



READY REFERENCE GUIDE

The letter forms

The lower-case alphabet for Starter Level:

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z

The lower-case alphabet for Books 1 to 6:

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z

A letter slant of 8° from the vertical to the right is introduced in Pupil Book 3:

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z

The lower-case print alphabet:

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z

The capital letters and numerals:

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

These are the same throughout the scheme.

The letter groups

Letter families

In year one, *Nelson Handwriting* groups the letters into sets based on handwriting families. These are letters that are formed in similar ways.

Set 1

c a o d g q s f e

Set 2

i l t u j y

Set 3

r n m h k b p

Set 4

v w x z

Joining groups

The joining groups divide the letters according to how they will join to other letters.

Group 1

a c d e h i k l m n s t u

Thirteen letters with exit flicks plus s.

Group 2

a c d e g i j m n o p q r s u v w x y

Nineteen letters which start at the top of the x-height.

Group 3

b f h k l t

Six letters which start at the top of the ascender.

Group 4

f o r v w

Five letters which finish at the top of the x-height.

The break letters

b g j p q x y z

Eight letters after which no join is made. Joins are not made to or from the letter z.

The joins

	Group		Group	
The first join	1	→	2	in am
The second join	1	→	3	ab ch
The third join	4	→	2	oa wo
The fourth join	4	→	3	wh ob
The break letters				bigger

The joined style

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

Letter size

Book	x-height of letter (mm)
Starter Workbook A	10
Starter Workbooks B & C	8
Book 1A and 1B	6
Book 2	5
Book 3	4
Book 4	4
Book 5	3
Book 6	3

Guidelines are provided in the Resources and Assessment Books and printable versions are available online.

THE JOINS

Joins between letters increase the speed, rhythm and ease of writing without reducing legibility. In *Nelson Handwriting*, the 26 lower case letters have been divided into five joining groups (which are not the same as the letter sets/families), according to the nature of the joins they require. There are four types of join and a set of 'break' letters after which joins are never made. (See pages 8–9 for details of the joining groups and letter sets.) The joins are taught in Pupil Book 1B and practice is provided in all subsequent books.



Joining

Joining letters is introduced midway through year one, and/or once children can confidently form and write letters correctly. This helps with spelling, as research tells us that seeing words as a whole, rather than a series of isolated letters, helps us memorise and spell words correctly. Joined writing also helps pupils write more, increasing the speed of writing and fluency. *Nelson Handwriting* teaches the four joins at the same time as teaching the letter sets/families.

The first join

The join from any member of joining group 1 to any member of joining group 2 is made with exactly the same movement as a diagonal join from one letter to the start of the next.

in

Teaching the first handwriting join is linked to the letter sets/families:

- When the first diagonal join is introduced, from the bottom of a small letter to the top of the next, we teach the diagonal join to Set 1 letters first, e.g. ed, eg, ac, as.
- This is followed by the diagonal join to Set 2 letters e.g. lu, lg, ly.
- Then diagonal joins to Set 3 letters e.g. ar, an, am, ap.
- Finally the diagonal join to Set 4 letters e.g. aw, ew, ex, ux.

The second join

The join from any member of joining group 1 to any member of joining group 3 is the same as the first join except that the join meets the ascender halfway up the letter and then continues to the top of the ascender.

il

Teaching the second handwriting join is linked to letter families too:

- The second join, a diagonal join from the bottom of a small letter to the top of an ascender, is taught using Set 1 letters first, then Set 2, 3 and 4.
- For example to Set 1 letters lf, ef, wf; to Set 2 letters il, it; Set 3 letters ck, ch.

The third join

The join from any member of joining group 4 to any member of joining group 2 is a horizontal curve because the join is from the x-height of one letter to the x-height of the next.

og

Teaching the third join, the horizontal join from the top of one letter, across and to the top of the next, is also taught using letter families:

- The third join to Set 1 letters e.g. wa, wo, fo; to Set 3 letters on, om; Set 4 letters ow.

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The fourth join

The join from any member of joining group 4 to any member of joining group 3 is the same as the first join except that it goes from the x-height of one letter to the top of the ascender of the next.

ob

The fourth join is the join from the top of a small letter to the top of an ascender.

- To Set 1 letters e.g. of, ff; to set 2 e.g. wl, rl; Set 3 e.g. ob, oh, ok.

The break letters

Joins are never made after the letters in this group. No join is ever made to or from the letter z. A small space should be left after each break letter so that it is spaced as evenly as the joined letters.

The letters e and s have slightly varying forms because their shapes depend on the nature of the preceding join. Attention is drawn to these special cases in Pupil Books 1A, 1B and 2.

As the size of writing decreases, children should be encouraged to decrease the space between words. By the time children are using Pupil Book 1A this space should be the width of a lower case letter a, and the space between two lines of writing should be about twice the height of this letter.

Teaching the joined style

- In the early stages the correct movements are more important than the appearance of the writing. Children should be discouraged from forming writing with incorrect movements, even if they manage to achieve results that appear satisfactory. However, in later stages a more individual style based around *Nelson Handwriting* is encouraged.
- As joined handwriting is a movement skill, it is essential for teachers to provide demonstrations. The *Nelson Handwriting* online teaching software is useful for this; you can also use whiteboards or flipcharts.
- Observe individuals as much as possible while they practise. This enables the teacher to recognise and correct bad habits as they arise.
- Talk the children through the process, using appropriate language.
- Encourage children to verbalise what they are doing from time to time. This gives a window into the thought processes they are using as they write.
- Most children will need extra practice with making the joins. The Pupil Books and Resources and Assessment books provide ample material for this.
- Encouraging children to use the basic handwriting patterns both for practice and for decorative purposes is a valuable technique.

England: National Curriculum for English

The aims of the new National Curriculum	How <i>Nelson Handwriting</i> delivers these aims
Year 1	
Handwriting Pupils should be taught to: • sit correctly at a table, holding a pencil comfortably and correctly • begin to form lower-case letters in the correct direction, starting and finishing in the right place • form capital letters • form digits 0-9 • understand which letters belong to which handwriting 'families' (ie letters that are formed in similar ways) and to practise these.	Nelson Handwriting supports children from the earliest stages of learning to write. Guidance is given in the Teacher's Book about how to create the conditions for good writing: atmosphere, seating and posture, and pencil and pen grip. Each Pupil Book has a flap on the front cover which reminds children how to prepare for writing. All of the lower-case and capital letters are covered in the Workbooks and online teaching software, with clear and consistent instructions about how to start and finish letters. The digits 0-9 are covered too. In Year 1, Nelson Handwriting groups the letters into handwriting families, i.e. letters that are formed in similar ways, and children practise these in a cumulative manner.
Notes and guidance (non-statutory) Handwriting requires frequent and discrete, direct teaching. Pupils should be able to form letters correctly and confidently. The size of the writing implement (pencil, pen) should not be too large for a young pupil's hand. Whatever is being used should allow the pupil to hold it easily and correctly so that bad habits are avoided. Left-handed pupils should receive specific teaching to meet their needs.	Nelson Handwriting is designed to be used little and often. The Teacher's Book gives guidance on direct teaching, and the online teaching software gives animated demonstrations of each letter and join. The Teacher's Book also gives useful guidance about left-handed pupils and their specific needs in terms of grip, posture and paper alignment. A left-hander's version of the Pupil Book cover flap is available in the Resources and Assessment Books.

The aims of the new National Curriculum	How <i>Nelson Handwriting</i> delivers these aims
Year 2	
Handwriting Pupils should be taught to: • form lower-case letters of the correct size relative to one another • start using some of the diagonal and horizontal strokes needed to join letters and understand which letters, when adjacent to one another, are best left unjoined • write capital letters and digits of the correct size, orientation and relationship to one another and to lower-case letters • use spacing between words that reflects the size of the letters	In Year 2, Nelson Handwriting revises the previously-learned joins with an emphasis on relative height. Children re-cap their learning of lower-case and capital letters and practise forming them with consistency. Children are also given the opportunity to continue to practise using print letters, and are introduced to the idea that some letters are best left unjoined when next to other letters.
Notes and guidance (non-statutory) Pupils should revise and practise correct letter formation frequently. They should be taught to write with a joined style as soon as they can form letters securely with the correct orientation.	Frequent practice and repetition is at the heart of Nelson Handwriting. The course provides ample opportunity for children to refine their writing skills as their motor control improves.

The aims of the new National Curriculum	How <i>Nelson Handwriting</i> delivers these aims
Years 3–4	
Handwriting Pupils should be taught to: - use the diagonal and horizontal strokes that are needed to join letters and understand which letters, when adjacent to one another, are best left unjoined - increase the legibility, consistency and quality of their handwriting, [for example, by ensuring that the downstrokes of letters are parallel and equidistant, and that lines of writing are spaced sufficiently so that the ascenders and descenders of letters do not touch]	Throughout Years 3 and 4, children continue to practise and develop their handwriting skills. The idea of writing with a slant is introduced for the first time. <i>Nelson Handwriting</i> provides practice in joining using diagonal and horizontal strokes as well as the 'break letters' that are best left unjoined. There is an emphasis on spacing letters consistently and on keeping ascenders and descenders in proportion.
Notes and guidance (non-statutory) Pupils should be using joined handwriting throughout their independent writing. Handwriting should continue to be taught, with the aim of increasing the fluency with which pupils are able to write down what they want to say. This, in turn, will support their composition and spelling.	Each of the <i>Nelson Handwriting</i> units is based on a context that links into areas across the curriculum, and/or picks up on a key spelling pattern, reinforcing the shape of the letters with the spelling pattern of the word. Guidance is given in the Teacher's Book about how teachers can best ensure that good handwriting is not just reserved for handwriting lessons, and about emphasising the importance of fluency, neatness and speed in writing across the curriculum.

The aims of the new National Curriculum	How <i>Nelson Handwriting</i> delivers these aims
Years 5–6	
Handwriting and presentation Pupils should be taught to: - write legibly, fluently and with increasing speed by: - choosing which shape of a letter to use when given choices and deciding whether or not to join specific letters - choosing the writing implement that is best suited for a task	At Years 5–6, <i>Nelson Handwriting</i> continues to provide structured practice for the skills that have been developed so far. Children continue to practise the joins and the break letters, looking at consistency of sizing and spacing. <i>Nelson Handwriting</i> empowers children to develop their own style of handwriting from a secure base, choosing their writing implement and style as appropriate to the occasion.
Notes and guidance (non-statutory) Pupils should continue to practise handwriting and be encouraged to increase the speed of it, so that problems with forming letters do not get in the way of their writing down what they want to say. They should be clear about what standard of handwriting is appropriate for a particular task, for example, quick notes or a final handwritten version. They should also be taught to use an unjoined style, for example, for labelling a diagram or data, writing an email address, or for algebra, and capital letters, for example, for filling in a form.	<i>Nelson Handwriting</i> continues to develop writing fluency. Speedwriting challenges help children practise automaticity and speed. Children are taught about the difference in expectation between informal jottings and final presented versions and given opportunities to practise these. A range of contexts, from writing addresses to labelling maps and diagrams, help them learn the contexts in which joined or unjoined writing is most appropriate.