

Direct Path to Cursive

The Quickest Way to Fluent Cursive

Bringing back the lost art of fluent cursive handwriting
that makes excellent readers and strong spellers.

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Direct Path to Cursive Lessons

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

1. a aaaa A
2. b bbbb ab ba B
3. c cccc ca ac bc abc C
4. d dddd ad da cd dc abcd D
5. e eeee ae ea be ed de abcde E
6. f ffff af fa ef fe abcdef F
7. g gggg ag ga eg ge abcdefg G
8. h hhhh ah ha eh he ch gh abcdefgh H
9. i iii ai ia ei ie hi bi ci di id if fi gi ig abcdefghi
I
10. j jjj aj ja ej je ij ji abcdefghij J
11. k kkkk ck ke ki ack eck ick abcdefghijk K
12. l llll al la el le li il bl cl fl gl dl ld lk L
abcdefghijklmnopkl
13. m mmmm am ma em me im mi mb M
abcdefghijklmnopklm
14. n nnnn an na en ne in ni gn kn N
abcdefghijklmnopklmn

15. o oooo bo ob ol lo og go oj jo od oa oe
oi io oc of oh ok ock om on O
abcdefghijklmnop
16. p pppp ap pa ep pe ip pi op po P
abcdefghijklmnop
17. q qqqq abcdefghijklmnopq Q
18. r rrrr ar ra er re ir ri or ro br gr pr
abcdefghijklmnopqr R
19. s ssss as sa es se is si os so bs gs sl sr
abcdefghijklmnopqrs S
20. t tttt bt at ta et te it ti ot to tl tr thr str
abcdefghijklmnopqrst T
21. u uuuu au ua eu ue iu ui ou no ju gu pu up
qu ug ul bu uck us abcdefghijklmnopqurtu U
22. v vvvv av va ev ve iv vi ov vo uv vu
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuv V
23. w wwww aw wa ew we iw wi ow wo
uw wv wh wr sw ws wn W
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvw
24. x xxxx ax ex ix ox ux X
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwx
25. y yyyy ay ya ey ye oy yo uy yu yl yr by ry
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxy Y
26. z zzzz az za ez ze iz zi oz zo uz zu
zy abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxytz Z

Direct Path to Cursive

Practice Words for Developing Fluency

- Lesson 1. a aa A
- Lesson 2. b ab ba Bab
- Lesson 3. c cab Cab
- Lesson 4. d dab dad bad cad add Dad
- Lesson 5. e be bee bed bead deed ace ebb Ed
- Lesson 6. f fed feed fade deaf beef face Fab
- Lesson 7. g bag bagged gab age caged gaff egg badge Gab
- Lesson 8. h had head heed hedge Hebb
- Lesson 9. i big hid hide if fib ice dice chief fife Ida
- Lesson 10. j jag jig jab jade Jade
- Lesson 11. k kid back kick deck khaki Kidd
- Lesson 12. l lad led lid black bell fled ball ill bill glad lake lace lilac hail eagle
Lee
- Lesson 13. m mad made ham lamb blame Mab
- Lesson 14. n name hand fan fine knee glean mine Ned
- Lesson 15. o on mom of off ok oh coal goad goal old hole cob job joke odd oil
foil hoe book ocean log local Oden
- Lesson 16. p pan pen pig pond lamp happen lip pill phone hope mapped
plane opened pal Pam
- Lesson 17. q See Lesson 21 (u)
- Lesson 18. r ran brand grand friend car rag red for from form hard error
roar Ralph
- Lesson 19. s sad sadness mass hose glass labs flags Sandra
- Lesson 20. t tan tape past potter other fit bright get giant taste tattle debt
ghost projector Tom
- Lesson 21. u up but rubber putter tube blue outside use bud suit judge guard
quick quack quit quiet unplugged Uncle Quinn
- Lesson 22. v vat van love vine valve vote vacuum Van
- Lesson 23. w we wet walk write cows saw was lawn woke work strewn what
swinging whole Walter
- Lesson 24. x ax axes tax taxes wax waxes box boxes fox foxes Fred
- Lesson 25. y yawn yes by buy bylaws cry baby navy yearly you yip vinyl
Young
- Lesson 26. z jazz zoo zebra lazy crazy buzz puzzle cozy zucchini zephyr Zeke

Direct Path to Cursive

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- Lesson 25. *y yawn yes by buy bylaws cry baby navy yearly you yip vinyl Young*
- Lesson 26. *z jazz zoo zebra lazy crazy buzz puzzle cozy zucchini zephyr Zeke*

Comprehensive Inventory of Lowercase Connecting Strokes

Downcurve: a c d g o q

Overcurve: m n v x z

Undercurve: b e f h i j k l p r s t u w y

Midline Joining Strokes

ba be bi bo bu bl br bs bt bc

*oa oe oi ou ow oy ob oc od of og oh oj ok ol
om on oo op or os ot ov ox oz*

we wi wo wh wr ws -wn wx

va ve vi vo vu vy

Below-Line Joining Strokes

ja je ji jo ju qu

ga ge gi go gu gl gr gs gg gh

ya yi ye yo yu ys yl yr

za ze zi zo zu zy zz

*All midline joining strokes and below-line joining strokes are represented at least once in the words in *Shortcut to Cursive*. It is important for all beginners to be taught explicitly and directly all possible joining strokes to maximize clear communications and avoid confusion.*

Cursive Letter Strokes with Arrows

A a B b C c D d

E e F f G g

H h I i J j K k

L l M m N n O o P p

Q q R r S s

T t U u V v

W w X x Y y Z z

Note: The strokes for the capital *I* should be reversed to start on the line and swing to the left.

Sentences Containing All the Letters of the Alphabet

Pangrams

1. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. (35 letters)
2. How quickly daft jumping zebras. (27 letters)
3. The five boxing wizards jump quickly. (31 letters)
3. The five boxes perform quick waltzes and jigs. (38 letters)
4. Sixty zippers were quickly picked from the woven jute box. (48 letters)
6. A quart jar of oil mixed with zinc oxide makes a very bright color. (53 letters)
7. The job requires pluck and zeal from very young wage earners. (50 letters)
8. Crazy Frederica brought many very exquisite opal jewels. (60 letters)
9. The public was amazed to view the quickness and dexterity of the juggler. (60 letters)
10. We promptly judged antique ivory buckles for the next prize. (50 letters)
11. Mr. Potter wrote this pangram to see how hard it might be to write a sentence containing all the letters in the alphabet and to help you very quickly zero in on the cursive connections. (35 letters)

Calculating Letter Writing Fluency in Letters Per Minute

Letters per minute (LPM) = 60 x letter count divided by seconds needed to write the sentence.

Example: The student wrote Pangram #10 in 25 seconds. $50 \times 60 = 3000$. $3000/25 = 120$ LPM.

Note: Once the students have learned all the letters in the alphabet, you can calculate the LPM for writing the Alphabet String (lowercase connected alphabet from *a* to *z*) by dividing the time in seconds by 1560. They cross the *x* and *t* and dot the *j* and *i* AFTER writing the alphabet, saying, “cross, cross, dot, dot.”

Special Technical Note: The letters *a*, *d*, *g*, *o*, and *q* can also be taught with an over-curve (or under-curve) from the baseline. In this program, our aim is to help students that are required to use the A Beka Book letterforms, which start these letters with a down-curve. Starting with the over-curve has the advantage of making the connection to the previous letter much easier to master. The down-curve form is basically an abbreviated form that originally was meant for advanced cursive writers, rather than beginners.

Direct Path to Cursive
Record of Instruction and Student Progress

Student _____ *Tutor* _____

Date	Lesson	Tutor's Notes and Observations	Tutor

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The goal of *Direct Path to Cursive* is to teach the entire cursive alphabet and all the connecting strokes in the shortest time possible. Words have been eliminated from the core instruction so as to dramatically shorten the time needed to master all the letters and connecting strokes. These skills will naturally and quickly transfer to words. Practices words are included on a separate page. The audience is the huge population of American students and citizens who were not taught how to write fluent cursive.

The current tragic situation is due to decades of Whole Language instruction, which sought to eliminate all direct instruction in basic skills: handwriting, phonics, spelling, etc. Although Whole Language has performed dismally in the classrooms, it still has an enormous lingering influence in the schools. Most teachers were taught Whole Language in the schools of education. Very few teachers today have received training in the high level skills necessary to teach fluent cursive handwriting, skills that were common among teachers when I attended first-grade back in 1953.

All teachers in America from kindergarten through at least high school should master the techniques for teaching fluent cursive - if we ever hope to achieve the old standards of academic excellence that made our country the envy of the rest of the world. Oddly the only teachers who seem to understand the tremendous value of cursive for teaching high levels of reading and spelling are the Orton-Gillingham Dyslexia teachers, among whom I am proud to count myself.

I hope that this work will help to spark a return to superior instruction in fluent cursive handwriting as a tool for clear thinking and expressive writing.

Teachers who teach *Direct Path to Cursive* can expect their students to master the basics in two to three weeks of daily 20 to 30 minute instruction. Once the basics have been taught, the students can begin to daily write the cursive alphabet in connected letters from *a* to *z* until they have achieved a high degree of fluency.

I always have my students practice writing the connected alphabet with their eyes closed. Since motor performance during distraction is incontrovertible evidence that the automaticity has been fully attained, I often have them write the alphabet with their eyes closed while singing a well known song such as *Mary Had a Little Lamb*.

Teachers must diligently attend to helping students achieve a proper tripod grip. Good posture is absolutely essential. It is also good to write on a vertical surface in big letters and then switch to paper.

I recommend teaching directly **without** the use of trace or copy. The mind - and not the eyes - should guide the hand. This is important if we are to achieve true fluency.

The motivation for teaching the connected alphabet came from Dr. Bob Rose. I highly recommend careful reading of his important book, *Forget the Bell Curve*, which is available in the Education section of my website.

Direct Path to Cursive was created to help students learn the cursive necessary for success at the *Odessa Christian School* in Odessa, Texas, where I serve as the Spanish and Remedial Reading Teacher. We are a *Total A Beka Curriculum School*. Every student is required to use cursive from kindergarten up.

The Practice Words were specially chosen to make absolutely sure that every possible connecting stroke is practiced. Randy Nelson of *Peterson Directed Handwriting* helped establish that no connecting stroke is missing, for with due thanks is offered.

My friend, Dr. Eugene Roth, Jr. of Phoenix, Arizona has noted a special advantage of cursive:

People who master cursive handwriting can also learn to write (i.e. spell) words, so that each word is one unit of memory. For example, a person would think of writing the word *two*, then start writing it and subconsciously finish writing it as one whole unit. This is similar to musicians playing a group of chords as one unit of memory. They start the melody and then their motor memory finishes the melody. In the case of cursive handwriting, a person would start writing a high frequency word, then the motor memory would take over, and the writer would spell the word subconsciously. This is much better way for students to learn to spell high frequency words, than using phonics rules and all of their exceptions.

That kind of motor memory does not develop as easily when students print words one letter at a time, because each letter in a written word is a separate memory unit. When cursive spelling is done, then each letter in a written word is a part of one larger memory unit.

The late Dr. Samuel L. Blumenfeld, one of America's chief cursive-first advocates, tells us that when we write cursive **the hand learns to spell**.

Why slanted instead of vertical letter formation:

Much cursive instruction today is more vertical because it is not pursuing high letter per minute (LPM) scores as an indicator of learning. Joining moves that travel far enough to allow the down-stroke to travel back to the left, enable one set of muscles to control the four basic shapes. Otherwise, multiple sets must be involved in order to get the needed shapes. That works of course, but not at the same high production rate. The coordination of multiple sets slows things down or control suffers.

Letter from Randy Nelson of *Peterson Directed Handwriting*,
January 17, 2014.

Classic Statement by Marilyn J. Adams:

Both theory and data suggest that instruction on neither the sounds of letters nor the recognition of whole words should be earnestly undertaken until the child has become confident and quick at recognizing individual letters (*Beginning Reading*, 363).

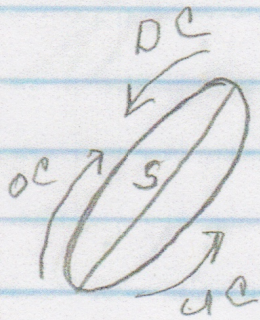
Oval Terminology: Language of Movement

The following unnumbered pages contain invaluable information on the **Oval Terminology: Language of Motion** for writing cursive letters.

Last revise 10/4/17. Thanks to all my cursive students, especially Zachary Marquez.

Shortcut to Cursive
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Donald L. Potter 5/27/2013, 10/4/2017

Oval Terminology: Language of Movement



Strokes

Under-Curve ↗ UC

Down-Curve ↓ DC

Over-Curve ↖ OC

Slant ↓ S

Connect-Stroke ↘ CS

Loop Back ↶ LB

Loop Forward ↷ LF

Hook ↷ H

Breakdown of Lowercase Strokes

a: = a a a
DC UC S UC Hook

b: = b b b
UC LB S UC CS H

c: = c c c
DC UC Hook

d: = d d d
DC UC S UC Hook

e: = e
UC LB S UC

f: = f
UC LB S LF UC

g: = g g g
DC UC S LB OC Hook H

h: $\nearrow \circlearrowleft \searrow \nearrow \searrow \nearrow = h$
UC LB S OC S UC

i: $\nearrow \searrow \nearrow \cdot = i$ bi
UC S UC Dot

j: $\nearrow \searrow \circlearrowright \nearrow \cdot = j$
UC S LB OC DOT

k: $\nearrow \circlearrowleft \searrow \nearrow \circlearrowleft \searrow \nearrow = k$
UC LB S OC LOOP AROUND S-Right UC

l: $\nearrow \circlearrowleft \searrow \nearrow = l$
UC LB S UC

m: $\nearrow \searrow \nearrow \searrow \nearrow \searrow \nearrow = m$
OC S OC S OC S OC

n: $\nearrow \searrow \nearrow \searrow \nearrow = n$
OC S OC S UC

o: $\downarrow \nearrow \cup = o \quad o \quad o \quad o \quad o$
DC UC CS H

p: $\nearrow \downarrow \circ \nearrow \curvearrowright \nearrow = p$
UC S LB OC curve Amount UC

q: $\downarrow \nearrow \downarrow \cup \nearrow = q \quad q \quad q \quad q$
DC UC S LF OC H

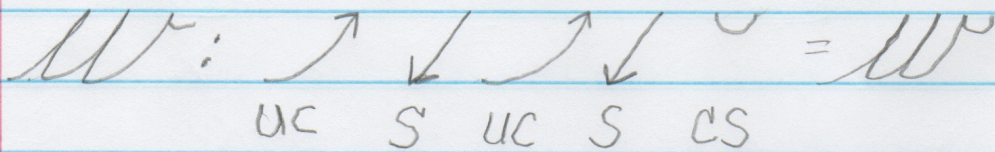
r: $\nearrow \searrow \downarrow \nearrow = r \quad r \quad r$
UC S-Right S UC

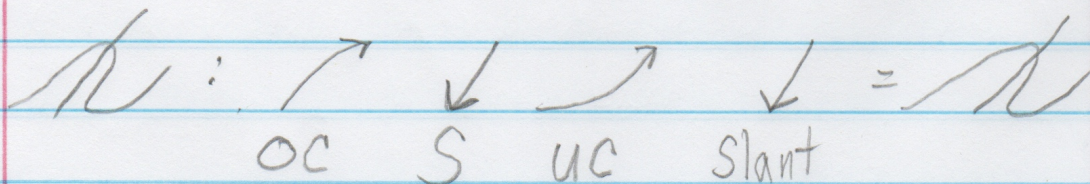
s: $\nearrow \curvearrowleft \nearrow = s \quad s \quad s$
UC curve down UC

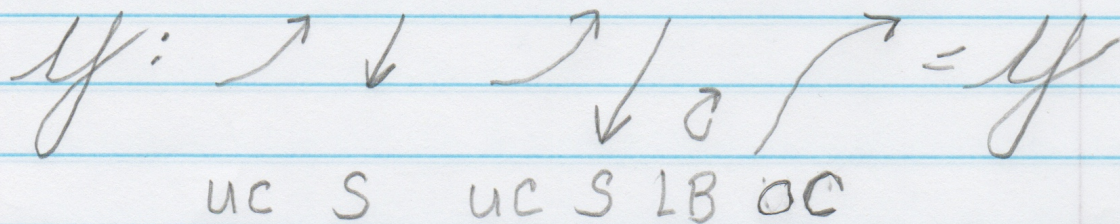
t: $\nearrow \downarrow \nearrow \rightarrow = t \quad o \quad t$
UC S UC cross

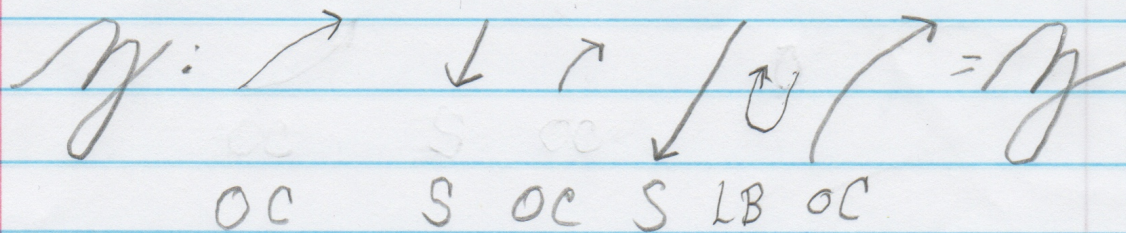
u: $\nearrow \downarrow \nearrow \downarrow \nearrow = u$
UC S UC S UC

v: $\nearrow \downarrow \nearrow \cup = v$
OC S UC CS

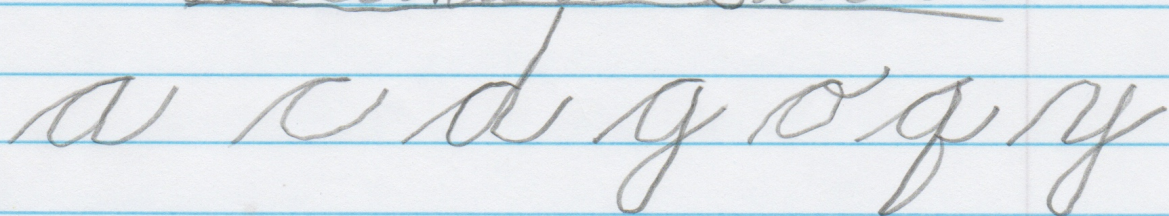
W:  = W

K:  = K

Y:  = Y

G:  = G

Alternative Strokes



Alphabet String for Daily Fluency Practice

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz