

## Play with Pasta...and Learn to Write

Pasta makes a great dinner, but it can also be used to teach kids proper letter formation! In this easy activity you'll help your child become aware of the way letters should be formed. Beginning writers often approach letter writing like drawing, trying to replicate the shape of the letter like they'd try to copy a picture of a sun or moon. They need to be taught that each printed letter is created by using a combination of straight or curved lines, sometimes referred to as *ball and stick* letters. In other words, there's a *structure* to printing! With a little pasta and some glue you can show your child how it's done.



### What You Need:

- Penne (straight) pasta
- Elbow or macaroni (curved) pasta
- Construction paper
- White glue (not a glue stick)

### What To Do:

1. Write your child's name on a piece of construction paper. The first letter should be capitalized and the others lowercase. The letters should be at least 3 inches high and have about  $\frac{1}{2}$  an inch of space between them, to avoid crowding once your child glues down the pasta.
2. As you point to each letter in your child's name, ask him if the letter is formed with straight lines, curved lines, or both. For instance, a capital N is made up of straight lines. However a capital D is made with a straight line and a curved line. Show your child how to use penne pasta for the straight lines, and elbow pasta for the curved lines. Using our examples again, he needs just penne for the N, but both penne and elbow pasta to make a D.
3. Hand over the glue (kids need to practice this too!) and have your child use it to trace over the first letter in his name. Once the glue is down, he should place the straight pasta on the straight lines and the curved pasta on the curved lines until his entire name is covered in pasta.

Once it's dry, give your child's masterpiece a prominent place on the fridge. All that glue and pasta has given him some insight into how letters are formed, and letter formation is an important tool as your child becomes a writer. The fact is, children who find it less difficult to write letters are more likely to want to write. And the more your child writes the better he'll get. So keep practicing, and keep that pasta handy!