

Cursive Knowledge

Student Book

by Jill Pike

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Institute for Excellence in Writing, L.L.C.

Also by Jill Pike

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Introduction

Are you embarrassed about your handwriting? I was. People complained that my handwriting was impossible to read. At first I figured there was nothing that I could do about it. But when I started to teach my children how to write in cursive, I discovered that my own handwriting improved dramatically. With a little practice it became not only legible but beautiful.

Sadly, with the advent of keyboarding, few want to teach handwriting anymore. However, there are times that being able to write quickly and legibly, if not beautifully, are necessary. Moreover, studies have shown that cursive writing makes people smarter because to do it successfully, writers need to access multiple areas of the brain.¹

Therefore, not only is handwriting a valuable exercise, it is a crucial component of your education. I trust that you will find the same joy and benefits that I did when I finally determined to gain cursive knowledge.

How to Learn to Write in Cursive

The most important thing is to commit to practice. These lessons will take you through the alphabet quickly, enabling you to practice writing words so that you can begin to use cursive in all of your writing.

The letters are presented according to stroke order. Many letters begin with the same shape, so learning them in groups makes it easier to practice them successfully.

Plan to work on these lessons for about fifteen minutes per day. If you do one task per day, you will have learned all of the lowercase letters at the end of two weeks. While you are learning the capital letters, you can begin to use cursive in all your handwriting, which will hasten your mastery of it.

There are a few other things that will help you improve your handwriting, so be sure to finish reading this section before starting.

Posture, Pen, and Grasp

Two of the most important things when it comes to handwriting are posture and how you hold your writing instrument. Always practice your penmanship working at a table and sitting in a comfortable chair. Sit up straight and work with your material directly in front of you.

Your writing instrument is equally important. Always use a good quality pen. I prefer gel pens because they glide smoothly across the page, but you might prefer something else. Visit an office supply store to try out pens and find the one that you love.

¹Klemm, William R. "Why Writing by Hand Could Make You Smarter." *Psychology Today*, 14 Mar. 2013, *Psychologytoday.com*.

Be sure you are holding the pen correctly using a tripod grip, illustrated at right. Holding your pen correctly will keep your hand from getting tired. Notice that the tip of your thumb should be on the pen—don't wrap your thumb around the pen.



If holding your pen is uncomfortable or your hand tires quickly, try using a pen with a rubber grip near the tip. If your favorite pen is thin, then consider getting a “pencil grip,” which works on thin pens. If you struggle to avoid wrapping your thumb around the pen, there are pencil grips such as the “crossover grip” to help you avoid this practice. Visit thepencilgrip.com for options.

Paper

Since all the letters begin at the baseline and end at the midline, having lined paper with a dotted midline will be helpful as you start out. Continue to use lined paper until you have become consistent with your cursive. After that, you may graduate to lined paper without a midline.



If you are right handed, tilt your paper a little to the left. That will give your cursive writing the slight angle that looks nice. It will also keep your hand out of the way of your writing.

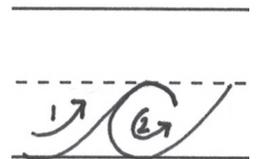
Left-handers are usually instructed to tilt their paper to the right. Although this keeps the hand under the writing, preventing smears, it also makes the cursive tilt backwards. There is nothing wrong with this, but as a lefty, I found that it was very difficult to form the letters at such an angle.

After talking to other lefties, I discovered an easy trick: Tilt the paper to the left such that the side of the page is almost parallel to the front edge of your desk. This puts your hand above the writing as you glide your hand away from your body. Your cursive will be slanted to the right, and the letters will be much easier to form. Thus, if you are left handed, play with the tilt of your paper until you find what works best for you.

Stroke Order

The key to good handwriting is learning the correct stroke order of each letter. In this way you will be able to consistently form each of the letters.

The letters are sorted into groups according to starting stroke. By learning them in their groups, your writing hand will be able to learn the beginning strokes, creating muscle memory. This memory will make all the letters in the group easier to produce as at least part of the letter matches the stroke of the others.



Pacing

The cursive instruction is divided into eighteen tasks, each of which can be completed in fifteen minutes or less. If you work on one task a day, you should be able to complete the program in about a month. If you find that you need more practice, simply spend more than one day on a task until it becomes a little easier.

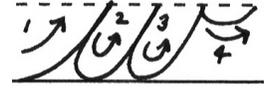
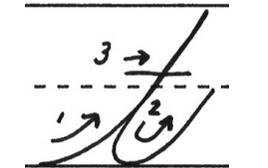
Practice Makes Permanent

Once you have completed the eighteen tasks, all you will need to do is practice. The most effective way to practice is by doing copy work. Not only is copy work enjoyable, but the daily practice of forming the letters as you copy will build the muscle memory that you need to easily write in cursive at any time.

A collection of sayings has been provided in the back of this book for you to copy. If you would rather copy something else, that is fine. Just be sure to practice! Plan on spending about fifteen minutes per day at this task. Once you have finished the quotations, use the remaining blank pages to copy whatever you wish. Choose one of your favorite books and begin copying it for fifteen minutes per day until you find your cursive knowledge to be complete.

Scope and Sequence

Task	Letters	Category
1	<i>c o a</i>	c Starters
2	<i>d g q</i>	c Starters
3	<i>i u r</i>	i Starters
4	Practice	c, o, a, d, g, q, i, u, r
5	<i>w s t</i>	i Starters
6	<i>p j y</i>	i Starters
7	<i>l e k</i>	Loop Starters
8	Practice	c, o, a, d, g, q, i, u, r, w, s, t, p, j, y, l, e, and k
9	<i>b h f</i>	Loop Starters
10	<i>m n v</i>	Hill Starters
11	<i>x z</i>	Hill Starters
12	Practice	All lowercase letters
13	<i>A Q O</i>	Top Circle Starters
14	<i>C E D</i>	Top Check Starters and Drop Down Starter
15	<i>B H K</i>	Slash Up Starters
16	Practice	A, Q, O, C, E, D, B, H, K
17	<i>P R</i>	Slash Up Starters
18	<i>M N U V</i>	Curvy Top Starters
19	<i>W X Y Z</i>	Curvy Top Starters
20	Practice	A, Q, O, C, E, D, B, H, K, P, R, M, N, U, V, W, X, Y, and Z
21	<i>I F L</i>	Salute Starters
22	<i>L S</i>	From the Floor Starters
23	<i>J j</i>	Backwards Loop Starters
24	Practice	All uppercase letters
25–32	Practice	Copy work

Task 5: Learn *w s t*. Practice in words.**Goal:** Learn to write three more letters, *w*, *s*, and *t*. Practice in words.The three new letters are all *i* starters.The letter *w* starts just like the *u* but with more tips. Notice that the *w* does not go back to the baseline—it swings out just like the letter *o*. Practice the letter on the lines below.*w**w**w*The letter *s* is a little slippery. It is an *i* starter, but after touching the midline, it swings down and around as illustrated. Practice the letter on the lines below.*s**s**s*The letter *t* is similar to the *i*, but it goes all the way up to the top line. To cross the *t*, you'll have to pick up your pen. Add the cross just above the midline. Left-handed students may cross the *t* from right to left. Practice the letter *t* on the lines below, leaving a space between each one.*t**t**t*

Task 5: Learn *w s t*.

Practice the following words, writing several on each line as possible.

Wait until you finish the word before you dot the *i* and cross the *t*.

wigs

wart

word

wait

sir

swat

said

squirt

twig

taut

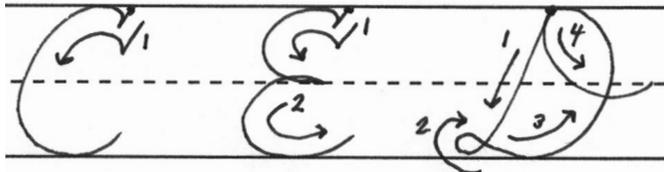
tags

toad

Task 14: Learn *C E D*. Practice in names.

Goal: Learn to write three capital letters: *C*, *E*, and *D*. Practice in names.

Each of these letters begin at the top. The *C* and *E* both begin with a check mark, making them Top Check Starters. The capital *D* is a Drop Down Starter, beginning with a line dropping down. Examine these models and practice them on the lines below.



Handwriting practice lines for cursive capital letters C, E, and D. Each letter is shown once with stroke order arrows and once as a solid model on a set of three horizontal lines (top, middle-dashed, bottom).

C

C

C

E

E

E

D

D

D

When you get to the end of your rope, tie a knot and hang on.
– Franklin D. Roosevelt

Handwriting practice lines consisting of solid top and bottom lines with a dashed midline. A large, light gray watermark reading "Sample" is oriented diagonally across the page.