. Finally, reinforce the lessons by maintaining high but realistic standards in all written assignments.

Letters are grouped according to motor patterns rather than as twenty-six unrelated letters. An example is the group of cursive letters known as *two o'clock* letters. This group consists of all the letters that begin by swinging up and around to the *two o'clock* position on a clock. The two o'clock letters are *c, a, d, g,* and *qu*.

Lower-Case Letter Groups

All lower-case letters start on the writing line, and all but four bridge letters (*b, v, w,* and *o*) end on the writing line. Because bridge letters do not end on the writing line, they are difficult to connect to the next letter and require special emphasis. Connecting bridge letters to rocket letters, such as *i* or *r*, is particularly difficult. Teach children to come down so the bridge sags (*b*), rather than going straight across the dotted line (*b*). In this way they will approach the next letter from the usual direction, from the bottom up. Both large and small models of specific bridge connections are provided in the handwriting books.

Two O'Clock Letters

Teach the students that when they hear two o'clock they are to swing up to the dotted line, come slightly below the line, stop and go back toward the red line. At the *stop,* the pencil should be where the numberal two sits on a clock face.
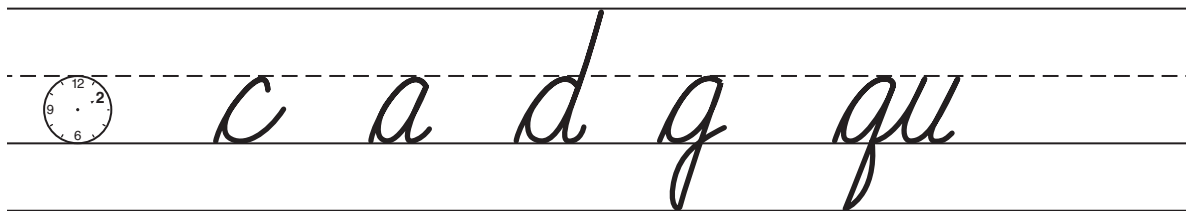
c = two o'clock and sit it on the writing line

a = two o'clock, close the circle and down

d = two o'clock, close the circle, all the way up and down

g = two o'clock, close the circle, pull straight down, turn to the red and cross at the writing line

qu = two o'clock, close the circle, pull straight down, away from the red to the *u*. (Make sure the students can write a *u* before teaching *qu*.)

Tall Letters

Teach the students to make a curved line up to the top line and pull straight down when they hear *tall* letter.

l h k f b l
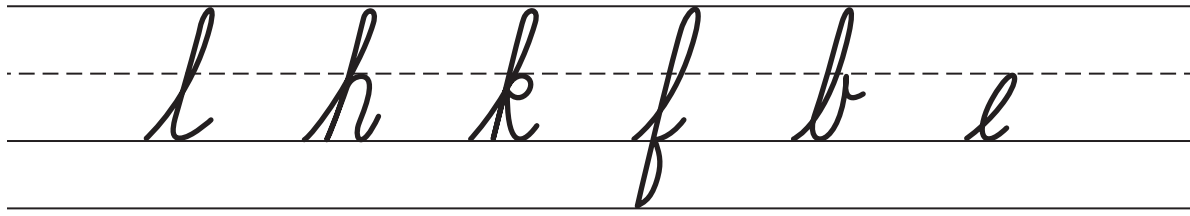
l = tall letter

h = tall letter, up to the dotted line and around

k = tall letter, up to the dotted line, around, in and out

f = tall letter, pull all the way down, away from the red, curve up to the writing line

b = tall letter, curve up and bridge

l = (a small *l*) small curve up and pull down

Rocket Letters

Teach the students to swing to the dotted line and come down on the same line when they hear *rocket*.

i u t w j p r s

i = rocket, dot

u = rocket 1, rocket 2

t = rocket almost to the top line and cross

w = rocket 1, rocket 2, rocket 3 and bridge

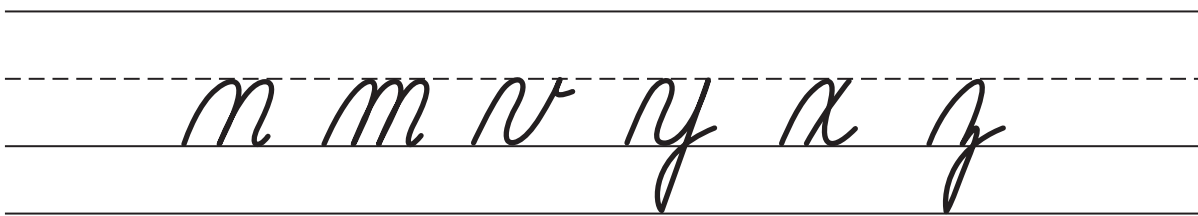*j* = rocket, pull straight down, to the red and cross at the writing line, dot

p = rocket, pull straight down, to the red, curve up and around and out

r = rocket, down and over, curve down (Only hit the dotted line once.)

s = rocket, make a big fat belly, go in and out

Hill Letters

Teach the students to swing up to the dotted line and over to make a *hill* when they hear *hill* letter.

n = hill 1, 2, (counting the number of times the pencil hits the writing line)
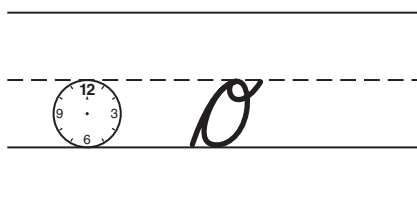
m = hill 1, 2, 3

v = hill, up and bridge

y = hill, up, pull straight down, to the red and cross at the writing line

x = hill, turn up, lift and slant to the red

z = hill, little hill, pull straight down, to the red and cross at the writing line

Twelve O'Clock Letter

o = swing to 12 o'clock, to the red, close the circle and loop
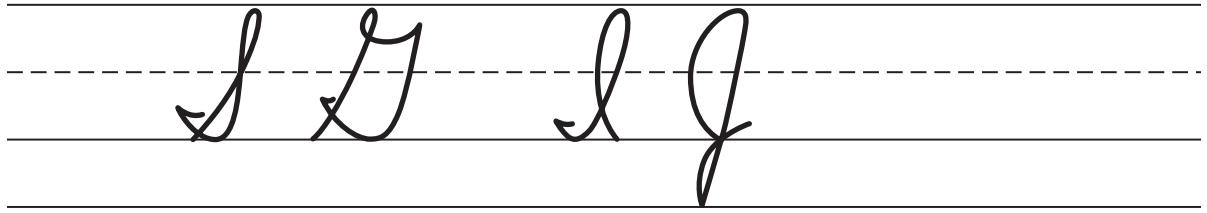
Capital Letter Groups

All capitals are connected to the next letter except: D, O, P, V, W, and X.

Several capitals end like a boat bottom. Demonstrate this association to facilitate the verbalization *make a boat*.
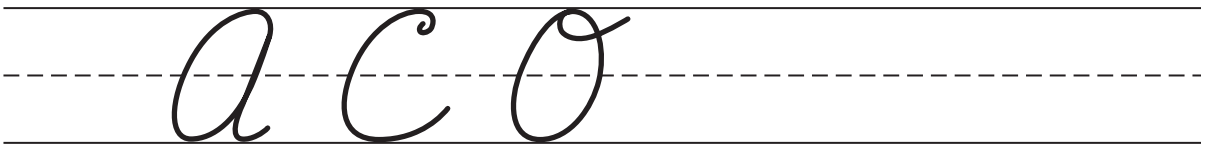
All capitals begin at the top except:

S G L J

$\mathscr{S}$ = curved line up, pull down and make a boat

$\mathscr{G}$ = curved line up, loop to the red, away from the red, pull down and make a boat

$\mathscr{L}$ = to the red, curved line up, pull down and make a boat

$\mathscr{J}$ = to the red, curved line up, pull straight down, to the red and cross

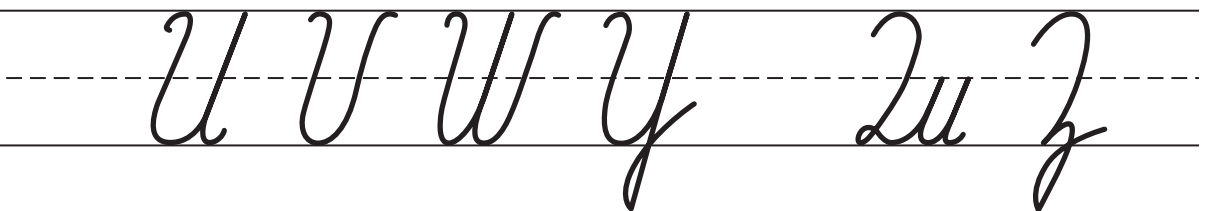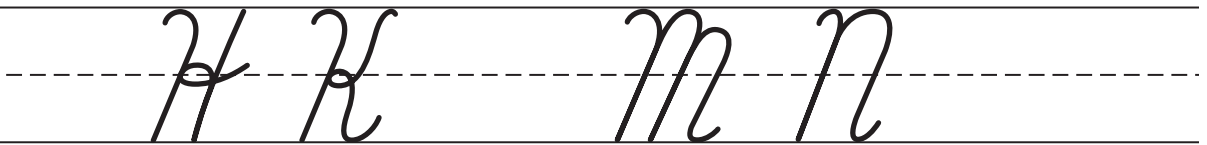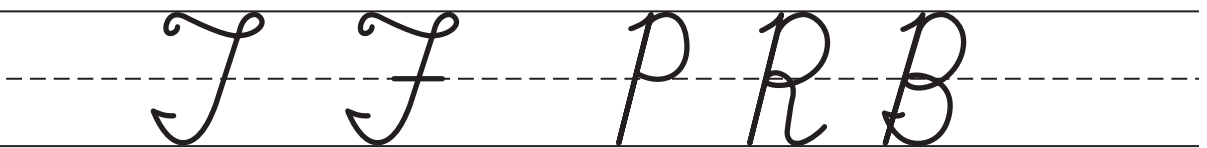These three letters have the same motor patterns as their lower-case partners:

A C O

$\mathscr{A}$ = tall two o'clock, close the circle and down

$\mathscr{C}$ = loop, tall two o'clock, and sit it on the writing line

$\mathscr{O}$ = tall twelve o'clock, to the red, close the circle and loop

The following letters are grouped for similar motor patterns:

T F   P R B

H K   M N

U V W Y   Qu Z

$\mathcal{T}$ = loop up to the top line and away from the red, loop up to the red, pull down and make a boat

$\mathcal{F}$ = loop up to the top line and away from the red, loop up to the red, pull down, make the boat and cross

$\mathcal{P}$ = swing up to the top line, pull down and back up, curve away from the red and in

$\mathcal{R}$ = swing up to the top line, pull down and back up, curve away from the red and in, loop and swing down

$\mathcal{B}$ = swing up to the top line, pull down and back up, curve away from the red and in, loop, curve down and make a boat

$\mathcal{H}$ = curve up to the top line and pull down, lift, pull down, loop to the red and out

$\mathcal{K}$ = curve up to the top line and pull down, lift, curve in and loop out

$\mathcal{M}$ = curve up to the top line and pull down 1, 2, 3 (counting the number of times the pencil hits the writing line)

$\mathcal{N}$ = curve up to the top line and pull down 1, 2

$\mathcal{U}$ = curve up to the top line, pull down, curve up and back down

$\mathcal{V}$ = curve up to the top line, pull down and curve up
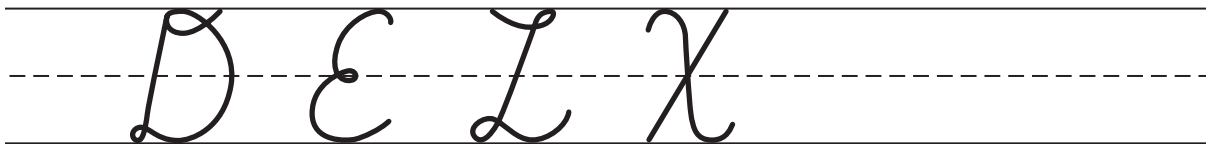
$\mathcal{W}$ = curve up to the top line, pull down, curve up, back down and up

$\mathcal{Y}$ = curve up to the top line, pull down, curve up and pull all the way down, turn to the red and cross

$\mathcal{Z}$ = curve up to the top line and pull down, back up and curve all the way down, turn to the red and cross

$\mathcal{Qu}$ = curve up to the top line and pull down, loop and away to the u

The remaining letters each have their own motor patterns:

$\mathcal{D}$ = top line, pull down and loop to the red, curve up and loop

$\mathcal{E}$ = tall two o'clock, curve to the red, loop, curve to the red and sit it on the writing line

$\mathcal{L}$ = top line swing away from the red, loop to the red, pull down, loop and swing away

$\mathcal{X}$ = curve up to the top line and swing down, lift, and slant to the red