



Cursive Writing RECOMMENDATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

In an effort to require public schools to implement instruction pertaining to cursive writing, the Mississippi Legislature passed Senate Bill 2273, which became effective on July 1, 2017. The legislation authorized and directed the State Board of Education to require all public school districts to meet the following elementary education curriculum standard:

The standard course of study shall include the requirement that the public schools provide instruction in cursive reading and writing, implemented across the curriculum, so that students create readable documents through legible cursive handwriting by the end of the fifth grade, and that students pass with proficiency a teacher-constructed test demonstrating the students competency in both reading and writing cursive. This requirement shall be applicable beginning with the 2018-2019 school year. The provisions of this section shall not be applicable to the Mississippi School for the Blind and the Mississippi School for the Deaf.

The purpose of this document is to provide teachers, schools, and districts with guidance for cursive writing instruction from Grade 2 to Grade 5, in support of the Mississippi College- and Career-Readiness Standards for English Language Arts. **It is important to note that instructional plans that detail when and how to teach and assess cursive writing should be developed at the local school or school district level.** This guide does not advocate the use of any particular program to teach cursive writing. Local districts are encouraged to choose or develop the program that best meets the needs of students.

As schools and districts are planning instruction and assessment, the following should be considered:

- Determine the grade level of administration (third - fifth)
- Establish assessment criteria (must be administered by the end of fifth grade)
- Communicate cursive writing requirements to parents
- Align writing resources to the standards

RESEARCH SUPPORTING CURSIVE WRITING INSTRUCTION

According to the researchers who presented at the 2012 Educational Summit for “Handwriting in the 21st Century,” teaching keyboarding skills, while valuable, “in lieu of handwriting can leave students at a disadvantage.” These researchers found that teaching handwriting can increase brain activity, impacts performance across all disciplines, and provides a foundation for higher-order skills (Zaner-Bloser, 2013). When writing cursive, the word becomes a unit, rather than a series of separate strokes, and correct spelling is more likely to be retained.

“Kate Gladstone, a handwriting specialist based in Albany, estimates that while a student needs to jot down 100 legible words a minute to follow a typical lecture, someone using print can manage only 30” (Freedman, 2005).

All lower case cursive letters can begin on the line, so fewer of them are likely to be reversed (King, 2015).

Most critically, handwriting engages more cognitive resources than keyboarding does (Berninger, 2012).

Dyslexia therapists in Mississippi learn structures and techniques for teaching multi-sensory basic writing as a part of the instructional programming. In *Foundations of Literacy: Foundations for Literacy: Structures and Techniques for Multisensory Teaching of Basic Written English Language Skills*. Revised Edition., Aylett R. Cox provides the following as a few of the purposes of structural instruction when teaching students cursive writing:

- To designate the point on the base line at which the student begins to write and to establish the direction in which he must proceed. The approach stroke (one of four) “triggers” the student’s memory of each letter shape.
- To associate the student’s kinesthetic memory of each letter’s shape with its name and the sound which it represents, both in the letter’s initial introduction and in subsequent daily practice. Emphasis must be placed on the student’s instant recognition of the relationship between the printed or “reading” letter and its cursive or “writing” form.
- To assure the student through adequate practice that his hand is writing the letter which he has just named.
- To reinforce the student’s visual letter discrimination while he is reading by linking each letter’s name and cursive shape with its printed configuration. He can read with a pencil in hand and superimpose the cursive shape over the print if visual confusion arises, e.g. b, d. His kinesthetic memory will evoke the letter’s sound.

- To promote student's ability to write the cursive alphabet letters in relative proportion. Three spaces above the line and two spaces below are suggested as guides.
- To develop the student's motor control by training his large muscles first and then by carefully reducing the size of the letters until he can control the finer muscle movements of his lower arms, hand, and fingers.

STANDARDS

Within Mississippi College- and Career-Readiness Standards for English Language Arts, teachers will find the following standards for handwriting and cursive writing:

Language Grades 2 through Grades 8	
Conventions of Standard English	
L.2.1 L.3.1 L.4.1 L.5.1 L.6.1 L.7.1 L.8.1	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing (printing, cursive, or keyboarding) or speaking.

As teachers and schools begin developing instructional plans for teaching cursive writing, schools should be sure that teachers:

- Maintain a daily schedule for instruction, modeling, and practice
- Find opportunities across the content areas to practice cursive writing skills

LETTER INTRODUCTION

Cox also provides suggestions for approach stroke instruction. Cox states that approach strokes assure students that they know where to start a letter and then the direction in which to go after they begin writing. The teacher places an arrow on the base line for the starting point. There are several schools of thought on stroke instruction. The Mississippi Department of Education suggests that schools and districts select a comprehensive cursive writing instructional program that provides a rationale for its instructional sequence. The following are some of the stroke approaches outlined in *Foundations of Literacy*:

- a. The swing-up stop stroke begins the cursive letters i, t, p, u, w, j, r, and s. The student stops at the top of the upswing and drops straight to the base line. In the case of p and j, the drop extends two spaces below the base line. In the case of r and s, the return curves but does not drop.

Swing up, stop.



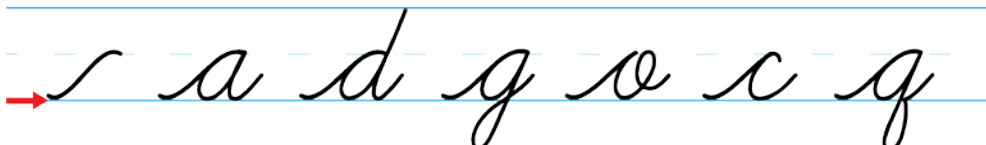
- b. The push up and over stroke begins a short over curve, which forms the first part of the cursive letters m, n, v, x, y, and z. The student then drops to the base line in a straight pull down, before completing the letter. For x, students slant down to follow the print.

Push up, over, down.



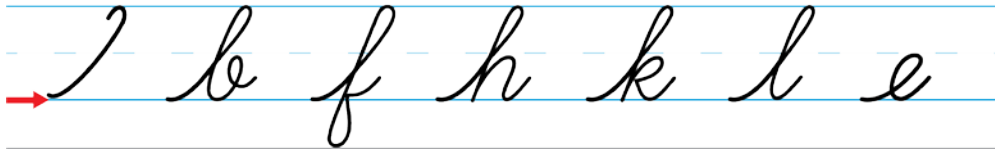
- c. The under-over stop stroke forms the first part of the cursive letters a, d, g, o, c, and q. In every case the student stops and reverses direction as he rounds the letter back under the initial over curve.

Under, over, stop.



- d. The curve way up, loop left stroke begins an upper loop which forms the first part of the cursive letters, b, f, h, k, l, and e. In every case the student then slows for a sharp turn to the left, and drops to the baseline in a straight pull down to complete the loop. The resultant loop is flat on the left and curved on the right side.

Curve way up, loop left.



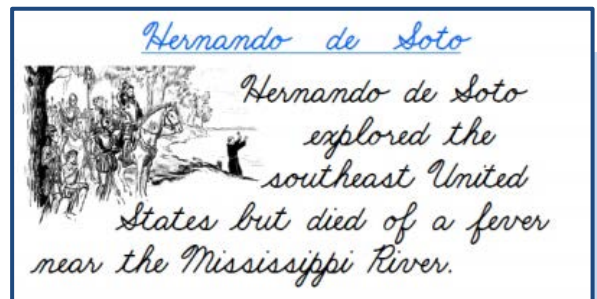
Example Order of Approach Stroke Introduction

Letter	Approach Stroke
i	swing up stop
t	swing up stop
p	swing up stop
n	push up and over
s	swing up stop
a	under over stop
l	curve way up and loop left
d	under over stop
f	curve way up and loop left
h	curve way up and loop left
g	under over stop
o	under over stop
k	curve way up and loop left

Letter	Approach Stroke
c	under over stop
m	push up and over
r	swing up stop
b	curve way up and loop left
e	curve up and loop left
y	push up and over
j	swing up stop
u	swing up stop
w	swing up stop
v	push up and over
x	push up and over
z	push up and over
q	under over stop

PARENT COMMUNICATION

- Discuss and provide communication regarding the purposes of cursive writing.
- Cursive writing should be encouraged and practiced at home. Parents and children can compare handwriting styles. Students and parents can work together to write advertisements or create signs in cursive for products, write letters to relatives and friends, or send letters to someone in the military.
- After proficiency in cursive writing is determined at 5th grade, students should have opportunities to choose to write in manuscript or cursive. After 6th grade, many students may be allowed to choose the type of handwriting that is best for their strengths. Of course, computer keyboarding is a skill that is needed and students should have time to learn and practice using the computer keyboarding skills throughout the grade levels. These are all important writing tools that can enable students to read and comprehend a variety of communications.



DEFINITIONS

Approach Stroke: where to start a letter and then the direction in which to go after they begin writing

Cursive: (of handwriting) in flowing strokes with the letters joined together

Handwriting: writing done with a pen or pencil in the hand; script

Print or Manuscript: to write in characters such as are used in print
(Dictionary.com, 2015)

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