

Shape Formation

What is it? Shape formation is the ability to create simple shapes using controlled pencil strokes. These are shapes that involve different straight and circular pencil strokes.

Why is it important? Every letter of the alphabet is made up of a combination of straight lines and circles. Letter formation involves taking parts of lines and circles and learning how to put them together.

Stages of Motor Learning

Handwriting is a motor skill, therefore it is important to think about the stages of motor learning that children experience. Initially, children need to go through these stages with the *pencil control concepts*, they then need to start at stage one again to apply it to *letter formation* and then again into *handwriting*.

Stage 1: Thinking about it (cognitive stage)

- Children gain understanding and knowledge about different aspects of the skills.
- Activities that can help at this stage are ones that include thinking (asking questions and reflecting), looking (attending to different aspects) and doing (experiencing the movement).
- Feedback is very important. This can be either internal or external, from another child or an adult.

Stage 2: Practising it (associative stage)

- Children rely on their knowledge and previous experiences to refine their skills.
- Repetition **is not the same** thing as practice. Repetition can lead to mistakes that can become embedded and difficult to correct. Practice involves thinking and making changes.
- This stage of learning may take a long time. For handwriting, it is expected that this will take several years.

Stage 3: Doing it automatically (autonomous stage)

- Once children have reached this stage, they are able to focus on **what** they are writing, rather than on **how** they are writing.

Thinking

Looking

Doing

With a Pencil

Children **first** have the opportunity to learn and experience their pencil control skills through Thinking-Looking-Doing activities.

Children **then** have the opportunity to practice and consolidate these skills with a pencil.

How you can support this?

Bee-Bot® Shapes:

For this activity you will need a Bee-Bot®. There is also an [online Bee-Bot® emulator](http://www.bee-bot.com).

- ❖ With a shape which has been drawn out, children can programme the Bee-Bot® to follow the edges of the shape.

Bounce the Shape: *This is best done in a large space*

- ❖ With a shape which has been drawn or created using cones, children can bounce using a Space Hopper around the edges of the shape.

Body Shapes:

- ❖ Working together, children use their bodies to create different shapes – e.g. three children could make a triangle, each being one of the edges.

Car Tracks – patterns and shapes:

Draw different patterns and shapes which can act as “car tracks”.

- ❖ Using toy cars, children can follow the pattern or shape of the car tracks.

Card games:

- ❖ Use cards with shapes on to play card games such as pairs and snap.

Coin Rubbings:

- ❖ Using a piece of paper on top of coins of different shape, get children to use the side of a crayon to rub the paper on top of the coin and think about what shape they have made.
- ❖ This could be replicated with thin pieces of wood, sandpaper or cardboard cut into different shapes.

Disco - shapes with lights or ribbons:

For this activity children will need LED finger lights, strips of crepe paper, ribbon, etc.

❖ Using materials:

- when given a shape, children can copy the shape: in the air, on the ceiling, on the floor
- children can make a shape from memory in the air, on the ceiling or on the floor
- children can make a shape in the air, on the ceiling or on the floor by following a description of what the shape looks like.

Filled tray - Using marks to “draw” a shape:

e.g. a tray filled with: glitter, gloop, lentils, rice, sand, shaving foam

❖ Using materials:

- when given a shape, children can copy the shape
- children can make a shape from memory
- children can make a shape by following a description of what the shape looks like.

Make the shape - Using different materials:

e.g. beans, clay, play-doh, pinboard & pins, pipe-cleaners, rope, shells, sticks

❖ Using materials:

- when given a shape, children can copy the shape
- children can make a shape from memory
- children can make a shape by following a description of what the shape looks like.

Printing Shapes:

Adult: cut out shapes in vegetables (e.g. potatoes, carrots)

❖ Children to dip vegetable printers in paint, or use stampers, to print different shapes on paper.

Shape Cutters:

❖ With shape cutters, when playing with play-doh or baking, use the shape cutters to cut out different shapes.

Shape Pictures:

❖ Cut out different shapes and use the shapes to make a shape picture.

Walk the Shape: *This is best done in a large space*

- ❖ **Step 1:** with a shape which has been drawn or created using cones, children can walk around the edges of the shape.
- ❖ **Step 2:** children can walk out a shape from memory

With a zip-lock sandwich bag filled with gel, glitter or paint, use a cotton bud to “draw” a shape:

- ❖ Using materials:
 - when given a shape, children can copy the shape
 - children can make a shape from memory
 - children can make a shape by following a description of what the shape looks like.

**With an implement - Using marks to “draw” a shape:
e.g. chalk, crayons, finger on the Smartboard, fairy liquid bottles filled with water, paintbrushes, sticks in the mud. Experiment with different sizes.**

- ❖ Using materials:
 - when given a shape, children can copy the shape
 - children can make a shape from memory
 - children can make a shape by following a description of what the shape looks like.