

Directionality

What is it? Directionality is the ability to control and change the direction of the pencil on the page. This includes; changes in direction during one pencil movement, forming the same shape but in different directions and following prepositions in relation to positioning and direction.

Why is it important? Handwriting is a very dynamic process and directionality plays a large part in correct and efficient letter formation that allows one letter to lead on to the next. This leads to efficient and fluid handwriting. Language relating to direction and positioning is relied upon heavily in handwriting instruction.

When initially introducing direction concepts, check out the [‘Concepts – including prepositions and adjectives’](#) guidance from the [Oral Language Toolkit](#).

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).

- ❖ Children to programme the Bee-Bot® when given a list of instructions.
- ❖ Children to describe how they would move Bee-Bot® from one location to another.

Describe Me: Obstacle Course

- ❖ Using different pieces of equipment the children can demonstrate a movement or preposition of their choice. Their job is then to share with others what they are doing.
 - “I am on top of the bench”
 - “I am walking across the rope”
 - “I am between the cones”.
- ❖ Children could then give instructions to each other or describe what other children are doing.



Disco: Following instructions with lights or ribbons –

For this activity children will need LED finger lights or a piece of crepe paper cut into a strip

- ❖ Using materials:
 - when given an instruction, e.g. “Make a line up the wall, from down on the floor, all the way up to the ceiling”, children to copy.

Follow the Leader:

- ❖ One child, as the leader, gives an instruction e.g. “Put your hands up in the air.”
- ❖ The other children follow the leader’s instructions.
- ❖ Adult to ensure that directions include circular and diagonal movements, e.g. “walk around the cone...now the other way”.

Follow the Leader – With Objects:

Using objects such as bean bags, cones, hoops etc.

- ❖ One child, as the leader, gives an instruction e.g. put the bean bag on top of your head.
- ❖ The other children follow the leader’s instructions.
- ❖ Adult to ensure that directions include circular and diagonal movements, e.g. “move the beanbag across the hoop”.

Junk Modelling:

- ❖ Using a number of junk pieces, children can be given instructions to follow, e.g. “Place the bottle on top of the cardboard box.”

Mazes:

Could be on a piece of paper or made on the ground, using sticks, rope, etc.

- ❖ Step 1: Children can complete a maze by following instructions
- ❖ Step 2: Children can complete a maze, describing the steps that they’ve taken.

On the Line:

For this task you will need to have vertical or horizontal line either drawn on the wall or on the ground. Childrne will also need an object to be placed/ stuck in relation to the line.

- ❖ For the horizontal line – children can place the object above the line, below the line, on the line etc.
- ❖ For the vertical line – children can place the object at the top of the line, at the bottom of the line, somewhere in the middle of the line.

Preposition Action Figures:

With language for directions and position

- ❖ With a selection of action figures or toys and plastic cups the adult can place the figures in relation to other figures and the cup(s).
- ❖ Adult to model, ‘The pig is beside the duck’. The adult can then set up another scenario, e.g. the fox is inside the cup ‘Where is the fox?’
- ❖ Following this the children can then create their own scenario and describe what they have created:
e.g. ‘The duck is in-between the pig and the fox’.



Preposition Musical Chairs:

With language for directions and position

This activity can be used to consolidate prepositions. The game has the same rules as musical chairs.

- ❖ Before each round the teacher should give one of the prepositions:
e.g. “The children are on the chairs”
“The children are under the chairs”
“The children are in front of the chairs”.
- ❖ When the music stops, the children will show that preposition.

Rolling a Ball/ Throwing a Ball:

- ❖ Roll the ball in various directions, e.g. forwards, backwards
- ❖ Roll the ball around shapes, e.g. a hoop for a circle, a rope placed on the floor in a shape
- ❖ Roll the ball up and down the arm, leg, around your waist.
- ❖ Throw the ball up in the air, watch it go up and catch it when it comes down.

Under the Ground – On the Grass – Up in the Sky:

For this activity there should be a walled area in the classroom with a garden scene which can demonstrate under the ground, on the grass and up in the sky; you will also need pictures of things which would be under the ground, on the grass and up in the sky – alternatively this can be created and projected on the wall using the Smartboard, or done on the horizontal plain on the floor or on the desk.

- ❖ Children to be given a series of instructions to follow e.g. “Place the worm underground”, “Put the football on the grass”, “Place the birds on the sky”.