

Should students still be taught cursive writing?

WITH PEOPLE RELYING on electronic forms of communication, such as e-mailing and texting, the need to learn the curves and loops of cursive handwriting may be waning.

Proponents of cursive writing say it is essential to daily life and to understanding history. It improves hand-eye coordination, and builds a variety of skills in youngsters. Critics argue that these days cursive writing is more of an art form than a necessary skill. It's too slow, they say, and it takes up teaching time that could be better spent on more important subjects.

What do you think?



Find out more about this topic on the Web:

www.miller-mccune.com/culture-society/handwriting-is-history-6540/

www.csmonitor.com/2007/1114/p13s01-legn.html

www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1912419,00.html

YES

from members:

Roy Lee Johnson
Eastpointe, MI



Even though we have computers, people should still know how to compose a letter and to write properly. Also,

everyone needs their own signature for their name.

Cynthia Pannor
Redondo Beach, CA



It is part of history and how we express our thoughts with some class and elegance. Anyone can learn

how to push a button, but not everyone can write beautifully.

David A. McGrath
Islip, NY



It teaches children how to think about what they write. It improves the content of their writing, and corrects tense, punctuation and syntax.

NO

from members:

Samantha Rivera
Spanaway, WA



I learned it as a child but do not use it now. Everything we do now is on the computer.

All the reports and schoolwork as you get older has to be typed out.

James B. Cannon
Buford, GA



I do not find it necessary at all. Cursive writing usually involves having to figure out the writer's slant. No

pun intended.

Pamela Sargeant-Laurence
Austin, TX



Kids today get more hand-to-eye from computers, phones and iPods. If texting were cursive it would have

died an early death.



PHOTO:ISC

from an expert in the field:



Todd Misura runs Maryland-based Write Here Right Now Inc. (www.writehererightnow.com) and has spent more than 20 years working with children who struggle with one or more of the aspects of writing.

CURSIVE HANDWRITING INSTRUCTION continues to be a worthwhile endeavor in our schools. Research shows that children who form their letters more easily and automatically will score better on standardized tests than their less-skilled classmates. In the high-stakes environment of educational testing, legibility and speed do, in fact, matter. A child who writes slowly and with decreased legibility simply will not score as well as a

child who writes quickly and with less effort.

With some exceptions, ACT and SAT college entrance examinations require handwritten responses. Handwriting must be legible, automatic and fast. Cursive is the answer.

Many reading specialists teach children cursive writing because they believe cursive mastery improves a child's ability to read and spell accurately. Their research indicates that cursive improves a child's ability to "chunk" letter sounds (for example "-ing"). The connected nature of cursive helps a child get an improved mental picture of these sound chunks. By learning these predictable letter groupings (or "chunks") within a word, as opposed to decoding each and every letter, a student can more quickly and easily decode (or read) the words.

Several related studies also contend that if a child can more easily recognize these chunks that make up words, there will be carryover to the child's ability to spell with improved accuracy. Here again, cursive is beneficial.

Modern cursive is not difficult to teach, nor does it require an inordinate amount of instruction time. In most schools, gone are the days of the Palmer method, in which children had to complete row after row of cursive using slanted swoops, loops and curlicues. The cursive style I teach can be taught in five- to 10-minute mini-lessons, has fewer loops and is much easier to learn than traditional cursive. I encourage children to come up with their own style once they have mastered the basic cursive strokes. In my experience, cursive teaches children how to write with less effort and increases their legibility and speed.

Cursive mastery benefits children by allowing them to keenly focus their energies upon the content of their writing and less upon the actual letter formation. I want every tool available when teaching children. ☞

from an expert in the field:



Melissa Shepard is the principal of Sue Reynolds Elementary School in Augusta, Georgia (<http://reynolds.rcboe.org>).

CHILDREN USUALLY BEGIN to learn cursive writing in the third grade and it's taught for approximately nine to 12 weeks. Students also spend some time in fourth grade practicing cursive—approximately 30 minutes a week. However, one has to question the need for this.

Cursive writing is not required for most professions, and in our technology-driven world it is not a necessary skill. When I asked my teenage son whether he ever needed to use cursive writing, he took a break from texting and surfing YouTube to laugh and question my expertise as a principal. He informed me that he does not write in cursive, he has never been required to write in cursive and his computer will do it for him.

Some argue that cursive writing is needed to provide a signature, but even this isn't necessarily true anymore. I have filed federal and state documents online without signing them with a pen.

Cursive's proponents often argue that it strengthens neuron connections in the brain and builds visual, spatial and coordination skills. However, many other activities, such as physical education, do this too. In fact, some educators say the best way to strengthen neuron connections in the brain is to relate what students learn in the classroom to their previous personal experiences and to make real-world connections to new experiences.

Moreover, good handwriting has not been proven to be associated with intelligence, SAT scores, school success, career success, etc. If it were, then we would be in big trouble, because I have never met a doctor with good handwriting!

Modern education continues to stress the importance of teaching cursive writing because this is what is familiar to education. Education has a way of moving in circles, and it is difficult for some to move away from the circle due to comfort and familiarity.

We need to make the time for reading intervention. Approximately 21 million Americans cannot read, and 45 million are marginally illiterate. I believe the time currently spent on teaching cursive would be better used to hone reading skills. Could you tell a child there is no time to provide him with reading intervention because he has to practice his cursive writing? ☞

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