

Cursive handwriting scheme –

Key points about joining letters

- ❖ Letters that end at the top join horizontally:

f o r t v w x

- ❖ Letters that end at the bottom join diagonally: *a c d e h i k l m n*

u

- ❖ Letters that are traditionally not joined:

b j p s q y z

These are not joined because they end in the opposite direction (left) to the direction of writing (right).

- ❖ The letters g and y can be looped, but these letters end to the left so it is therefore more consistent for them not to be joined. Children who loop these letters often then contrive other unsuitable loops, such as for the letter s.
- ❖ Capital letters should not be huge. They should be no higher than ascenders.

Nelson Handwriting is an upright, plain style.
It classifies the letters of the alphabet into five overlapping sets.

Set 1	Lower case letters which have hooks at the bottom of the a height.	acdehiklmntu
Set 2	Lower case letters which commence at the top of the a height.	acdegijmno pqrsuvwxyz
Set 3	Lower case letters which commence at the top of the ascender.	bfhklt
Set 4	Lower case letters which conclude at the top of the a height.	forvw
Set 5	Lower case letters after which no join is ever made.	bgjpqxyz No join is made to z either.

Nelson defines the joins between letters using these sets.
Only four types of join are needed.

Basic join	Set 1 → Set 2	in ma ki
Second join	Set 1 → Set 3	ab if co
Third join	Set 4 → Set 2	oa fo we
Fourth join	Set 4 → Set 3	ob fl wh
Examples of words with 'break' letters	bigger quiz pass boxer zebra open just table scissors lazy style	

Nelson Handwriting is a proprietary product of Nelson Thornes Limited providing a clear, practical framework for the teaching of handwriting. See www.nelsonthornes.com for more details.

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A few technical terms to teach children

- ❖ The word **cursive** means joined.
- ❖ The correct name for the joining bits between letters is **ligatures**.
- ❖ The technical name for a tail is a **flourish**.
- ❖ The technical word for handwriting is **calligraphy**.
- ❖ **Serifs** should **not** be put on letters: historically they come from the tradition of carving (stone masonry) not calligraphy. The letter **I** should not have the two lines at the top. It should appear as shown in the word processed form above.
- ❖ The letters b, d, h, k, and l are called **ascenders**. The top of the letter should reach very close to the top of the line (it shouldn't touch!). The letter **t is not an ascender**.
- ❖ The letters g, j, p, q and y are called **descenders**. The flourish these letters have goes below the line.
- ❖ **t** is an unusual letter – a three quarters letter, rather than an ascender

Other vocabulary children should be taught:

- ❖ clockwise
- ❖ anticlockwise
- ❖ vertical
- ❖ horizontal
- ❖ diagonal
- ❖ parallel
- ❖ consonant
- ❖ vowel
- ❖ joined
- ❖ sloped
- ❖ loop

The essential qualities of good handwriting are fluency, neatness and speed.