

CURSIVE WRITING FOR DYSLEXIC STUDENTS

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Most students want to learn cursive handwriting. Cursive, like drawing, is a learnable skill. I have found that even students with very poor printing skills can learn cursive, succeed and feel proud of their accomplishment. In many cases, their printing also improved after learning cursive.

Teaching cursive is a good way to start the year and is a good review of the alphabet. I teach cursive to students grades 4-8.

Materials:

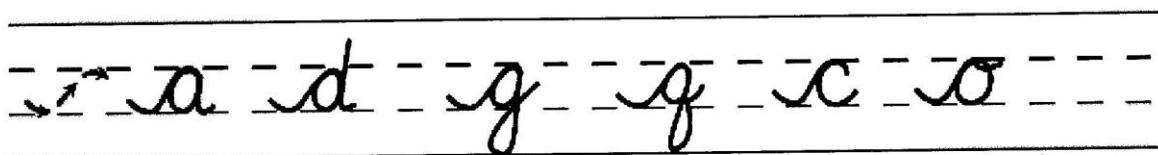
You will need a good cursive poster in front of the room with lower case and capital letters. I use "Zane-Bloser Cursive".

Make copies of a letter chart for each student to use as a reference. Require the students to bring regular lined paper (not a notebook).

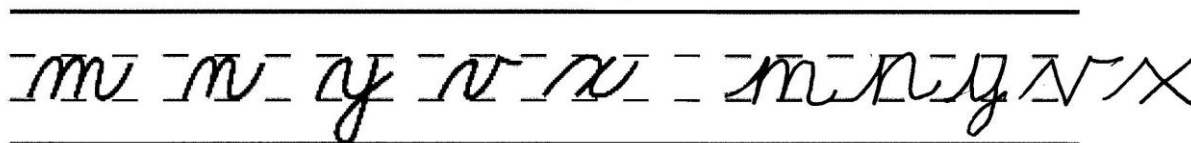
Dyslexic students and students with Sensory Motor disabilities benefit from cursive writing for the following reasons:

- The pencil never leaves the page – the continuous flow of letters trains the hand's "memory", improving hand-eye coordination and manual dexterity.
- The flow from left to right prevents reversals of letters such as b/d or p/q.
- The over-curves, under-curves and loops of cursive give students practice visualizing distance, proportion and space.
- There is a clear distinction between capital letters and lower case.
- Students can write faster in cursive.

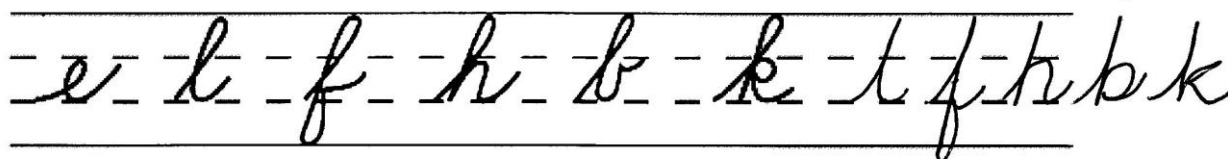
Down-curve letters: a d g q c o



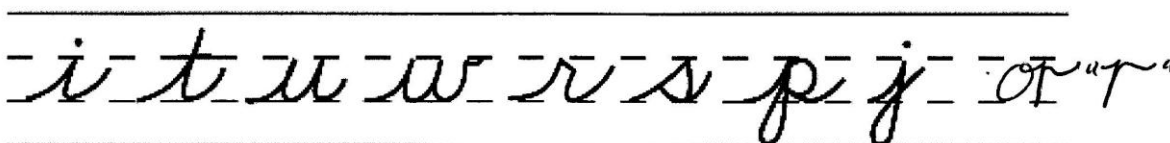
- 1) Begin with the small letter "a". Draw horizontal parallel lines on the board. Draw a wave (see above). Next, model drawing an "a". When you get to the top of the wave, trace back down and around. Show them that when connecting a row of the letter "a", you must go, "up, back and around". Repeat this phrase often.
- 2) Have the students "pretend draw" the letter "a" in the air with their index finger (turn your back and model the motion). Connect "a's" in the air, saying, "Up, back and around".
- 3) Students now write on paper. They must sit with feet together under the desk. Make sure the margin line is on the left. The paper should be tilted to the left for right-handed students (and tilted to the right for left-handed students). Instruct the students to begin next to the margin line and to make a row of individual a's. TWO spaces high.
- 4) Next, make a row of connecting a's. Walk around the room and make sure their pencils are going "up, back, and around". Once they get this principle (up, back and around), they can begin making smaller a's one space high. When they succeed, be sure to give lots of praise!
- 5) The letter "d" begins with a wave, just like letter "a". The letters "d" and "t" do not go all the way to the top line.
- 6) The letter "g" also begins with a wave, but hangs straight down and touches the bottom line.
- 7) Teach letters "q" and "c". Always model each letter on the board first, using parallel lines.
- 8) The letter "o" begins with a wave, but loops off the top. Have students make rows of "o's". Now students can write "dog" and "dad".

Over-curve letters: m n y v x

- 1) Teach “m” and “n”. Have the students write “no”, “man” and “mom”.
- 2) Teach “y”, “v”, and “x”. The letter “y” must hang down all the way to the bottom line. Now they can write “van” and “ox”.

Letters with loops: e l f h b k *make less “loopy”*

Teach each letter in the above order. The “l” and “h” touch the top line. Students can now write “leg”, “fox”, “yak”, and “neck” (model each word on the board).

Under-curve letters: i t u w r s p j

Teach each letter in the above order. The letter t, like the letter d, does not quite touch the top line. The cross is exactly on the line. Students can write “you”, “summer”, “winter”, “sun”, and “print”

Capital letters

Teach the capital letters last. Start with capital “I”. Have them practice writing their own name, the days of the week, or the months of the year. Give them short spelling tests in cursive. Begin with just five words.

Sources: British Dyslexia Association, 2008

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