Master Handwriting - The Complete Guide to Improving Your Handwriting
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Introduction

In this age of computers, tablets, smart phones and other electronic devices, where most official documents are typed, why would anyone need to improve his or her handwriting?

Done correctly, handwriting can convey the message you’re trying to send, and it can also add a personal touch, especially to items such as gifts, cards and invitations. The art of handwriting goes beyond technology and has been a part of society for ages. With a bit of practice and some easy techniques it is possible to improve your scrawl to the point where it is not only readable, but even pleasing to the eye.

Students spent a lot of time perfecting penmanship skills in years past. This has significantly changed, with less time being devoted to this skill in this digital age. This reduced stress on the ability to write properly has led to more people encountering problems with poor or unreadable handwriting. In this guide, you will find some easy steps you can use to develop your penmanship skills and make your handwriting neater and more legible.

We have narrowed down problems with handwriting to a few specific areas. For example, alignment and spaces between words is one widespread problem. How one holds the pen or pencil can be another problem. Many people have developed the problem of gripping a pen or pencil incorrectly, and consequently have dreadful handwriting. If this problem goes on for too long, it can be very difficult to correct.

The process of perfecting your handwriting is actually quite simple: it’s possible to get better penmanship just by writing a paragraph a day. Depending on your
personality, you may wish to start a diary for this purpose. Some people do it by just writing random words on any piece of paper they see lying around.

In this guide, you will learn how to make practicing your handwriting fun. We will also look at common handwriting problems such as letter formation and sizing, the spacing between each word and your line alignment. In short, we will retrain you, giving you the tools to write legibly. There’s also a section for left-handed persons, where we focus on the unique challenges faced by this group.

Regardless of your age, if you’ve always felt embarrassed by your handwriting, learning how to improve it will certainly be worth the effort. Your handwriting is a subtle representation of you. Prospective employers, business contacts and even friends will have a tendency to judge your capabilities just by your penmanship, regardless of the contents of your handwritten message.

Handwriting does not have to be a battlefield. You can make headway once you aim at a precise goal and schedule regular practice. By the time you finish this guide, you should be able to write down phone messages, compose handwritten letters and fill in forms with handwriting that is readable, neat, and small enough to fit into the allotted spaces. Don’t give up out of frustration and discouragement – improving your handwriting may require more effort than you expected it would. Legible handwriting is a worthy cause worth waiting for!

**Modern Scripts: NEW Ways to Form Your Letters**

Also called joined-up, joint or running writing, cursive is any method of handwriting in which letters are written in a conjoined and/or flowing style, usually with the intention of making writing faster. There arose a debate in the late 20th century that teaching cursive was harder than it should be: that traditional cursive
was not necessary, because students found it easier to use slanted characters known as “italic.” This led to a shift in the approach to handwriting.

The Traditional, Old Methods of Handwriting

**Spencerian Script**

Spencerian was a script style that thrived in the United States from 1850 to 1925 and was in effect regarded as the American standard writing style for business communication before the typewriters became prevalent. The method bears the name of Platt Rogers Spencer, who used a variety of existing scripts for ideas to develop a distinctive oval-based penmanship technique that could be written swiftly and legibly to assist in matters of business communication and stylish personal letter writing.

![The Coca-Cola logo is a classic example of Spencerian Script](image)

**Palmer Method**

Austin Palmer developed the Palmer Method of teaching penmanship at the turn of the nineteenth century. Students of this technique learned to assume a consistent method of writing cursive with regular motions. It was a great deal faster than the painstaking Spencerian Method, and allowed the writer to, in effect, vie with the typewriter, and so Palmer’s
supporters liked to call attention to how quickly and easily the technique could be mastered.

**Modern Handwriting Methods**

**Zaner Bloser Method**
Charles Zaner, founder of a penmanship college, got together with Elmer Bloser to develop the Zaner-Bloser method of teaching cursive in 1904. The two were business partners at the time. The Zaner-Bloser Method is a very popular method of teaching cursive the United States even to this day. It teaches students to create letters through the use of a sequence of arrows drawn around the practice letters, which point to the strokes that should be made first and the direction in which the stroke should be made. The method covers both print and cursive writing.

**Getty-Dubay**
Getty-Dubay is a fairly new adaptation of italic script developed in 1976 by Barbara Getty and Inga Dubay to ease the switch to cursive. Only the lowercase letter “k” and a small number of uppercase letters have forms unlike their printed counterparts save for the strokes to join the letters. About one-third of American home-schooled children are reportedly learning Getty-Dubay rather than the usual manuscript-then-cursive handwriting styles.
**Barchowsky Fluent Handwriting (BFH)**

Like Getty-Dubay, with BFH, one easy alphabet serves learners from infancy into later life with legibility, speed and individuality. BFH never changes letter formation, so teaching time is saved. There is no need to unlearn letter formation or to stop to remember how a particular letter is formed, leading students to transmit their thoughts to paper much more efficiently.

**D’Nealian**

D’Nealian was developed by Donald Thurber in 1978. It was designed as a system to alleviate the problems with teaching children the standard Zaner-Bloser script technique and the consequent difficulty transitioning to cursive writing. Theoretically, it’s easier for children to learn and attain basic handwriting skills using this technique than conventional cursive writing.

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**Best Handwriting Advice: Tips for Holding Your Pen Correctly**

It may appear silly to think about how you hold your pen when writing. The way you grip your pen, however, not only influences how you write and how you sign
your name, but also offers a peek into your psyche. A person’s pen grip determines how he or she forms each letter and is responsible for the unique look of handwriting. As you explore different writing methods to find the one that suits you best, you should also think about improving your pen grip.

**Here are Three Secrets to Holding Your Pen the Right Way**

1. **The Tripod Grasp**

The time-honored and most comfortable method for holding any writing instrument is the tripod grasp. The thumb and the middle and index fingers create a tripod that holds the pen or pencil, as illustrated in the picture. The index fingertip should be resting on top of the writing instrument. All of your fingers should be slightly bent. Stationery stores sell a range of tools that will help in keeping the fingers in position, because it can be difficult to keep them in the tripod grasp.

![Tripod Grasp Image](image)

2. **Hold the Pen at the Correct Angle**

Using the tripod grasp, hold the pen in your dominant hand about one inch above its tip. The pen should slant at about 45 degrees as you grasp it loosely. The end of the pen should point toward your shoulder. Some people position the paper in
a way that makes a slant in the handwriting possible, while others leave the page straight and produce the slant with their handwriting method of choice.

3. Grasp the Pen Loosely

Do not clasp your fingers around the pen or hold it too firmly. You just need to pull it across the page, so don’t try to strangle it. When writing, do not push the pen too heavily against the page. That makes it harder to make the even lines required for writing, particularly cursive. You won’t have to press too hard if you get a good pen – all you should be doing is pulling it evenly against the paper. It’s always a good idea to test out the pen before you purchase it.

Too many people hold the pen too tightly, or they grip it between the wrong fingers. Incorrect grip on your pen will actually cause finger and wrist problems at some point, and it can make your writing look sloppy. So always keep in mind that you should hold your pen in a manner that’s comfortable, at an angle between thumb and forefinger. Keeping a good grip on your pen can help your handwriting to improve really fast.

How to Hold a Pen

Between your thumb and two fingers place
Your pen to write with comeliness and grace;
Your thumb first aloft, as highest bestowe,
Your forefinger next, your middle finger belowe;
Hold softlie your pen, lean lightlie thereon,
Write softlie therewith, and pause thereupon.
For swiftness will come of itself anon,
Ill tricks are soone caught, but not so soone gon.

From the Writing Schoolmaster by Peter Bailes, 1590
Retraining Your Arm – 5 Ways for 5 Days

The finger muscles are not the “right muscles” for writing. In fact, the “right muscles” can be found in the forearm and shoulder girdle. In addition to giving a smooth, clean, full look to the completed text, the forearm and shoulder muscles can do much more complex actions than you might think and they don’t tire as easily as the fingers.

Nearly anyone can improve the quality of his or her work by practicing handwriting. If you’ve ever found it hard to think and write at the same time, or you’ve missed a large part of a lecture because you were taking notes, or you tire of writing in a short time, then this section is for you. Below are some quick, but effective, exercises – specifically designed for busy adults – for the shoulder girdle, forearm and fingers to keep the muscle groups you use for writing strong and flexible.

These are five different ways to train this muscle group so you can do a different exercise each day of the week.

**Monday – Air Writing and Painting**

Raise your hand to practice forming letters in the air. These pretend letters should be made as large as possible. Persist with this exercise even if it feels stupid in the beginning. You will feel the movement in your upper arm, shoulder, and back muscles. Gradually make your air letters smaller and smaller. Practice air writing from a-z once daily for several days for 10-15 minutes per day.

If you grip your pen or pencil incorrectly, it’s a good idea to paint often. It’s difficult to grasp a thin paintbrush with anything other than the tripod grip, and so it will be good practice for writing with other instruments. You will become used to
the correct grip and holding a pen or pencil any other way will begin to feel awkward.

**Tuesday – Pay Attention to Muscle Coordination**

Take note of the muscles you use when you write. You should be using your forearms and shoulders in a great, synchronized flowing motion. Do not use your finger muscles to “draw” letters. Finger writers place their wrists on the document they’re writing, then pick up their writing hands and move them frequently as they go down the line. Your fingers are just guides, controlled by muscles that are much larger than just your wrist.

**Wednesday – Do Activities that Improve Motor Skills**

Certain yoga poses, jumping jacks and chair push ups can improve your gross motor skills. Get involved in a pottery class: shaping clay or squeezing a foam ball or even working with play dough will enhance your fine motor skills, while reinforcing the main muscles used for writing. Hand-eye coordination is a fine motor skill necessary to complete any task that requires a pencil. However, in order to write using your forearms and shoulders as described, it’s necessary to develop your gross motor skills as well.

Daily actions, for example lacing and tying shoes, fastening clothing or zippering a winter coat can help your handwriting. And play with your children: their small toys, for example Lego’s, small blocks, miniature cars, and action figures also strengthen the “handwriting” muscles.

**Thursday – Have Fun With Handwriting Day**

Teachers of handwriting must come up with creative ways to keep children engaged, and you can use some of these methods too! For example, the old game of pick up sticks teaches the type of coordination needed for handwriting. You can also play the game “Operation,” where you squeeze a pair of tweezers
and attempt to remove a bone without triggering any lights. Even mundane activities like stirring cake mixture can help you retrain your arms to become a better hand-writer.

Exercises such as playing hopscotch or jumping rope will improve your motor skills and strengthen the coordination between your eyes and the rest of your body, enabling them to work better together.

The “leopard crawl” is another good way to have fun with handwriting. This exercise should be done on grass or on a stretch of floor. It’s another great exercise to do with your kids. To do the leopard crawl, lie on your stomach and then move forward on your elbows using your shoulders to pull yourself along. It’s a great outdoor activity, but you can also do it under the tables and chairs in your home. The benefit is increased shoulder strength, making it easier to control the muscles used for writing.

**Friday – Practice Letter Formation**

If you can get hold of a first-grader’s Big Chief tablet, use it for practice. Using your shoulder and forearm muscles, make lines, loops and spirals freehand. Your strokes and lines will look crooked and downright ugly at first, but don’t be discouraged. Concentrate on keeping your wrist, hand and fingers stationary and in proper alignment, and let the big muscles do the work.

Create and print out the worksheets to practice consistent formation of letters using a continuous stroke if possible. Go to the downloaded files to print out the worksheets, or go to this website: [http://handwritingworksheets.com/](http://handwritingworksheets.com/).

For example, you should practice to write the letter *b* by starting at the top of the vertical stroke then making the loop to the right without lifting the pen, rather than forming the stroke and then the loop in two separate movements. Some letters, such as *f* and *t* require lifting the pen from the paper to make a second stroke.
As with any other activity, handwriting practice is the key. It’s also important to sit upright, use comfortable instruments, and have your paper at the correct angle. Give yourself a break whenever you start to feel tired of handwriting practice, and do the quick exercise for the day. Spending a few minutes each day doing these exercises will help the muscles in your shoulders, forearm and fingers to get stronger and more flexible.

**Four Components of Legibility**

In order to have good handwriting, you must be able to master a number of skills, including vision, synchronizing the arms, eyes, hands, posture, memory and body control, in addition to the job of holding a pen and forming letters. Handwriting is an essential tool used in several stages of our everyday life.

As discussed earlier, you must master fine motor skills in order for your handwriting to improve. You also need to strengthen your hand eye coordination, which affects your ability to copy shapes, letters and numbers, and your visual perception, or how well you use visual information to ascribe meaning to what you see. You must also master trunk control, since your trunk is what will support you as you perform the fine motor skill of writing, and you’ll need shoulder stability, because when writing, you use slow, deliberate shoulder movements. Once you develop these skills, you have a much better chance of having legible, neat handwriting.

Here are the four components of legibility to help you create handwriting so readable you’ll be proud to put pen to paper:

1. **Size**
“Size” refers to the letters in relation to each other and to the lines or spaces on the paper. In an earlier section, we recommended that you get a Big Chief tablet to practice your handwriting. On the Big Chief, tall letters should touch the top line, and short ones should touch the midline. Some letters, such as g or y actually go below the baseline. Similar letters should be uniform in height, depending on their position.

2. **Shape**

Learning the basics of letter formation is one of the first steps in developing legible handwriting. The effort is rewarding, although it takes time to learn. Once you master this skill, however, you will use more efficient movements, gain in writing speed and clarity, and you’ll be better able to focus on the content of your document.

3. **Slant**

In cursive handwriting, letters are written with a slant. Your slant should be uniform, and go in the same direction. Correct hand positioning will help you slant your letters uniformly. Some modern handwriting methods advocate writing without a slant, i.e. vertically, because it is thought that this makes writing easier to read. Pick a slant that’s comfortable for you (including vertical, if that’s what you like), and practice writing each letter in a uniform direction.

4. **Spacing**

Neat handwriting requires correct spacing between single letters and words. Consistent spacing between letters, words and sentences is important for increased legibility. The spacing between words should be even, and a little larger than the spacing between letters. The spacing between sentences should also be even, and a little larger than the spacing between words.
Dealing with handwriting troubles can make you feel discouraged. This guide is aimed at helping you concentrate on becoming proficient in precise skills as you develop insight about your areas of weakness. You need to examine your own writing so you can know how to improve. Writing can look so much better if you work on developing even one of the components listed above.

**Ergonomics: Do You Adopt the Right Posture for Writing?**

*Constant writing ... fatigues the hand and whole arm, on account of the continual and almost tense tension of the muscles and tendons.*

Ramazzini (1777) from *Essai sur les Maladies de Disseus*

Ramazzini acknowledged that hand-writers have a high-risk job over two hundred years ago. A pencil or pen can cause strain on your upper extremities when held in a “death grip.” In order to stay healthy while improving your handwriting, it’s important that you heed these warnings.

**BEND YOUR ELBOW AT 90º OR MORE**

When you bend your elbow at a tight angle it increases wrist and hand strain when writing. Avoid leaning heavily on your forearm, and relax your fingers. Do not curl up your knuckles so that they turn pale as you write. Don’t use your fingers to move your pencil or pen: use your forearm and wrist instead. If possible, use a slanted surface so that your wrist remains relaxed, especially if you’re left handed.

**MAINTAIN A GOOD POSTURE**

Some of the things that contribute to poor handwriting are sprawling on the desk, holding up the head with one hand, and not keeping your knees under the desk and aligned with the paper. Proper writing posture is similar to good mousing technique: you should use the larger arm muscles. Posture problems that
contribute to poor handwriting include sprawling on the desk, holding head up with one hand, and not keeping the knees under the desk and aligned with the paper.

MAKE SURE YOUR DESK AND CHAIR ARE RIGHT FOR YOU

Your desk and chair should be specifically designed for reading and writing, and both items must be steady. The chair has to support your back, and your bottom must be pushed into the chair’s back pocket. Make sure the desk is not too high for you. It should be at about elbow height. Make yourself comfortable and your handwriting skills will develop as a result.

Keep your writing paper near your body so that it’s easier to maneuver your elbow and wrists to write. Some people use writing platforms to have better access to their writing materials and for better positioning of their wrists. These platforms force you into an upright position. Your feet should rest on the floor or on a foot rest. A duct taped phone book makes a great footrest.
The quality of your handwriting can be influenced by the fit of your body to your chair or desk. Keep your thighs parallel to the floor, so that your knees and hips form 90-degree angles. Your body should be about a fist’s breadth away from the edge of the desk. If your elbows are parallel to armpit height when you put your forearms on the desk to write, then you need to adjust the height of the desk.

Research affirms that your handwriting improves when you are given direction on how to sit, how to position the paper and how to hold the pen or pencil. Less capable writers show poorer biomechanics when compared to more skillful ones. Smith-Zuzovsky and Exner (2004) also found that complex hand skills, such as those used in handwriting, hinge on the quality of the subject’s sitting position.

The Right Pen: The Facts on How Pens Affect Your Handwriting

The formation and appearance of your script has plenty to do with the writing tool you use, interestingly enough. Handwriting can vary considerably depending on the kind of pen used. What type of pen leads to what type of writing? Read on to find out…

Choose the Right Pen to Improve Your Handwriting Now!

Bold, inky pens give more form to handwriting that is already readable. On the other hand, if your writing flaw is legibility, then what you require is a pen that gives you cleaner and more distinct lines. Italic or calligraphy pens are great for persons who are reasonably happy with their penmanship but want some added extras to their writing style. A good pen can be a great incentive for improving general penmanship.

**FACT: You can still have a nice handwriting with a ballpoint pen**
Ballpoint pens are the most common writing instruments available, and it’s important to know how to write with them. Grip your ballpoint as you write so you are holding it neither too firmly nor too freely, and take your time as you write. Pay attention to the letters you’re forming: the more aware you are of what you’re writing, the better. Some people write better with fine point ballpoints, and others with medium point. Find the one that you like best, and that your handwriting looks best in.

REALLY BIG FACT: The right pen can control the smoothness of your handwriting

Although you can use the information in this guide to write really well with a ballpoint pen, its ink flow is really not conducive to smooth, fluent handwriting. Fine line markers, roller ball and fountain pens all contain ink that flows smoothly without need for pressure of any kind. Pens should be the correct size, and feel comfortable in the hand. Grippers or writing tubing can be added to small pens to add to their size.

BIGGEST FACT OF ALL: It’s absolutely necessary that you experiment until you find the pen that’s right for you

Try out different colors, and experiment with different sized nibs and balls to find a line thickness that pleases you. You simply cannot know the right pen for you without trying it first. Comfort should be one of the deciding factors when you’re trying to choose the right pen. Your pen should have the correct barrel size that lets you maintain a good hold and it should have proper grip to place your finger and thumb. Your hold will be off if the pen is too little or too big, and writing for longer periods may be uncomfortable.

Search for a pen that writes effortlessly without needing a lot of pressure. Its ink must flow easily: you shouldn’t be forcing the pen to scratch across the paper.
Finally, always remember to loosen up your shoulders and arms so that the writing arm can move freely and easily as your pen flows across the paper.

**Cardinal Rule for Good Handwriting: Slow Down**

Have you been told that your handwriting is poor? Besides writing and practicing your ABC’s, you may also need to hold the pen or pencil correctly and write within the lines if you want to improve your handwriting. More importantly, it may be necessary to slow down the pace at which you write. You do not have to maintain a slow handwriting style forever, but writing slowly primarily to develop better handwriting can help you to write more neatly once you increase speed.

Give full attention to the shapes, sizes and uniformity of your letters, and to the spacing between your words. Write slowly until you develop perfect handwriting. Gradually increase the writing speed once you can put pen to paper legibly and comfortably, but give complete attention to the quality of the handwriting. You will be sure to get better handwriting if you practice, taking it slowly for the first two to three months.

Rapid writing makes it tough for you to control when you begin and end letters and numbers, causing more errors. One of the tricks you can use is to play games that entail drawing or controlling hand movements in some way. Try using a clothespin to lift up your game piece while you’re playing a board game, as this will help make the muscles you use for writing stronger.

Many people, children especially, struggle with writing because they try to do it too quickly. This is why we’re encouraging you to take the time to shape your letters properly. Errors will still happen, but they will be less frequent if you slow down. In no time at all, you will be hand-writing notes and thank-you letters, and you may even be able to do handwritten invitations as well!
It makes sense to slow down and develop your handwriting skills, because several studies suggest that writing by hand is essential for your brain’s development and cognition – helping you to sharpen fine motor skills and better enabling you to create and communicate your thoughts. Virginia Berninger, a psychologist at the University of Wisconsin, tested pupils in the second, fourth and sixth grades. She discovered that not only did they write more quickly by hand than on the keyboard – but they also produced more ideas by writing compositions in longhand.

Physicians are also saying that hand-writing is a good tool for increasing baby boomers’ cognitive skills who want to sharpen their minds as they age. When learning languages with different characters, such as Chinese, or symbol systems for Chemistry or Music, people also gain from hand writing the symbols, since they retain a stronger and longer-lasting recognition of their correct orientation.

Persons with dysgraphia (a condition similar to dyslexia that affects handwriting rather than reading) can only form decent letters if they write slowly. Most doctors will recommend writing instruments and computers for most of their work because of the time involved in forming letters in addition to the pain that frequently occurs in the hands when writing.

Writing in longhand continues to exist long after the introduction of the printing press and of the typewriter, so it’s not destined for extinction: the skill is still commonplace a generation after the popularization of the personal computer. In spite of the availability of more sophisticated technology, a lot of people – especially those who came of age before the era of the personal computer – have a preference for doing their writing in longhand.
How to Improve Left-Handed Handwriting

Correct writing technique might be harder for left-handers to learn than it is for right-handers for numerous reasons. Our culture reads and writes from left to right, favoring right-handers. You can pull a pencil or pen across a page more easily than you can push one. As the left hand goes across the paper, it then covers your words, and may also smudge your ink or pencil marks.

The most widespread problems with left handers include the “hook writing position,” where the hand is curved around the pen, and runs along the writing line in an effort to position the pen in the same way a right hander would. There’s also the problem of smudged work, which is caused by the hand pushing the paper across the page. Finally, left-handed people are often guilty of over tight grip, which leads to cramps, poorly formed letters and inconsistent writing style, and is also extremely strenuous.

The methods for teaching left handers to write properly are very simple and easy to apply. With just a little guidance, you can learn a writing technique that will allow you to develop a neater, more comfortable and proficient writing style that will benefit you for the rest of your life. Smudged work, painful wrist, time-consuming writing and bad posture will no longer be problems.

Here’s How You Can Eliminate These Problems So You Can Write Efficiently With Your Left Hand

1. *Left Handed People Must Form Some Letters Differently*

Left-handers avoid the problem of having to constantly push the pen across the page by forming certain letters differently, like this:
Many right handed teachers are not conscious of the difference, and this may have caused misunderstanding and great frustration when you learned to write as a child. You can use practice sheets specially formulated for left handed people to learn to properly form your letters.

2. **Slant Your Paper at a 45 Degree Angle**

You can write without smudging, with the correct slant with your left hand if you turn the paper 45 degrees clockwise and draw the left hand toward your body on forward strokes, and left to right on upward ones. The paper should be to the left of your body’s mid line. This should involuntarily bring the hand in the proper writing position – *beneath* the writing line. You can also do calligraphy with your left hand using this posture, but with nibs designed for right-handed persons. It’s also easier for lefties to learn 19th century copperplate hands.

3. **Hold Your Pen or Pencil Correctly**

A lot of left-handed people grip a pen so near to the nib that they cannot see what they are writing. To ensure that you write most legibly, you must learn the correct way to hold a pen or pencil. The Handedness Research Institute, which holds a wealth of information on how to manage left-handed students in addition to ensuring designers remember that left-handed people exist, advocates that you hold the writing instrument one inch back.
Handwriting Myths Debunked

In order for there to be fluency of writing, there must be dynamic movement of the pencil, which comes from good pencil grip, which in turn is a result of fine motor skill development. A great deal of the handwriting literature is open to doubt, but the following facts are based on recent research. The following myths are ones we often encounter. We’re ready to make some real waves in the handwriting arena by debunking five of these myths right here in this section!

Handwriting Myth No. 1: There’s no point trying to correct one’s handwriting once one gets past elementary school

Handwriting Fact

Once you’re decidedly motivated to do something about your handwriting, it’s never too late to deal with it. Whether you decide to teach yourself the basics of letter formation, sizing and writing letters on the line or you opt for expert help, you will see results once you stick to your handwriting program. You’re most likely reading this guide because you understand the importance of handwriting. Now it’s time to find out which specific areas need to be addressed, and what you can do about them.

Handwriting Myth No. 2: Your lack of handwriting skills is your fault

Handwriting Fact

This isn’t true! A good number of teachers just do not receive the appropriate instruction on teaching their students proper handwriting skills. The majority of elementary schools are emphasizing curricula geared towards standardized exams and computer skills, instead of teaching children how to write fluently, although handwriting is a vital element of language instruction and also educates
students in the disciplines of tidiness, attention to detail, and meticulousness as life skills.

**Handwriting Myth No. 3: You only have to learn to write letters once – it’s like riding a bicycle**

**Handwriting Fact**

By the time you reach adulthood, you would have discovered and mastered different handwriting skills at different grade levels. Regular practice keeps skills sharp. If you’re unsatisfied with your handwriting, it’s pretty easy to fix it. Single letters, words and sentences can all be practiced – just allot about half an hour per week dedicated solely to improving your handwriting. You’ll be amazed at the results.

**Handwriting Myth No. 4: It is difficult for left-handed people to learn handwriting skills without a personal tutor**

**Handwriting Fact**

Many left-handed people display better handwriting skills than their right-handed colleagues. Left-handed children learn to draw, write and perform all other actions that entail using a pencil as early as right-handed children. If you think being left handed will hold you back, just look at the left handed toddler. Everybody else is more concerned about his left-handedness than he is himself.

**Handwriting Myth No. 5: Handwriting is no longer important in the technology age**

**Handwriting Fact**
The proficient use of technology is vital for success in today’s world, because we live in an age of technology. This technology has not taken over the need for paper and pencil, however. We are still required to write several tasks all through the day. We must fill out forms, write checks and legible grocery lists. Many state mandated tests also call for students to write by hand.

Handwriting, as with any other skill, should be learnt in a way that fosters a love for it. Competent writers are more confident writers. Confidence in writing translates to productivity as a citizen. And productive citizens are more successful citizens.

**Steps to Getting Expert Help**

Correcting illegible handwriting should have been a job for your schoolteachers. If, in spite of the tips and recommendations you’ve read so far, you’re still having that problem, you may need to consult with an occupational therapist. Writing engages the fine motor skills, which an occupational therapist can help you with, since these are professionals trained to assist people in developing the skills needed for daily living. You can improve your handwriting if you consult with the experts. Here are the steps:

**Foolproof Plan to Getting Expert Help to Improve Your Handwriting**

**Step 1: Find a Handwriting Tutor**

Look for a tutor or occupational therapist that has experience in helping children and adults succeed in handwriting. This should be an expert who provides a range of services to teach handwriting, including tutoring, evaluations and presentations. This individual should be capable of communicating his or her knowledge to you in a manner that you can easily understand.
Step 2: Verify Credentials

Handwriting tutors should ideally complete multiple classes and obtain certification, although some tutors operate on experience alone. In some cases, an associate’s or even a bachelor’s degree is a requirement for one to become a fully certified handwriting tutor. Some tutors are trained extensively, for weeks and sometimes months at a time.

Step 3: Attend a Few Sessions

This is essential for you to know whether you can work with your tutor. Handwriting tutors typically meet with students for one-on-one or group sessions to help them improve their penmanship. The tutor will most likely assess your handwriting during the first session. He or she will also show you the correct way to sit when writing, how to hold a pen or pencil, and the right way to form letters.

It makes sense to get expert help for many reasons; including the fact that handwriting is increasingly being used as a tool by many corporations when recruiting employees to assess whether or not they are suitable for the job. A good tutor will devise a lesson plan to teach you correct technique after he or she pays close attention to the general attitude that you exhibit during the writing process.

If you're having issues with your fine motor skills, you may need a referral to see an occupational therapist. It is the occupational therapist’s job to evaluate your handwriting and spot the primary cause of your difficulties. He or she will evaluate your functionality in these areas:

- **Visual Motor Integration**: this is a neural function that transfers what you see into a motor expression
• **Fine Motor Skills**: this includes motor and bilateral coordination, hand dominance, in-hand manipulation, muscle tone, how well you grip your pencil, and the strength of your shoulder, arm and hand

• **Visual Perception**: this skill deals with spacing between letters, discriminating between words, letters and numbers that are similar, writing on (or between) the lines and correct margin use, recognizing letters that are fully formed, and reversing letters and numbers (especially in children)

• **Cognition**: language command, recall, definite learning difficulties (for example spelling), reasoning and problem solving

• **Possible Sensory Processing Difficulties**: the occupational therapist will look for problems that can affect your handwriting, such as posture, visual, attention and tactile difficulties

It’s important for you to know the primary cause of your handwriting difficulties, and consulting with an expert might be the only way for you to improve. Experts such as tutors and occupational therapists should be able to suggest activities that you can do every day to improve your writing, along with a handwriting program that centers mostly on forming your letters correctly so that they are legible.

**Handwriting Quiz: Are You Practicing the Right Way?**

According to a *Time* magazine article by Claire Suddath titled “Mourning the Death of Handwriting” (published Aug. 3, 2009), people born later than 1980 tend to have a distinct approach to penmanship: a tad sloppy, slightly childish and almost never in cursive. So after reading through this guide and using the exercises in it to practice your handwriting, is your penmanship still sloppy and childish?
Take this simple 5-question handwriting quiz to discover whether you’re practicing correctly

1. **Do you have the right handwriting posture?**

Remember that when writing, your feet should be on the floor, and you should be sitting upright. This allows sufficient space for the arm to move across the page. Never slump over when writing, because the weight of your body will come onto your hand. Your hips and knees should form 90-degree angles. Optimum desk height should be two inches above your resting elbow position.

2. **Do you have the right handwriting material?**

In the section titled “The Right Pen,” we discussed the effect the equipment you use can have on your handwriting. Purchase an assortment of paper, pens and other writing material to experiment and discover which material is best for you. A lot of people rely on fountain pens to produce better script, but it’s a personal choice. You can also use a ballpoint pen once the line thickness is suited to your handwriting.

3. **Are you using the correct pressure to write?**

If you use too much pressure when you write your hand will cramp up. There’s no way you can produce quality handwriting if your hand is crampd. Instead, your writing will be erratic and uneven, instead of free flowing and even like cursive should be. Being attentive to what your body is telling you will cause you to improve in that respect. Consciously try to loosen up your hand if it’s cramping up while you write, use less pressure, and allow your pen or pencil to move smoothly over the paper.
4. Are you using the right technique?

Write down something and pay attention to your technique. Do you write with your fingers? Remember you should be using your forearms and shoulders. The fingers are for guiding the pen and should not be the force behind your writing. Don’t hold your pen in a death grip. Also, don’t do like a lot of people and put all the weight of your hand on the paper, only to keep lifting it to move it across the page – this will just make your letters tight and cramped.

5. Do you practice regularly?

Practice your writing whenever you get a chance. Try your preferred handwriting style while you’re talking on the phone, making your to-do list, or writing thank you notes. This will certainly make it easier to emulate the style you like, although it may not make your handwriting perfect. The more you work at it, the better you’ll become, as you retrain your hands and create new muscle memories.

Remember, it’s pretty easy to improve your handwriting. You need to decide which handwriting style you like, whether it’s Zaner-Bloser, D’Nealian or Barchowsky Fluent Handwriting, and practice using it, tracing the letters at first, and then copying them. Move from letters to words, and from words to sentences. In no time at all, you’ll get your handwriting to look exactly like your chosen style, or at least some variation of it!