

TAKE
A SIDE

Debate

Directions: Read the article. Study the facts. Decide what you think. Write an opinion essay.



Is Cursive Writing Still Important?

As fewer schools teach cursive writing, experts wonder if we are losing a link to our past **By Lauren Tarshis**

You love writing in cursive, right? Your pen just flies across the page, creating words so beautiful that you want to frame them.

Wait. Your cursive looks like a 2-year-old's furious scribbles?

Don't worry—cursive is not considered as important today as it was just a few years ago. Forty-one states do not even require students to learn it at all. That elegant, looping handwriting could disappear.

But would that be a mistake?

Cursive Graffiti

Cursive writing is any handwriting with letters that are joined together with loops. (In England and Ireland, cursive is known as “joined-up writing.”) People have been writing in a cursive style for thousands of years. You can see cursive graffiti on the crumbling walls of Pompeii. The looping letters fill the crinkled pages of Christopher Columbus’s diary and make up America’s most famous document, the Declaration of Independence.

It’s easy to understand why cursive became



popular. It’s quicker than writing out printed letters because you don’t have to lift your pen as often. It is less messy too. Before there were Magic Markers and sparkly pencils, people used fragile quill pens and ink. Writing in cursive meant fewer broken quill points and ink stains.

The style of cursive writing that we use today was developed during the eighth century. By the 1700s, cursive was being taught in American public schools. Look through your parents’ scrapbooks, and you’ll see their life

histories written out in cursive—postcards from camp, book reports, love letters.

Not So Important?

Over the past decade, though, a powerful force has threatened to wipe out cursive forever: technology. Today, people send e-mails and texts instead of writing letters. High school and college students tap on laptops instead of writing in notebooks. An Instagram post can replace a postcard from a vacation spot.

Today's school leaders are under pressure to help students learn the math and reading skills they need to do well on tests and in college. Long division? Important. Reading nonfiction? Important. Writing in cursive? Maybe not so

much. Some argue that learning cursive should be like learning a musical instrument—an option rather than a required skill.

But not everyone is so eager to see cursive go. Our handwriting is a form of personal expression, some say, as unique as a fingerprint. Some studies have even suggested that writing in cursive improves our thinking skills.

And perhaps most important, cursive helps us connect to our history. What if you found a secret letter written by your great-grandmother, revealing the location of a buried treasure? It's likely that letter would be written in cursive.

Maybe cursive isn't as useful as it once was. But perhaps we shouldn't delete it from our lives just yet. ■

**WHAT
DO YOU
THINK?**

Is learning cursive still important?

Go back to the article and find information to support each side. Write the information on the lines below.

YES We need to know it!

- 1 _____

- 2 _____

- 3 _____

NO Why bother?

- 1 _____

- 2 _____

- 3 _____

Study the points on both sides of the argument—and think about your own opinion. State your opinion in one sentence below. It can become the thesis statement for an opinion essay on this topic.

**FIND AN
ACTIVITY
SHEET
ONLINE!**