



Zimbabwe
Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education

LITERACY



IGATE Module 3

Assessment and more
on reading/writing
words



care World Vision



Girls' Education Challenge



For information about the IGATE project see:

www.wvi.org/education-and-life-skills/igate-improving-girls-access-through-transforming-education

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Revised Module 3 (MoPSE)



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Foundational literacy

Module 3: Assessment and more on reading/writing words

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About these modules

This is the third of six Teacher Professional Development (TPD) modules for all teachers working with learners whose attainment in literacy is below their Grade or Form level. The modules are also appropriate for Initial Teacher Education (ITE) – particularly during school placements or practicum.

Module 1: Single letters sounds and first steps in writing

Module 2: The sounds of letter pairs/threes and ‘tricky spellings’

Module 3: Assessment and more on reading/writing words

Module 4: From longer words to short sentences

Module 5: Comprehension of short texts

Module 6: Working with longer texts / Review

The modules were collaboratively developed for the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE) by The Open University, World Vision, and CARE international. The modules have been tried and tested in hundreds of primary and secondary schools across Zimbabwe, strengthening the teaching of foundation skills and improving learning outcomes. Our thanks to everyone who contributed – especially teachers, school heads, and schools’ inspectors.

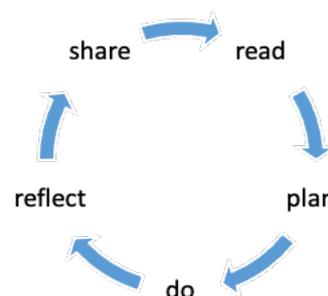
MOPSE’s highest priority is to empower ALL learners through strong foundations in literacy and numeracy. Whatever their Grade or Form, all learners need strong foundations in literacy and numeracy to succeed in other learning areas.

Learners must *learn to read and use number* so they can *read and use number to learn*.

Using the modules

Teachers will benefit most by using the modules within reflective-practice cycles in their schools, as shown below.

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| Read | an activity. |
| Plan | how you will use the activity. |
| Do | the activity with your learners. |
| Reflect | what did learners learn from doing the activity? |
| | ➤ What worked well? |
| | ➤ What would you change next time? |
| Share | your experiences with your colleagues. |



The modules can be used by

- individual teachers.
- pairs or groups of teachers.
- whole schools.
- cluster meetings or district workshops.

The modules provide classroom activities and guidance for effective use.

Learner attainment

We describe learners who can do an activity confidently and successfully as ‘higher attaining’ and learners who cannot do an activity well as ‘lower attaining’.

No one knows what a learner will be able to do given the chance. Every learner has the potential for growth. Teachers have often been surprised when they found that a learner who was ‘higher attaining’ for one activity was then ‘lower attaining’ for another—and vice versa. So we don’t label learners with words like ‘fast’ or ‘slow’.

A learner may have different levels of attainment in different learning areas, or in different aspects of one learning area. That’s why assessment is a big part of the activities. It is important to find out, as often as possible, what learners know and can or can’t do. Then they can be given activities at a level that will help them progress.

Working in groups

Learning takes place as a result of **doing** an activity, **thinking** about it, and **understanding** the ideas it contains.

In order to make sure that all learners are **doing**, many activities are designed so learners work together in pairs or small groups for most of the lesson. Pairs, or groups of four to six learners work best because everyone can take part. The activity will usually need to be demonstrated by the teacher first.

There are several ways in which learners can be put into groups. Teachers should choose the one which works best for the activity and their learners.

1. Learners choose themselves. Sometimes this can result in friends working (or not working!) together, while other learners are left out.
2. Learners at a similar level of attainment work together. This can work well, as learners are working at their preferred pace, but learners who need help have to find it from outside the group.
3. Learners at mixed levels of attainment work together. This type of grouping has the advantage that higher-attaining learners can help lower-attaining ones. This gives lower attaining learners personal and prompt support, and higher-attaining learners a chance to talk about what they have learnt which helps to deepen their understanding.

Foundational literacy

Unit 1: Assessing reading and writing

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Key words

early literacy, assessment, reading, writing, catch-up activities

Unit 1 Introduction: Why assess?

We need to assess our learners' levels of reading and writing regularly for two main reasons. Firstly, we need to know their level so that we use the right kind of activity with them. Obviously, activities which are much too easy for the class are likely to be a waste of time, as the learners won't develop their skills any further when they do them. Activities which are too difficult are a waste of time because the learners simply can't do them. This can also demotivate learners: they need to feel that they are succeeding when they do an activity, otherwise they may be left with negative feelings about the lesson, and perhaps developing their literacy in general. It is very easy for children to start feeling that something is 'too hard' for them, and very difficult for them to stop feeling that.

Secondly, we need to know how much progress our learners are making. If assessment shows that they are not making much progress, then we need to find out why that is, and try to correct the problem.

This unit shows ways to:

- assess learners' current ability **individually** to match sounds with letters (i.e. what each individual learner can do, not just the class as whole)
- assess learners' current ability **individually** to form the shapes of letters
- give extra help to learners who need it, both individually and in small groups.

In this module you will find methods to assess very basic elements of foundational literacy. You will see ways to assess more developed reading and writing skills in later modules.

Continuing the assessment

The assessment activities in this unit focus on the basic foundation of literacy: reading and writing single letters. Research has shown that there are learners who are struggling to match sounds with letters and form the shapes of letters all the way up to the end of their schooling. For this reason, it is recommended to use these assessment activities with all learners, not just the younger learners.

1.1: Assessing reading

Aim

To help the teacher to understand the current level of reading skill of each learner.

What the learners will do

They will read and say the sounds of letters to test their current knowledge.

Resources

You will need at least three grids for the assessment test (see **Resource A** at the end of this module, page 32). If you use only one grid, learners may start to learn some of the sequences of letters from hearing them read aloud by others while they are being assessed. Use the grids printed in the booklet, or copy them onto sheets of paper. The letters have been chosen carefully so all letters (except Q) are represented in capital and lower case ('small') versions. If you copy the grids, copy the letters exactly as they are in **Resource A**.

Activity

1. Give the class a quiet activity to do. This could be reading silently.
2. Ask a learner to come to sit with you at a desk. This desk should be as far from the rest of the class as possible. Make sure you seem friendly and relaxed. The learner should feel that it is fun, almost like a game. Say to the learner: 'Please tell me the sounds of the letters. Not the names, but their sounds. For example, the sound of this letter is ...'
3. Point to one of the three letters at the top of the grid, and say just the sound of that letter, without any extra sound. Repeat with the other two letters. For example, mmm (not 'muh' or 'mah') for *m*, the sound of *e* in *red*, and the sound of *p* with no voice – just the sound of the air coming out of your mouth.
4. Get the learner to say the sounds of those three letters in the same way.
5. Point to the main grid of letters. Say: 'Point to each letter and say the sound of that letter.' The learner must point to each letter and say the sound. If the learner hesitates for more than about three seconds on a letter, point to the next one, and say: 'Please go on.'
6. If the learner cannot complete the test at all, or can only say a very small number of letters, discontinue it. Otherwise, keep a tally of the number of letters the learner cannot read correctly. Try to avoid the learner seeing you do this. If the learner reads a letter incorrectly, then self-corrects, count that as correct. You may wish to keep the tally in this form:


 = 17 out of 50 incorrect

7. Praise the learner for having completed the assessment, then ask another to come and do it.
8. Keep a record of each learner's score in a special notebook, or electronically on a phone/tablet. In the case of the example above, the score is 33 out of 50, which can be doubled to give a percentage: 66%

Assessment

Ideally, by the end of the school year, every learner will score 100% or almost 100%. If more than a very few fall below this, it suggests that you still need to do activities to teach the sounds of letters with the whole class. You can use your experience of using the assessment to decide which letters still need to be taught. If any learner has a score significantly below the average for the class, then they may need extra help with this skill.

Into practice: Teachers share reading assessment results

Towards the end of each term, Mrs Tschuma uses **Activity 3.1** to assess all her learners' reading skills individually. Mrs Tschuma keeps a record of their scores in a special notebook, and looks to see how much each learner has improved over the school year. She also sees which learners have very low scores, and gives them extra help.

I also share the results of the assessment with the other teachers in the school. This helps them to build up a picture of how well the learners are progressing in the school as a whole.



1.2: Assessing writing

Aim

To help the teacher to understand the current level of writing skill of each learner.

What the learners will do

They will write letters in short words as they are spelled out by the teacher.

Resources

Resource B at the end of this module, page 35: a list of common words for assessing letter formation.

Activity

1. As described for **Activity 3.1**, give the class a quiet activity to do. Ask a learner to come and sit with you at a desk. Give the learner a piece of paper, and say: 'Please write your name.'
2. After the learner has written their name, say: 'Please write this word.' Then say the word in this format: '*Pen, p- e- n-*.' As described in stage 3 of **Activity 3.1**, use just the sounds of the letters (not the names), without any extra sounds.
3. The learner must write the word. Repeat the instruction as many times as the learner needs (within reason).
4. Repeat with at least four more words, so there is one for each vowel. Use more words if you wish to.
5. Praise the learner for having completed the test, then ask another to come and do it. Keep a note of your assessment record in the same notebook you use for their reading assessments, or electronically on a phone/tablet.
6. (Optional) To assess learners' ability to write capital letters, ask them to begin each word with a capital letter (or 'big letter').

Assessment

It is difficult to assess the ability to form letters with a score. Ideally, every learner at Primary level will be able to form all the letters in their name and in the simple words you said. The formation may not be very accurate and the letter sizes may be irregular, but (ideally) it will be clear enough for you to identify which word was attempted. The learner's name should start with a capital letter. You can use the results of the assessment to decide how much more work the class needs to do on letter formation, and which learners need extra help with this.

You can use a code to record your learners' writing skills.

A = at the desired level for the year.

- B =** below the desired level for the year, but can improve through normal classroom activities.
- C =** very below the desired level for the year – needs extra catch-up help.
- NW =** non-writer – cannot write in any meaningful way.

Here are three examples. A class of learners were asked to write *Man*, *Leg*, *Sit*, *Fox* and *Cut*, all starting with capital letters. In the top example, the learner has formed all the letters clearly and fairly evenly, and the lower case letters are successfully joined up. This learner has a good level of writing skills for early Primary. (code **A** above). In the middle example, there are some problems with the shapes and regularity of the letters, but the learner has a reasonably good knowledge of what shapes all the letters are supposed to be. The teacher needs to make sure that this learner's writing improves through normal classroom activities, and that the learner starts to join up the letters soon (code **B**). The bottom example has many serious errors. This learner needs some catch-up help (code **C** – there are a lot of mistakes, but the learner can form some letters and understands the basic patterns of writing, so is not a non-writer.)

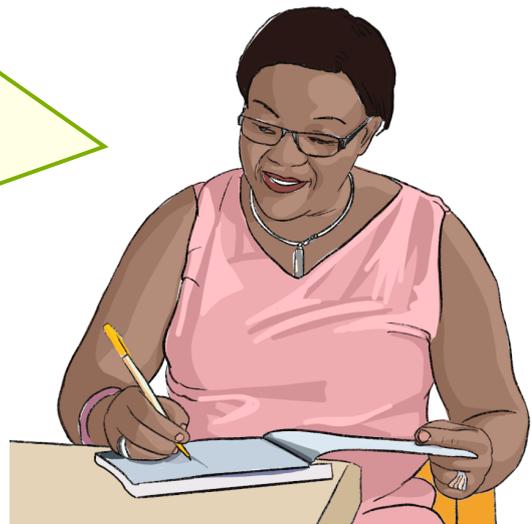
The image shows three rows of handwritten text. The first row shows the words 'Man Leg Sit Fox Cut' written in a clear, cursive style. The second row shows 'MAN Leg sit FOX cut' with some irregular letter shapes and spacing. The third row shows 'w a-y leg 2 1-At cat' with significant letter formation errors and misspellings.

Note that the above paragraphs feature the word 'ideally'. It may be that your assessment finds out that all or almost all of the learners in the class still have problems with letter formation. If this is the case, it tells you that the class still needs to do more letter formation activities on a regular basis.

Into practice: Teachers share reading assessment results

In **Into Practice** with **Activity 3.1** above, you read how Mrs Tschuma assesses her learners' ability to read single letters, and shares the results of that assessment to help understand how well the learners are progressing in the school as a whole. She also does this with the results from assessing her learners' ability to form letters.

Using the code A, B, C and NW (non-writer) is a simple and effective way to keep track of my learners' current level of writing skill, and to share it with other teachers. Of course, I don't let the learners see the results. It could make them feel that they 'belong' to a particular attainment group and that isn't true. A learner's attainment may go up and down.



1.3: Catch-up activities

Aim

Catch-up activities aim to help learners who have fallen behind the rest of the class. There are many different types of catch-up activity. The one described below is easy to use, and is based on the same resources used for **Activity 1.1** above.

It is important to use catch-up activities with those learners who need them. If their problems with early literacy don't get fixed, it is likely to damage their future education, and – as a result – it may damage the whole of their future lives.

What the learners will do

They will read and say the sounds of single letters.

Resources

You will need a letter grid from **Resource A** (page 32). Alternatively, you could make a more colourful and fun handwritten version as shown below. It should include the capital and lower-case version of every letter except *q*. For best results, copy the letters exactly as shown below, in as many different colours as possible.



Activity

1. Ideally, do this before or after a lesson. If that is not possible, give the rest of the class some quiet work to do, such as silent reading.
2. Work with a group of up to four learners who need extra help. Make sure the learners feel that this is a relaxed, fun activity – more like a game.

3. Point to a letter, and ask the learner to say the sound. If the learner cannot do this, ask if any of the others can say it. Then give a good example of the sound (just the sound of the letter, with no additional sound). Get the learners to repeat it together a few times, while they all point to the letter.
4. Repeat with the other learners and letters.

Assessment

This activity may help you to realise which letters are relatively 'easy' for your learners (even the lowest-attaining ones), and which letters are still causing problems. Make a note of this, and use the information to plan future lessons with more work on the problem letters.

Into practice: Giving catch-up tuition

As a result of using the assessment activities described in 3.1 and 3.2 above, Mrs Tschuma confirmed what she already suspected: about a third of the learners are still having problems with matching sounds to single letters and forming the shapes of letters. Many of these learners have missed a lot of school days and some of them come from very disadvantaged home situations. Mrs Tschuma knows that they really need to catch up with learning these basic literacy skills, or they will get even more left behind by the rest of the class.

In some lessons, Mrs Tschuma gives the rest of the class a quiet activity to do, and then spends about 15 minutes giving catch-up tuition to a group of three or four of the learners who need special help. She makes sure she rotates who is included, so she helps all the learners who need catch-up tuition. Occasionally, she gives a few minutes of one-to-one extra help to a learner who is *really* struggling.

For some lessons which are immediately after the lunch break, she invites three or four learners to come to the lesson 15 minutes early for some catch-up tuition. It's a sacrifice to give up part of her lunch break, but when she sees how much difference the catch-up tuition is making, she feels it is well worth it.

Of course, Mrs Tschuma makes sure that the learners who need catch-up tuition do not feel that they have failed in some way, or are being punished for falling behind. She makes sure that the catch-up tuition is fun and enjoyable, and she always praises the learners for the progress they are making.

Foundational literacy

Unit 2: Letters with more than one sound, apostrophes and silent letters

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Key words

early literacy, phonics, assessment, silent letters, punctuation, teaching resources

Unit 2 Introduction

This unit will show you activities which teach learners how to read words that follow different spelling rules. For example, *page* (*g* has a different sound), *write* (the *w* is silent) and *doesn't* (it has an apostrophe).

2.1: Match the letters with the same sound

Aim

To help learners to recognise alternative sounds that letters can represent (for example, *c* in *nice*).

What the learners will do

They will compare words to see if the highlighted letters have the same sound or a different sound.

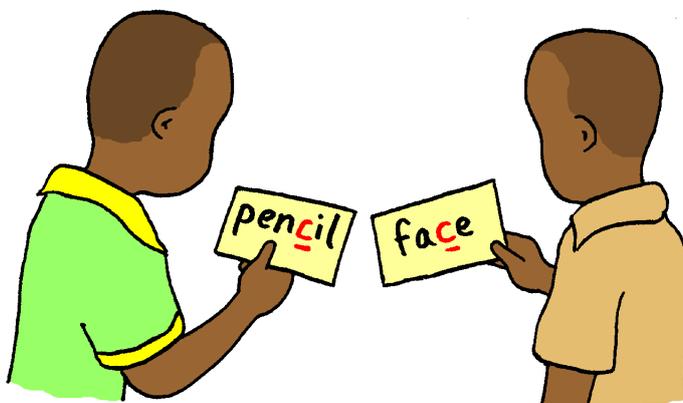
Resources

You will need to prepare a set of cards based on **Resource C, Set 1** (page 36). You will also need a way to stick the cards onto the board or a wall.

If possible, write all the words on the board before the lesson with the red letters in red chalk (or another bright colour).

Activity

1. If you didn't do it before the lesson, write all the words from the cards on the board with the red letters in red chalk (or another bright colour). Go through the words one by one. Say the sounds of each letter, and say the whole word. For example: p-e-n-c-i-l, pencil. (As usual, say one the sounds of the letters. Don't add any extra sounds.) Then get the learners to say the letter sounds together and, and then whole word. Check the learners understand the meaning of the word too. Then wipe the words from the board.
2. Give each learner a card. The learners then stand up and walk around the classroom. Each learner must find the other learner or learners with words with the same sound for the red letter. They read and say their words. When two learners have found a match, they continue to walk around together, looking for any other learner with a matching card. They continue until all the matches have been found.

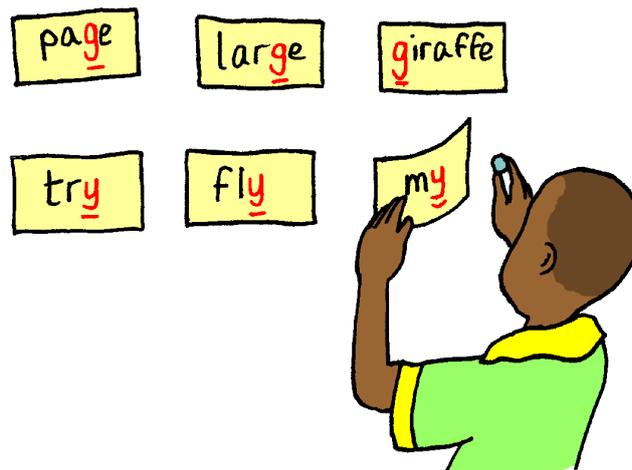


pencil + page: not a match. The letters in red are different.

pencil + picture: not a match. The letters in red are the same, but have different sounds.

pencil + face: a match. The letters in red have the same sound. The partners stay together, and look for any other learner with a matching word.

3. When they have finished, collect the cards, redistribute them and repeat the activity. Continue for several more turns. Explain to the learners that they must tell you if you offer them a card with a word that they have had before.
4. Finally, stick the cards to the board or wall, so that each is next to the other card with the same sound for the red letter. To do this, invite one learner to come and fix their card. Then ask who has a card with the same sound for the letter in red. These learners must then come and fix their cards next to the first one.
5. In a later lesson, repeat the activity with **Resource C, Set 2** (page 37).



Assessment

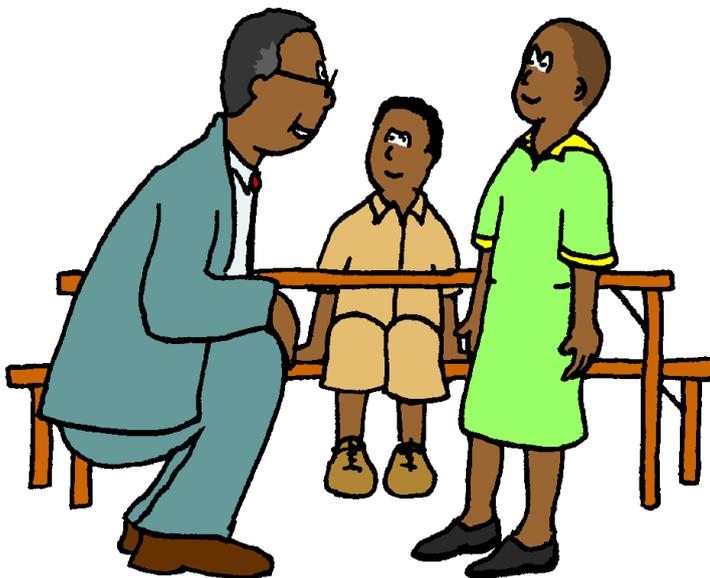
Write about six of the words that you used in the activity on the board. Point at one word, and ask the class to read and say it together. Judge from how confidently they respond how many of the learners can now read the word. This will help you to decide how much more work they need to do on words with alternative letter sounds.

Into practice: Don't be a scary teacher

Mr Mudimba is 55 years old. He realises that he may seem to be a distant and slightly scary 'authority figure' to the learners, and especially to the quieter, shyer girls. He also knows that the whole class will learn better if they feel relaxed and are not scared of him. So Mr Mudimba always remembers to smile and speak to the class in a friendly, relaxed way. He is also willing to talk in silly voices, act roles, make animal sounds and do other things to

amuse and entertain the class while he teaches. Making the class laugh together helps to make a good, relaxed learning environment.

Sometimes when he speaks to an individual learner, Mr Mudimba squats down. This means he is facing them directly rather than talking to them from high above.



The things that he *doesn't* do are equally important. He never shouts at the class. (This is also better for him – shouting is very hard on the throat!) He never punishes learners for making a mistake. He remembers that we all make mistakes, especially when we are learning how to do something new (in this case, learning how to read and write). The important thing is to notice that it's a mistake, and to try not to make the same mistake again in the future. Mr Mudimba knows that punishing children for making mistakes doesn't help with this at all. In fact, it has the opposite effect. It can make them afraid to try to do new things and can slow down their learning.

2.2: Find the silent letters

Aim

To develop learner's ability to read words that include silent letters.

What the learners will do

Read and say letters, and highlight the silent letters.

Resources

Choose some words from the list in **Resource D** (page 38). You will need to decide how many is right for your lesson. For a class with a low level of literacy, three or four may be enough. An older class with a higher level of literacy may be able to manage up to around ten.

Activity

1. Write the first word from your list on the board. Get the class to say it together. Check they know the meaning by demonstrating the word by asking a question, demonstrating, drawing a simple picture or asking the learners to say the word in their home language.
2. Tell the class to copy the word onto paper or into their notebooks.
3. Get the learners to work in pairs. Each pair must find and draw a circle around the silent letter, preferably in a different colour.

know what listen write

4. Once the pairs have done this for each word in your list, ask volunteers to come to the board and circle the silent letters. The other learners check their work and change it if necessary. After each word, get the whole class to practise saying it together again.
5. In later lessons, repeat the activity with some words you have covered before, and some which are new.

Assessment

Visit the pairs during the pair work stage. Notice which learners can do the activity confidently, and which are struggling. Decide if it will be useful for your class to do this activity again in a future lesson.

Also notice which learners are good at doing independent work in pairs, and which (if any) have not understood how to do the activity properly. This may tell you that you need to give more and clearer demonstrations of how to do activities before the learners start.

Into practice: Learners check their work in pairs

In some of the activities Mr Ditso uses in class, the final stage is that something that learners have written must be checked to make sure it is correct. Mr Ditso has a way of doing this which he often uses, and which he finds works well.

First, he puts the learners into pairs to compare their work with each other. If any learner has made a serious error, the other partner may see that it is wrong, and offer help with how to correct it.

Next, Mr Ditso asks different pairs to suggest answers. If a pair suggests a wrong answer, Mr Ditso thanks them for their suggestion but explains that it is not correct, and then he asks another pair. He never says anything angry or critical to the pair who gave the wrong answer. That would make them feel bad, and would not help anybody.

When a pair gives a correct answer, he writes it on the board. Any learner who wrote something different can now correct their work.

Mr Ditso finds this method often works better than going around the class checking the work of every learner. The whole class is involved all the time, rather than sitting waiting for the teacher to visit. It also makes the learners responsible for checking and correcting their own work, and that can be more helpful for their learning.



Of course, there are exceptions to this rule. I sometimes check the work of every learner when it is necessary for the activity, and/or when I want to see every learners' work so I can judge their progress.

2.3: Human apostrophes

Aim

To help learners to develop their ability to read words that include apostrophes to represent a missing letter. This includes some of the commonest words in English. For example, *I'm, isn't, you're, can't*. Learners need to know how to read and say these words. They also need to know that they are equivalent to the full forms: *I am, is not, you are, cannot* etc.

What the learners will do

They will arrange cards to form words that contain apostrophes

Resources

You will need words from **Resource E** (page 39) that contain enough letter cards for every learner in the class to take a turn. So, for example, if there are 30 children in the class, you will need words which in total are at least 30 letters. Use cardboard/manila and a marker pen if possible, but plain paper and normal pen will do if necessary. Ideally, you will also be able to stick the cards to the board.

The first time you do the activity, start with the words from the top of the list in **Resource E**, and work downwards when you repeat the activity in later lessons.

Activity

1. Say one of the words in an example sentence. (For example: 'We **don't** live in Harare.')
2. Get the class to say the sentence, and then to repeat the word with an apostrophe.
3. Ask some learners to come to the front of the class – there must be one for each letter in the word. Give them the letter cards. They hold their cards to face the class, and they must arrange themselves in the right order to spell the word.
4. Ask another learner to come to the front. Give this learner the apostrophe card. He/she must join the word in the right place. The other learners must move up to make enough space.



5. Fix the letters to the board, and add in the apostrophe with chalk. (Or just write the word on the board if it's not possible to fix the cards there.)
6. Elicit from the class what the full form is (for example, *do not*). Then write that next to the contracted form.
7. Get the class to say your example sentence again, this time with both forms. (For example: 'We *don't* live in Harare. We *do not* live in Harare.') Point to the contracted form when they say that form, and to the uncontracted form when they say that form.
8. In later lessons, repeat the activity with a mixture of words from **Resource E** (page 39) that you have already covered and also new words from the list. For classes with a high level of literacy, you may wish to make cards for these additional words too: *hadn't*, *needn't*, *oughtn't*.

Assessment

Write the words from the activity on the board, but in some of them put the apostrophe in the wrong place. For example, *wa'snt*. Point at each word, and get the class to say it together. Ask if the apostrophe is in the right place. Where it is not in the right place, point at different places in the word and 'Is it here?' until you reach the correct place. Then write it there.

Use the strength of the responses you get from the learners to judge their knowledge of these words, and how much more work they need to do on this topic.

Into practice: Repeating activities

Mrs Moyo has been using the IGATE Foundational Literacy and Numeracy activities with her classes for several months. She often finds that the first time she uses an activity, it can be a little difficult to get the class to understand what they are supposed to do, even with plenty of demonstration. Then when they do the activity, some learners do it quite well but others are clearly struggling.

Very often, she repeats the activity in the next lesson, or a lesson soon after. This time, the learners already know how to do the activity, so she does not have to spend a long time demonstrating it. Many of the learners who struggled last time are able to do the activity more confidently this time.

Often, she chooses to repeat the activity once again a few days later. This time, even the learners who struggled the most the first time are able to complete the activity successfully.

You may need to repeat the activity again. It is easy for learners to forget what they have learned. There may also be some learners who missed the activity the first time. Mrs Moyo often repeats activities a few weeks and even a few months later. This helps to make sure that:

- the learners do not forget what they have learned

- learners who are struggling can repeat the activity until they can do it, and do not get left behind.



Just because I've taught it, it doesn't mean that they've all learned it!

Foundational literacy

Unit 3: Moving to joined-up writing

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Key words

early literacy, writing, letter formation, handwriting, joined-up writing, assessment

Unit 3 Introduction

In previous IGATE modules you have seen activities in which learners form the shapes of individual letters. When a child has learned how to form the letters correctly and knows how to position them on a page, they are ready to start doing joined-up writing. Joined-up writing is quicker to do than writing single letters. It also puts less strain on the hand and arm, so it can be done for much longer.

Some learners may not achieve learning to do joined-up writing at the desired age, and may need to catch up. Others may join some letters but not others and/or may do the joins in an inappropriate way, and so need to improve their joined-up writing. The activities in this unit can be used to help learners to take their first steps with joined-up writing, and can also be used to help learners to catch up and/or to improve their joined-up writing.

Remember to accept imperfect attempts at writing. The learners are on a journey from not being able to write at all to being proficient writers. Each step forward they make is a good achievement, and should be praised.

Letter shapes and joins

In this unit, we use ‘cursive’ to mean letters which have the necessary form to join with other letters, and ‘joined-up’ to mean that all or almost all of the lower case (‘small’) letters are joined.



cursive form

joined-up letters

There are different ways to join letters. For example, in some joined-up writing systems, *b* joins to the next letter from the top of the loop; in others, it joins from the bottom of the loop. In some systems, there is a loop below a *z* to join it to the next letter, and in others there is not. The letter-joining methods and letter shapes in this unit are used in many schools around the world, and are offered as examples. There may be an official policy in your school to form letters in a different way.

3.1: Repeat letters on lines

Aim

To help learners learn to form the shapes of letters and to start joining them.

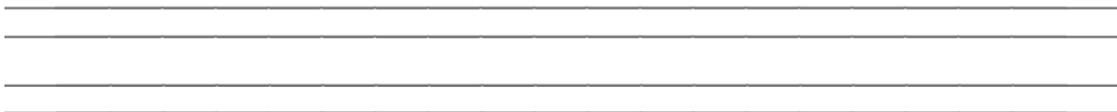
What the learners will do

They will copy letter shapes onto guide lines

Resources

Resources F and **G** at the end of this module, pages 40 and 41. In this activity, learners learn the cursive shapes of the letters one at a time. You saw the movements for forming unjoined letters in Module 2. **Resource F** shows the movements for the cursive forms. Do not ask the learners to do the whole alphabet in one lesson. Instead, choose from three to six letters, depending on the learners' current level of writing skill. Repeat some of those letters and add new ones in a later lesson. Start with the most common letters, and move towards the less common ones in future lessons. See **Resource G** for guidance on this.

Draw lines on the board before the lesson starts (to save time in the lesson). If possible, use a long straight edge to run the chalk along (a long ruler is ideal, but anything long and straight will do). Note how the middle space is wider than the top and bottom spaces. (You may wish to arrange for some lines like this to be permanently painted onto the board.)



Activity

1. Draw lines on the board as shown above, if you didn't before the lesson. Then write the joined-up form of the letter several times. Say the sound of the letter at the same time (as usual, say just the sound the letter makes, without adding any extra sound).



- The learners write the joined-up version of the letter several times. Ideally, they will have lined paper to write on. Get them to use three complete lines to write on, so that the central part of letter fills the middle line, and the high and low parts of the letter extend into the lines above and below. Because the lines the learners will be using are all the same size, ideally they should not extend the letters to fill all of the top and bottom lines (see the example below).



Note that this is a way to *start* forming joined-up handwriting. In the future, learners should learn to write smaller letters, which are contained in one line.

- Go around the class and briefly check that everybody is doing the activity correctly. Of course, they will probably not produce perfect shapes at first. The important thing is that the lines follow the right direction, and they are producing the correct movements.
- Choose a word the learners can write with the letters they have learned to form so far (see **Resource G** for suggestions, page 41). Write the word on the board in joined-up letters on the lines as you did before. Check the learners understand the meaning of the word using methods discussed previously, and ask them to say it together a few times.
- The learners write the word several times in joined-up writing.

Assessment

This activity can be very useful for assessing your learners' skills in forming letters and starting to do joined-up writing. You will be able to see clearly who is having problems making the correct letter shapes and joins. Make a note of which learners may need extra help.

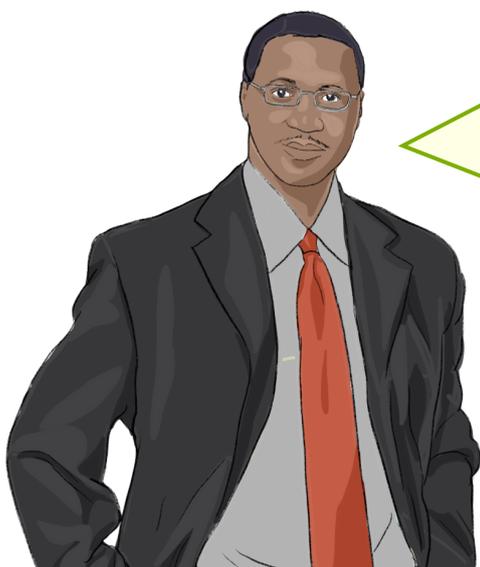
Into practice: checking learners pens and paper for all

Some of Mr Maphosa's learners regularly arrive at school without pens, pencils or notebooks to write in. Mr Maphosa found this very frustrating. How could they learn to write without anything to write with or write on?

Mr Maphosa discussed the problem with the school head. They agreed to have a supply of pens and paper for learners to borrow when necessary.

They decided against giving learners single pieces of paper to write on and take away as these would probably just get lost. Instead, they decided to have a set of class notebooks. Each one has a different number. Any learner who

doesn't have a notebook can borrow one, and write on the next empty page. Then Mr Maphosa collects in the notebooks. In this way, the learners feel that they have created something which is a little more permanent. They can remember the number of the notebook they used, and look at their work again in the future if they wish.



This solution is not ideal. Will the learners who use the class notebooks feel embarrassed about using them? Will this system discourage some parents from buying notebooks and pens for their children? However, on balance, I feel it is better than learners doing nothing in writing lessons because they lack pen and paper.

3.2 Copy the words

Aim

There are different types of joins, depending on which letters are being joined.

low to low: *and*

low to high: *six*

high to high: *won*

high to low: *toe*

This activity aims to help learners to practise these different types of join. The activity format is similar to **Activity 3.1**.

What the learners will do

Copy words with joined letters, practising different types of join.

Resources

As for **Activity 3.1**, draw guide lines on the board.

Choose at least four words from **Resource H** (page 42) or use your own choice of words. There should be at least one from each category of letter joins.

Activity

1. Write one of the words on the board in joined-up letters on the guide lines. As usual, check the learners understand the meaning of the word.
2. The learners copy each word into their notebook at least three times. As for **Activity 3.1**, they should use the lines in their notebooks as guide lines, with the centre part of the letters filling one line, and the upper and lower parts going into the lines above and below.

girl post

3. Wipe your version of the words off the board. Tell the learners to start on a new page, and not to look at the first page they wrote on. Say the first word. The learners must write it in joined-up writing again, this time from memory.
4. Repeat with the other words. Remember to allow enough time for everybody to complete the word (check before moving on). Tell fast finishers to write the word more than once.
5. Ask the learners to compare their two versions of the words. If the second version has different joins, they must cross it out and write it again, based on the first version.



6. Visit as many learners as you can, and check their work. Make sure that nobody is getting left behind.
7. In later lessons, repeat the activity with new words, or a mixture of new words and words that you have already covered.

Dotting *i* and crossing *t*

When you demonstrate joined-up writing with a word that has *i* and/or *t*, complete the whole word, then go back and add the dot to *i* and the horizontal line to *t*. Encourage the learners to do the same.

1 lime 2 time

Assessment

Walk around the classroom during the activity, and notice if any learners are not yet forming letters confidently and clearly, and which ones are not yet joining the letters successfully. Make a note of which learners may need extra help.

Into practice: Writing examples for learners to copy

Like everybody who can write, Mr Zhou has his own style of joined-up handwriting. It slopes forward quite a lot, his letters are taller and thinner than most people's, and he has an unusually small bottom loop on his *g*, *j* and *y*. There is nothing wrong with this, but when he gives handwriting examples for his learners to copy, he tries to give more standard versions of the letter shapes and joins. Each learner will develop their own distinctive handwriting style, but it is best if they start by copying versions without any unusual features.

Mr Zhou's usual handwriting:

higher

An example he wrote for his learners to copy:

higher



It wasn't too difficult for me to get into the habit of writing in this way for my learners.

3.3 Read and copy sentences about yourself

Aim

In **Activity 3.2**, learners copy words in order to develop their skill in joined-up writing. The words do not have any purpose except to provide practice in writing them. This type of activity is useful for getting learners to start doing joined-up writing.

As soon as possible, learners should start doing joined-up writing for a reason, such as writing a message or a short story. The activity below aims to bridge the gap between simple copying and writing for a reason. The learners have to read and understand sentences in joined-up writing, and then reproduce some true sentences about themselves.

What the learners will do

They read and write sentences which reflect their personal experiences.

Resources

Copy the sentences below onto pieces of card or paper in large, clear **joined-up** letters. Make sure you keep your handwriting consistent, and note that the letters either side of the apostrophes are not joined. The parts in brackets must relate to your learners. Use your own statements too/instead if you wish to. About half the sentences should be true for the learners in your class, and the other half obviously false. Fix the cards to the wall around the classroom, in the order that they are numbered.

1. I live in [the district of your school].
2. I live in [a place far away].
3. I've got blue hair.
4. I can read.
5. I've got two heads.
6. My name is [name of a learner in your class].
7. I'm [the age of some of the learners] years old.
8. I'm [another age of some of the learners] years old.
9. I can count to ten.
10. I've got brown eyes.

Activity

1. Tell the class to write the numbers 1 to 10 in a column in their notebooks. Do the same for yourself.
2. Go to one of the sentences on the wall which is true for you. Read it aloud. Ask the class if it is true or not true for you. Establish that it is true, then write yes (in joined-up writing) next to that number, and show the class

what you have done. Repeat the process with a sentence which is not true for you. This time write *no* (in joined-up writing) next to the number.

3. The learners stand up and walk around the classroom. They read a sentence, and write *yes* or *no* next to the number for that sentence. Then they move to the next sentence. They don't all need to start at number 1. Send them to start at different places around the classroom, so they are not all crowded around the same sentence.
4. Walk around the classroom, and read each sentence aloud. Everybody for whom it is true raises a hand.
5. The learners copy the sentences that are true for them in joined-up writing into their notebooks. They may be able to see the cards from their seat, or they may need to stand up and go to look at them. The learners who do not already know them can copy the joins exactly as they see them on the cards.

Assessment

This activity can be very useful for assessing your learners' skills in forming letters, joining them and sequencing words clearly on a page. You will be able to see who is having problems doing these things. Make a note of which learners may need extra help.

Into practice: Adapting activities for higher-attaining classes

Many of Ms Gomo's learners are not yet doing joined-up handwriting with a sufficient level of skill for their age. When she saw **Activity 3.3** above, she thought the format could be useful, but the sentences were not suitable for her class. She thought they were too simple and lacking in variety to give her class the practice they needed. So she decided to create her own sentences.

First, she noticed the characteristics of the sentences given in the original activity. They are all personal sentences, and about half of them would be true for any learner. They are quite short, and they use contracted forms (*I'm* and *I've*). She then followed those characteristics to produce some sentences for her class. She added another characteristic too. Some of her new sentences ask the learners to form an opinion when they answer. For example, *I live near to my school* asks the learners to form an opinion about what 'near to' means.

Ms Gomo decided on the following sentences:

1. I go to [name of the school].
2. I live near to my school.
3. I eat sadza every day.
4. I like eggs.
5. I've got very short hair.
6. I've got three arms and two heads.
7. I'm wearing black shoes.
8. I can read and write.

9. It's [the day of the week] today.

10. It's very hot today.

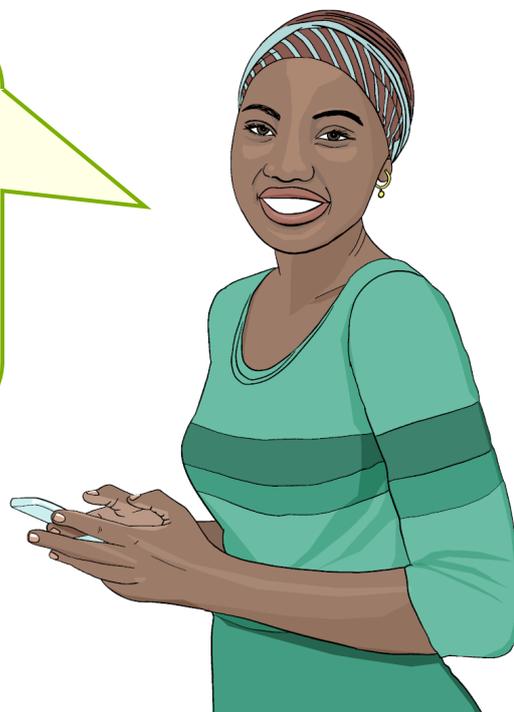
Ms Gomo's class did the activity with these sentences. They enjoyed it, and she felt that the more complex sentences gave them the right kind of practice for their age and current level of handwriting skill.

End-of-module Reflection

When you have completed this module, and tried out the activities in class, reflect on what you have learnt from it. You can do this by yourself, but if you can, it is better to do so with other teachers in your school or cluster. Perhaps you can meet after school or set up a WhatsApp group to work with teachers who are some distance away.

- Which activities worked best with your learners? Why do you think they worked well?
- What will you do differently as a result of reading this module?
- How did the activities in this module move what your learners can do forward? What do you predict will come in Module 4?
- Choose one activity from this module. Think about how it relates to each part of the Connections diagram on page 1.

I find that talking about my teaching with other teachers really helps. We share good ideas, and we help each other to solve problems. And when things don't go as well as I hoped, it makes me realise that I'm not alone!



Resource A: Letter grids for assessing reading of single letters

GRID 1

m E p

n H e w A L i D t F
R u T y K a P o C k
Z l s r G m x I O g
V b Y E v X U p c J
N W f d z S j B M h

GRID 2

S g a

t f A z m P U l E o
X s R H B w v c g F
p N u x D Y a Z S k
O d I j V M K i G h
r L J C b y e W T n

GRID 3

A v H

L c e H A k s U f D

Z T y I m O x j E P

R z d g F v N r l C

X S u w t B o J i M

G a K h W p V n b Y

GRID 4

t n O

P A z i r N C e D M

X s O G B w a Y U K

v J F c T k o E f n

Z t l h y W u g I x

p S j L d V H R m b

GRID 5

For a longer test, use a grid with 100 letters as below, to give a score out of 100. If you need further grids of 100 letters, combine two 50-letter grids (e.g. Grid 3 and Grid 4).

E L k

d A m P g E s F k C

s Z u O T n B t M L

c w f e r I R Y h D

y J G t S K A n o b

i M h v l X p N z H

L R a n D u g w C t

z o W j p O x k S J

F r i Y X P m U V e

P B A E c H s f T d

U W I b V y a G l N

Resource B: Words for assessing letter formation

Use at least one word from each column with each learner.

Try to give a good variety of other letters. For example: *hat, red, six, dog, fun* – 15 different letters. (Not *bag, bed, big, dog, dug* – only eight different letters.)

Examples of words beginning with every letter of the alphabet except *q* and *x* are highlighted in red. These can be used to assess/practise capital letters: ask the learner to begin the word with a capital letter (or ‘big letter’).

with a	with e	with i	with o	with u
and	bed	bin	box	but
bag	end	big	dog	cut
can	get	dig	fox	dug
cat	leg	him	got	fun
fat	met	kit	hop	hut
had	pen	pig	hot	jug
hat	red	six	job	mug
man	ten	sit	lot	nut
rat	wet	win	not	run
van	yes	zip	top	sun

Two-letter words:

am an if in is it on us

Resource C: Words for 'Match the letters with the same sound'

The cards should be at least 10 cm x 4 cm (the bigger the better). Write the words with black and red marker pens as shown. If you don't have a red pen, use a different bright colour. Also underline each coloured letter, in case any learners are colour-blind.

You will need one card for each learner. Use at least two words from each row. There are 44 words in each set. If you need more than that, take some words from the other set.

Set 1

h <u>a</u> t	b <u>a</u> g	st <u>a</u> nd	l <u>a</u> mp
sm <u>a</u> ll	<u>a</u> lways	b <u>a</u> ll	t <u>a</u> ller
<u>c</u> ome	<u>c</u> an	<u>c</u> lock	pic <u>t</u> ure
n <u>i</u> ce	p <u>e</u> ncil	fac <u>e</u>	f <u>e</u> n <u>c</u> e
b <u>i</u> g	<u>g</u> et	l <u>e</u> g	<u>g</u> row
pag <u>e</u>	<u>g</u> iraffe	larg <u>e</u>	cag <u>e</u>
book <u>s</u>	eat <u>s</u>	<u>s</u> it	lik <u>e</u> <u>s</u>
boy <u>s</u>	com <u>e</u> <u>s</u>	has <u>s</u>	pleas <u>e</u>
<u>y</u> es	<u>y</u> ou	<u>y</u> esterday	<u>y</u> ear
happ <u>y</u>	bus <u>y</u>	quickl <u>y</u>	carefull <u>y</u>
tr <u>y</u>	fl <u>y</u>	m <u>y</u>	dr <u>y</u>

Set 2

<u>a</u> nd	bl <u>a</u> ck	h <u>a</u> nd	fl <u>a</u> g
f <u>a</u> ll	s <u>a</u> lt	c <u>a</u> ll	<u>a</u> ll
music <u>c</u>	do <u>c</u> tor	magic <u>c</u>	<u>c</u> ook
ric <u>e</u>	sin <u>c</u> e	rac <u>e</u>	onc <u>e</u>
dog <u>g</u>	<u>g</u> o	ag <u>g</u> ree	dig <u>g</u>
ag <u>e</u>	hug <u>e</u>	<u>g</u> iant	stag <u>e</u>
plate <u>s</u>	jump <u>s</u>	take <u>s</u>	what' <u>s</u>
pen <u>s</u>	find <u>s</u>	sister <u>s</u>	goe <u>s</u>
<u>y</u> our	<u>y</u> ellow	<u>y</u> oung	<u>y</u> ourself
quietl <u>y</u>	carri <u>y</u>	only <u>y</u>	sill <u>y</u>
cry <u>y</u>	by <u>y</u>	wh <u>y</u>	Jul <u>y</u>

Resource D: Words for ‘Find the silent letter’

The words are arranged in approximate order of how common they are. Start with the most common words, and work through the list in later lessons.

The silent letters are in red.

school	know
what	listen
write	hour
walk	answer
wrong	knee
daughter	would
thought	half
talk	could
foreign	autumn
scissors	sign
guess	castle
weigh	whose
knife	biscuit
whole	should
building	through
island	honest
guitar	Christmas

Resource E: Letter cards for 'Human apostrophes'

Write each letter on a separate card. The letter cards should be at least A4 size (approximately 20 x 30 cm). Write the letters with thick marker pen. You will only need one apostrophe card.

'

I m

i t s

w e r e

y o u r e

t h e y r e

i s n t

a r e n t

d o n t

d o e s n t

w a s n t

w e r e n t

t h e r e s

w h o s

c a n t

w o n t

w o u l d n t

c o u l d n t

m u s t n t

s h o u l d n t

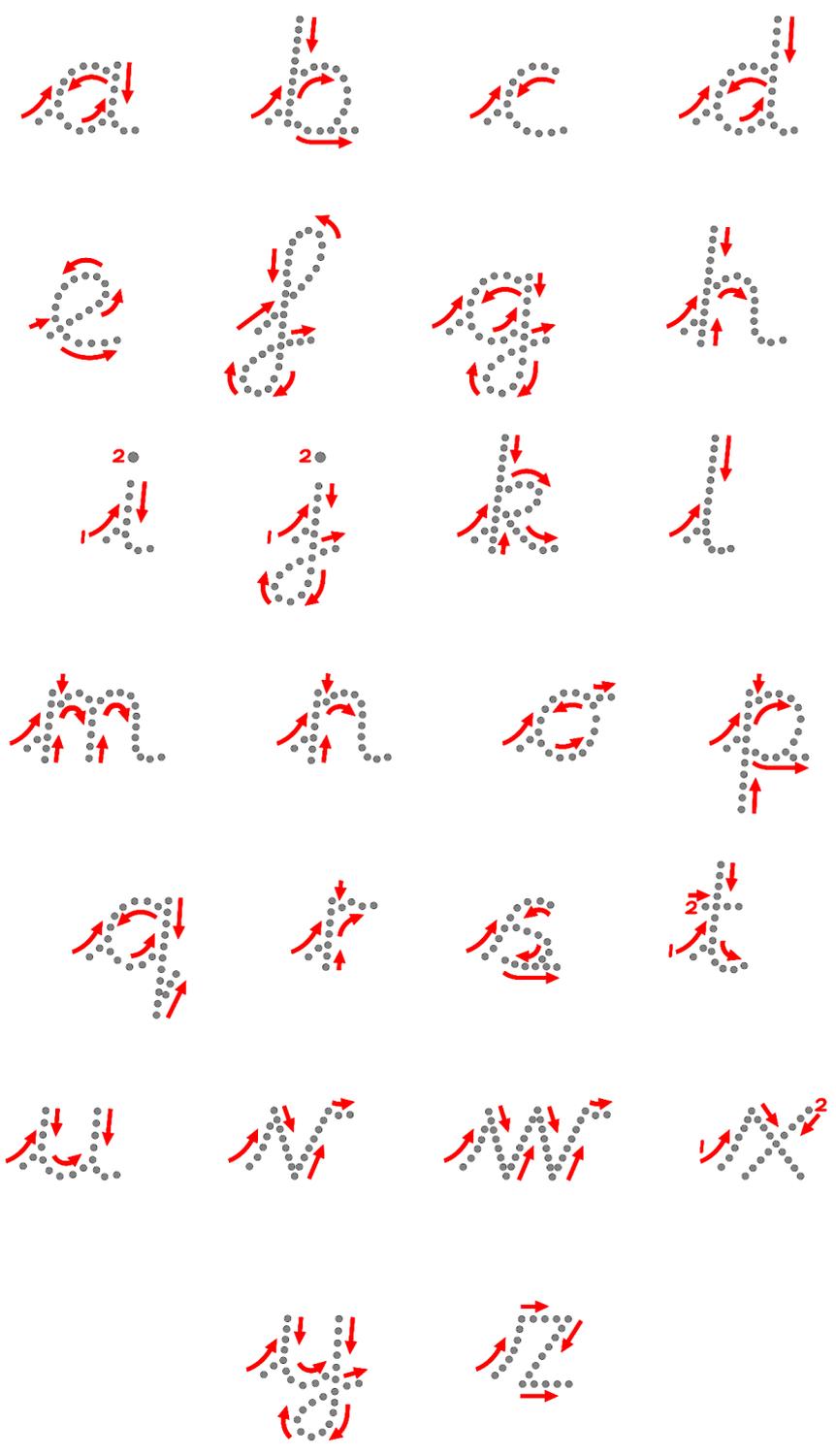
h a s n t

h a v e n t

Resource F: Movements for forming cursive letter shapes

Note: These include the movement leading into each letter, but the angle of these may change depending on the previous letter.

Other forms are possible. Check for any current official policy on joined-up letter shapes and joining methods.



Resource G: Suggested letter shapes and words for Activity 3.1

Other forms are possible. Check for any current official policy on joined-up letter shapes and joining methods.

<i>sss</i>	
<i>aaa</i>	
<i>ttt</i>	at, sat
<i>ppp</i>	tap, pat
<i>iii</i>	sit, tip
<i>nnn</i>	pan, pin, ant
<i>mmm</i>	man, mat, map
<i>ddd</i>	sad, and
<i>ggg</i>	pig
<i>ooo</i>	dog, son
<i>ccc</i>	cat
<i>kkk</i>	kit
<i>eee</i>	get, pen, end
<i>uuu</i>	sun, put
<i>rrr</i>	run, red, arm, rat
<i>hhh</i>	hat, hot, had
<i>bbb</i>	bag, big, bad, bit
<i>fff</i>	fit, far, for
<i>lll</i>	lip, lid
<i>jjj</i>	jug
<i>vvv</i>	van
<i>www</i>	win
<i>xxx</i>	six, taxi
<i>yyy</i>	yes, you
<i>zzz</i>	zoo
<i>qu</i>	quite

In this system x is not joined to the following letter. Do the \ line first, then the /.

Resource H: Words for Activity 3.2

Other forms are possible. Check for any current official policy on joined-up letter shapes and joining methods.

Low to low	Low to high	High to high	High to low
and	was	too	we
begin	mix	girl	toe
call	gave	when	leave
talking	saw	farm	aren't
find	live	know	have
hello	useful	move	where
again	newer	house	shoes
juice	lazy	doll	doesn't
quite	never	boat	towel
happy	ourselves	whole	weren't

Of course, other words that your learners know can be useful practice for doing joined-up writing. When choosing other words, try to cover the full range of letters and types of join.

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