

The thumbs-up trick for **b**, **d** and **p**

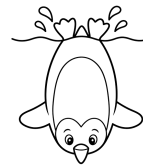
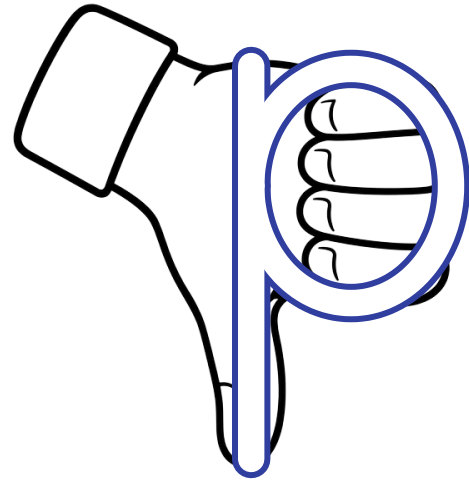
Your **left hand** is a letter. Make the shape, then check the letter against it.

b Thumbs up = b



Birds fly up!

p Thumbs down = p



Penguins dive down!

1 Make the hand

Left hand. Thumb up for b, thumb down for p.

2 Hold it by the letter

Look at the stick and the round part.

3 Does it match?

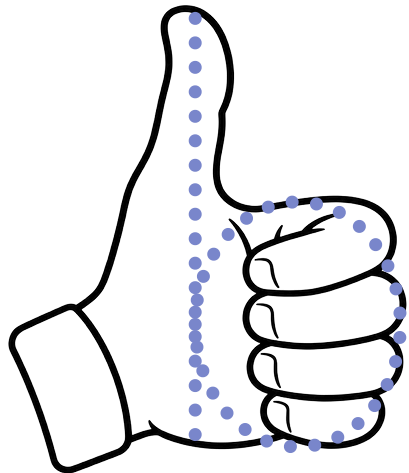
Yes: it's **b** (or **p**). It faces the other way: it's **d** (or **q**).

Always the left hand. Write with your left hand? Put the pencil down and check with it anyway. Your right hand makes the opposite letter.

Say the sound too. /b/ bird, /d/ donut, /p/ penguin. And a tip for q: it almost always comes with a u, as in queen.

Trace the letter on the hand

Trace the letter on the hand with a crayon and say its sound. Then color the hand.

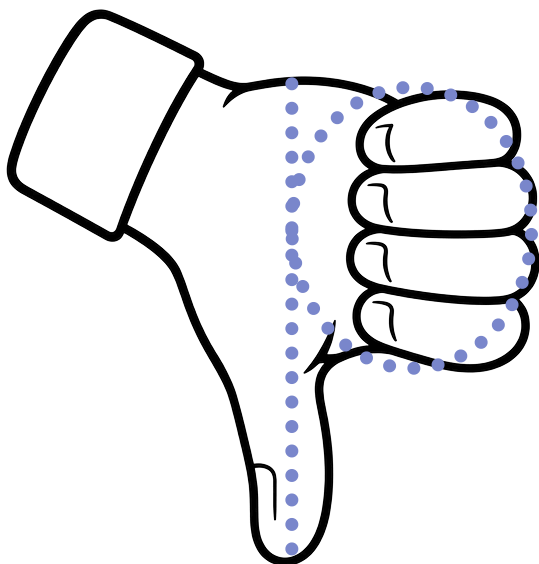


b **Thumbs up**

Trace the b. Say /b/.



Birds fly up!



p **Thumbs down**

Trace the p. Say /p/.



**Penguins dive
down!**

Find the bird letters

Circle every **b**. Not sure? Make your thumbs-up hand and hold it next to the letter.

d	b	d	b	d	d	d
d	b	d	b	d	b	b
b	b	b	d	d	d	d
b	b	d	d	b	d	b
b	b	d	b	b	d	d
d	d	d	d	b	b	b
d	b	b	b	d	d	d

I found _____ b's.

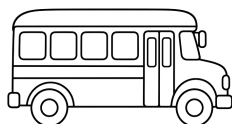


Color the bird.

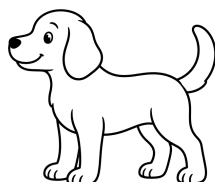
Birds fly up, like the thumb in a **b**.

b or d? Write the missing letter

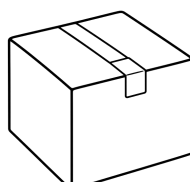
Say the word. Listen for /b/ or /d/. Write the letter, then check it with your thumbs-up hand.



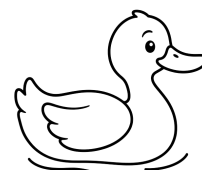
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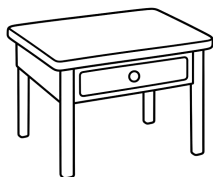
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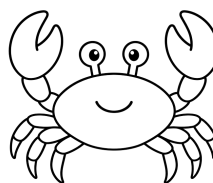
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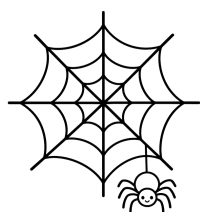
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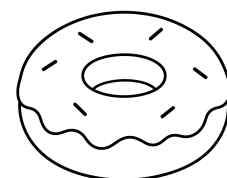
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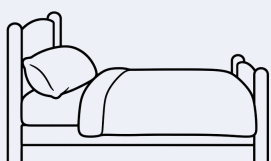
han __



tu __



__ onut



Bonus

__ e __

This word has a b *and* a d.

Thumbs down = p

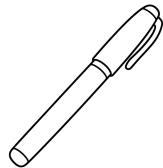
Circle every p. Check each one with your thumbs-down hand.

p	q	b	p	b	p	q	q
b	p	p	p	q	q	d	d
p	d	b	p	d	b	d	d
p	q	p	p	b	b	q	d

Write p where it goes. Does your p match your thumbs-down hand?



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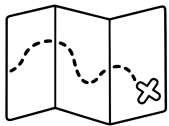
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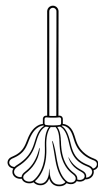
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cu__



ma__



mo__



__u__

qu

q tip: q almost always comes with u, as in queen.

Trace it, then read it

Trace the gray letters, then write your own. Say the sound each time.

b

Say /b/, like bird.

b b b b

d

Say /d/, like donut.

d d d d

p

Say /p/, like penguin.

p p p p

Read these words

Stuck on a letter? Check it with your hand.

bed

dad

pup

bad

dip

pad

bud

pod

bid

bib

For parents and teachers

Answer key

1. **Page 3:** there are 23 b's.
2. **Page 4:** bus, dog, box, duck, desk, bag, crab, dish, web, hand, tub, donut. Bonus: bed.
3. **Page 5:** there are 11 p's. Words: pan, pen, pot, cup, map, mop, pup.

How to use these pages

1. **One letter at a time.** Make b solid (pages 1–3) before mixing in d.
2. **Sound first.** Every time the student writes or finds a letter, they say its sound.
3. **Check, don't guess.** The hand is for checking a letter they are unsure of. Over time they need it less.
4. **Little and often.** Five minutes a day beats one long session.

Is reversing b and d a sign of dyslexia?

- **Usually not on its own.** Young children mix up b and d because the brain first learns that a thing facing left is the same thing facing right. Reading means unlearning that for letters.
- **Most children stop by about age 7 or 8** (the end of second grade).
- **Ask about an evaluation** if reversals continue past second grade, or come with other signs: trouble linking letters to sounds, slow and effortful reading, or guessing at words.

Watch the 40-second video

See the trick in action, with the bird and the penguin, and read our short guide to letter reversals.

readingmountain.com/resource-center/b-and-d-reversals

Reading Mountain teaches b, d and p with interactive lessons. Try the first two lessons free.

