

# Handwriting in the early years

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In New South Wales public schools, students learn to use the **NSW Foundation Style** writing font. The following resource may provide guidance and activities to use with students in the early years. This resource will complement the phonics sequence activities. Each letter has a short script to support students in forming letters.

The following is an overview of lower case and capital or upper case letters and numbers in the **NSW Foundation Style**.



### Tips to help your child develop fine motor skills for successful handwriting

In order to support handwriting development, teachers engage students in a range of fine motor activities to strengthen hand muscles.

#### Encourage your child to develop fine motor skills by:

- using their fingers to draw and build in sand
- using a range of pencils, crayons and markers to draw and make patterns
- using play dough and clay to create shapes and patterns
- drawing patterns in the air
- playing with pegs and helping to hang out washing
- playing games that involve tweezers or tongs
- threading activities such as beads and string
- craft activities involving cutting and sticking.

### Starting to form letters

In the early years, students develop basic skills of writing, including correct pencil grip, good posture and handwriting movements, using a thicker pencil.

#### Teachers support students to learn correct letter formation by building skills in a sequence, including:

- drawing a range of shapes such as straight lines and circles
- exploring patterns such as a soft wave or pointed peaks
- having students write over a highlighted letter, with a dot to show where to start
- writing the letter using a letter outline with a starting dot
- writing the letter using a starting dot on a line
- writing the letter in dotted lines.

### Structuring a handwriting activity

#### Posture

Having a rhyme to start the lesson can be a fun way to encourage students to engage the correct posture and position. The following is a suggestion:

**1 2 3 4**

**Are my feet flat on the floor?**

**5 6 7 8**

**My chair is in, my back is straight!**

### Pencil grip

We encourage students in the early years to use a thicker pencil and the tripod grip.

Ways to encourage the tripod grip may be to put a dot or sticker on the pencil to make sure fingers are in the right position.

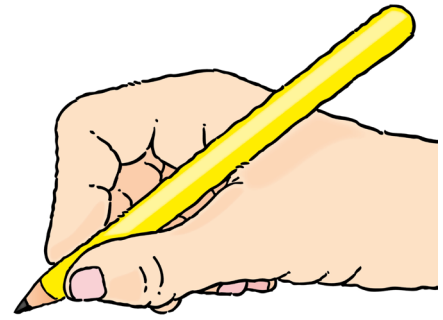


Figure 1: Hand holding a pencil using the tripod grip.

### Warm up exercises

Many classrooms play warm up games with students stretching their fingers and pointing them in different directions. Often students will chant “Exercises, exercises, see me do my exercises” whilst moving their fingers.

### Mnemonics

Using a short, sharp way for students to remember the action whilst writing is used in many classrooms. The mnemonic needs to be quick so that it is said in the time it takes to write a letter. For example, for the letter ‘T’ you might say, “Down and across”.

### Script

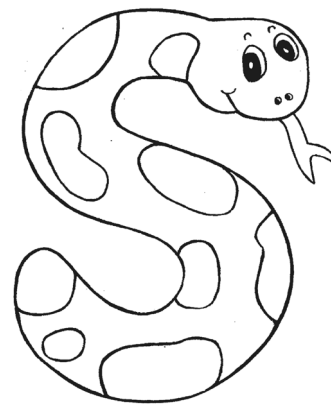
A short script has been provided for each letter to help you describe to your child, the movements and shapes used when forming a letter.

- Tall letters stretch from the top dotted line to the bottom solid line.
- Short letters stay in the solid lines. They touch both the top and bottom solid lines.
- Long letters stretch downwards to the bottom dotted line.



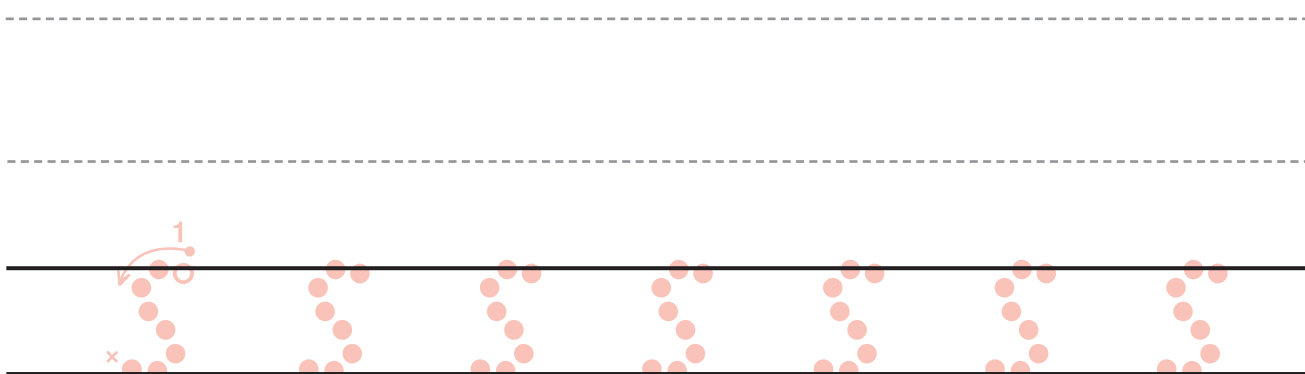
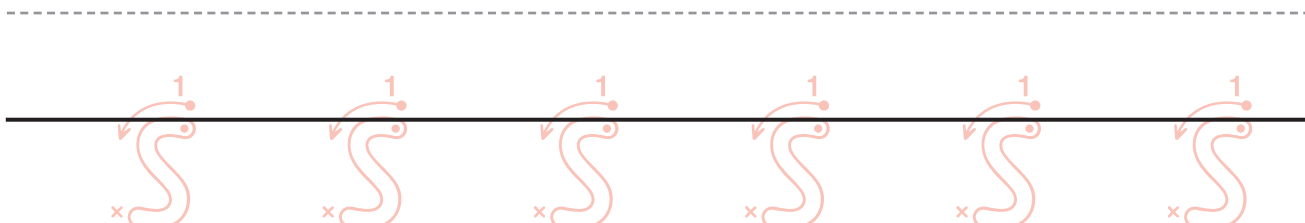
# Lower case s

Ss



The lower case 's' is a short letter.  
When we write this letter, we start  
at the top and move to make two  
smooth curves.

Example mnemonic: Left, right, up!

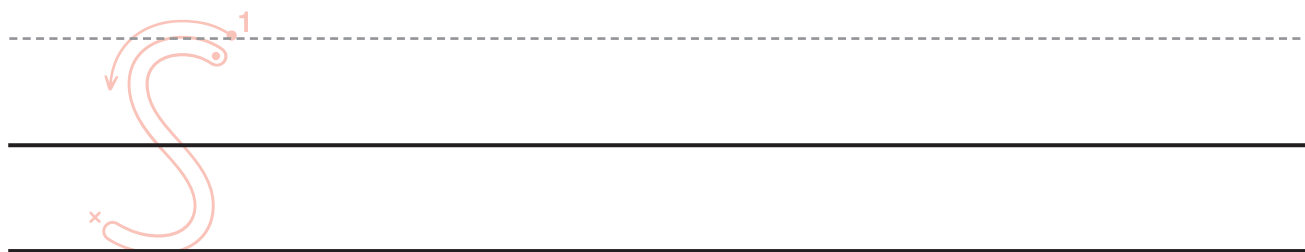
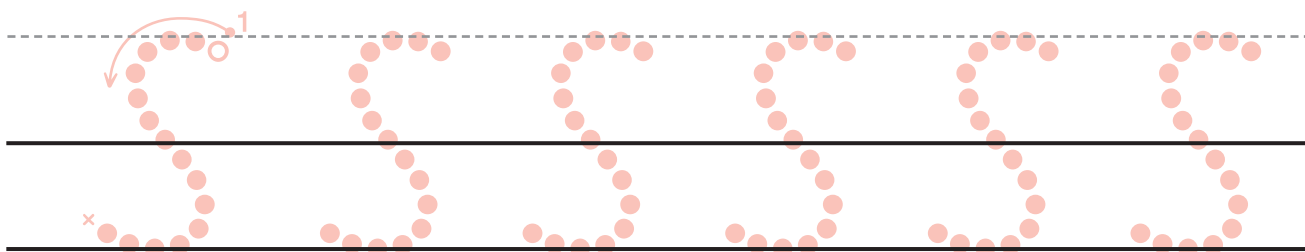
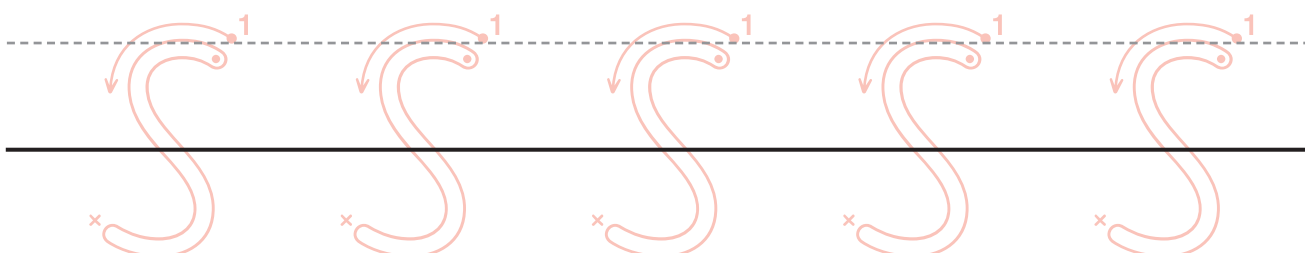
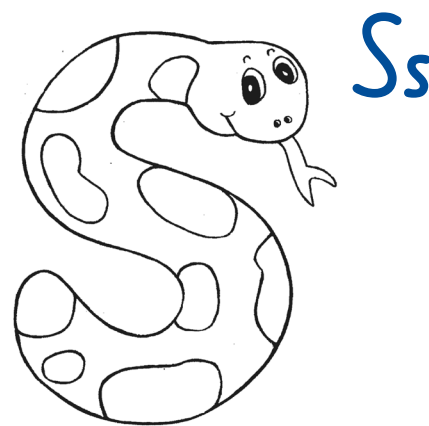


# Upper case S

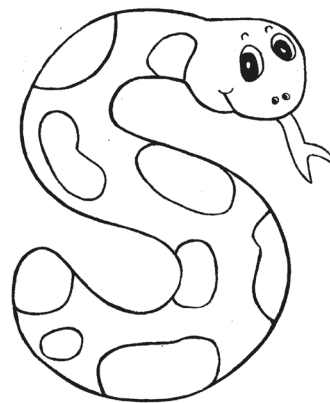
The upper case 'S' is a tall letter.

When we write this letter, we start at the top and move to make two smooth curves. It is the same as the lower case letter but taller.

Example mnemonic: Left, right, up!

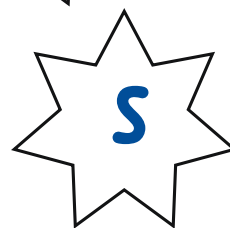
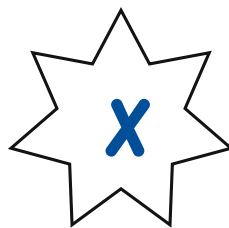
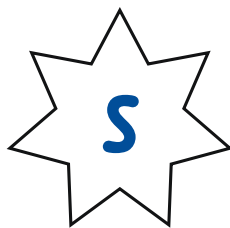
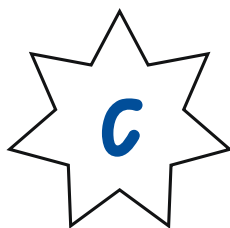
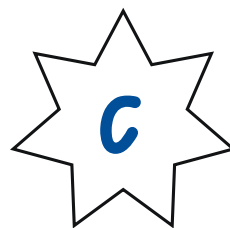
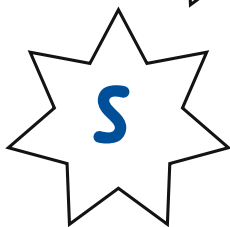
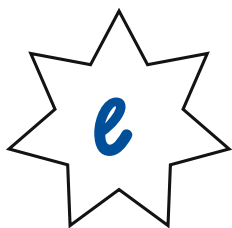
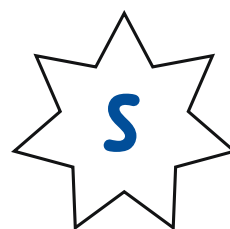
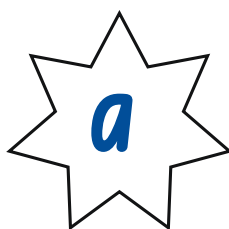


Can you draw some things that **start**  
with the **s** as in snake phoneme (sound)?



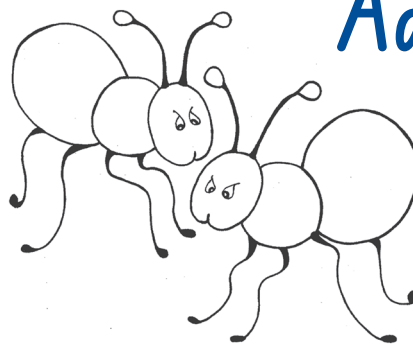
Ss

Colour the stars with the letter **s** inside them.



# Lower case a

Aa



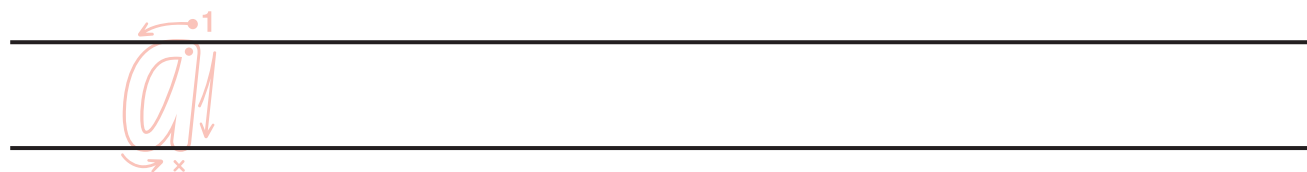
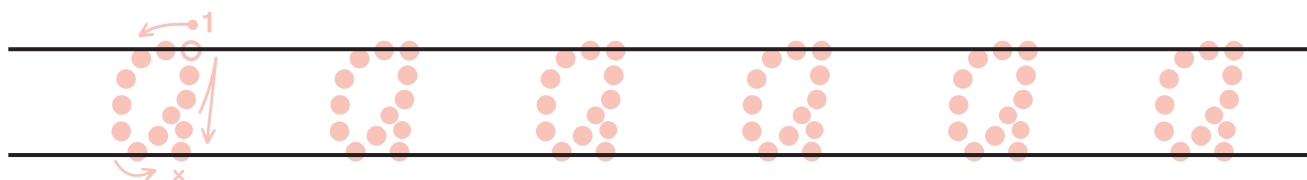
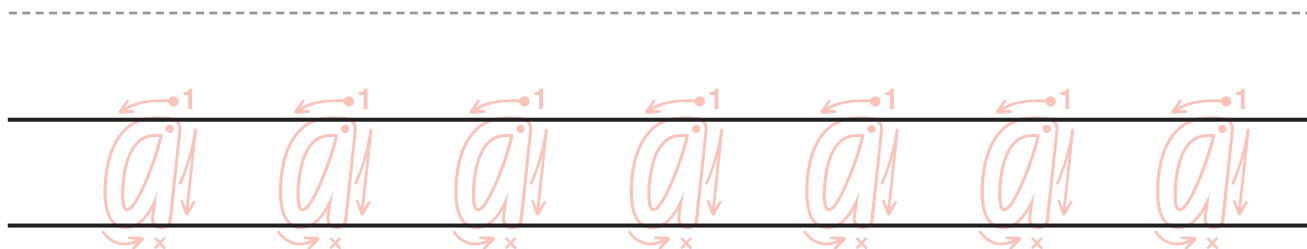
The lower case 'a' is a short letter.

We start at the top and move around to make a round shape and come back to where we started.

We keep our pencil on this point and then make a straight line to finish the letter.



Example mnemonic: Around, up, down!

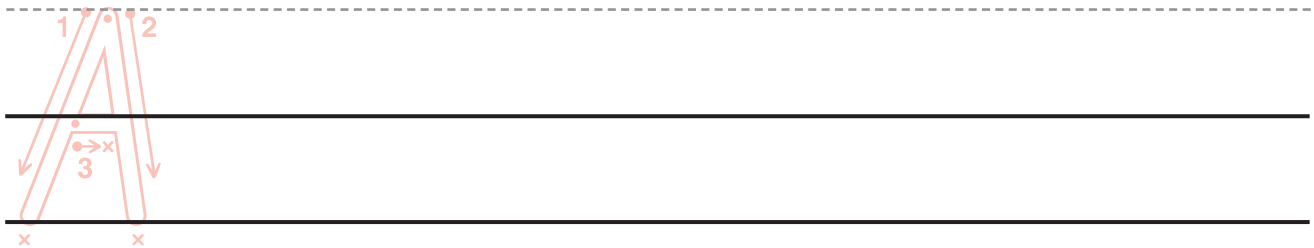
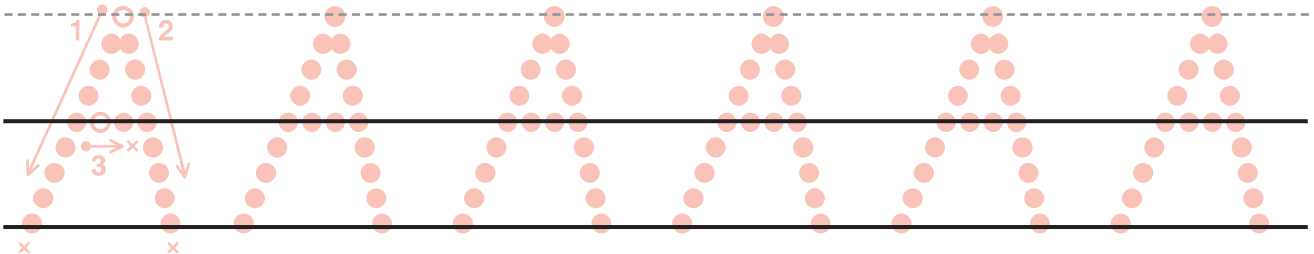
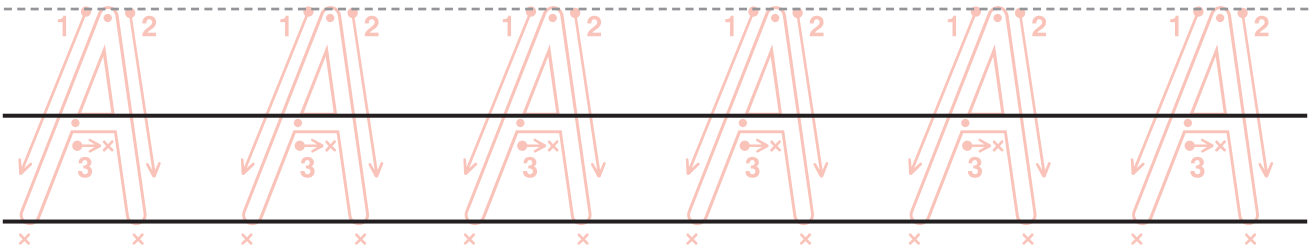
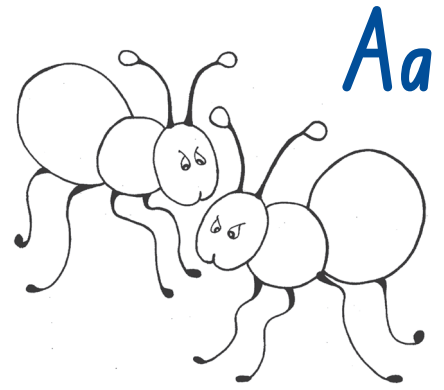




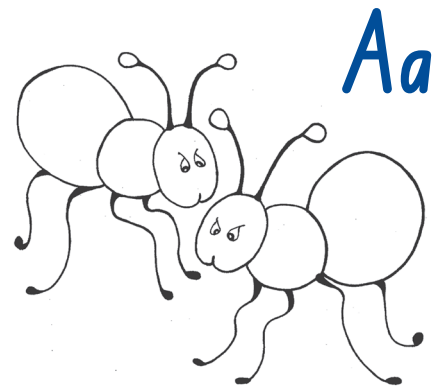
# Upper case A

The upper case 'A' is a tall letter.  
We make the upper case letter 'A' in different way to the lower case 'a'. We start at the top and make a straight line. Next we go back to where we started and make another straight line. Then, we make a line to join them.

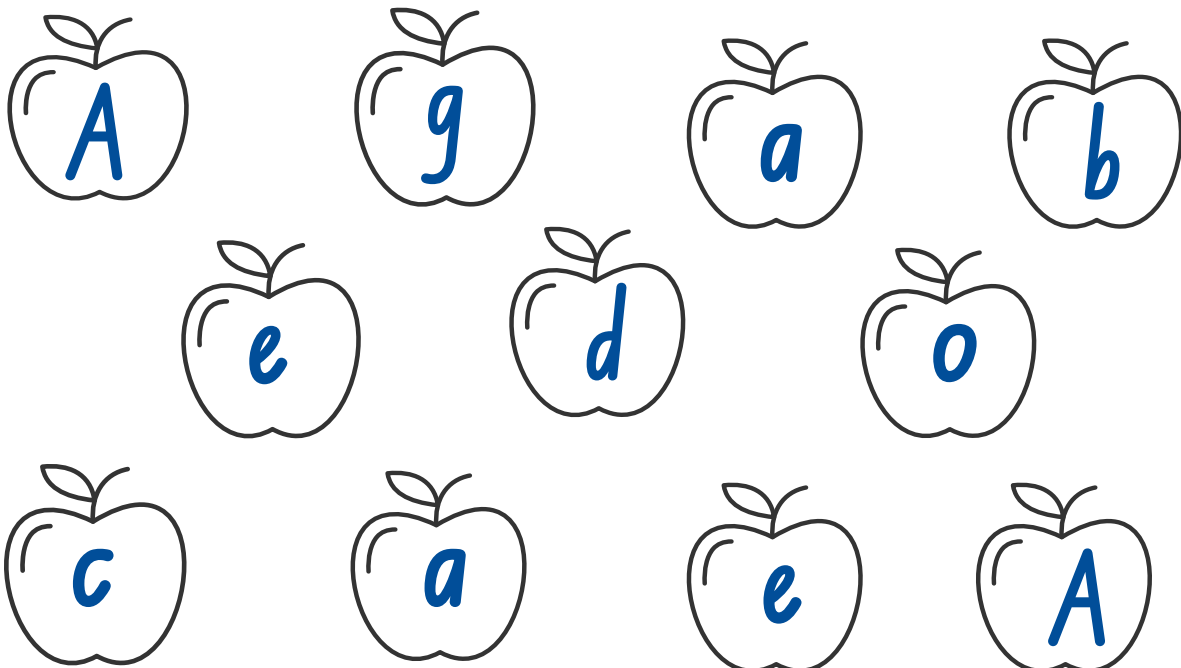
Example mnemonic: Down, down, across!



Can you draw some things that **start**  
with the **a** as in apple phoneme (sound)?

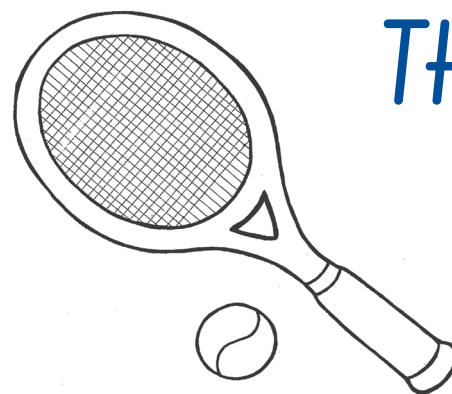


Colour the apples with the letter **a** inside them.

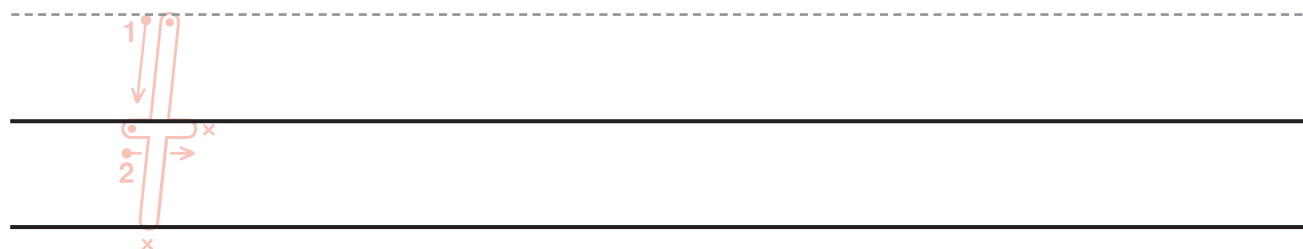
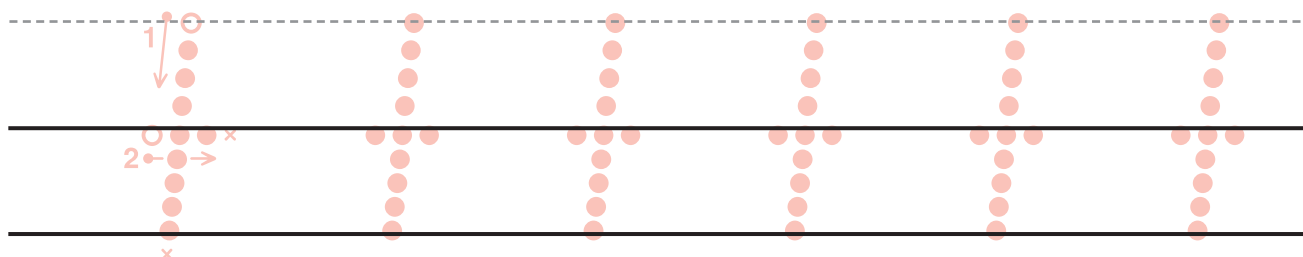
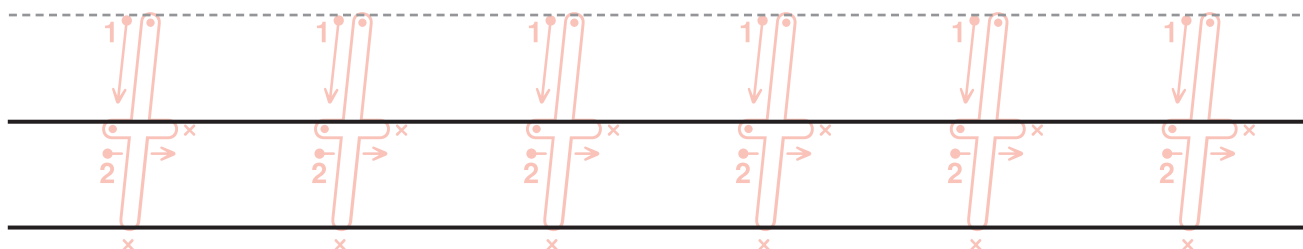


# Lower case t

The lower case 't' is a tall letter.  
We start at the top and make a straight line. We then make a little line across to finish the letter.



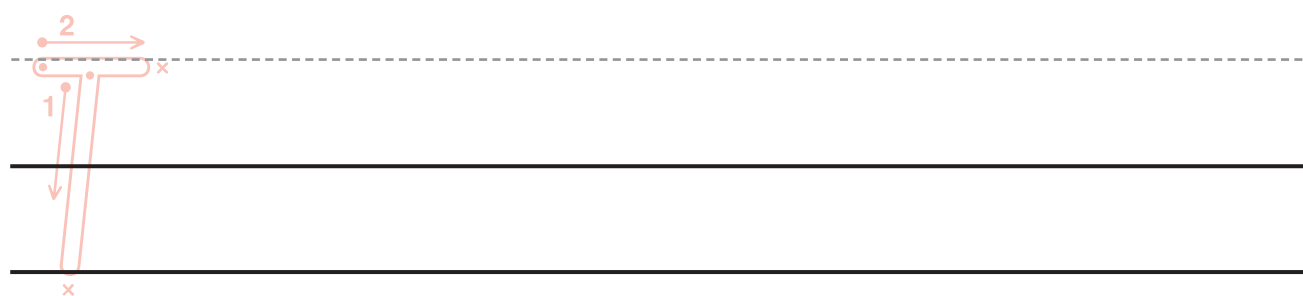
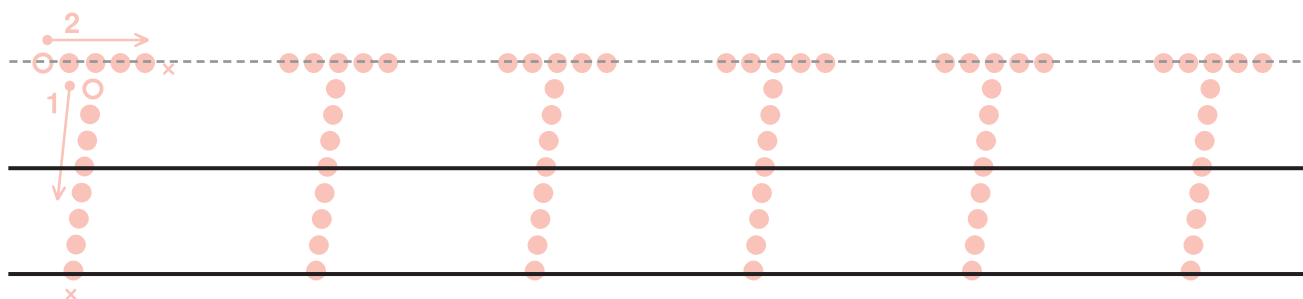
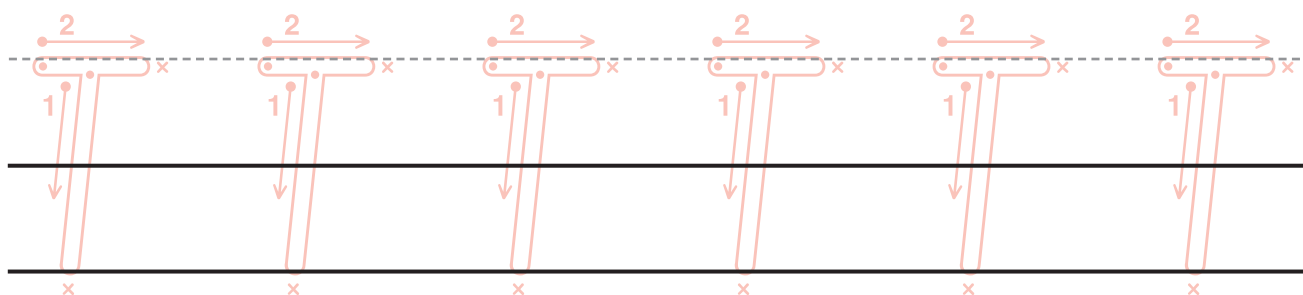
Example mnemonic: Down, across!



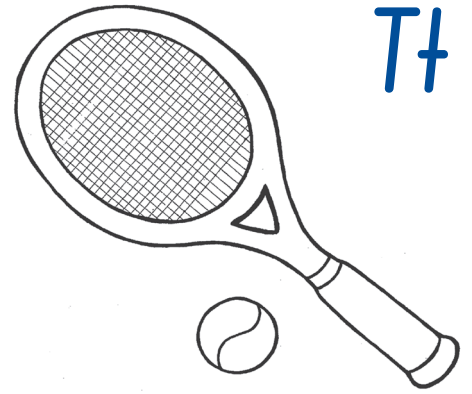
# Upper case T

The upper case 'T' is a tall letter.  
We start at the top and make a straight line.  
We then make a little line on the top to finish the letter.

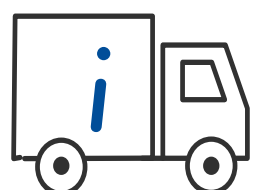
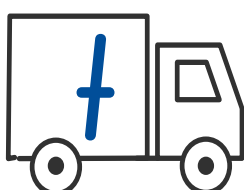
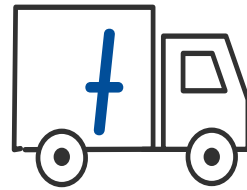
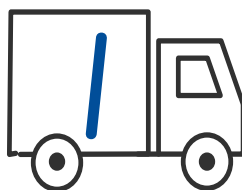
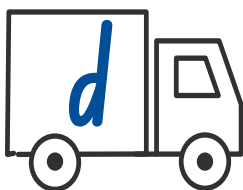
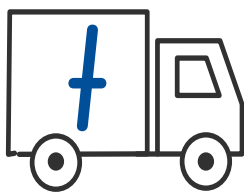
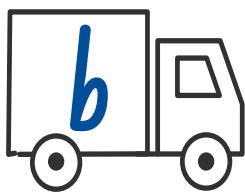
Example mnemonic: Down, across!



Can you draw some things that **start**  
with the **t** as in tennis phoneme (sound)?



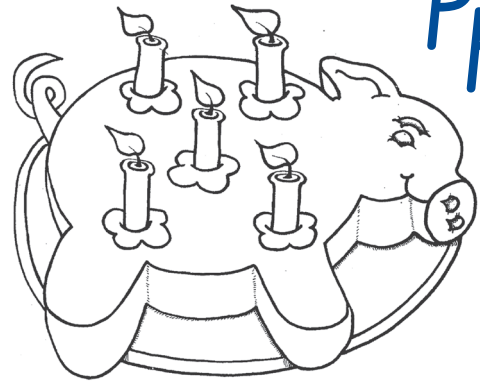
Colour the trucks with the letter **t** inside them.



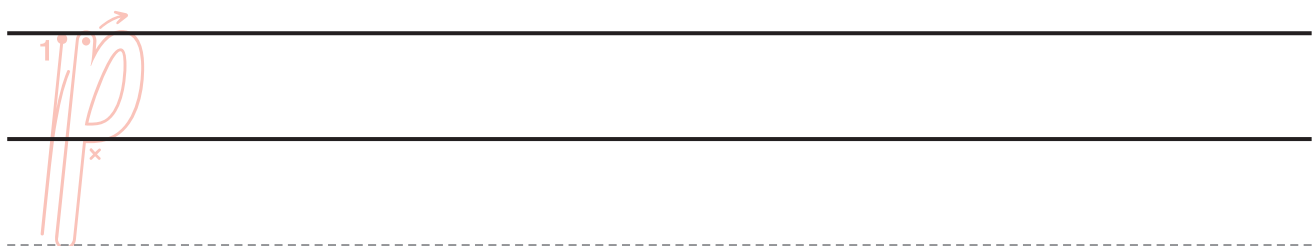
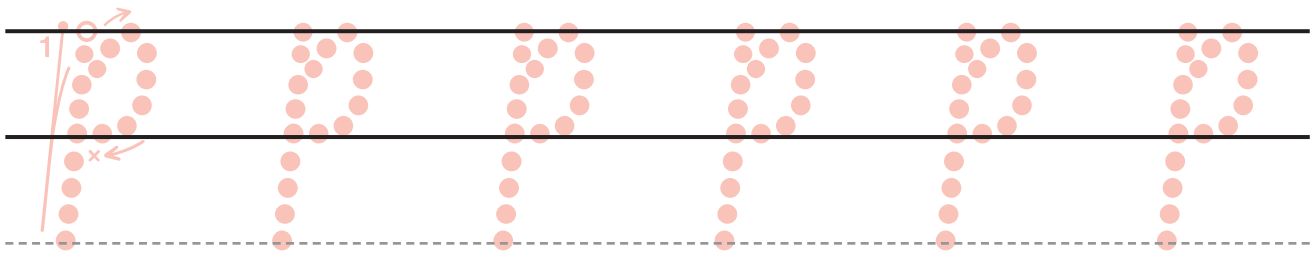
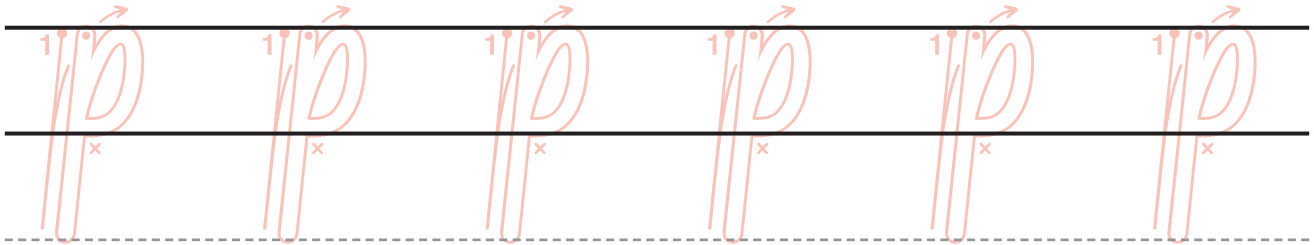
# Lower case p

Pp

The lower case 'p' is a long letter. We make a long line that goes down the page. We keep our pencil still, then follow the same line up until we are nearly at the top. We leave a little wedge at the top and make a round shape poking out from the line. Then we move back to the line.



Example mnemonic: Down, up, around and back!



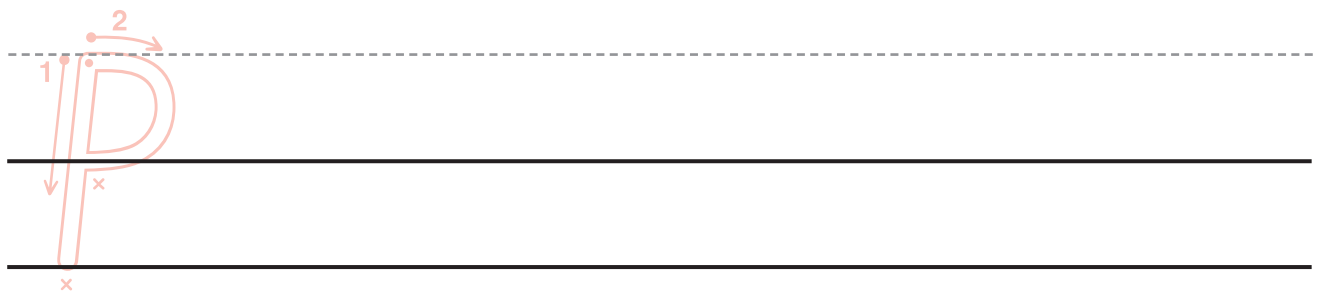
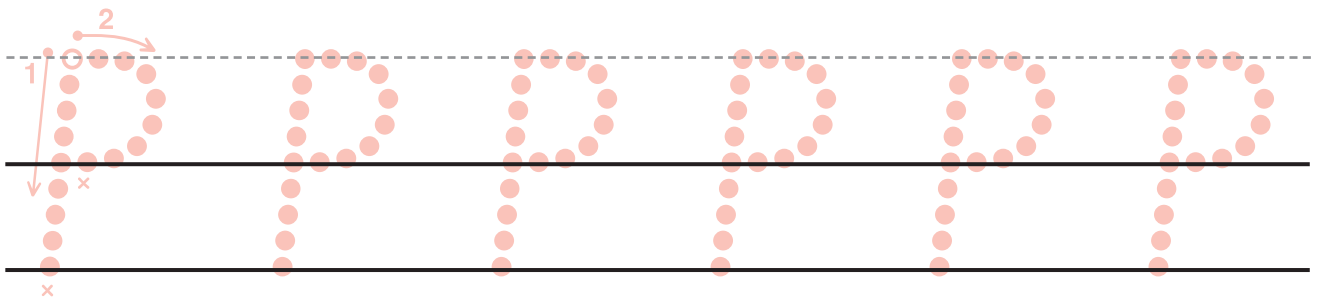
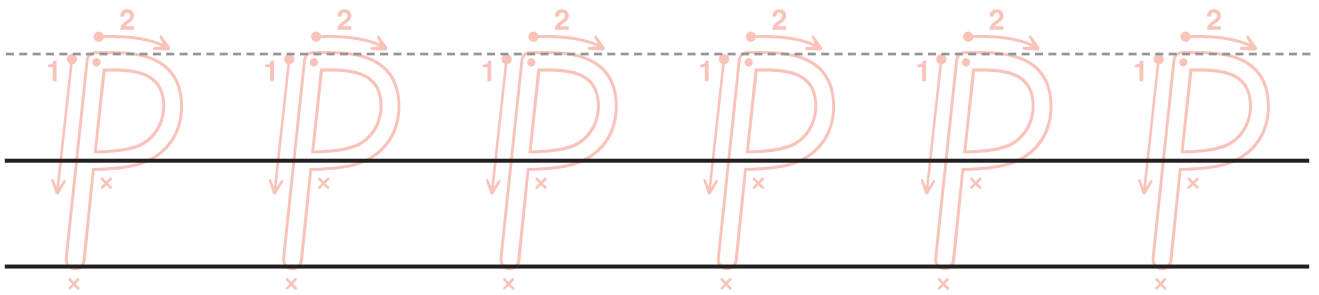
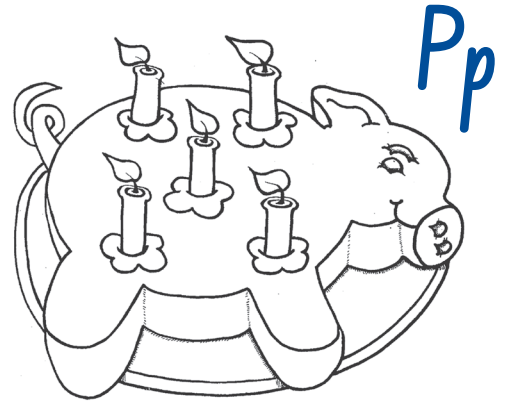
# Upper case P

The upper case 'P' is a tall letter.

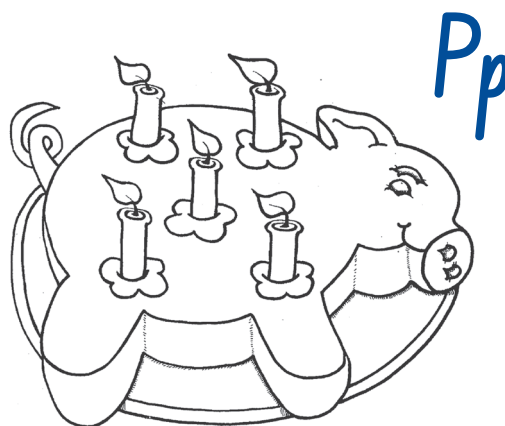
We start at the top and make a straight line.

We then we move to the top of the line and make a big bump coming from the top and it joins back to the straight line.

Example mnemonic: Down, up, around and back!



Can you draw some things that **start**  
with the **p** as in pig phoneme (sound)?



Colour the pears with the letter **p** inside them.

