

Teachers' Notes

Handwriting Basics: Practice for Beginners is for anyone who needs help in forming the various shapes of the letters of the English alphabet. It can be used by young or old, and it can be used with beginning learners of English as a new language. In this case, it is recommended that the learner have control over very basic grammatical skills and a spoken vocabulary of about 300 words.

This book may be used by learners working independently, but the support and encouragement of a helper will make the work faster and more fun.

Although the emphasis and purpose are to develop the hand-eye coordination that allows the writer to produce legible script, the practice exercises that focus on shape formation are also done in a very simple context so that the work is somewhat more meaningful than simple drawing of lines. For that reason the learners are also asked to put letters together to form words, for example, *stop, enter, woman, taxi*.

The practice work involves printing capital letters (also called upper case) and small letters (lower case). "Capital" and "small" are used in this book. The book also introduces cursive, but it does not offer extensive cursive practice. The decision to work on cursive is left primarily to the learner and helper and will depend on the situation. This practice book's purpose is to develop printed writing.

One of the first concerns for pre-literate writers is how to hold the pencil or pen. Classic examples are shown on the cover and title page. They can be used to guide the learner's physical hold on the pencil. The helper will probably physically help the learner find a comfortable and effective hold. It should also be noted that the illustrations are of right-handed people, except of the girl on the back cover. Lefties have to adjust (there was a time when they were forced to write right-handed.). Note that as the left hand moves across the page forming letters at the finger tips, the other fingers would naturally drag across the freshly written letters. Not a big problem with a pencil, but ink smudges. For that reason beginners may be better off using a pencil – and they can erase and try again. We recommend that the helper show and encourage learners to find their own way to write well.

Many handwriting materials show with small arrows the direction the pencil should go to move efficiently. The helper may choose to do that for the learner, but in this practice book we have taken a freer approach, feeling that the learner, especially the adult learner, will learn faster if they try to figure the directions of the lines themselves.

The typeface we have chosen as the standard for the learner, Kalam, is relatively simple. It slants slightly to the right, giving the lines a little more life than a straight up and down face, but learners should be allowed to find their own style.



The practice book proceeds step-by-step, beginning with the numbers. The English numbers are fairly universal and consequently familiar to most learners. Additionally, numbers do not have capitals, small letters, and cursive. Consequently, this first step is the easiest step. Because the practices have a simple content, the letters are introduced as needed to write simple words, phrases and sentences, not in alphabetical order. There is also an attempt to introduce easier letters before the more challenging ones.

For example, the first two steps introduce *E H I L M N A O J*. With the exception of J, these letters are all composed of straight lines and a circle.

At the end of the book there are some extra practice pages, but after Step 8, the helper should supplement the book with practices that are relevant to the situation, such as family names, country names, local signs, and documents such as licenses, certificates, and grocery store flyers.