

HANDWRITING Pocketbook

A pocketful of tips,
tools and techniques
for teaching, improving
and troubleshooting
handwriting



Julie Bennett

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LAUREL HOUSE, STATION APPROACH,
ALRESFORD, HAMPSHIRE SO24 9JH UK

Telephone: +44 (0)1962 735573
Fax: +44 (0)1962 733637
Email: sales@teacherspocketbooks.co.uk
Web: www.teacherspocketbooks.co.uk

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HANDWRITING

Pocketbook

The quick
brown fox



By Julie Bennett

Cartoons:
Phil Hailstone

Published by:



Teachers' Pocketbooks

Laurel House, Station Approach,
Alresford, Hampshire SO24 9JH, UK

Tel: +44 (0)1962 735573

Fax: +44 (0)1962 733637

E-mail: sales@teacherspocketbooks.co.uk

Website: www.teacherspocketbooks.co.uk

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Introduction

Why a book on handwriting? In this technological age, don't computers eliminate the necessity for handwritten script? Technology has made an enormous contribution to the world of education – and the benefits of word-processing are unquestionable. But handwriting still offers some things that computers cannot, and as two primary school pupils point out:

'We mustn't always rely on machines.' (9 yrs)

'We need to keep doing handwriting in case we forget how to do it.' (7 yrs)

Students use handwriting for between 30% and 60% of classroom time; it is still the main method of jotting down notes, capturing ideas and of recording evidence of learning in school and in external examinations.

Introduction

Handwriting has played an important part in human history and communication. Scribes have been held in high esteem across cultures and across centuries for their ability to weave **beauty** into our written language. It's easy to see that there's an **aesthetic** aspect to handwriting for both reader and writer.

There is also something very **personal** about handwriting. A handwritten letter offers a personal touch and represents an **investment of self**.

Being personally involved in the **fluent, creative process** of handwriting gives us a sense of **ownership, pride** and **resourcefulness**.

Perhaps more than that, handwriting is an expression of **identity**. As a teenager, I remember experimenting with elements of other people's writing and making them my own. I took the roundness of my mother's hand, the uniformity of my father's, the slant and neatness of my friend Vince's script, Mr Eagles' funny '**E's**', and later I took inspiration from the italicised style of Steve Varley, my university lecturer. Our handwriting style **evolves**. It grows up with us and it's **unique** to us.

Introduction

When I first started teaching 20 years ago, I found that, despite a structured approach, achieving acceptable handwriting was a stumbling block for many learners.

When I later began working with students who had specific learning difficulties, I found many of them struggled with handwriting. This caused them so many additional problems that it led me on a quest to discover the specific reasons for handwriting difficulties, and how they might be overcome.

This book is the result of that quest. It is designed to offer ideas and resources on handwriting for **teachers, teaching assistants** and **parents**. It covers issues that arise in both the formal teaching of handwriting and in the informal opportunities for improving handwriting that occur during the school day or at home. You'll find it useful whether you're teaching beginner writers or improving and troubleshooting handwriting problems with older students.

Adopting some of the ideas here will enable you to understand and support your students as they learn and improve their handwriting.



**Handwriting
Matters**



**Handwriting
Policy**



**Are You Sitting
Comfortably?**



**Fixing the
Goalposts**



**Teaching
Beginner Writers**



**Improving
Handwriting**



**Solving
Handwriting
Problems**



**Handwriting
Directory**



Handwriting Matters

The problems



In our classrooms we have the responsibility for teaching and/or improving students' handwriting. We regularly encounter students whose handwriting is:

- Slow
- Illegible
- Poorly formed
- Joined incorrectly
- Lacking in fluency
- A mixture of capitals and lower case
- A mixture of cursive (joined) and print (not joined)
- Sloping in multiple directions
- Not uniform in size/too large/too small

These difficulties may be a result of developmental delay or specific learning difficulty, or they may simply be habitual patterns that have developed over time. Whatever the causes, learners with handwriting difficulties often have to invest an enormous amount of effort to create acceptable handwriting. As a result they may experience tiredness, frustration and may possibly get 'turned off' from learning.



Struggling with handwriting hinders learning and achievement.



What are the benefits?



It is beneficial to work towards improving handwriting for both our students and ourselves.

Some benefits of fluent and legible handwriting are:





- Ease of learning letter strings and spellings
- Higher exam results
- Better readability for teachers and examiners (time saving for teachers)
- Easier acceptance of students' ideas because they are more easily read
- Enhanced ability to focus on composition and quality of writing content
- Improved capacity of writers to access their own thoughts and information
- Raised sense of self-competence as writers, which in turn increases achievement across all subjects

“ It is important that we work towards improving our students' level of handwriting, as it will improve their overall performance. ”

What is handwriting?



Handwriting is not an isolated activity; neither can it be seen solely as a motor activity (all about movement). It is part of language activity. Virginia Berninger refers to handwriting as 'language by hand', which is a useful reminder of its context and purpose.

Reading	=		Language by eye
Listening	=		Language by ear
Speaking	=		Language by mouth
Writing	=		Language by hand

Handwriting should be seen in the context of its place in literacy development. We know that the most effective methods for teaching literacy are structured, cumulative, and multi-sensory; it is the same for handwriting. First we must be clear about what we are teaching and expecting from our writers.