

Tips for Teaching Cursive Writing

Cursive writing is now part of the Ontario curriculum and is introduced at the grade three level. Many studies have shown that practicing cursive writing improves comprehension and retention, engages the brain on a deeper level and enhances fine motor dexterity (www.nea.org/). For some students, cursive writing offers a fresh start to master difficult letter formations and improve written output speed.

Below are some general tips for starting a cursive writing program in your classroom. Speak with your school's Occupational Therapist to learn more about strategies and resources!

Tips:

1. Ergonomics Matter

Ensure students are in a comfortable writing position: hips at 90 degrees, knees at 90 degrees, ankles at 90 degrees.

2. Midline Paper Please

Provide midline paper to support letter alignment and legibility.

3. School-Wide Approach is Best

Consider adopting one "school-wide" approach or program. This ensures the techniques and verbal prompts remain consistent as students advance to the next grade level.

4. Teach By Cursive Formation Group

Teach **lowercase letters first** and in groups using similar movement patterns. For example:

c,a,d,g h,t,p,e,l,f u,y,i,j

k,m,s o,w,b,v m,n x,q,z

5. Review Previously Taught Letters Continually

Ensure students have mastered one group before introducing the next. Continue to practice the "older groups" to reinforce motor patterns!

6. Don't Discount The Benefits of Multisensory Learning

Introduce a multisensory component to make the activity fun and strengthen motor memory. Ex. air writing, writing on a chalkboard or whiteboard, using various mediums like paint, markers and crayons!

7. Keep Visuals Handy!



Cursive alphabet desk strips can help children review and refine their cursive letter formations.

8. Keep Lessons Short & Consistent

Keep lessons short and consistent (ex. 15 minutes/day) and provide lots of opportunities for breaks and movement!

9. Make It Functional

As students gain proficiency with letter and word-level cursive, make it functional by having a daily writing tasks completed using cursive.

Initially, make this writing task fun, and less content demanding. This can include using cursive to write in a daily agenda, sign their name on a daily sign-in sheet, or write a pen-pal.



Popular Cursive Writing Programs:

While there are some differences in general approaches, many cursive writing programs tend to use a similar methodology: grouping letters based on their formation patterns, providing feedback on quality of work, using verbal prompts and encouraging multisensory and kinesthetic output. Here are three of the more common cursive programs used in Ontario classrooms:



Learning Without Tears:

<https://www.lwtears.com/hwt/cursive-letters-alphabet>

Uses vertical letter formations which may appear more similar to manuscript.

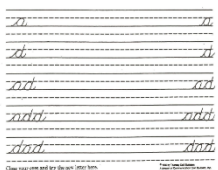
Worksheets incorporate word-level and sentence-level practice.

c a d g h t p e l f



Loops and Other Groups:

a d g q c



<https://www.pearsonassessments.com/store/usassessments/en/Store/Professional-Assessments/Academic-Learning/Interventions/Loops-and-Other-Groups%3A-A-Kinesthetic-Writing-System/p/100000277.html>

Teaches based on common formation strokes ("Clock Climbers- a,d,q,g,c").

Midline paper used is similar to that available in some school notebooks.

Aa Bb Cc

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Zaner-Bloser:

<https://www.zaner-bloser.com/>

Follows a “Model-Practice-Evaluate” framework that encourages self-reflection.
Coloured lines may support letter placement and orientation.