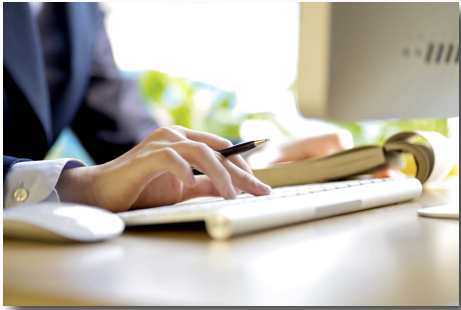


## *Handwriting & Computers*



There is no question that computers have enhanced our world but like a lot of inventions, they don't need to replace every aspect.

*They become a choice.*

To write by hand creates *a script that is unique* to the individual. It's an ability that can be expressed any time, any where. From notes, directions, grocery lists, greeting cards, and those moments of pure inspiration or passion to placing your signature on documents; it's a skill everyone uses regardless of frequency.

*Learning to write by hand involves much more than memory and muscle movement.* It begins with a thought of putting pen to paper. Your brain then sends instructions through nerve impulses down your arm to your fingers where you begin to form letters that join to form words. Meanwhile, your mind is rapidly selecting which word to write out of many possibilities while remembering what each letter looks like and how to connect them. Not that you make your letters and connections the way you were originally taught because now your emotions, experiences, and perceptions influence how your writing will look on the page. Still, your brain remembers the basic image, choosing capital or lowercase, and directs the fingers to move in a way that will reproduce that image with your special flair. At the same time, you're thinking about what you want to say while remembering to dot your *i*'s, cross your *t*'s and add commas and periods; not to mention feeling emotions as you press harder into the page or barely touch it, and all the while remaining somewhat aware of the environment around you. All this commotion is definitely *exercising the brain*.

To be most useful, handwriting must be practiced until the student can easily, quickly, and legibly write what they want to say without focusing on how to construct and connect each letter.

Handwriting remediation specialists draw a correlation between the marked decrease in formal handwriting instruction and the rise in hyperactivity and lack of concentration in school children. The repetitive movement in *penmanship class encouraged the development of impulse control and self-discipline*—qualities beneficial to a student's ability to do well in school. Hand and finger movements stimulate nerves that, in effect, exercise the brain and prepare it for learning.

*Increased proficiency in handwriting leads to increased confidence.* Recent studies have shown that students who are more skilled at handwriting perform better on tests, get better grades. Children who have difficulty forming letters will spend more time processing text before they can put their thoughts on paper. So practice isn't so much about "making perfect" but about making handwriting automatic so the skill can support more advanced studies that come later.

And as students become more adept and acquire more experience in creating the physical shapes of their language, they also gain confidence in their ability to express themselves through writing. Perhaps our comfort in communicating with others begins at this fundamental level. Feeling more familiar, at ease, and confident in this basic form of communication will help prepare them for the variety of ways they'll need to communicate in the future.

They may later prefer a laptop but they'll always be able to express a thought with a pen, pencil, crayon, a mud streaked window, or a stick in the sand – and in a style that is uniquely their own.



*Write On!*