

The daily sign-in

Lisa provides a daily sign-in each morning. The children come into the classroom, hang up their coats and bags, and then sign in just like teachers do. There are 5 to 8 sign-in sheets and the students line up and sign any one of these sheets. They may use their manila tag card as a reference if they aren't exactly sure how to make their names. When the sheets are full of names, they become sheets for reading, which many students learn to read quite quickly. Later, mostly to save on paper, Lisa or her partner Melanie has the students use chalk and mini-chalkboards to sign in. Even simple routines, such as making sure that students sign their names on the board when they go to the washroom or to a specific learning centre, help provide practice in writing their names as well as monitoring where students are.

REFLECTING ON THE LEARNING

- Reflect out loud on the child's attempts and demonstrate your appreciation of the effort taken. You can say, "You have used the model of your name and made three names on this paper with your pencil." Or, if the child wasn't able to do three names, comment on what he or she has done: "This is the way we would like you to make your name at school. Which do you think is your best attempt?"
- Choose one or two letters that the child has done in good standard form and comment on how these letters are easy to read. "I can read this word easily. That's because you've made your letters the right shape and size." Comment on the top-to-bottom formation of letters.
- Collect all the student sheets and read the names out loud to the whole class so they can see that reading their names out loud is reading and can be done by anyone with the ability.

NOTES ON ASSESSMENT

Before the Lesson: Almost all students will benefit from this lesson even if they are printing their names in "school" print when they first come to school. They will be introduced to the procedures of following directions from a teacher model and will have the top-to-bottom movement in the formation of letters reinforced.

Asking students to print their names on a piece of artwork or letter home before you begin this task will allow you to see which students will need to be monitored closely and which students might need some adaptations to make the lesson more interesting for them.

During the Lesson: You will be required to observe both the students' ability to stay focused and follow directions in a timely fashion, and their ability to use a model to make their names during this lesson. Having a good pencil grip, control over fine motor movements, and ability to sustain concentration are all necessary to complete three tries of writing their names; you will be both assisting students to do this by pointing out where to start or where to continue and helping them form the letters with hand-over-hand trials of tracing their names on the model card.

Asking students to tell you what they have done so far will help them begin a process of self-assessment. You can ask: "Tell me about your job. What have you

done so far? What do you need to do next? When will you be finished?” These questions will help students to maintain focus.

During this lesson you will be busy providing support for struggling students and so observations will need to be noted at a time after the lesson has been finished.

After the Lesson: If you collect the papers that students have worked on, you will be able to assess how well students were able to do this task during this first lesson. You will need to think back on their performance to determine whether focus and concentration were an issue, or if the main issue was an inability to copy a model with the fine motor skills needed. Be sure to make these observations in your anecdotal notes on the children in your class.

In the Appendixes, you will find a blackline master titled “Generic Assessment Checklist,” which you may use to assess how well students can make their names. Below is an example of how you could rate students:

Assessing the basic skill of _____ *Writing My Name*

Year 2007–2008

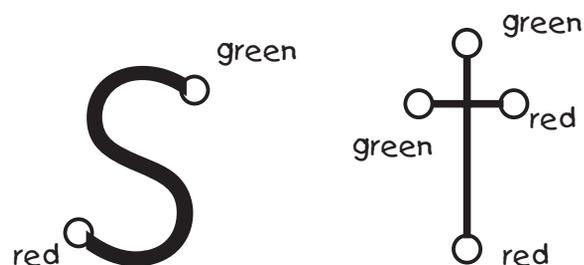
- 1 unable to do the task
 - 2 attempts the task with minimal ability
 - 3 demonstrates average ability with distinct need for further practice
 - 4 good ability—meets age-appropriate standards for the task
- Description of proficiency levels, with 1 being the lowest and 4 being the highest

Date Assessed	9/09										
Names of Students											
Marie	4										
Gabriel	1										
Chandra	3										

MAKING IT SIMPLER

If children are unable to do this task, they will need some one-to-one assistance with an adult. Many of the ideas listed below will be helpful for children who have little control over their writing implements and do not remember how the letters of their names go. For each session with your students, try to find something that they were able to do reasonably well and give specific feedback on what they did correctly.

Green Dot, Red Dot: For students who need help with directionality, you can put a green dot on the beginning spot where the pencil should go to make the letter and then a red dot where the letter ends. Here are two examples:



Trace the Letters from a Pencil: Sometimes, you may have to print the letters of names lightly and ask students to use skinny felt markers to trace them. Some teachers make names in small dotted lines that children can trace over.

Provide Tactile Stimulation: Ask students with fine motor difficulty to take their cards and make their names in a sandbox or in a long shallow box filled with salt, sand, or rice. Lisa uses a pie plate, which works well. Having their fingers trace letters through a substance helps to imprint the shape and direction of the letters in their names. Creating their names out of sandpaper letters and putting them on a card will also provide a tactile surface for students who need more sensory stimuli.

Limit the Goal: For example, telling students to focus on printing just the first two letters of their names may reassure them that you will always be able to recognize their names by these letters. Let them know that you will help them learn the rest of their names soon, but that they have made a great start.

Hand over Hand: If you can organize one-to-one time, have a student write his or her name on a chalkboard, hand over hand, with your hand over your student's to guide. As the student makes the letters, talk through it. It might sound something like this for the name Fay.

“We are going to make the capital *F* first, and we start at the top and make a straight line down, then we make a little line that goes from the top of the line we made to the right and then another little line halfway down that goes from the left to the right. We leave a spaghetti space, and then make an *a*, which is a circle and a line down. Finally, we make *y* which is a slanted line from top to bottom going from right to left, and then we make the top part a *v*.”

You can do this with a felt pen or pencil. After a number of practices ask the student to print the name without help.

Use Magnetic Letters: To help students learn the sequence of letters in their names, print their names on the chalkboard, and ask them to use magnetic letters to make their names. Check to make sure that the letters are close together but not touching. Then rearrange the letters (I often say that a windstorm has come up and moved the letters around). See if students can make their names again.

Provide a Larger Surface: It may be helpful for students to print large-sized letters, using a surface such as a chalkboard or an easel, to get the movements and shapes of the letters more firmly entrenched in their minds. Many students have difficulty with the fine motor skills; they are better able to make larger arm movements on an easel or chalkboard. Gradually, they can move to smaller letters, first on the chalkboard or easel, and then on paper.

Position Paper for “Lefties”: Left-handed students have difficulty visually monitoring printing since their hands cover their writing as they make letters from left to right, something that doesn't happen with right-handed students. It is helpful for them to position their paper so it is completely left of their midline. If you angle the paper so it lies parallel to the child's forearm, this can also help.