

Introduction

Handwriting is my passion, in fact, more than a passion it is a calling. I delight in seeing beautiful cursive script. However, it is more than just teaching students to write neatly, it is about what the handwriting symbolizes or says about that unique individual. Computers aside, students seem to recognize the importance of a pleasing, legible script. A child who can write fluidly and neatly can also get their ideas on paper quickly, then they can focus on content over letter formation. Regrettably, the penmanship of American students has deteriorated over the last several decades. I see children struggle with writing and know the far-reaching effect poor writing has on them. Writing difficulties have an adverse effect on education, and in the business world costing companies billions.

In our current educational system, most students are not taught cursive until the second or third grade, if at all. However, the *Penmanship Council of America* recommends that, “cursive script be taught as the primary form of writing in the first grade.” By the third grade, student’s printing habits are so fixed that it is difficult for them to learn an entirely new way of writing. The transition time between “unlearning” and “new learning” frustrates and confuses many students, and they often revert back to printing.

The complex motor skills required for handwriting are really child’s play. Why have we turned it into a chore? Most educators receive little or no training in cursive instruction. The *New American Cursive Penmanship Program (NAC)* was developed to remedy that need. The *NAC Alphabet* is a simplified script that is legible, fast and attractive. Every stroke in the *NAC Alphabet* was analyzed for clarity, speed and ease of learning. The *NAC Copybook* is simple, clear and effective, and it focuses on increasing legibility and ease of learning for beginners. It has no distracting illustrations or games so the student can focus on his/her writing and the correct letterforms. Numerous opportunities to trace and practice correct letterforms improve the student’s graphic maturity. The user-friendly *StartWrite/NAC* software program allows teachers and parents to customize worksheet pages and integrate cursive practice with any subject. You can create worksheets illustrating how to write the student’s name, spelling words, scripture and poems all in the *NAC* script. It makes teaching and learning penmanship pleasurable. The *New American Cursive Penmanship Program* is designed for adaptability to the skill level and individuality of the student.

Handwriting is a vital life skill. Early training in cursive is essential; it allows the student to build up speed for class work and tests. A fluid cursive script allows the hand to glide over the page instead of hopping across with the disconnected up and down strokes of printing. As an expressive form of communication, cursive writing is more “you” than any printed piece could ever hope to be.

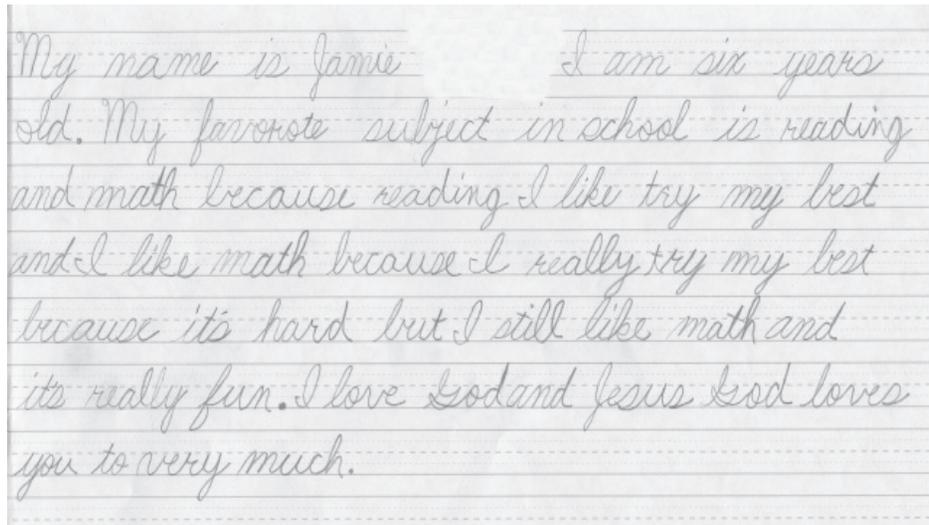


Why Teach Cursive Writing?

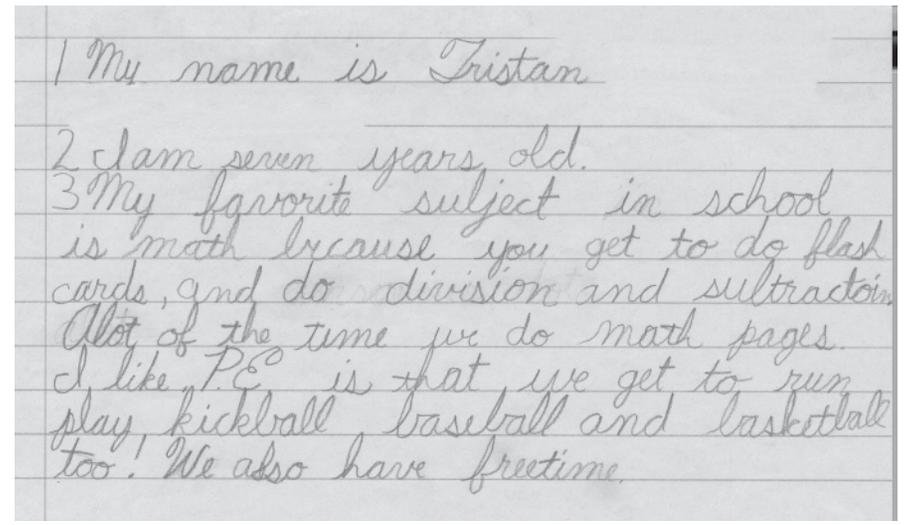
Few things help enhance a student's academic self-respect more than the development of good penmanship. A well-rounded child should learn to use cursive **and** computers. It is hard for children to read cursive if they do not know how it is written. Is there anyone who doesn't appreciate distinctive, legible handwriting?

1. **Cursive improves the continuity and fluidity of thought in written communication.** Connecting letters increases the speed of writing. Increased speed improves attention span and the ability to excel academically. The connectivity of letters is pleasing to children. They feel the flow of the letters and they sense the delight of the movement.
2. **Cursive improves neural connections in the brain.** Cursive improves the dynamic interplay of the left and right hemispheres of the brain. The physiological benefits of the release and control (up and down) movements of cursive help build pathways in the brain while improving mental effectiveness.
3. **Cursive graphically illustrates the development of fine motor skills.** Handwriting is a frozen manifestation of the complex development of the brain. Few outward expressions convey a well-educated individual better than the ability to communicate thoughts and ideas effectively through the written word. Nice penmanship is like a business suit for your letter, it makes a good impression. Cursive is more individualistic and expressive than printing; it's an art in itself.

First grade writing samples:



My name is Jamie I am six years old. My favorite subject in school is reading and math because reading I like try my best and I like math because I really try my best because its hard but I still like math and its really fun. I love God and Jesus God loves you to very much.



1 My name is Tristan
2 I am seven years old.
3 My favorite subject in school is math because you get to do flash cards, and do division and subtraction. A lot of the time we do math pages. I like P.E. is that we get to run, play, kickball, baseball and basketball too! We also have freetime.

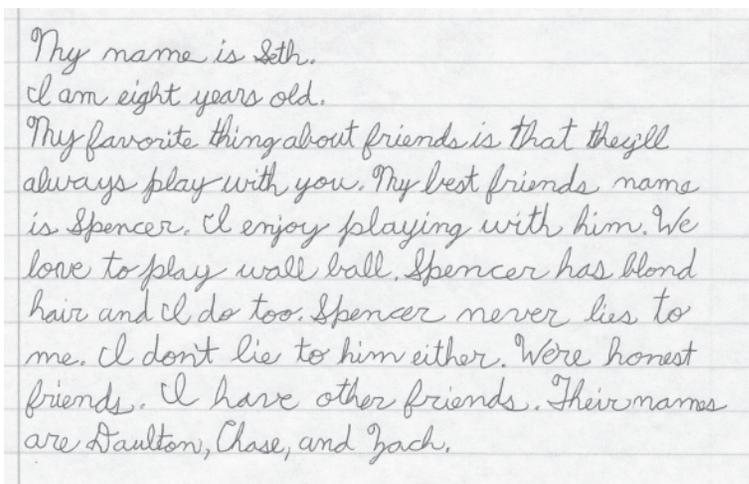
Why start cursive training early?

If you teach cursive first you can always develop a good print style later. But if you teach printing first, many students never develop good cursive and often go back to printing. Children learn print from reading so it is not essential to have them perfect printing. Research indicates that waiting to change from printing to cursive until the third grade slows students down to a first grade speed level for at least a year. Learning cursive early frees up instruction time in the third grade. Most young students are eager to learn cursive and see it as a rite of passage. The three main reasons to start cursive training as early as the first grade are:

1. Because they have the capability! Before the 1940's, U.S. students were taught cursive in the first grade and learned to write quite nicely. The ability to write a fast legible script is rapidly declining in America. In 2007 a national survey indicates only 16% of high school seniors are writing in cursive. We are losing the ability to write fluidly in our own language.
2. Cursive develops the neurological connections in the brain required for early fine motor skill development. The ability to write the letters from memory fluidly (until it becomes automatic) increases the writer's speed and ability to focus on content.
3. Cursive is easier to learn than printing especially for children with learning challenges such as Dyslexia and Attention Deficit Disorder. In printing, many letters look alike and are easily reversed. Children often become confused and make unnecessary errors. Starting cursive in first grade eliminates the difficult transition from manuscript to cursive in a later grade.

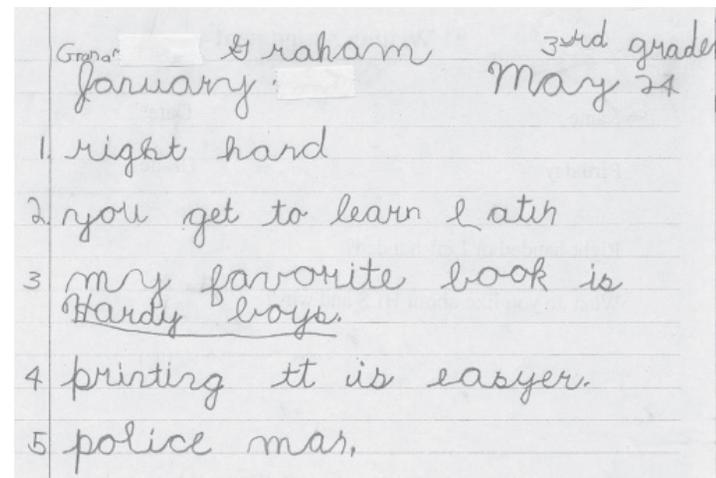
Third Graders

CURSIVE TAUGHT IN FIRST GRADE



My name is Seth.
I am eight years old.
My favorite thing about friends is that they'll always play with you. My best friends name is Spencer. I enjoy playing with him. We love to play wall ball. Spencer has blond hair and I do too. Spencer never lies to me. I don't lie to him either. We're honest friends. I have other friends. Their names are Staulton, Chase, and Zach.

CURSIVE TAUGHT IN THIRD GRADE



Grandpa: Graham
January: May 24
3rd grade
1. right hand
2. you get to learn later
3. my favorite book is Hardy boys.
4. printing it is easier.
5. police man.