



In England, the curriculum begins with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) 0–5 years, followed by the National Curriculum which is divided into Key Stages 1–4. The National Curriculum for English (2014) places high importance on teaching handwriting and confirms the importance of achieving automaticity so that the child’s higher processes of thinking can be released to work on compositional skills, rather than be consumed by the motor, sensory and perception demands of transcription.

Good early practice in handwriting teaching seeks to establish secure foundations from the beginning then to practise, refine and extend skills. Continuity and consistency are essential factors in helping children retain movement patterns.

Some settings may advocate the early teaching of fully cursive with “lead in” or “entry” strokes and may wish to establish this practice from school entry (Reception) so that children do not have to alter movement patterns at a later stage. Whilst this model sounds plausible and is successful with some children, this is unsupported pedagogically, is unnecessary and creates failure in some of the youngest and most vulnerable children.

**Early writers:**

Some children will be already reading and writing letters when they start Reception or Sparkletots. The letters they use, and those in the wider print environment, are unlikely to have entry strokes. Our focus in EYFS is to foster and strengthen the areas of development that provide the basis for long-term success in handwriting and to identify children who need extra provision to strengthen their skills.

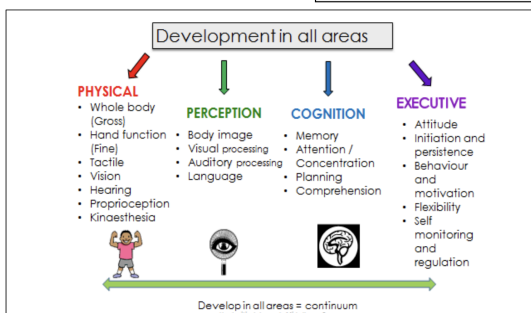
(National Handwriting Association 2021)

<https://nha-handwriting.org.uk/handwriting/articles/teaching-fully-cursive-writing-in-reception/>

Foundation skills in handwriting are focused on the areas outlined below. Practitioners are aware that the premature rush to get children “joining their writing” when prerequisite skills are immature, may leave a legacy of handwriting problems that will be difficult to reverse at a later stage. The development of the right oblique stroke necessary for entry strokes is emerging between the ages of 4 and 5. Children with delayed development are likely to struggle to achieve this movement and experience frustration.

**The Beery – Buktenica Developmental Test of Visual- Motor Integration**

Writing readiness can be guided by the child’s ability to write these first 8 to 9 shapes as these form the foundations of all letters and numbers.



Handwriting is a complex perceptual–motor skill that is dependent upon the maturation and integration of a number of cognitive, perceptual and motor skills. Achievement demands the orchestration of multiple skills involving the eyes, arms, hands, memory, posture and body control as well as managing pencil, paper and following instructions.



## **Statutory requirements:**

There are no requirements to teach fully cursive writing either in the EYFS or in the National Curriculum. Indeed, the National Curriculum for English places emphasis on the acquisition of letter shape, space and size before joins are taught and delivers clear messages that some letters are best left unjoined.

## **ELG: Fine Motor Skills**

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Hold a pencil effectively in preparation for fluent writing - using the tripod grip in almost all cases.
- Use a range of small tools, including scissors, paint brushes and cutlery.
- Begin to show accuracy and care when drawing.

## **ELG: Writing**

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Write recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed.
- Spell words by identifying sounds in them and representing the sounds with a letter or letters.
- Write simple phrases and sentences that can be read by others.

## **KS1**

### **Year 1**

Pupils should be taught to:

- sit correctly at a table, holding a pencil comfortably and correctly
- begin to form lower-case letters in the correct direction, starting and finishing in the right place
- form capital letters
- form digits 0-9
- understand which letters belong to which handwriting 'families' (i.e. letters that are formed in similar ways) and to practise these.

### **Year 2**

Pupils should be taught to:

- form lower-case letters of the correct size relative to one another
- start using some of the diagonal and horizontal strokes needed to join letters and understand which letters, when adjacent to one another, are best left unjoined
- write capital letters and digits of the correct size, orientation and relationship to one another and to lower case letters
- use spacing between words that reflects the size of the letters.

## **KS2**

### **Y3 and Y4**

Pupils should be taught to:

- use the diagonal and horizontal strokes that are needed to join letters and understand which letters, when adjacent to one another, are best left unjoined
- increase the legibility, consistency and quality of their handwriting [for example, by ensuring that the downstrokes of letters are parallel and equidistant; that lines of writing are spaced sufficiently so that the ascenders and descenders of letters do not touch].

### **Y5 and Y6**

Pupils should be taught to:

- write legibly, fluently and with increasing speed by: choosing which shape of a letter to use when given choices and deciding whether or not to join specific letters
- choosing the writing implement that is best suited for a task



## **Progression EYFS- End of Key Stage 1:**

### **Step 1: Let's get ready to write and have a go...**

#### **3-4 years/ Sparkletots Preschool:**

- Use large-muscle movements to wave flags and streamers, paint and make marks.
- Use one-handed tools and equipment, for example, making snips in paper with scissors.
- Use a comfortable grip with good control when holding pens and pencils
- Show a preference for a dominant hand.
- Use some of their print and letter knowledge in their early writing.
- Write some letters accurately.

#### **Reception:**

1. Develop their small motor skills so that they can use a range of tools competently, safely and confidently. Suggested tools: pencils for drawing and writing, paintbrushes, scissors, knives, forks and spoons.
2. Use their core muscle strength to achieve a good posture when sitting at a table or sitting on the floor.
3. Develop the foundations of a handwriting style that is fast, accurate and efficient.
4. Form lowercase and capital letters correctly.
5. Hold a pencil effectively in preparation for fluent writing – using the tripod grip in almost all cases. (ELG)
6. Write recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed. (ELG)

### **Step 2 - Forming letters - formation and size**

#### **Year 1 (Autumn and Spring Term)**

- To sit correctly at a table,
- To hold a pencil comfortably and correctly,
- To form lower case letters in the correct direction,
- To form letters using the correct size relative to one another,
- To start and finish letters in the right place,
- To form capital letters and the digits 0-9 of the correct size, orientation and relationship to one another and to lower case letters,
- To form the digits 0-9.
- To understand which letters belong to which handwriting 'families' (i.e. letters that are formed in similar ways) and to practise these.

### **Step 3 - Forming letters, positioning & pre-cursive**

#### **Year 1 Summer Term/ Year 2 Autumn Term**

- To understand which letters belong to which handwriting 'families',
- To start using some of the diagonal and horizontal strokes needed to join letters.
- To use spacing between words that reflects the size of the letters.
- To write capital letters and digits of the correct size, orientation and relationship to one another and to lower case letters.
- To form lower case letters of the correct size, relative to one another.
- To use spacing between words that reflects the size of the letters



## Step 4 - Joining letters and fluency, style & speed

### Year 2

- To use the diagonal and horizontal strokes that are needed to join letters;
- To increase the legibility, fluency, consistency and quality of their handwriting;
- To ensure that their lines of writing are spaced sufficiently so that the ascenders and descenders of letters do not touch;
- To begin to use a neat, joined handwriting style with increasing accuracy and speed.

### Formations taught in EYFS and reinforced in Year 1:

Using the Bug Club Phonics handwriting directions.

a Formed by the vertical stroke and the half circle.	b Formed by the vertical stroke and the circle.	c Formed by the circle.	d Formed by the vertical stroke and the circle.	e Formed by the vertical stroke and the circle.	f Formed by the vertical stroke and the top bar.
g Formed by the vertical stroke and the circle.	h Formed by the vertical stroke and the hump.	i Formed by the vertical stroke and the dot.	j Formed by the vertical stroke and the hump.	k Formed by the vertical stroke and the hump.	l Formed by the vertical stroke and the long leg.
m Formed by the vertical stroke and the hump.	n Formed by the vertical stroke and the hump.	o Formed by the circle.	p Formed by the vertical stroke and the hump.	q Formed by the vertical stroke and the hump.	r Formed by the vertical stroke and the hump.
s Formed by the vertical stroke and the hump.	t Formed by the vertical stroke and the hump.	u Formed by the vertical stroke and the hump.	v Formed by the vertical stroke and the hump.	w Formed by the vertical stroke and the hump.	x Formed by the vertical stroke and the hump.
y Formed by the vertical stroke and the hump.	z Formed by the vertical stroke and the hump.				

#### Continuous Arrow Alphabet Handwriting

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff  
Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm  
Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt  
Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz

### End of Year 1 - Year 2:

Children are introduced to pre-cursive formations. Using letter formation stories if needed to continue correct formations.

Aa Bb Cc Dd  
Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii  
Jj Kk Ll Mm  
Nn Oo Pp Qq  
Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv  
Ww Xx Yy Zz

#### EYFS / Y1

1. Form lowercase and capital letters correctly.
2. Hold a pencil effectively in preparation for fluent writing – using the tripod grip in almost all cases. (ELG)
3. Write recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed. (ELG)

#### Shape families

- Long letters: l i u t y j
- Bouncing letters: r n m h b k p
- Curly letter: c a d g q o e s f
- Zig zag letters: z x y w v k

#### Number families

- bouncing : 2 3 5 (clockwise)
- Curly: 0 6 8 9
- zigzag : 1 4 7

#### Capital letters



	<p>Letters formed using Bug Club Phonics handwriting directions <b>Aim: focus on fine/gross motor skills, leading to letter formation in print</b></p>
<p><b>End of Y1</b></p>	<p>Children introduced to pre-cursive formations. Using letter formation stories if needed to continue correct formations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Long letters: l i u t y j</li> <li>● Bouncing letters: r n m h b k p</li> <li>● Curly letter: c a d g q o e s f</li> <li>● Zig zag letters: z x y w v k</li> </ul> <p>Number families</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● bouncing : 2 3 5 (clockwise)</li> <li>● Curly: 0 6 8 9</li> <li>● zigzag : 1 4 7</li> </ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Numbers – in numerical order</li> <li>2. Capital letters – In alphabetical order. Teach M and W together and O last. Emphasise that you can take the pencil off of the paper</li> <li>3. Pre-cursive words</li> <li>4. Practise digraphs, common classroom words/names e.g. dates, spellings and topic vocabulary/maths numbers using pre-cursive font. Do not join.</li> </ol> <p><b>Aim: to secure letter formation in print and then learn the lead in/out for precursive from Summer onwards</b></p>
<p><b>Year 2</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Check pencil grip/seating</li> <li>2. Recap of year 1 letter formations using the shape families (see year 1)</li> <li>3. Children will refer to a 'magic middle line' to ensure letters are written to the correct height (the magic middle line runs at the height of the middle letters). The height of the ascending or tall letters should go above the magic middle line</li> <li>4. Diagonal join to ascender e.g. at, all, th, ch, cl</li> <li>5. Diagonal join, no ascender e.g. in, im, cr, tr, dr, lp, mp</li> <li>6. Diagonal join, no ascender, to an anti-clockwise letter e.g. id, ig, nd, ld, ng</li> <li>7. Horizontal join, no ascender e.g. ou, ow</li> <li>8. Horizontal join, no ascender, to anti-clockwise letter e.g. oa, og</li> <li>9. Horizontal join to ascender e.g. wh, ol</li> <li>10. Numbers – in numerical order, focusing on similar size, orientation and spacing</li> <li>11. Capital letters – focusing on similar size, orientation and spacing</li> <li>12. Joined cursive words – joining digraphs, common classroom words/names</li> <li>13. e.g. dates, spellings and topic vocabulary using cursive font when fully ready for this. <b>Aim: to begin to join cursively</b></li> </ol>
<p><b>Year 3 Cursive - joined</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Recap of year 2, where appropriate</li> <li>2. Pencil grip/seating</li> <li>3. Children will refer to a 'magic middle line' to ensure letters are written to the correct height (the magic middle line runs at the height of the middle letters). The height of the ascending or tall letters should go above the magic middle line</li> <li>4. Numbers – in numerical order, focusing on similar size, orientation and spacing</li> <li>5. Capital letters – focusing on similar size, orientation and spacing</li> <li>6. Linking to the teaching of spelling/phonics</li> <li>7. Joined cursive words – joining digraphs, common classroom words/names</li> <li>8. e.g. dates, spellings and topic vocabulary using joined cursive font – focusing on parallel and equidistant down strokes</li> </ol> <p><b>Aim: to secure the joins, leading to increased speed and fluency</b></p>



<b>Year 4 -6 Cursive - joined</b>	Check pencil grip/seating Linked to the teaching of spelling <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Joined cursive words – joining digraphs, common classroom words/names e.g. dates, spellings and topic vocabulary using joined cursive font – with fluency and speed</li><li>2. Vary letter shape for effect</li><li>3. Choose the best writing implement for the task Print as appropriate e.g. algebra/emails</li></ol> <b>Aim: to develop speed and fluency using cursive handwriting</b>
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**Ensuring common problems are avoided:**

- Joining a capital letter to a lower case letter in the same word
- Not keeping the letters on the line (this should be helped by using a lead-in from y1)
- Not keeping to the same line of the letter when coming back along it
- Joining to the bottom of the letter from a horizontal join
- Going round the bottom of some curly letters
- Not going all the way round to 'one o'clock' on curly letters
- Too large 'i' and 's'
- Descenders standing on the line (especially j and p)