

Why You Should Use the Joined / Cursive versions of the worksheets

The new primary curriculum does not suggest introducing joined or cursive writing until children are in Year 2. However I would argue that this is misguided. The focus on having children learn to form letters correctly in Year 1 and Year 2 is welcome. However at the very least I would suggest that children be taught to form letters in a joined / cursive style from the beginning of their time in school. The rationale for this is as follows:

1. If children become fast and comfortable with a printing-style of writing, and then later have to switch to a cursive / joined-up style they can be reluctant to move away from what they know and are comfortable with i.e. writing in print, rather than joining up.
2. Children will have to unlearn how to form some letters e.g. f and k.
3. A key principle of specialist dyslexia teaching is that learning to spell needs to be made multisensory. Joining letters up helps a child's 'muscle memory' to remember a word and is a kinaesthetic way of learning. Given that 4 to 8% of children are thought to be dyslexic (Rose Report, 2009), there is likely to be at least one dyslexic child in most classes.

Using lead-in strokes or not

There are arguments for and against using lead-in strokes when forming letters. People who are in favour of using lead-in strokes argue that they make it easier for a child, because the child knows that they always start 'on the line'.

Personally I prefer not to teach children to use lead-in strokes for the following reasons:

1. It makes letter formation more complicated; therefore it can put children off writing, slow them down and cause them to have messy 'spider-writing'.
2. The letters o, r, v and w join 'though the grass (in the middle of the upper and lower lines)'. Teaching letters with an entry stroke from 'the ground' (the bottom line) causes problems when joining from these letters e.g. it can make an r look like an n.

Two versions of the joined / cursive worksheets are provided for each lesson: one with lead-in strokes and one without lead-in strokes. Ultimately it is up to each individual school to decide on their preference. The most important thing is that the decision is made as a whole school and all teachers are teaching letter formation and handwriting in the same way.