

The Formation of Letters

TEACH

Use this language to show how to start and form each letter. You may want to model it with a large formation at first and then move to standard size.

Listen to how I say words to help me. Say the words to help you make the letters.

PROMPT

Have the students say the language with you as they trace or write a letter.

You know how to start it.

Think about how to write it.

REINFORCE

Have the students make the letter without using the language.

You knew how to start it.

You knew how to write it.

LOWERCASE LETTER FORMATION

- a** — pull back, around, up, and down
- b** — pull down, up, around
- c** — pull back and around
- d** — pull back, around, up, and down
- e** — pull across, back, and around
- f** — pull back, down, and cross
- g** — pull back, around, up, down, and under
- h** — pull down, up, over, and down
- i** — pull down, dot
- j** — pull down, curve around, dot
- k** — pull down, pull in, pull out
- l** — pull down
- m** — pull down, up, over, down and up, over and down
- n** — pull down, up, over and down
- o** — pull back and around
- p** — pull down, up, and around
- q** — pull back, around, up, and down
- r** — pull down, up, and over
- s** — pull back, in, around, and back around
- t** — pull down and cross
- u** — pull down, around, up, and down
- v** — slant down, up
- w** — slant down, up, down, up
- x** — slant down, slant down
- y** — slant in, slant and down
- z** — across, slant down, across

UPPERCASE LETTER FORMATION

- A** — slant down, slant down, across
- B** — pull down, up, around and in, back and around
- C** — pull back and around
- D** — pull down, up, around
- E** — pull down, across, across, and across
- F** — pull down, across, across
- G** — pull back, around, across
- H** — pull down, pull down, across
- I** — pull down, across, across
- J** — pull down, curve around, across
- K** — pull down, slant in, slant out
- L** — pull down, across
- M** — pull down, slant down, slant down, pull down
- N** — pull down, slant down, pull up
- O** — pull back and around
- P** — pull down, up, and around
- Q** — pull back and around and cross
- R** — pull down, up, around, in, and slant down
- S** — pull back, in, around, down, and back around
- T** — pull down, across
- U** — pull down, around, up, and down
- V** — slant down, slant up
- W** — slant down up, down up
- X** — slant down, slant down
- Y** — slant in, slant, and down
- Z** — across, slant down, across

Letters Made in Similar Ways

c o a d g q

b h t i j k l p

n r m u

v x w y

f s

e z

Ways to Sort and Match Letters

by color

blue
letters

red
letters

yellow
letters

green
letters

by consonants/vowels

b f t
d c
r m
w v

a e
i o
u

by slant/straight lines

v w
x

p b
l r
h d
t

by upper/lower case

b
a e p
d c f n
m r t

A C D V
F P G M
R

by tails/no tails

y p q
j

m n w
r s x
c

by circles/no circles

o b p a
g d

k x w
h r f

by tunnels/no tunnels

h u
n m

j g f
c b o
s

by long sticks/short sticks

h d b
p

r u
m

by tall/short

t h d
f b

m o x
c n r

by dots/no dots

i j

o l s
m r p
n

by same lowercase/uppercase match

x w p o c s u v z

X W P O C S U V Z

by different lowercase/uppercase match

a b d e f g h i j k l m n q r t y

A B D E F G H I J K L M N Q R T Y

Letter Reversals

Should I be concerned?

Parents and teachers may become concerned when a child reverses letters or words: writing b's instead of d's, "tac" instead of "cat" and so on. The truth of the matter is that most beginner readers/writers will make reversals; it's not all that uncommon. It's very common for young children up to age seven to reverse the letters "b" and "d" and "p" and "q." Some researchers find that this is due to immaturity in brain development. Others have found that the students simply don't pay too much attention to the way letters are oriented.

When children first learn to write they frequently have letter reversals. Many children continue to have reversed letters in first and second grade. It is not uncommon or unusual to see children 4, 5, 6 and even 7 years of age making letter and/or letter reversals. There may be a need for some concern if a child continues with letter reversals or mirror reading/writing into and beyond the 3rd grade.

Letter/word reversals are, for the most part, due to a weak memory, the lack of enough previous experiences, or a lack of left-right awareness.

Many myths surround the children who make reversals such as: the child is learning disabled; the child has some type of neurological dysfunction; or the child will become dyslexic. Dyslexics often have many reading/writing errors including reversals so this theory is difficult to prove. However, very little research has been done regarding the matter of reversals.

While letter reversal is one of the signs of dyslexia, many more signs of the disorder have to exist for a child to be diagnosed as dyslexic. Any questions you have about dyslexia can probably be answered by visiting the International Dyslexia Association website.

Become concerned about reversals only if the child continues to reverse letters after s/he has had considerable instruction in the left-to-right direction in both reading and writing. Then, if he is having difficulty learning to read, the possibility of a reading problem should be investigated.










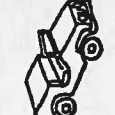












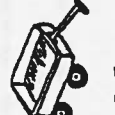





How do I help?

- Most teachers have discovered that there is not a magic cure for children who display reversals in their reading or writing. However, there are some strategies that may be helpful:
- In the meantime, the best way to ensure that a child becomes a good reader is to be read to every night. Also listen to him/her read the stories that s/he is working on at school.


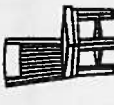
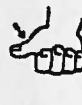






- Praise is another important component in helping young children learn to read. When your child reads to you, find something good to say about his efforts. And try to keep reading fun so he will enjoy reading to you.
- Children need to be taught to use the left hand margin and need to be taught that their work should be organized from left to right. This is difficult to teach the child who does not know his left from right.
- For a second grade student who consistently reverses his letters, introducing cursive early may help correct the reversal errors.
- Practice finger writing in shaving cream, sand, rice, pudding, etc.
- Give the child a visual cue at his desk for commonly reversed letters. For example, *"d' is the first letter of 'dog'. A dog has a tail. This stick is like the dog's tail. The body comes first, then the tail."* As the child improves his skills he will no longer rely on or use the visual cues.
- Over-teach 'b", then over-teach 'd", before presenting both together.
- Trace, then write, the confused letter or word and pronounce it as written.
- For young children, encourage left and right awareness. Give the child time to develop motor skills.
- If the child is confused about his own left/right, use a ring, watch, ribbon or band on his writing arm. Color cue side of desk/table or paper or word as a starting place.
- Use weighted wristband to designate right or left hand.
- Trace hands on paper. Label "right," "left."
- Play "Simon Says" - "Touch right foot; raise left hand," etc.
- Have the child follow directions: drawing lines up, down, right to left, etc. and in touching parts of body.
- Invite the child to connect dots on white/chalkboard to make a completed pattern.
- Have the child march: left, right, left, right. Now add the hands: left, right, left, right.
- Have a child find a space in the room. Then have them name objects on right and on left. Move to different parts of the room and repeat.
- Arrange story pictures in sequence, left to right.
- In reading, use markers, "windows," and other left-to-right directional aids.

Education Expert Advice from



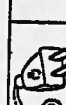
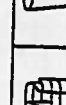
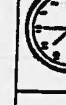



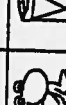



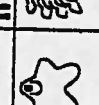




- Peggy Gisler and Marge Eberts, Family Education
- Sue Watson, Special Education Developmental Support Counselor
- Child Development Institute, LLC

 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			 Aa	 Gg

Diagrams

 sh	 ch	 th	 wh
 squ	 str	 spr	 spl
3	 scr		
thr			

3-letter blends

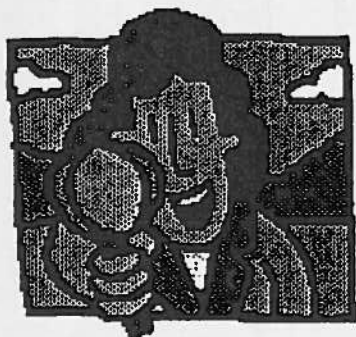
 bl	 pl	 fl	 gl	 cl
 pr	 tr	 fr	 dr	 br
 sk	 st	 sp	 sn	 sw
				 gr
				 sc

Good Readers...

*Caution!

LOOK

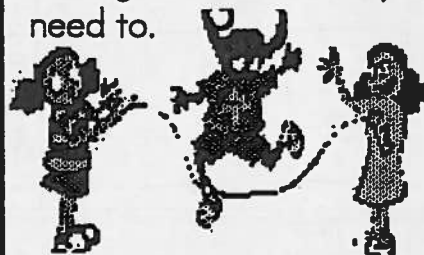
at the pictures.



Slide through the whole word.



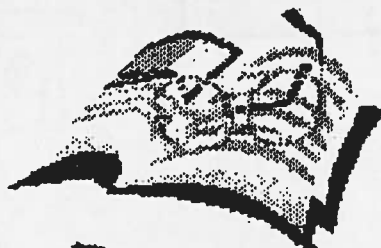
DON'T SKIP hard words.
Instead, try something first.
Then go back to fix if you
need to.



...Read
...Try something
...Go back and fix

Get your MOUTH

ready to make
the first sound.



Reread....

Does it **LOOK** right?
Does it **SOUND** right?
Does it **MAKE SENSE**?

If not...
STOP and go back!

Think about the story.



Does that make sense?

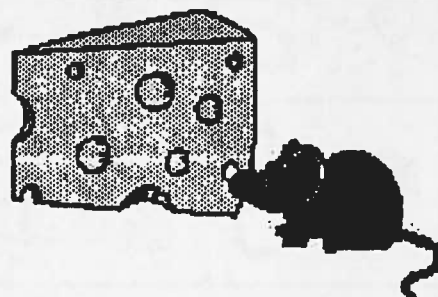
Try a different VOWEL sound.



Think of a RHYMING word you do know.



"If I know
c-a-t is cat,
then I know
h-a-t must
be hat."



"Chunk It"

Look for smaller
words
hiding inside.

25 Ways to Use Magnetic Letters at Home

1. **LETTER PLAY** Encourage children to play with the magnetic letters on the refrigerator or on a table. Playing with letters allows children to learn more about how the letter forms look.
2. **MAKING NAMES** A child's name is the most important word. Have children make their names several times, mixing up the letters, making their names, and checking them with their names written on a card.
3. **LETTER MATCH** Invite children to find other letters that look exactly the same as a letter in their name (e.g., place a *m* on the refrigerator and have the child find all the ones that look like it). They don't need to know the letter name.
4. **NAME GAME** Have children make names of friends or family. Have them make the names, mix the letters, and make the names several times.
5. **MAKING WORDS** Make a simple word such as *mom* or *dad* or *sun* and have your child make the same word by matching each letter below the model (*sun* – *s-u-n*).
6. **ALPHABET TRAIN** Have your child put the lowercase magnetic letters in the order of the alphabet. Then they can point to them and sing the alphabet song. Have them repeat the process with uppercase letters.
7. **CONSONANT/VOWEL SORT** Have children sort the consonant letters and the vowel letters.
8. **FEATURE SORT** Have children sort letters in a variety of ways — for example, letters with long sticks and letters with short sticks, letters with circles and letters with no circles, letters with tunnels and letters with dots, letters with slanted sticks and letters with straight sticks.
9. **COLOR SORT** Have children sort all the red, blue, green, and yellow letters.
10. **UPPERCASE/LOWERCASE MATCH** Have children match the uppercase letters with the lowercase forms.
11. **WRITING LETTERS** Have children select ten different letters and write each letter on a paper. They can use the magnetic letter as a model.
12. **WRITING WORDS** Have children make five simple words (such as *dog*, *fun*, *big*, *hat*, *like*, *sit*) and then write them on a sheet of paper.
13. **MAKING FOOD WORDS** Make some words that identify food — for example, *bun*, *corn*, *rice*. Have children draw pictures of each, mix the letters, and make the words again.
14. **MAKING COLOR WORDS** Give children a list of color words with an item made in that color as a picture support (for example, a *red* ball). Have children make the color word with magnetic letters using the model, mix the letters, and make it again several times.
15. **MAKING NUMBER WORDS** Give children a list of numerals with the number word next to each. Have children make the word and mix the letters two or three times.
16. **LETTER NAMES** Specify a color and have children take one colored letter at a time and say the letter name.

17. **MAGAZINE MATCH** Look through a magazine or newspaper with children, cutting out some large-print simple words (such as *man, box, boy*). Glue them on a sheet of paper with plenty of space below each. Have children make each word below the printed one.
18. **FIND THE LETTER** Make a set of alphabet letters, upper- or lowercase, on a set of index cards. Shuffle the "deck" and take turns drawing a card and finding the magnetic letter that corresponds to it.
19. **LETTER IN THE CIRCLE** Draw two circles and place an *h* in one and an *o* in the other. Have children put letters in the *h* circle and say how they are like the *h*. Do the same with the *o*. This activity will help children learn to look at features of letters. Vary the letters in the circles; accept their explanations about what they are noticing.
20. **CHANGE THE WORD** Build several simple words and show the children how to change, add, or take away a letter to make a new word. Examples are *me, he, we; me, my; at, hat, sat*. After the demonstration, put the needed letters in a special place in an empty container for them to practice.
21. **ALPHABET SEQUENCE** Place the letter *a* on the table and have the child find the next letter (*b*) and put it next to it. Place the letter *c* next to the *b* and have the child look for the next letter (*d*). Continue through the alphabet with lowercase letters. Repeat with uppercase letters.
22. **LETTER SORT** Place a pile of magnetic letters on the table for the child to spread out. Have the child put all letters that are the same together in a pile. Then if appropriate, have the child give the letter name for each pile.
23. **LETTER CHAINS** Make a five-letter chain (for example, *primo*). Have children find the same letters and make the same chain below your model. Then have the children make a chain that you copy.
24. **LETTER BINGO** Make two cards with a grid of three boxes across and three down. Trace one lowercase letter in each box. Put a pile of magnetic letters that are representing the letters on the cards and some that are not in a plastic bowl. Play a Letter Bingo game. Take turns taking a letter, saying its name, and then placing the letter in the box if there is a match. If there is no match, put the letter back in the bowl. The first to fill three boxes across, down, or diagonally says, "Bingo" and wins the game. Play the same game with uppercase letters.
25. **RHYMING PAIRS** Use a magnetic cookie sheet. Make a simple three-letter word such as *dog, bug, cat, fan, can, hot, man, net, pan, rat, sit*. Say the word and then say a second word that rhymes (*dog-log, bug-mug, cat-fat, fan-man*). Ask the child to make the rhyming word below each.

Home Activities

Rhyming

- Read nursery rhymes or sing songs with rhyming words. Exaggerate the rhyming words. See if your child can tell you which words rhyme.
- Vary the above activity by leaving out the rhyming words and letting your child fill in the blanks. For example, say "Jack and Jill went up the ____."
- Say two words. Ask your child if they rhyme. For example, say "Boat, pizza: do these words rhyme?"
- Read Dr. Seuss books or other books with a lot of rhyming words. Help your child find the rhyming words.
- Help your child think of words that rhyme with his or her name, names of family members, days of the week, animals, etc. Throw in some nonsense words for extra fun and practice!

Syllables

- Clap the syllables in favorite songs or nursery rhymes.
- Clap the syllables in your child's name, names of family members, cartoon characters, foods, etc.
- Vary the clapping activities by stomping, tapping, or taking steps for each syllable.
- Use objects like pennies, buttons, or macaroni to represent syllables. Say each word slowly, putting down a button for each syllable. Then count the objects to see how many syllables were in the word.
- Cut out pictures from a catalog or magazine. Have your child group the pictures by the number of syllables in each word.

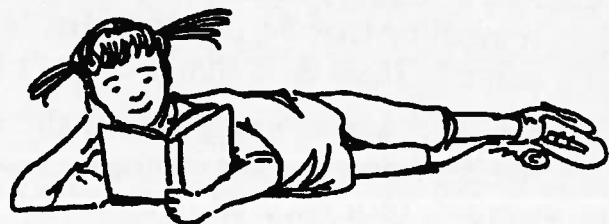
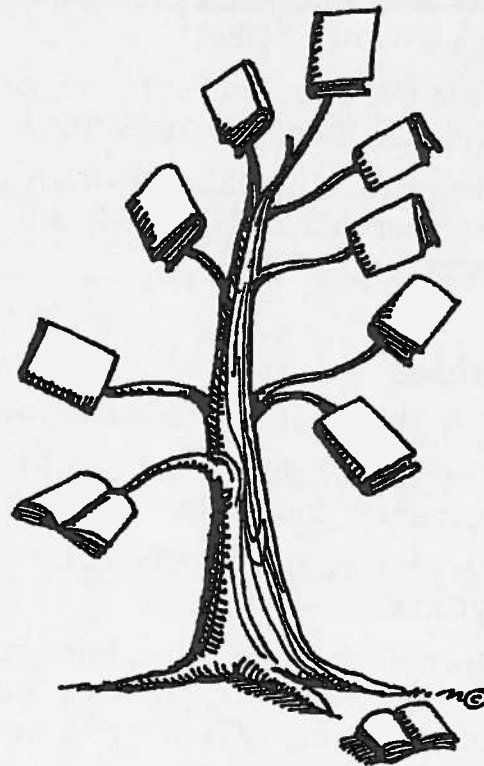
Sounds

- Help your child think of words with the same sound. For example, *baby, bunny, bed, bologna, brown* all begin with the sound "b."
- Ask your child to fill a grocery bag with things that begin with the same sound. For example, for the sound "s," your child might choose scissors, cereal, soap, and a strawberry.
- Play guessing games using first sound clues. For example, "I'm thinking of something that begins with the 'b' sound." (Say the sound of "b," not the letter name.) "It's a food that monkeys like to eat. You have to peel it."
- Say short words, exaggerating the last sound in the word. Ask your child what the last sound is. For example, "Cat. Which sound do you hear at the end of the word?" Your child should say the sound of "t," not the letter name pronounced "tee."

Suggested Gift List

If you are in the market for holiday gifts for your child, there are many gifts that can help your child with their schoolwork. You may want to consider the following:

- ✿ Chalkboard and chalk
- ✿ Dry erase board and markers
- ✿ Paper (all kinds, sizes and colors)
- ✿ Binder for their papers
- ✿ Magna Doodle
- ✿ Magnetic letters
- ✿ Pencils, pens, markers, crayons
- ✿ Paints
- ✿ Tray of sand
- ✿ Glue
- ✿ Stapler
- ✿ Fasteners (to make books)
- ✿ Play Dough
- ✿ Boggle or Boggle Jr.
- ✿ Scrabble
- ✿ Leap Frog
- ✿ Books on tape/CD (or make your own tape)
- ✿ Stationery & stamps to write to friends and relatives (thank you notes or friendly letters)
- ✿ Save wrapping paper to make covers for children's homemade books or turn it over to use as writing paper)
- ✿ A library card
- ✿ Comic books
- ✿ Magazine subscription
- ✿ And of course books



Tips for Helping Children With Reading Comprehension Difficulties

by Wendy C. Ward, M.A.T.

Does your child have difficulty remembering or understanding what he/she reads? If your child reads slowly and struggles with words that should be familiar, then it is probable that your child does not comprehend what he/she is reading. As your child progresses through school, the inability to read comprehensively affects how he/she gains knowledge. Below are strategies to assist parents in improving their child's reading comprehension skills.



Improve Decoding Skills

In order for children to understand what they read, they must first be able to read words on the page. They must be aware of letters and the sounds they make and understand that they must blend these sounds to make words. This is decoding. Good readers determine if the words they read make sense in a sentence. If the words do not make sense, they go back and try reading those words again. Prompt your child when he/she reads a word incorrectly by asking, "Does that word make sense in the sentence?" If he/she responds "no," have the child decode the word(s) and reread the sentence.

Improve Vocabulary Skills

Reading comprehension improves when a child understands vocabulary words in their context. As your child reads, have him/her make a flashcard for each unfamiliar or difficult word. Help your child look up the meaning of the word in the dictionary or glossary and talk about its meaning in the context of the sentence.

Improve Active Comprehension Strategies

Good readers use strategies to prepare themselves for reading a particular text. These strategies may include:

- Making predictions while they are reading.
- Making connections to what they already know.
- Determining the meanings of unfamiliar words based on context clues.
- Interpreting the text (following printed directions, understanding a sequence of events, understanding and interpreting the mood of the story and feelings of the characters).
- Generalizing how the ideas revealed in the text may apply to future readings (a chronicle of historical or scientific events).

Struggling readers have difficulty with all of the skills above and therefore, require more instructional time and practice. Below are general activities to do with your child at home to improve active reading comprehension skills. Help and encourage your child to prepare to read for pleasure or complete classroom assignments using the tips below.

- "Walk" through the story (or assignment) page by page and look at pictures, illustrations, headers, sidebars, etc. This helps the child prepare for the information he/she is about to read as well as improve comprehension and concentration.

- Separate what the child is reading into story grammar components: setting, main character, action, and outcome.
- Take turns reading aloud and find places to stop, discuss, make comments, give opinions, and relate to personal experiences. When parents read aloud, they should model correct inflection and feelings.
- Listen to your child read aloud for a few minutes every day. The length of time should be appropriate for the child's age (a minute for every year of age). The book he/she is reading aloud should be at a level slightly below his/her classroom instruction in order to foster reading fluency. Ask your child's teacher for a suggested booklist.
- Reread favorite books. Rereading familiar books provides good practice for fluency and decoding. Your child should be able to read at a smooth, conversational pace.
- Read aloud to your child often from a book, magazine, or newspaper article. This helps build vocabulary. Ask questions frequently about the content and details, and ask him/her to retell the story to check the level of understanding.
- Talk about what your child reads to you. This helps him/her remember and think through the themes of the book. Ask your child questions about the content of the book before, during, and after reading. Use pictures or illustrations to extend discussion about the story or topic.
- Explore different forms of reading material. Take a trip to the library; check out a book and its companion audio tape or CD. Have your child read aloud with the narrator of the book while listening to the text on tape or CD. This helps the child learn to emulate inflection and feeling.
- Provide age-appropriate magazines! Children will read books and magazines over and over when it's something they have an interest in. Larger bookstores have a huge selection of books and magazines spanning from sports to doll collecting. Allow your child to choose his/her reading material by providing several choices and allowing him/her to make the final decision.
- Find popular children's books that are now available as screenplays on video or DVD. Have your child read the book version and then, watch the screenplay. Talk about the similarities or differences between the book and the screenplay. Ask your child how the screenplay compares to what he/she visualized while reading the book.



It is extremely important that parents are active, encouraging, involved, and most of all, setting the example that reading is important. Consult your child's teacher for information and guidance in selecting the appropriate level of reading materials outside the classroom. Ask him/her for other helpful reading strategies to ensure that your child is getting all the help he/she needs to become a successful reader.

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Name

Date