

WORK WITH THE READING

• A. Read the article and gather information about how important it is to write by hand.

Two Styles of Writing



a child learning to write

- 1 What does it mean to learn a language? Of course, we need to produce the sounds that make up words, put words together into meaningful units, and understand others who speak to us. To be literate, we also need to read and write. We should be able to write the letters of the alphabet, but with all the other parts of the language that need to be practiced, is it important to learn two ways to write them?
- 2 Educators have long seen the connection between learning to read and learning to write the letters that make up words. In one study, adults who learned to write a new alphabet with paper and pencil were better able to recognize and remember letters than their counterparts, who only studied the printed letters but did not try to form them. In addition, children develop fine motor skills and control when learning to write **by hand**. They must pay attention to

the shape of the letters, for example, in order to produce a "d" that is distinct from a "b." Likewise, they must judge how much pressure to apply so as to avoid poking holes in the paper or accidentally tearing it. They must learn to move their hands and not smudge their work while writing. Also, they need to keep the words in a straight line and pay attention to how the letters are placed with respect to one another. For example, the stem of a "b" rises, while the stem of a "p" falls.

- 3 Educators also employ tactile¹ and kinesthetic² methods to help young children learn to form their letters. Children may trace letters on sandpaper to **stimulate** nerve endings in their fingers. Similarly, they may use their whole arm and shoulder to write giant letters in the sand or on big pieces of paper. Using these large muscle groups helps to establish important **nerve** connections between the muscles and the brain.
- 4 With so many subjects competing for attention, some parents and teachers have raised questions about how **worthwhile** it is to teach children both to print, to form letters in much the same way as they are seen in books, and to write in cursive, a kind of writing that connects the letters of a word together. Is it worth the time spent on learning both forms, or is it enough to learn just to print, leaving more time for other subjects, such as reading or computer skills?

¹ tactile: related to touch

² kinesthetic: related to motion

5 Supporters of learning both forms **maintain** that cursive writing is faster than printing—an advantage when composing papers or taking notes. Brian Palmer, writing in the online magazine *Slate*, states that cultures have favored connected script throughout time, and writers will often develop their own **distinctive** methods of linking letters so as to take advantage of the faster means of forming words. These individual scripts can be problematic for readers, however, so teachers **advocate** the use of a standard script so as to better **ensure** legibility.

6 Furthermore, because cursive writing is highly individualistic, it is used as a means to establish identity. Analysts can use handwritten documents to determine whether two samples of writing most likely came from the same person or not. This is useful to historians who find unsigned papers or to police looking at evidence.

7 Yet another reason for continuing to teach cursive writing is that it is part of our culture and, therefore, valuable to link us to our past. Indeed, cursive writing is often seen as a more mature type of writing, and if we want to continue to read historic documents that predate the printing press, we will almost **certainly** need to continue to teach children this form of writing.

8 Those who disagree with continuing to teach this form are not opposed to cursive writing in itself. They contend that not everyone needs to be **proficient** in this skill and that there are other solutions to the problems cursive writing addresses.

9 First of all, the neurological benefits of learning to write are developed both with printing and with cursive writing. As long as we continue to have children write with their hands, or do other skills with their hands that involve fine motor control, we will continue to build nerve connections. These benefits do not change.



Many people find typing a useful alternative.

10 In addition, even with instruction, children and adults do not always develop **legible** handwriting. Some people prefer to print and can actually **attain** writing speeds comparable to those of people writing in cursive. Many people find typing a useful **alternative** and have increased their speed so that they can take notes comfortably on a computer. Writers themselves have a responsibility to their readers to produce clear texts by printing or typing their words if their writing is illegible.

11 Options also exist for using handwriting as a means of identification. Instead of asking for a signature, a legal paper could carry a thumbprint or a fingerprint. Some people might choose to learn to read and write in cursive much like some people learn to make clothes, speak Latin, or build houses. These people could be called on to use their skills when an old document needs to be read or when a special document is created.

12 No one seems to be suggesting that we stop teaching children to write by hand. After all, even if we had the technology to replace writing, technology sometimes fails or is unavailable. As with any skill, handwriting needs to be practiced, and schools are under pressure to have time to practice many different skills. The question lies in whether we want to take the time and make the effort to teach children a second, related, form of writing. What do you think?



**Vocabulary
Skill Review**

In Unit 3, you learned about prefixes that change a word's meaning and suffixes that change the part of speech. As you learn new words, find out whether you can apply these prefixes or suffixes to make related words.

B. VOCABULARY Here are some words and phrases from Reading 1. Read the sentences. Circle the answer that best matches the meaning of each bold word or phrase.

1. My computer stopped working, so I wrote my essay **by hand**.
 - a. using a machine
 - b. easily
 - c. with the hand(s)
2. When his heart stopped, the doctors **stimulated** it to keep him alive.
 - a. made up
 - b. made active
 - c. made quiet
3. Your hands are sensitive because you have a lot of **nerves** in them.
 - a. things that let you move or feel pain
 - b. lines
 - c. shaking
4. All our practice was **worthwhile** because we won the game.
 - a. useless
 - b. hard work over a long time
 - c. good to spend time on or put effort into
5. Some people **maintain** that writing in cursive is still necessary.
 - a. keep at the same level
 - b. keep stating that something is true
 - c. keep repaired
6. My teacher identified my **distinctive** handwriting when she looked at my note.
 - a. different from others
 - b. unpleasant in sound
 - c. not loud enough to hear
7. He is going to **advocate** for a typing class next semester.
 - a. publicly support
 - b. work hard at
 - c. give legal advice to
8. Her mother **ensured** that she studied for the test.
 - a. gave money when something happened
 - b. made sure that something happened
 - c. found out why something happened

9. It took hard work to become **proficient** in writing Chinese script.
 - a. able to identify something
 - b. able to support something
 - c. able to do something well
10. A teacher's writing needs to be **legible** to students.
 - a. legal; able to stand in court
 - b. able to be selected
 - c. clear enough to read
11. After four years, we will **attain** a university degree.
 - a. put into
 - b. succeed in getting
 - c. understand
12. We didn't like our decision, but we didn't like the **alternative**, either.
 - a. something that you change
 - b. something that you charge
 - c. something that you choose



C. Go online for more practice with the vocabulary.

D. Circle the answer that best completes each statement.

1. Some benefits of writing by hand include ____.
 - a. understanding differences in letters and gaining muscle control
 - b. learning how to tear and poke holes in paper
 - c. knowing different ways of writing
2. People disagree about whether ____.
 - a. children should learn to write in school
 - b. adults should learn to identify letters in another language
 - c. children should learn to write in two different ways
3. Some benefits of writing in cursive are ____.
 - a. it is faster and more legible than printing
 - b. it is more attractive and stimulates more nerves
 - c. it is faster and individualistic
4. People agree that ____.
 - a. cursive writing is unnecessary
 - b. children should learn to write by hand
 - c. documents should be written by hand



**E. Each subheading below refers to a main section of the text.
Match the subheadings with the paragraph numbers in the box.**

paragraphs 2–3
paragraph 4

paragraphs 5–7
paragraphs 8–11

1. Benefits of Writing by Hand: _____
2. Reasons for Teaching Cursive Writing: _____
3. Explanation of the Problem with Teaching Cursive Writing:

4. Reasons against Teaching Cursive Writing: _____

F. Write *T* (true) or *F* (false) for each statement. Then correct each false statement to make it true.

- 1. People who study letters in print and how to form them by hand learn the alphabet more quickly.
- 2. Tactile and kinesthetic methods of teaching can develop brain and nerve connections.
- 3. Brian Palmer states that most cultures through history have preferred printing over cursive writing.
- 4. Researchers can match a person's identity to a piece of handwriting.
- 5. Children must learn cursive in order to refine nerve connections and develop good motor skills.



G. Go online to read *Handmade Paper* and check your comprehension.



WRITE WHAT YOU THINK

A. Discuss these questions in a group.

1. Have you learned to write in two different ways? Why or why not?
2. Is it more important to learn to write by hand or to learn to use a computer keyboard? Why?
3. Do you think people will always write with pen and paper? Why or why not?

B. Choose one question and write a paragraph in response. Look back at your Quick Write on page 95 as you think about what you learned.