

Writing the Visual, Kinesthetic, and Auditory Alphabet

Tips for teaching the alphabet using visual and kinesthetic cues.

For teaching resources for visual and other right-brained learners, visit www.child1st.com.

By Sarah K Major



www.child1st.com

Writing the Visual, Kinesthetic, and Auditory Alphabet

Ages 4 and up.

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Other titles by this author:

Right-Brained Math Series: *Addition & Subtraction* Vol. 1 & 2, *Multiplication & Division*, and *Fractions*. *The Illustrated Book of Sounds & Their Spelling Patterns*, *Alphabet Tales*, and the Easy-for-Me™ Children's Readers series.

Other educational work: Child1st stylized sight words and alphabet.

WHY INCLUDE VISUAL & KINESTHETIC ELEMENTS?

Young children learn most easily when material is presented in a way that is closely tied to movement and visual objects with which they are familiar. If we incorporate purposeful movement and visuals into our teaching, we will go a long way toward preventing learning problems.

Traditionally, teachers have asked their students to just remember how certain symbols are formed, whether letters or numbers. This approach works for some but falls short of what others need in order to learn.

To ensure success with all learners, we have chosen to approach writing the alphabet by using motions that are familiar to young children and by using wording that allows the child to imagine actually doing what they hear you say. A very important note: These motions are not the only way to teach the alphabet. In fact, learning will be far better if you make a practice of asking your children how they can move to look like the letter you are studying.

What follows is a sample of handwriting that illustrates the need to give young children the kinds of helps we share in this book. The writing sample is from my daughter, Melissa.



Melissa
Morgan
Malburg

Age 3;
circa 1985.

Following are some helps included in this book that would have provided Melissa with memory cues on how to form the problem letters: M is like mountains that start on the ground. E has 3 tables that come out from the top of the head, at the belly button, and at the feet. S is two stacked caves, facing different directions. Even very young children know their heads, belly buttons, and feet; they know about climbing mountains or hills; they know about sliding down. Because these things are a part of their world, they become simple helps that make all the difference!

TEACHING BY SOUND, NOT LETTER NAME

When I first teach the alphabet to young children, I do not teach letter names. I instead use only the sound of the letter. For instance, the letter A does not say, "Ay," but rather is an individual sound that is heard at the beginning of words like "ant" or "Abigail." Young children learning to read don't need to know the names of the letters. A word is made up of sounds that are put together meaningfully to form a word, not made up of collections of letter names.

Some children become hopelessly lost in the process when they are asked to learn the letter names first, then learn the name of an object that represents each letter, and THEN learn the sounds. They don't know how to manage all that information that, to them, seems unrelated and without purpose. If we simplify the process for them and let them understand that words are made of sounds, and those sounds are represented by symbols called letters, they have far less to manage. I have found that they somehow learn the letter names along the way. I've never met a child yet who learned the sounds but could not call the name of the letter.

TO MEMORIZE OR NOT TO MEMORIZE THE ALPHABET

After several years of working with young children in learning the alphabet, another practice I abandoned was the emphasis on learning the alphabet in sequence first of all. Although I had an ABC displayed on the wall of the classroom, I did not feel it was best practice to insist that all children learn to recite the alphabet by heart before starting to teach them to read.

Children can successfully start right out putting sounds together and making small words, and in doing so, understand WHY we learn letters and sounds! The relevance is there that jump-starts them in their process of learning to read. My practice is to be very simple, very clear, and very purposeful in what I teach young children and in what I ask them to learn. *The Easy-for-Me™ Teaching Manual* is the product of experiencing real success with this simplified process of teaching reading to early learners. This simplified approach helped them avoid the difficulties many children face that often result in failure and discouragement.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Before writing whole letters, practice these simple shapes and names:

- | | |
|-------------------|-------------|
| 1] Thin Man: | 4] Cave: C |
| 2] Table: — | 5] Curve: ⤵ |
| 3] Slide: \ and / | 6] Hump: ∪ |

TIPS FOR TEACHING

1. THIN MAN: Stand up very straight and tall and have the children copy you. Say, "Start with your pencil at the top of the thin man's head and draw a line straight down to the floor!" As you say this, demonstrate on your own body, using your pointer finger as the pencil and drawing an imaginary line from head to toe. Have the children copy your motions and words. Then repeat, using paper and pencil.

2. TABLE: Draw the children's attention to a table or desk top and have them feel how flat it is. Show them that if the table is tilted, your pencil will roll off. Practice "drawing" a very flat table in the air, then repeat with pencil and paper.

3. SLIDE: Talk about sliding down a slide at the playground. You start at the top, sit down, and then slide at an angle to the ground. Mention that slides can be going in different directions. With the children, practice making your hand "sit down" at the top of a slide; then swoop and slide your hand down to the ground. Move now to pencil and paper. Practice drawing a slide down and toward you and a slide up and away from you.

4. CAVE: To make a cave with right-handed children, have them make a cave shape with their left hand, using thumb and pointer finger to make the curve. They can initially draw the cave inside this structure of their hand by putting their pencil at the tip of their pointer and then going on around until they reach the tip of their thumb. Lefties can stick their pointer finger out onto the paper, pretend it is a bear, and draw a cave around it. Practice doing this together in the air, then move to paper and pencil. See illustrations on page 6.

5. CURVE: For the curve, reverse the directions exactly from number 4, depending on if the child is right- or left-handed.

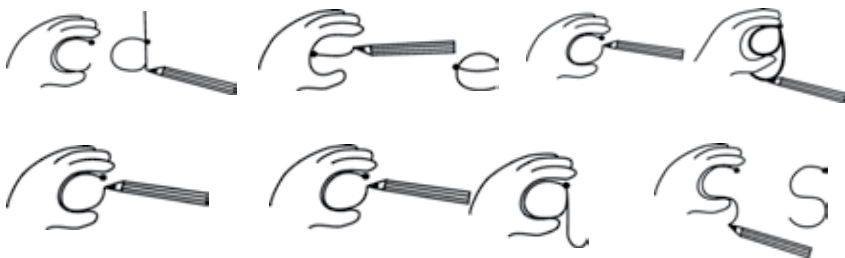
6. HUMP: Have children jump ahead a short step to simulate what they are going to draw with their pencils. Point out that they start on the ground, jump up and forward, then land back on the ground! Practice together, then move to doing it with paper and pencil.

CATEGORIES OF LETTERS

The alphabet may be grouped into categories based on how each letter is formed. What follows is one way of grouping the letters. It might be a good idea to work on the letters in one group before moving on to the next group.

Cave Letters: a, c, d, e, g, o, q, s

Children will make a cave like this:



Left-handed children can make a bear with their right pointer finger and draw the cave around the bear!

Bear or Peanut Letters: p, b

The letters for "peanut butter" are made this way.



Left-handed children can make a cave with their right hand and draw the letters inside the cave!

Slide Letters: k, M, N, v, w, x, y, z

Thin Man Letters: F, H, i, j, l, T

Hump Letters: u, (h, n, m, r)

Combo Letter: R

Aa

HAND MOTIONS:



WRITING:



Uppercase: "Start on the ground and climb to the top of the hill (make a slide going up and away from you), then sit down and slide down to the ground (make a long slide going down away from you). Next, make a table straight through the middle". Or "Climb up, slide down, then make a table through the middle."

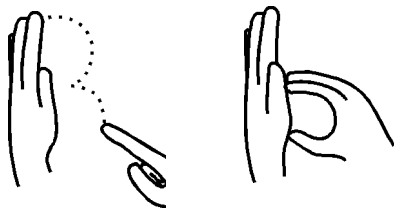
Lowercase: "Start by making a cave, but instead of leaving the door open, make your pencil go all the way back up to the top to close the opening. Then without lifting your pencil, come straight back down to the ground (make a thin man)."

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY:

Give the children a sheet of paper and crayons. Let them draw large capital A's and make believe they are anthills. They can draw ants crawling up and down the sides. If you want a more involved project, let the children draw a large A and then brush glue right over the two sides with a Q-tip. They can then sprinkle sand over the glue and allow to dry before drawing their ants!

Bb

HAND MOTIONS:



WRITING:

Uppercase: "Make a thin man. Put your pencil back on top of his head and make a curve to touch his belly button. Next, bounce back out to make a curve that touches his toes."

Lowercase: "Make a thin man. Put your pencil on his belly button and make a curve that touches his toes."

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY:

Let the children make their B's and b's into bears and draw a cave nearby that they live in. Point out that their bellies both point away to the right. It is as though they are taking a walk both facing the same way. You may choose to have the children practice walking like B's do... all in a line with their bellies all going the same way. (D's do not do this, as they will soon find out!)



Cc

HAND MOTION:



WRITING:

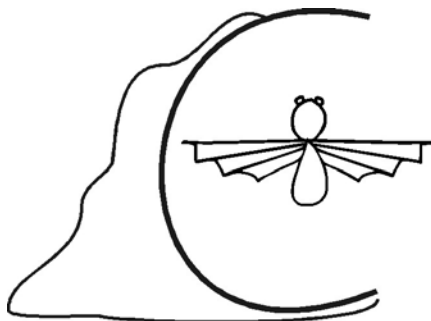


“Put your pencil near the top line. Curve around and make a cave.”

Many children have difficulty in positioning their pencil correctly when making the C. They want to start right on the top line and drop down from there. You might point out that initially what they are doing is starting just below the top line and humping up to touch the line before circling around to make the cave. See tips for making C on page 6.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY:

Let the children draw bears or bats or other cave-dwelling creatures in their C's. They might even want to draw themselves camping out near the mouth of the cave.



Dd

HAND MOTIONS:



WRITING:



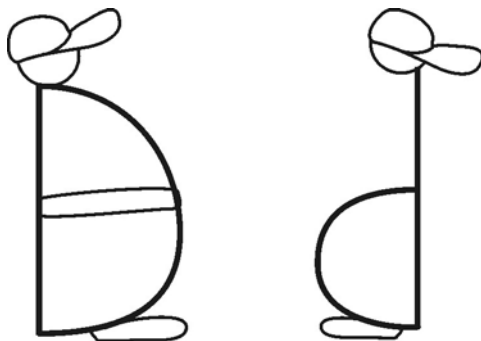
Uppercase: "Make a thin man. Put your pencil back on the top of his head and make a big curve that touches his toes. He's not a thin man anymore!"

Lowercase: "Make a thin man and put the pencil on his belly button. Make a small cave that touches his toes." (Say that the D's like to talk, so their bellies are facing each other.)

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY:

The children can practice facing each other talking like the D's do or walking facing the same direction like the B's do. Say, "The Bb's like to walk, and the Dd's like to talk."

Let them draw shoes and hats on their D's to make Dad and Don Dee.



Ee

HAND MOTIONS:



SAY "Make your fist into an egg shape. Can you see the lowercase e?"

WRITING:

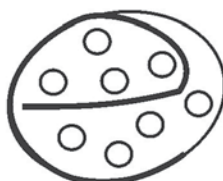


Uppercase: "Make a thin man. Put your pencil back on top of his head and make a table, pushing away from you. Put your pencil on his belly button and make a table. Then put your pencil on his foot and draw a table right on the ground."

Lowercase: "Make a table under the middle dotted line, and then without lifting your pencil, curve around to make a cave around the table."

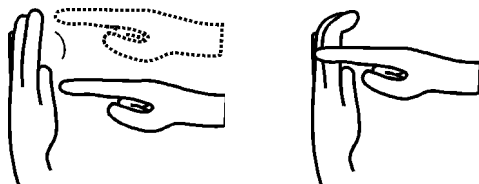
FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY:

Let the children decorate their capital E's to make a little girl named Emmy who wants all the Easter eggs in the playground! Their lowercase E's can be decorated with bright crayons to make Easter eggs.



Ff

HAND MOTIONS:



WRITING:

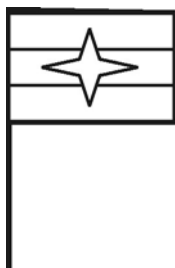


Uppercase: "Make a thin man for the flag pole. Put your pencil on the top of the thin man's head. Make a table. Put your pencil on the thin man's belly button and make another table."

Lowercase: "Start on the top line, but instead of going straight down, start a curve, and then drop the line to the ground. Make a table near the dotted line that goes all the way through the thin man."

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY:

Children can make real flags out of a chop stick, wooden skewer, or plastic straw, adding a decorated rectangle of paper glued to the top.



Gg

HAND MOTIONS:



WRITING:



Uppercase: "Starting near the top, make a large cave. Then make a little table to eat your lunch on."

Lowercase: "Make a little cave, and then close up the mouth. Without lifting your pencil, drop a hook down into the basement. Make sure the hook is under the cave."

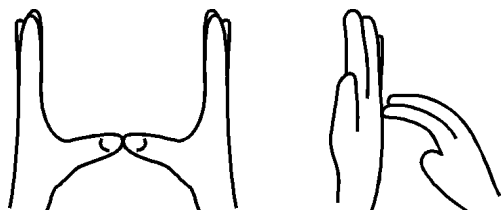
FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY:

The child could make the upper and lowercase letters and then decorate the uppercase G as a cave with a picnic table at the entrance and the lowercase g as Gary the gorilla. Of course Gary will want some green grapes to eat on his table!



Hh

HAND MOTIONS:



WRITING:

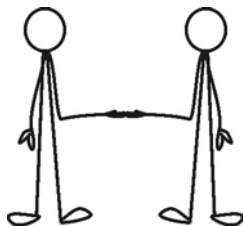


Uppercase: "Make a thin man. Then make another thin man near the first. Then put your pencil on the belly button of the first thin man. Make a table that touches the belly button of the second thin man. Make a hump."

Lowercase: "Make a thin man. Without lifting your pencil, go back the way you came and make a hump."

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY:

Children can collaborate to make a capital H by standing near each other, arms against their bodies, with only their elbows bent so their fingertips touch.

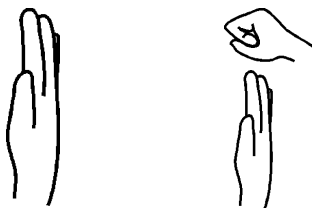


They might like to draw an uppercase H and make it into a large two-story house.



Ii

HAND MOTIONS:



WRITING:



Uppercase: "Make a thin man. Put a little table on top of his head as though he's wearing a very flat hat! Put a little table under his body to make feet."

Lowercase: "Make a short thin man, and then put a dot floating above him."

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY:

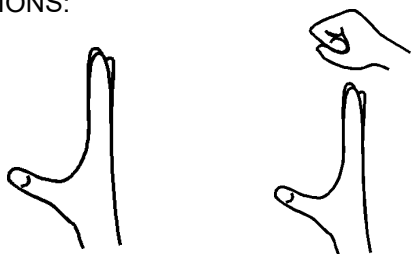
Children can act out being capital I by standing up very straight while they say, "I am the thin man. I have a flat hat on my head (motion with their hand to make a flat table on top of their heads), and I have long, flat shoes (again, motion with their hands to signify the long, thin shoes on the floor.)"

They may draw large capital I's and decorate them as men wearing varying uniforms. They can say, "I am a fireman. I wear a red hat, and I fight fires." Or, "I am a policeman. I wear a flat, blue cap, and I keep people safe."



Jj

HAND MOTIONS:



WRITING:

Uppercase: "Start at the top and go down like you are going to make a thin man. But when you get to the bottom, bounce back up a little, making a hook. Put a table on top. Make sure the hook is pointing away from the next letters so they won't get poked by the sharp point of the J!"

Lowercase: Give the same directions, but instead of making a table on top, the children will float a dot over the head of lowercase J.

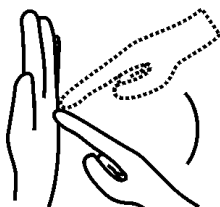
FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY:

Remind the children that sometimes when you go fishing and feel something on your line, you don't always have a fish! You might have gotten a piece of junk caught on your hook! Cut out some fish and some items that start with J and put them into an empty milk jug with the top cut off or into a plastic container suitable for this game. Have the children take turns "fishing" with their "hooks" (their little curved fingers). Enjoy seeing what each one brings up when they go fishing without looking...a fish or some J-junk!

Ideas for items: jeep, jeans, jacket, jellyfish, June bug, jerky, jet, jewels, jar of jam, jar of jelly beans, joke book, Jack-in-the-box, Jack-o'-lantern, jaguar, and so forth.

Kk

HAND MOTION:



WRITING:

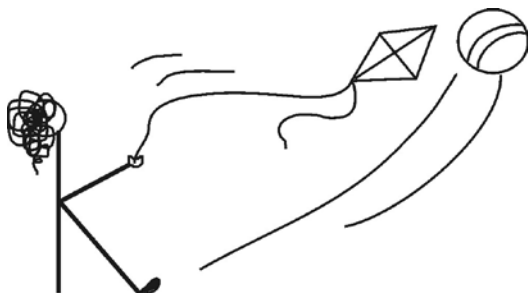


Uppercase: "Make a thin man. Put your pencil on the belly button and make a short slide going up and away from you. Then put the pencil back on the belly button and make a short slide going down to the ground."

Lowercase: Directions are the same except that the slide going up and away is shorter.

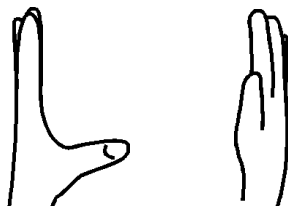
FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY:

K's are fun to make with your whole body. Stand nice and tall, and then hold one arm forward at a slant, while holding your right leg out in front of you just as far as your arm is. You can have the children talk about how their leg looks like they are kicking a ball, while their arm looks like they're holding on to a kite string. They might want to draw this picture using a K as a body that is kicking a ball and holding a kite.



LI

HAND MOTIONS:



WRITING:

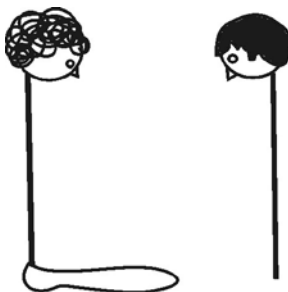


Uppercase: "Make a thin man, starting at the top line. Without lifting your pencil, turn right, or away from you, making a table right on the bottom line."

Lowercase: The lowercase L is just a tall thin man!

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY:

Children could make a child with a long, lavender shoe out of capital L and draw his barefoot friend out of lowercase L. Ask the children to make up names for their L people, ones that start with the LLL sound.



Mm

HAND MOTIONS:



WRITING:



Uppercase: "Starting on the ground, climb up the side of the mountain. When you are at the top, sit down, and slide down the other side. Climb up the next mountain, sit down, slide down, and you're done!"

Lowercase: "Make a thin man, and then go back the way you came. Make a hump. Then make another hump."

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY:

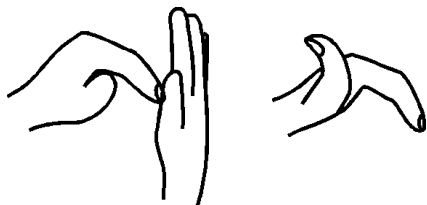
Have the children act out being lowercase M. First they will make a thin man by standing up very straight. Then they will take two forward hops to make the two humps of the mountain!

Have them draw M and pretend it is mountains (works best if they draw the M's nice and large). Have them put trees on the sides of the mountains, a river in the valley, and then draw themselves climbing the mountain. They could draw some animals they might find on the mountains, and a moon.



Nn

HAND MOTIONS:



WRITING:



Uppercase: "Make a thin man. Then put your pencil back on the top of the thin man's head and draw a slide moving away from you. Then make your pencil go straight back up until it touches the top line."

Lowercase: "Make a shorter thin man, and then go back up the way you came, making a hump right by the thin man."

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY:

Have the children draw capital N and turn him into a man sitting on the ground which we will name Ned. Ned is a narrow (thin) man who loves to eat noodles. Make lowercase N and turn it into a woman named Nelly. Ned never notices Nelly who is sitting right behind him.

If you are really brave, boil some spaghetti noodles and bring them to school. When it is time to use them, run hot water over them from the tap to soften them up again, and then let the children form Ned and Nelly out of pieces of noodles.



Oo

HAND MOTION:



WRITING:

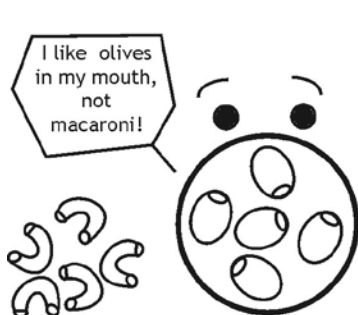


“Make a cave, but then close up the mouth of the cave.”

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY:

Have the children say the AH sound that is short vowel O, like the sound found in “pot.” Then point out that the shape of their mouth when they say AH looks like an O! Trace around your lips with your right pointer finger while you say, “ah.”

Children can draw the open mouth that is the O and then make their own picture out of it. They can fill the mouth with their favorite foods that start with the short O sound, or they can make up reasons for why the owner of that mouth might be wailing!



Pp

HAND MOTION:



WRITING:



Uppercase: "Make a thin man. Then put your pencil on his head and make a curve that touches his back right at his waist."

Lowercase: Lowercase P is the same, but his thin man starts on the dotted middle line, and his legs go into the basement.

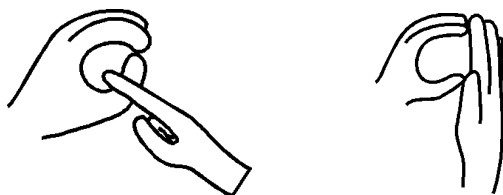
FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY:

Let the children pretend to be P's by putting packs on their backs and pretending to go hiking in the mountains. Or they could draw themselves with their packs on, filled with all the things they would put inside. They could cut pictures out of old magazines to glue inside their backpacks.



Qq

HAND MOTIONS:



WRITING:

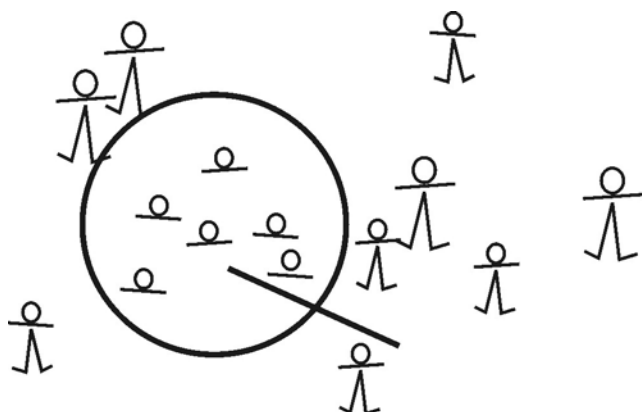


Uppercase: "Make a large cave, and then close up the mouth. Then put your pencil in the middle of the O and make a slide. This is the diving board for the quiet pool!"

Lowercase: "Make a little cave and close up the mouth. Without picking up your pencil, drop a thin man into the basement."

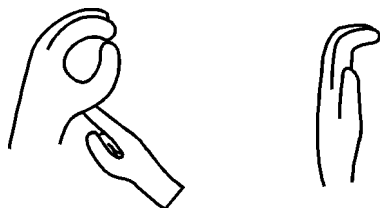
FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY:

Children may draw large uppercase Q's and then draw their friends or family and themselves at a pool party!



Rr

HAND MOTIONS:



WRITING:



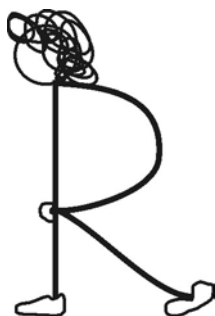
Uppercase: "Make a thin man. Start back up with your pencil on the top of his head and make a curve that stops at his belly button. Without lifting the pencil, make a slide away from you, down to the ground."

Lowercase: "Make a short thin man. Go back up the way you came and start to make a hump, but then stop near the top."

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY:

Children can pose like Rebecca did (see *Alphabet Tales*) when preparing for her race: one foot out in front, their bodies leaning over, and both hands on their forward knee.

After they have practiced the whole-body R, they could draw an uppercase R and embellish it to look like a runner at the starting line.



Ss

HAND MOTION:



WRITING:



“You start to make a cave, but then as you get near the dotted line, you change your mind and decide to make a curve under the cave, facing the other way.”

To make the S easier to form, have the children make a cave with the thumb and pointer finger of their right hands. The S fits nicely in and around this shape:



FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY:

Have children make large S's and decorate them as snakes with bright markings on them.



Tt

HAND MOTIONS:



WRITING:

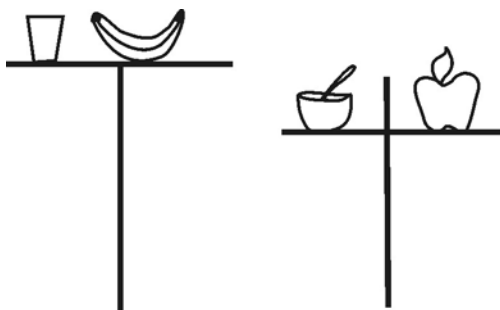


Uppercase: "Make a thin man by putting your pencil on the top line (top of the thin man's head) and dropping a line straight down. Start to one side and make a nice flat table on top."

Lowercase: "Make a thin man, and then make his table across his shoulders."

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY:

Let the children "set their tables" with their favorite food for a snack. They may draw the foods or cut pictures out of old magazines and glue them in place.



Uu

HAND MOTION:



WRITING:

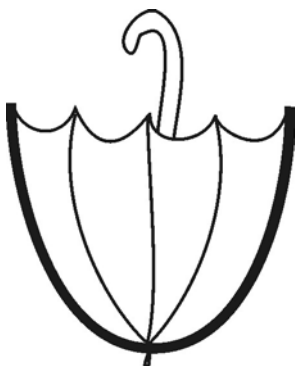


Uppercase: "Starting at the top, go down, curving at the bottom; bounce off the bottom and go back to stop at the top line again."

Lowercase: "Start on the middle line and make another bowl shape. This time, when you are back up on the dotted line, draw a thin man going straight down."

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY:

When the children have practiced making U's, let them make Uncle Ule's umbrella by adding little curves at the top to join the two sides and drawing a curving umbrella handle. Let them decorate, if desired, and color.



Vv

HAND MOTION:



WRITING:



“Starting at the top, make a long slide moving away from you. When you get to the bottom, make a long slide going back up.” Later you can say, “Slide down, and then climb back up.”

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY:

Show the children that they can make really big V's with their arms by touching elbows in front of their bodies and making their arms slant outward. They will no doubt like to make these “volcano funnels” and make swooshing, erupting lava noises too!

Let the children decorate their V's by coloring red lava inside and curling black smoke and ash coming out the top.



Ww

HAND MOTION:



WRITING:



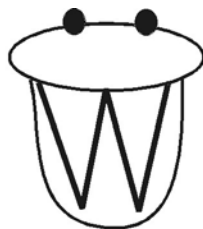
“Start at the top line and make a slide away from you, down to the ground. Without lifting your pencil, climb up and away from you until you touch the top line. Make a slide away and down, then climb up and away until you touch the top line.”

(Later you can say, “Down the slide, up the slide, down the slide, then up and stop.”)

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY:

The children can make their W's into Wayne and Wanda Walrus by drawing a curve around the W's, an oval above them and adding round eyeballs at the top.

Fish are easily made by drawing curves in opposite directions and letting them intersect for a tail.



Curve



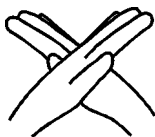
Pencil on nose, curve away.



Pencil on tip, curve to other tip

Xx

HAND MOTION:



WRITING:



Uppercase: "Start at the top and make a long slide away from you until you reach the bottom. Then put your pencil at the top again and make another long slide coming back the other way. Be sure and cross over the first slide right in the middle, on the dotted line."

Lowercase: Repeat the directions, but use the dotted line for the top.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY:

Have the children make a connection between the center of the X and their waists to reinforce that the slides have to cross in the middle. Have them put their hands on the sides of their own waists to remind them of this while you talk about how to form the letter.

Have the children practice doing jumping jacks so their whole body looks like a big X. Then let them draw their X's in pretty colors and decorate them to look like kids exercising.



yy

HAND MOTION:



Use right hand so thumb will represent the short slide in the Y.

WRITING:



“Starting in the air touching your top line, make a short slide going away from you that stops on your dotted center line. Then go back to the top line, start at the other side and make a long slide all the way down to the very bottom line. Be sure and touch the bottom edge of the short slide as you go past it.”

Children can say “Little slide away from me,” then “Big slide toward me.”

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY:

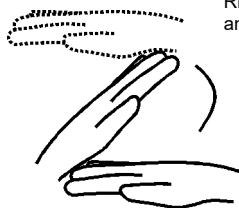
Let kids draw large Y’s on their papers and then make them into girls or boys who are jumping in the air with their arms out yelling, “Yippee yay!”



Zz

HAND MOTION:

LH makes a slide:



RH table starts at top
and quickly moves to bottom:

WRITING:



“On the top line, make a table pushing the pencil away from you. Then without lifting your pencil, make a long slide coming toward you. Without lifting your pencil, draw a table going away from you on the bottom line.”

The children might enjoy saying, “Zig, Zag, Zig,” while they make each motion. Zig is the sound for the table, while Zag is the sound for the slide.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY:

Let the children draw their idea of a storm and make the lightning in the sky. It would be especially effective to do this project on black construction paper and use white and yellow crayons for the lightning flashes!