

Handwriting Without Tears®

What's in a Capital Letter?

What's easier, capitals or lowercase letters? Teachers agree that capitals are easier and that's where we begin. Be smart, start with easy! Rather than give little children the overwhelming task of learning **62 symbols** (26 capitals, 26 lowercase and 10 basic number symbols), start with capitals! When children learn to write their CAPITALS, they develop a strong foundation for printing. They learn important handwriting rules (such as a top to bottom, left to right habit), proper letter formation, and solid visual memory of their CAPITAL letters. Lowercase letters will be a breeze to learn because of this foundation!

Use developmental principles

Some letters are easier to write (developmentally) than others. Children gradually develop the ability to copy forms in a very predictable order.* This order is shown below:



After examining this developmental order, it is easy to determine which letters are easy and which are hard. Generally, letters that use just vertical and horizontal lines are the easiest, while letters with diagonal lines are difficult.

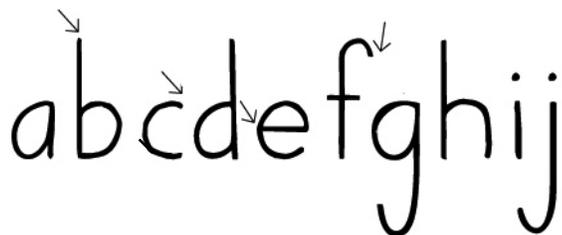
Capital letters are easy

- All are the same height.
- All start at the same place - the top!
- All occupy the same vertical space.
- All are easy to recognize and identify (compare A B D G P Q with a b d g p q).
- They are big, bold and familiar.



Lowercase letters are more difficult

- Lowercase letters are not the same size.
- Lowercase letters are more difficult to recognize because of subtle differences (a b d g p q).
- Lowercase letters occupy three different vertical positions.
- Lowercase letters start in four different places. (b c e f)



*NOTE: Gesell, Arnold and others. The First Five Years of Life. New York: Harper and Row. 1940.

Let's do the math

Here it is! You can see it at a glance. CAPITALS are easier for children. Children have fewer chances to make mistakes when they write capitals letters. They aim the pencil at the top and get it right! For lowercase, 24 things could go wrong!

CAPITAL AND LOWERCASE LETTER ANALYSIS

	Capitals	Lowercase
Size	1	2
Position	1	3
Start	1	4 a b e f
Total Variables	1	24
Appearance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Familiar• Distinctive A B D G P Q	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Many similar• Easy to confuse a b d g p q

When teaching handwriting, teach capitals first! You will save yourself time, make life easier for children, and get better handwriting results.