

# READING HANDWRITING

Handwriting is used for such things as legally identifying people. Analyse your handwriting or someone else's to see what personality characteristics it reveals.

**MATERIALS:** White, unlined paper; pen.

## DOING IT:

1. You can analyse your own handwriting or someone else's. It's best to try to get a sample of "normal" handwriting; that is, handwriting that wasn't written specially to be analysed. If you're getting a sample from someone else, don't tell them why you want it until they're finished writing. This way, they won't think about their writing, which can change its characteristics.

One type of graphology involves scientifically analysing handwriting to detect forgery. Handwriting experts testify in court about whether or not something has been written by a certain person.

Another type of graphology involves examining a person's handwriting to get information about his or her personality. For example, Italian artist, engineer, and scientist Leonardo da Vinci's square, precise handwriting shows him to be inclined toward applied science and mathematics. British politician Winston Churchill's handwriting is fast, straight, and not as easy to read as da Vinci's, indicating a person who is used to being in charge and is self-assured. This approach to studying handwriting goes back to ancient times. Formal analysis techniques were developed in the late 1800s. The techniques are used more in Europe than in North America; some business firms consult graphologists before hiring new employees. Many people do not view this type of graphology as a science. Some principles of graphology are reasonable. For example, handwriting is affected by illness, aging, and stress. But the meanings that graphologists attach to various handwriting features are open to debate and can be somewhat arbitrary. If nothing else, looking at handwriting helps to develop skills of analysis and observation -- and it's fun! This activity provides a general introduction to the analysis of handwriting; graphologists go into much more detail.

**Topics:** Classification; Human Behaviour; Communication.

2. A handwriting sample should be on a sheet of white, unlined paper. Choose a specific topic to write about (e.g. what you did yesterday, a description of your home, your favourite sport, what you would like to do on your birthday). The topic itself doesn't really matter; what's important is concentrating on the topic you're writing about (not on your handwriting!). The sample should be made up of one or two paragraphs, and finished off with a signature. Now you're ready to analyse the handwriting.

3. *Letter Slope:* How do the words and letters slant? This feature gives insights into a person's sociability. The greater the slant, the more extreme the personality characteristic.

- Right: Outgoing, open to other people's ideas and experiences.
- Left: Shy, doesn't feel comfortable with people.
- Straight: Very independent, little concern about other people or what they think.

4. *Line Slope:* How do the lines of handwriting slope (i.e. from left to right) on the page? This feature is influenced by a person's mood at the time he or she wrote the sample.

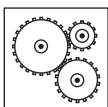
- Rising: Optimistic and energetic.
- Falling: Worried, lack of confidence.
- Straight: Self-controlled, reliable.

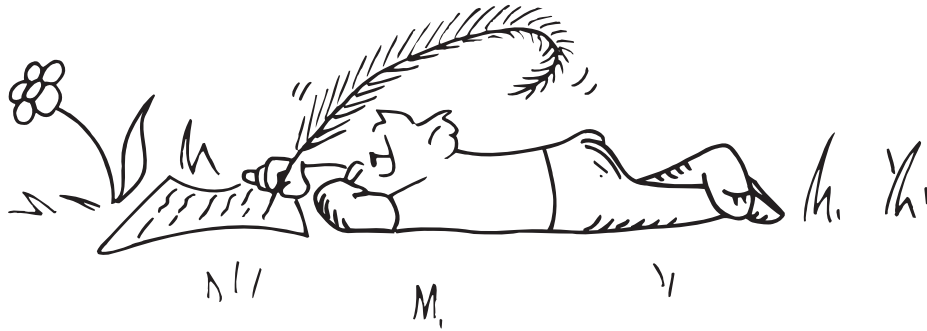
5. *Flow:* How are letters in words connected to each other? This feature gives insights into the way a person thinks.

- All connected: Rational, logical.
- Some connected, others not: Imaginative, depends on hunches and intuition.
- Few connected: Dreamer, not always practical.

6. *Pressure:* How hard does the person press the pen when he or she is writing? Check this by using your finger to feel for grooves and ridges on the underside of the page. This feature gives insights into health and will-power.

- Heavy pressure: Healthy, forceful, can be stubborn.
- Light pressure: May be physically weak, sensitive.





**7. Capital Letters:** How do capital letters look relative to other letters? This feature gives insights into how someone views himself/herself.

- Very large: Conceited, arrogant, perhaps dishonest.
- Same size as small letters: Modest, humble.

**8. "T":** Some letters are key in analysing handwriting. What does the "t" look like? How is it crossed? This feature helps a graphologist put other features/personality characteristics into context.

- Long line: Aggressive, passionate, may anger easily.
- Short line: Fixed ideas, can find it difficult to make decisions, lacks passion.
- Thick line: Wants to be in charge.
- Thin line: Timid, weak will.

**9. "i":** What does the "i" look like? How is it dotted? This feature helps a graphologist put other features/personality characteristics into context.

- Dot is high above stem: Unrealistic, focuses on tiny details instead of bigger picture.
- Dot close to stem: Doesn't share easily.
- Dot centred above stem: Pays attention to details, over-precise.
- Dot to the right of stem: Tends to act very hastily, dynamic.
- Dash-like dot: Anxious, sense of responsibility.
- Circle dots: Stubborn, fussy.
- No dot: Careless, poor memory.

**10. Signature:** Signatures aren't usually like normal handwriting. Most people develop and practice a particular signature. Your signature is your own personal stamp. A signature often reveals what a person *thinks* they are like or would *like* to be like. Compare the signature to the rest of the handwriting sample. Do letters

look the same? What about capital letters? Is the signature decorated in any way? Is it larger than the rest of the handwriting? Is the full first and second name included? Are initials used? What insights can you get into personality?

**11.** Do you agree with the analysis? Do you think it's scientific? Do you think that handwriting can tell you something about a person's personality? Why or why not?

**12. Variation:** Collect handwriting samples over several days or weeks. Analyse and compare the samples. Does handwriting change? Why?

**13. Extension:** Get several people to write the same one or two sentences on the same type of paper with the same pen. Don't look at the handwriting samples as you collect them. Scramble the samples and then try to identify who wrote which sample. Everyone writes differently, so you should be able to see differences in the samples.

