

The importance of handwriting

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Having neat handwriting is never the most major problem in our minds. Finishing the next project or writing the next paper is the only thing that swims through our heads. Even so, finishing the projects is as, or even less, important than how we form it.

With the ever growing development of technology and digital devices, students and adults alike are pleased with the efficiency of typing that manuscript can't produce. Although many people believe keyboarding is a more effective way to write out ideas, physical penmanship is highly underrated as it affects the grading of papers because of visual appeal and enhances the crucial skills needed, like composition and memory, to succeed in school. Unknown to many, physical writing plays an important role in the learning process of children and students. Writing by hand activates parts of the brain that are involved with memory, impulse control, and attention. According to multiple studies like 2012 and 2014 study, handwriting is linked to composition skills which, with practice, can lead to "automatic writing", or being able to form characters, letters, and words subconsciously. When writing physically, the writer can focus more on the content than the writing itself and will be able to think more creatively and compose more ideas onto the paper instead of writing just to fill up the page.

Because of this, students prefer writing by hand as they are able to think of more ideas that add to their paper. In schools, the content of the writing should be more valued than the page count as the quality of the text should speak for itself. Compared to print, typing and pressing the keys doesn't have the same effect as writing physically. To the brain, all the keys feel the same as compared to manuscript, which creates a cognitive image in the

brain due to the repetition of creating symbols to form words, ideas or thoughts. Moreover, it can also help students read more quickly and retain more information.

For example, in a 2014 study, college students were asked to take notes on a lesson either digitally, using tablets or laptops, or by hand; those who wrote their notes by hand demonstrated better understanding and memory of the taught material than those who used electronics. In the end, the value we have set on handwriting is decreasing as the benefits of it aren't apparent to many. In any case, almost every school district has only one standard: students are only required to print upper and lower case letters. Since this is the only requirement, it drastically reduces the need for handwriting instruction. As a result, students may develop messy handwriting which can ultimately affect the final grade of their paper or essay. In a BIC study, researchers surveyed 2, 000 teachers and university grad students about handwriting.

61% of teachers have said that there was a decline in handwriting quality over the last 5 years, 64% have admitted that bad handwriting has prevented the students from getting full marks, and 82% believe that students are losing traditional skills, like penmanship and mental arithmetic, because of the increasing usage of digital devices. Along with this, 89% of the students preferred to use laptops or computers instead and of that percentage, about half believed handwriting was “ outdated”. In schools, keyboarding and computer skills are more valued than physical handwriting as students and teachers alike use them more frequently on a day to day basis. Projects, research papers, and essays are often done on the computer

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because it has more visual and professional appeal than writing by hand. To some, typing is used instead of writing by hand to avoid any kind of teacher bias towards the writing.

As mentioned before, teachers have taken off points because of messy handwriting, even if the content itself was excellent. This is avoided by typing instead because the written characters are uniform throughout each student's works. Technology has come a long way on creating more efficient products for us to use, but for a cost. The more we rely on technology, the more dependent we are on it than on ourselves. Over the years, many students are now relying more on technology than ever.

Computers and tablets are used in class to take notes as it is faster to type than write out the needed information. In most schools and classes, keyboarding and word processing are seen as more essential than handwriting; therefore, so much more is done typing than using a pen or pencil. We use computers or digital devices to do our bidding so often that we don't realize how little time is spent physically writing. Typing has become as natural as writing to many as both are used daily. In primary school, nearly half of the tasks children are required to do involve a form of writing without using any form of technology. A majority of a child's handwriting and penmanship development lie in their early years in schools where they are taught to create shapes in the form of letters.

During this stage of growth, it is crucial that the child learns to write efficiently and consistently on their own. Furthermore, even wealthy elementary schools, who can afford devices for every student in their school,

still recognize the importance of print writing. Many believe that handwriting skills are still valued in our lives, and even so, keyboarding shouldn't just be thrown out for that very reason. It would be more effective to build on keyboarding skills after achieving efficient manuscript writing. Between the various types of handwriting, print is the most preferred as it is the base of most of our writing styles.

To some, print is considered “ baby-handwriting” while cursive is seen as more adult like as it is more preferred, as seen by society, for most adults. Even with this, it shouldn't matter how people write. All of that should be taken into account is the efficiency and the legibility of the writing for the reader, along with the writer themselves. The main reason for teaching cursive in schools is primarily because of “ tradition and wide usage, not on research finding”. Along with this, teachers don't see the need to have handwriting instruction.

The fact that it isn't graded, creates a large divide even though it plays a big role in school and composition. “ Kids with better handwriting do better in schools,” is becoming a near-universal rule as teachers tend to give better grades to papers they can read. Having neat or messy handwriting not only affects the teachers, but peers as well. Upon seeing someone's handwriting, they can determine if that person would fit their definition as a leader. Even in the past, during the Middle Ages, elegant handwriting became a status symbol and a specialized discipline.

Signatures also played an important role as they were associated with various professions and social ranks among others. This also relates back to

how much people can infer about others when they see another person's writing style. The neatness, spacing, and shape of letters and words can show much more than automated letters on a screen. At the same time, writing by hand can show us more than just the content, but the writer's current emotions, thoughts, and personality. It is more important to keep the gift that writing provides for us as it represents who we are and what we stand for. Since the Middle Ages, the value of handwriting has declined as technology has sprung forward to take its place.

Various views on the efficiency of handwriting have created the conflict between the need to teach penmanship or to continue to use the ever-growing technology around us. Many of us don't see the true value that is shown in manuscript, but to lose writing will be a major loss in our language and sense of self.