

Sunny Hill Health Centre for Children
Therapy Department



Printing Like a Pro!

A Cognitive Approach to
Teaching Printing to
Primary School-Age Children

(For School Staff)



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Printing Program Suggestions for School-Age Children

PRINTING LIKE A PRO! (School Staff Version)

The following ideas are meant to be a list of possible suggestions. Select activities that are at the student's present developmental level. Please contact the student's occupational therapist if you have any questions.

- **Goal of this program:** To learn the correct way to form each letter so that printing becomes easier and more automatic. This can also help to make printing neater and quicker.
- **Who can use this program:** This printing program is appropriate for all types of learners in primary grades. It was, however, developed specifically for students with motor learning challenges. It can be used one-on-one or in small group work.
- **Teaching Strategies:** Cognitive strategies include **modeling, imitation, self-talk,** and **self-evaluation.** Use a **variety of writing tools.**
- **Structured teaching:** 20 minutes, three to five times a week is recommended. This regular teaching may help to prevent or correct "bad habits". Printing practice should be done as a **separate activity** – focusing only on learning to print.

Teaching Strategies:



1. **Modelling:** Show the student a few times how to form each letter using a chalkboard or white board. **Include numbered arrows** that show correct letter formation as this provides a **good visual cue.** Having a letter strip with arrows showing letter formation on the student's desk is also suggested for classroom work times.
2. **Self-Talk:** Encourage repetitive talking out loud of directions of proper letter formation, i.e. self-talk of direction of movement (e.g., "i= down • lift • dot"). Verbally model the self-talk and prompt the student to talk out loud, repeating the same set of directions each time. Using the same **self-talk phrase** each time is important for best learning (see sample self-talk directions attached.)
3. **Self Evaluation:** It is important for the student to look at their work to see how closely their letter formation matches the target letter. **Self-evaluation** can also be in the form of circling their best-formed letters. Discuss with the student why they chose those letters.
4. **Practice:** Use a **wide variety of writing tools.** In addition to using a pencil for practicing, have the child write with chalk on a chalkboard or with felt markers on a white board. Please see next page for further ideas.

Activities to Try:

How often?

- The following activities should be done for about **20 minutes, three to five times a week.**
- Remember to model each letter a few times, encourage “self-talk”, use “visual cues” (letters with numbered arrows), and encourage “self-evaluation”.

What to use and what to do?

Try to keep the practice fun by using a wide variety of writing tools/materials such as use of:

- A chalkboard with chalk; a white board with a felt marker; paper using crayons, felt markers, pastels or paint/paint brush or a SMART board.
- Show the student a few times how to form each letter. Remember to use proper letter formation, use numbered arrows, and model self-talk.
- Allow the student to practice many times. Remember to encourage “self-talk”.
- Wait a few seconds and have the student print each letter from memory (i.e., do not show the student how to make it). It is important for the student to correct any errors they have made (i.e., self evaluation). Also make note of any letters the student is struggling with so that more attention can be paid to learning these letters.

Initially, avoid use of lines, as learning to both print and stay on the line can be difficult. As you notice improvements, you can add the use of lines in each session.



IMPORTANT:

- *At the **end** of each session, **practice each letter learned using a pencil and paper** to help “carry over” onto paper what was learned (i.e., generalization of the skills learned). **Printing Like a Pro! worksheets** (both lower and upper case) can be used for this purpose and are available for download from: http://www.childdevelopment.ca/SchoolAge_Therapy_Practice_Resources.aspx. To allow for **repeated use** worksheets can be **laminated** or put in **page protectors** with use of an overhead fine tip marker. This wipes clean with a wet paper towel.*
- *All printing **practice should be supervised** to ensure the student remembers to use “self talk” and “self evaluation” strategies.*

Letter Groupings and Teaching Lower Case Letters

Please work **first on teaching lower case** as lower case letters are **used more in printing** (and in reading) than upper case.

- It is important to teach the proper way to form each letter as shown on the Printing Like a Pro! worksheets, i.e., left to right, top to bottom, etc.
- Work on each group listed below **until** you feel the student has learned the group i.e., can easily remember how to correctly print each letter in the group.
- After practicing each individual letter, it is good review to practice all letters from the group in random order.
- Once printing of each letter in the group appears **easy and automatic**, move on to the next group.

The groups have been **broken down** from **easiest to most difficult letters** to form.

Following are the groups you can work on:

<u>Downers</u> (Group 1)	l i t f	easiest
<u>Rounders</u> (Group 2)	c o e a d	↓
<u>Curvers (special)</u> (Group 3)	s u	
<u>Curvers</u> (Group 4)	r n m h b	
<u>Diggers</u> (Group 5)	j g q p	
<u>Sliders</u> (Group 6)	v w y x z k	
	most difficult	

IMPORTANT

- A good teaching tip is to **begin each session with a review of all letters already learned** as this helps the student remember all the basic motor patterns needed to print more challenging letters.
- It is important to **observe if** the student **correctly forms** the letters in each group. If they have forgotten, you will need to go back and re-teach using the above strategies.
- **Once the student has learned correct letter formation and can easily remember how to form letters, other parts of printing can then be addressed** such as staying on the line, spacing, sizing, etc.

Simple Words

Once the student can easily and automatically print letters, the next step is to work on simple words. Use of self-talk and numbered arrows should no longer be required. Use words that correspond to most of the letters in each group. For example, Group One/Downers - "it, lit, tilt", etc. These can be done on a chalkboard or on paper. Build on each group as the student progresses.

Initially, do not worry about staying on the lines. As you notice improvements, you can focus on proper positioning on the line as well as consistent sizing. Later, you can teach proper spacing between letters and words, i.e., use finger spacing or a Popsicle stick between words.

Capital Letters

- Once simple words are introduced, the next step is to work on CAPITAL LETTERS using the progression below, working from the easiest to the most difficult letters to form. **Remember to model each letter a few times, encourage "self-talk", use "visual cues" (letters with numbered arrows), and encourage "self-evaluation".**

Following are the groups you can work on:

<u>Downers</u> (Group 1)	L T I H F E	easiest ↓ most difficult
<u>Rounders</u> (Group 2)	C O Q G	
<u>Curvers (special)</u> (Group 3)	S U J	
<u>Curvers</u> (Group 4)	P B R D	
<u>Sliders (long)</u> (Group 5)	V W X A N M Z	
<u>Sliders (short)</u> (Group 6)	Y K	

- Follow the same steps as listed above regarding use of the **Printing Like a Pro!** worksheets. At the end of each session, practice each letter learned on a regular sheet of paper using a pencil. This is done to help "carry over" what was learned (i.e. generalization of the skills learned).
- The last step is to work on words that begin with capital letters. This can first be done on a chalkboard or white board. You can then progress to having the student print entire sentences, concentrating on:
 - proper letter formation and sizing
 - proper positioning on the line
 - proper spacing within and between the words
 - proper use of punctuation

Please contact the student's Occupational Therapist if you have any questions.

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Sample of "Self-Talk" Directions for Lower Case Letters

The following are examples of the self talk directions the student can say aloud while printing.

Downers - Group 1

- l Down
- i Down • lift • dot
- t Down • lift • across the middle
- f Up • around • down • lift • across the middle

Rounders - Group 2

- c Around • leave open
- o Around • close
- e Forward • up • around
- a Around • close • down
- d Around • close • up • down

Curvers (Special) - Group 3

- s Curve back • curve forward
- u Down • curve • up • down

Curvers - Group 4

- r Down • up • curve forward • stop
- n Down • up • curve forward • down
- m Down • up • curve forward • down • up • curve forward • down
- h Down • up • curve forward • down
- b Down • up • curve forward • close

Diggers - Group 5

- j Down • dig • curve back • lift • dot
- g Around • close • dig • curve back
- q Around • close • dig
- p Down • dig • up • curve forward • around • close

Sliders - Group 6

- v Slide down • slide up
- w Slide down • slide up • slide down • slide up
- y Slide down • lift • slide back • dig
- x Slide down • lift • slide back
- z Forward • slide back • forward
- k Down • lift • slide back • slide forward

School Staff

Printing Checklist of Best Practices

For

One to One and Small Group Work

I Teach Students How to Write Each Letter by...

- Showing them how it is formed.
- Describing how it is similar to and different from other letters.
- Using visual cues, such as numbered arrows, as a guide to letter formation.
- Encouraging self-talk when learning letter formation.
- Providing practice imitating and copying, as well as writing the letter from memory.
- Keeping instructional sessions short, with frequent reviews and practice.
- Asking them to identify or circle their best-formed letter or letters.
- Encouraging them to correct or rewrite poorly formed letters.
- Monitoring their practice to ensure that letters are formed correctly.
- Reinforcing their successful efforts and providing corrective feedback as needed.

I Help Students Become More Fluent in Handwriting by...

- Providing them with plenty of opportunities to write.
- Having them copy a short sentence with letters they know, several times, trying to write it a little faster each time.

I Promote Handwriting Development by...

- Making sure that each student develops a comfortable and efficient pencil grip.
- Encouraging students to sit in an upright position, leaning slightly forward as they write.
- Showing them how to place or position their paper when writing.
- Teaching students to identify and name the letters of the alphabet.
- Teaching them how to write lowercase letters and then later upper case.
- Allotting 75 to 100 minutes per week to handwriting instruction (in grades 1 and 2).
- Providing students with plenty of opportunities to use different types of writing instruments and paper.
- Asking students to set goals for improving specific aspects of their handwriting.
- Implementing appropriate procedures for left-handed writers, such as how to properly place or position their paper when writing.
- Monitoring students' handwriting, paying special attention to their instructional needs in letter formation, spacing, slant, alignment, size and line quality.
- Dramatizing students' progress in handwriting through the use of charts or graphs, praise, or posting neatly written papers.

I Assist Students by...

- Coordinating my handwriting instruction with the efforts of other professionals, such as an occupational therapist.
- Placing special emphasis on teaching difficult letters as well as correcting reversals.
- Helping them develop positive attitudes about handwriting.

I Make Sure That I...

- Maintain a balanced perspective on the role of handwriting in learning to write.

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http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/perf_stands/writing.htm

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