



Early writing skills

Writing is an important part of reading and a critical component of literacy. Many children begin drawing, scribbling, and reproducing letters and letter-like forms long before they understand what the letters mean.

Providing the following activities encourage early writing awareness and promote reading readiness.

- Scribbling, drawing lines, shapes, and pictures are the first steps towards writing.
- Drawing should be encouraged by providing time and a variety of materials.
- Helping to hang out the washing, picking up grains of rice with fingers and tweezers, all help develop the grip needed for writing.
- Give children ample opportunity to scribble (pretend writing) this helps them develop an appreciation for writing. Demonstrate the correct way to hold a pencil (using triangular pencil grips can help).
- Pointing to words as you read them in stories or writing words said in a conversation will help them understand the link between spoken words and written text.

It is important to remember that during pre-school many children will not be ready to begin to form recognisable letters with a pencil, this will become a greater focus for development within reception class. However it is important to build on children's natural curiosity of letters and letter formations through a variety of activities. The focus during pre-school will be on the development of your child's hand, shoulder and arm muscles and motor movements which are fundamentally important. The more opportunities your child has to develop large and small movements in their arms, hands and fingers, the better equipped they will be to develop skills needed for early writing. The early skills required for later handwriting can be practised in a variety of contexts, which should include both gross and fine motor movements. At pre-school age letter formation/ movement should not be restricted to pen and paper and should be fun and stimulating. Letter formation and movement can be practised by;

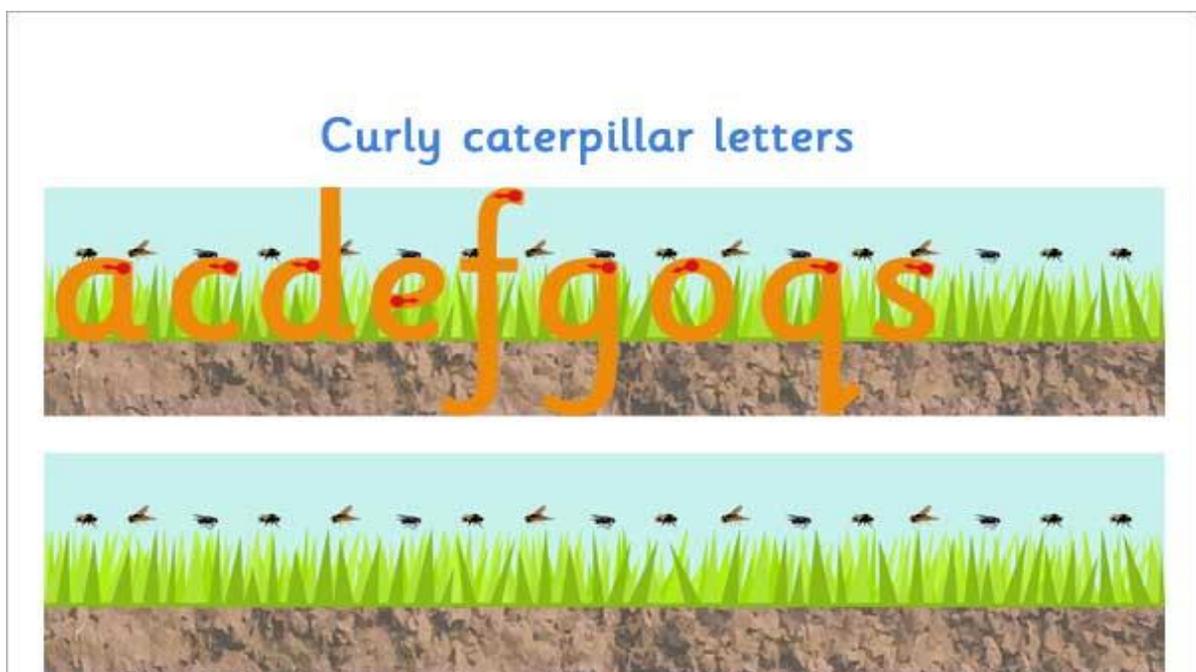
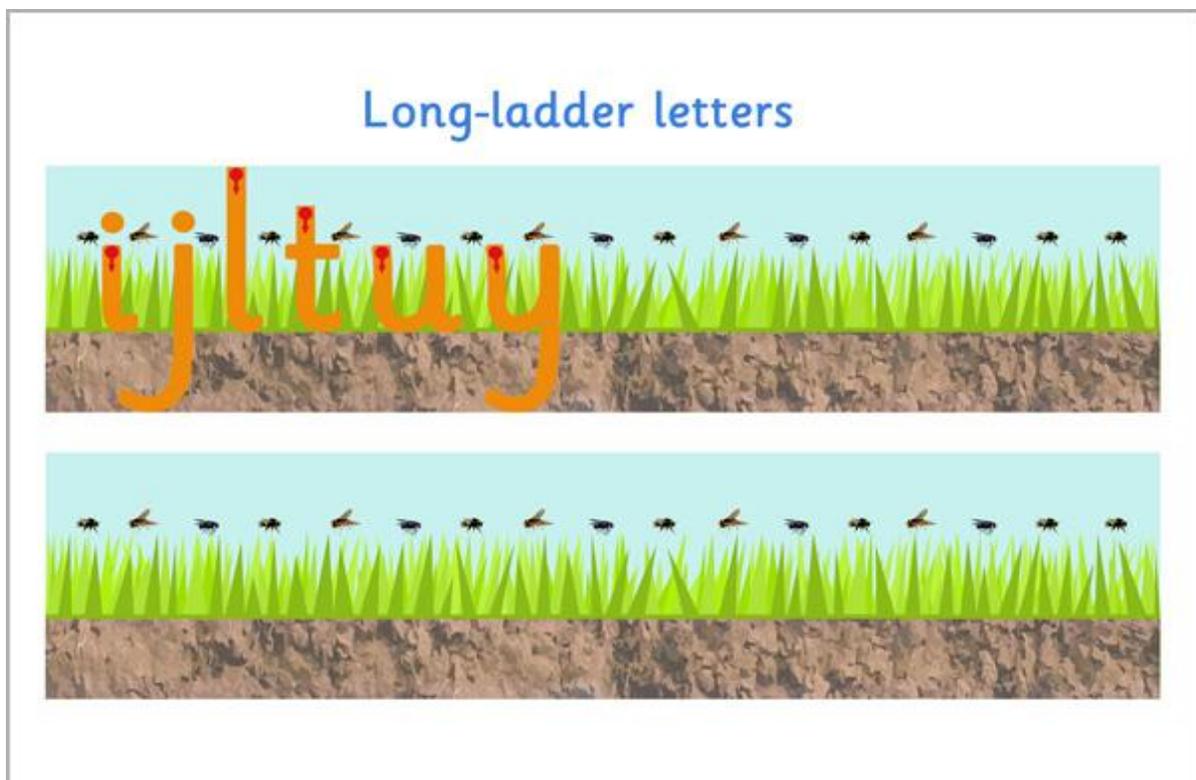
- air writing with scarves, pom poms and flags,
- writing in sand, mud, on walls with water and paintbrushes,
- making letter shapes out of modelling media.
- Take advantage of any opportunity to copy writing through marks and scribble (i.e. writing grocery lists, daily schedules, letters, notes or birthday cards to family members).

If your child is eager to begin writing letters it is helpful for children to understand the correct place to start a letter and the correct direction in which the letter should move, this saves relearning the letter formations later. When your child is ready to write help them to learn

good writing habits by demonstrating the movement of each of the four letter families when encouraging your child to try letter formations at home, these are;

1. Long Ladders (down and off in another direction) – l, i, j, t, u, y
2. One armed robots (down and retrace upwards) – b, h, k, m, n, p, r
3. Curly Caterpillars (anti-clockwise round)– c, a, d, e, g, o, q, f, s
4. Zig Zag letters – v, w, x, z

Each letter in the diagrams below includes an arrow to indicate where to begin writing and is shown against the backdrop of the earth, grass and sky. This is designed to make it easy for children to differentiate between the letters that go up in to the sky, those that go down under the ground and those which stay in the grass.



One-armed robot letters



Zig-zag letters



We understand that some children may wish to try to write important words during their pre-school year such as their name or names of family members. If your child is showing an interest in forming letters please demonstrate correct letter formations using the above strategies. Encourage your child to use a capital letter only at the **beginning** of their name and to complete the remaining letters using lower case. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to speak to one of the practitioners working in your child's room.