



INTRODUCING **PM** *Handwriting*

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PM *Handwriting* is a carefully sequenced program of handwriting instruction for Kindergarten to Year 6. It is designed to support students in developing a fluent, legible and automatic handwriting style.

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WHAT EVERY TEACHER NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT THE TEACHING OF HANDWRITING

Why is the teaching of handwriting important and relevant today?

Studies have shown that:

- Learning how to handwrite improves students' concentration as it engages their attention and ability to focus.
- Good fine-motor skills lead to better performance in both reading and writing.
- Using pen and paper to write boosts memory.

Despite our increasingly screen-based lifestyles, handwriting is still a part of everyday life.

About the New South Wales handwriting style

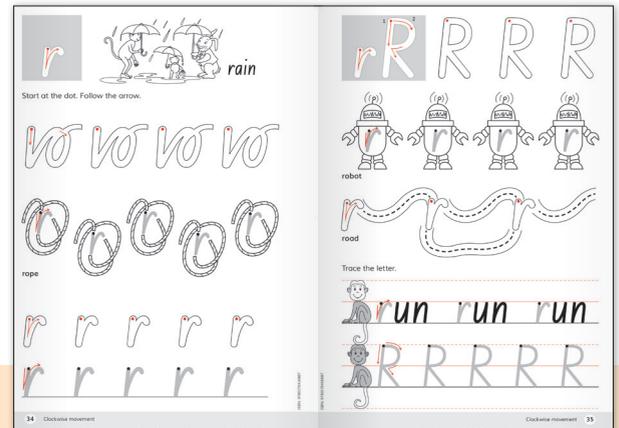
- The name of the handwriting script for NSW students is the New South Wales Foundation Style.
- The basic letter shapes are the same for both unjoined and joined letters, so this handwriting style does not require students to learn a completely new script when transitioning from print to cursive.
- Students are progressively guided through a number of joins that connect the letters together.



NEW SOUTH WALES HANDWRITING: THE ESSENTIALS

Why are pre-writing and patterning exercises (even up to Year 6) so important?

- Young writers need to internalise two simple movements: top to bottom, left to right. Regular pre-writing and patterning exercises help students to master these movements and ultimately achieve automaticity.
- Patterning exercises help to free up students' hand movements, and build their confidence towards cursive writing.
- By focussing on patterns instead of writing, the pressure of trying to spell correctly is removed.



What is the rationale for the letter groupings: why aren't the letters presented in alphabetical order? How are the letters grouped and named?

- The letters are grouped by movement. These movements arise out of the scribble patterns of children and have been refined to form the basis of the letter shapes in the NSW Foundation Style.
- There are three basic movements:



anti-clockwise movement:
u, y, v, w, a, d, g, q, c, e, o, s



clockwise movement:
n, r, m, h, k, b, p



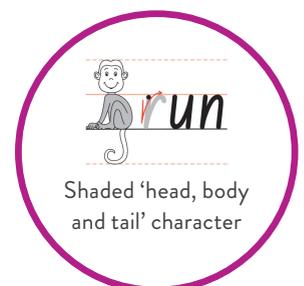
downstroke movement:
l, t, i, j, f, x, z

What is the rationale for the sequence of letters presented?

- Each letter group comprises of letters with some shapes in common. Within each group, the letters are ordered according to logical progression – one letter shape can be seen to arise naturally out of and lead to the shaping of others.
- Repeated practice separately of correct letter formation separately and in context is essential to achieve fluency and automaticity.

What is the purpose of the 'head, body, tail' character?

The 'head, body, tail' character is useful as a means of introducing students to writing lines, and correct letter placement within lines and in relation to each other.



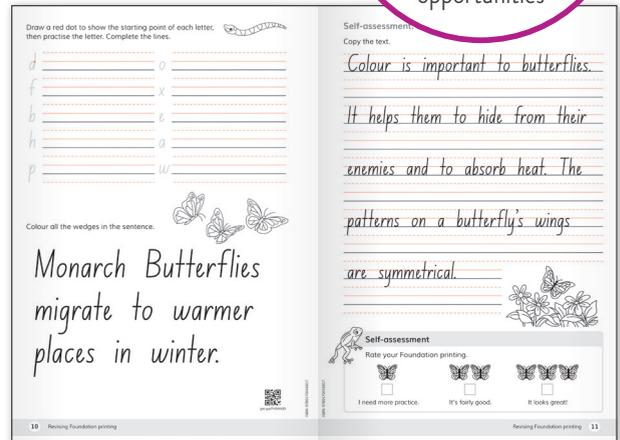
What is the role of verbal rehearsals and self-assessments in handwriting instruction?

Verbalising the basic shapes and movement of letters is essential for scaffolding very young students learning to write letters for the first time.

Self-assessment gives teachers valuable insight into students' understanding of what constitutes legible handwriting. It encourages students to self-correct, and can be used as a basis for setting corrective exercises.

What are the two main join types?

Diagonal and horizontal joins are the two most common join types in the New South Wales Foundation Style.

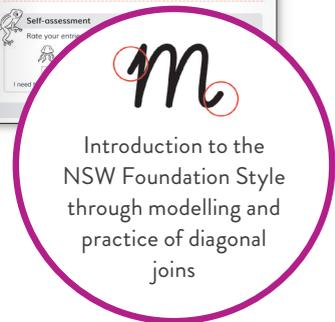
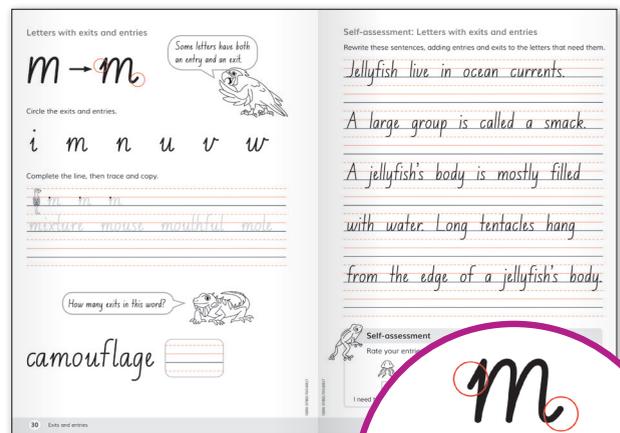


What is the rationale for the sequence of joins taught in PM Handwriting? Why is the diagonal join introduced first?

In *PM Handwriting* joins are introduced according to their complexity. The diagonal join is the easiest join to write correctly, so this is taught first.

Students transition from unjoined to joined script first by adding exits and entries to letters. With exits and entries mastered, it's easy to see how certain letters will be joined diagonally. It is a natural progression then, from exits and entries to joined writing.

In *PM Handwriting*, all joins are introduced in Year 3, and revised up to Year 6.



What is the rest of the sequence after diagonal joins?

The rest of the sequence is drop-in joins, horizontal joins, letters that do not join and tricky joins: from 'q', from 'z', and to and from 'f'.

Why should I spend valuable time on handwriting instruction?

While we juggle the competing demands of an increasingly crowded curriculum, there is no doubt that, for the reasons outlined above, regular handwriting instruction pays off, especially for students in Kindergarten, Years 1, 2 and 3. Integrating handwriting instruction within a literacy block may make it easier to find the time to pay attention to this essential skill.

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... we must continue to teach students how to write efficiently and automatically by hand, so that they can express themselves meaningfully in written language and fully engage in the learning opportunities provided at school ... That means teachers and teacher education students need to receive a clear message about the importance of continuing to teach handwriting to young children.

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Dr Noella Mackenzie, Senior Lecturer in Literacy Studies at the School of Education at Charles Sturt University

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PM HANDWRITING IN PRACTICE

Shaded 'head, body and tail' character

Large-format models to demonstrate accurate formation of letters in the New South Wales Foundation Style

Illustrations featuring favourite characters from the PM series

Posture, paper position and pencil grip instruction

Purposeful literacy extension activities accessible through QR codes

Patterning exercises to find the letter and colour the wedge

Frequent track, trace, copy and colouring-in opportunities

Sentences incorporating PM high-frequency words to trace and copy

Alignment with NSW English K-10 Syllabus and Australian Curriculum: English

A comprehensive handwriting program for New South Wales



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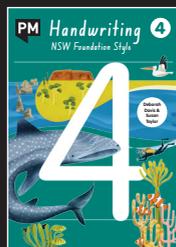
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NELSON AUSTRALIA
 CUSTOMER SERVICE PHONE: 1300 790 853
 EMAIL: anz.customerservice@cengage.com
 Level 7, 80 Dorcas Street, South Melbourne VIC 3205
 Cengage Australia Pty Limited ABN 14 058 280 149 (trading as Nelson, A Cengage Company)

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 www.nelsonprimary.com.au
 Printed 05/18 PRI 9372

9780170327367