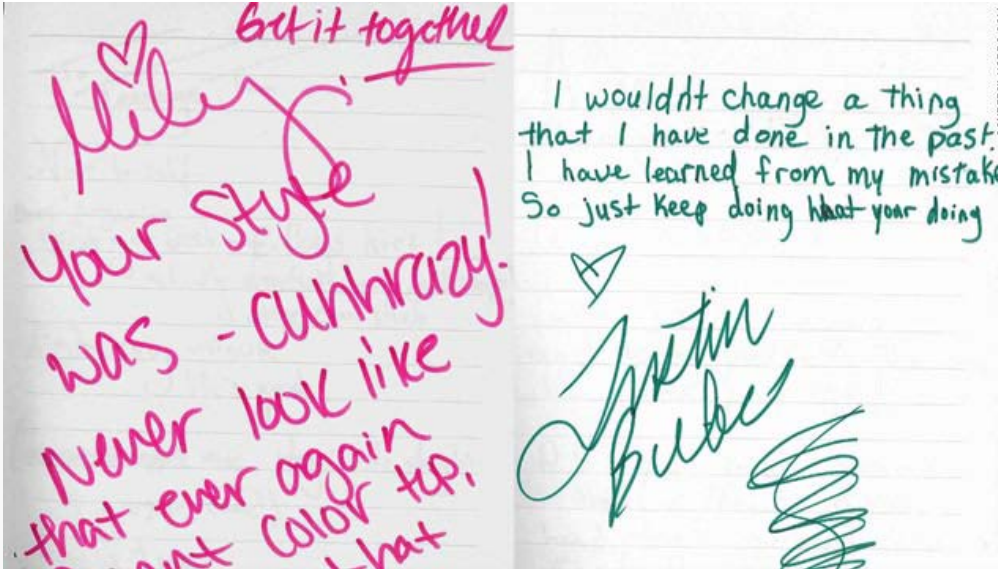


Nation of adults who will write like children?

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By Katia Hetter, Special to CNN
August 10, 2011 2:04 p.m. EDT



Miley Cyrus's and Justin Bieber's handwriting in Habbo Celebrity "Advice to My Teenage Self."

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- Critics are upset that cursive writing classes are being kicked out of more schools
- Teacher: "Handwritten documents convey important cultural information"
- Another critic fears adults in the years to come will write like children
- Autograph seller says stars under age 30 already have sloppy writing

(CNN) -- A glance at teen stars Miley Cyrus and Justin Bieber's letters to their younger selves makes one thing clear: their handwriting is terrible. In the letters, part of the Habbo Celebrity "Advice to My Teenage Self" book, the content is messy and their cursive signatures are barely legible.

The handwriting of today's teen stars "is so atrocious, it's talked about and recognized through the industry," says Justin King, a Toronto-based paparazzi for Flynet Pictures and independent autograph seller. "With stars ages 30 and above, they generally have a much more full, legible signature. When you deal with these new people like [teen actress] Elle Fanning, you're lucky if you get an E and F and a heart for her signature."

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It's just not the teen stars who can't write properly. Most states don't require children to learn cursive writing anymore. Some 46 states have adopted the Common Core Standards, a set of educational guidelines that do not require cursive writing as part of a school's curriculum. The state of Indiana recently announced it would drop a district requirement to teach cursive writing as of this fall. Instead, students must be able to type on keyboards.

How friends, family spark handwriting change

Technology has pushed cursive writing off the agenda of many school systems across the country. As a result, Handwriting Without Tears founder Jan Olsen sees more sloppy handwriting in schools

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today.

"If you stop teaching handwriting in the second grade, you're going to have a generation of people who write like second graders," says Olsen, whose company teaches a clean and simple style of cursive that avoids the fancy curls and swirls of old-fashioned script.

Are we becoming a country of adults who write like children? Will we be able to understand the power of John Hancock's actual signature on the [Declaration of Independence](#) if we can't read the document he signed? How can we feel the magic of Jane Austen's earliest, unpublished, handwritten manuscript, "The Watsons," which recently sold for \$1.6 million at auction?

Will younger generations not know the powerful emotions that come from receiving a handwritten love letter that describes all the love someone else feels for you? What about the fear and courage that comes from writing your first love letter that contains all the love you feel for someone else?

['Snail Mail' project promotes art of letters](#)

"Handwritten documents convey important cultural information about authors," says Davis Schneiderman, novelist and chair of the English Department at Lake Forest College. "These documents also suggest an authenticity that electronically produced documents do not. The Declaration is an index of its time as well as clue to the physicality of its signers. Imagine 'John Hancock' typed in an 18-point Times New Roman font. The proud fury behind his oversized signature would be lost."

Retired schoolteacher Carol Collin also mourns the loss of cursive in children's lives. "They miss the sense of pride they get when they can write neatly and elegantly in cursive instead of only knowing manuscript [print]," says Collin, who taught for 40 years in the Monterey Peninsula Unified School District in California and still substitute teaches. "There are many times in school and as an adult where being able to write elegantly is an advantage. Prospective employers will be impressed by clear, readable, attractive writing."

[Educators warn of negative effects of not teaching cursive](#)

Granted, most workplaces are more likely to be dominated by computers and technology than pens and pencils and handwritten thank you notes. It makes sense that computers are the go-to resource for researching and writing papers and other homework assignments.

And some writing experts aren't worried about children not being able to read the original Declaration of Independence or sign their names in cursive. Historical documents can be reprinted in print form and children can be taught to sign their names in cursive for legal documents and birthday cards.

[Handwriting has never been a static art](#)

Yet teens who can't write legibly -- multimillionaire teen celebrities aside -- do suffer. Even though many children use computers to write papers at home, most writing done within the school walls is still done by hand. (The country's ongoing economic problems won't likely add many computers to our nation's public school classrooms in the next few years.)

"Without it [cursive handwriting] you lose the sense of having your thought process through your hand movements to create your

language and thoughts to someone else," says [Michael Sull](#), a [master penman in Spencerian script](#); past president of the International Association of Master Penmen, Engrossers and Teachers of Handwriting; and author of four books on handwriting including, "American Cursive Handwriting," which was released last month. "There is a great loss in the progress that could be made with children fostering their motor skill development, literacy training and concepts of communication."

Sloppiness makes the reader think the writer's ideas aren't any good, studies show. "If you have sloppy handwriting, people make [negative] judgments about the quality of your ideas," says [Steven Graham](#), professor of education at Vanderbilt University.

And poor handwriting slows down the writer. If you write slowly, your hand may not be able to keep up with your mind's attempt to have a thought, form it into a sentence and remember it long enough to write it down. "Until you can do this skill quickly and without thinking, it will interfere with your output," says Graham. "You better learn to write."



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As long as it isn't THAT bad I wouldn't care.
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Laureth
@cemtes, there's a difference between spelling errors and typos.
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Laureth
I agree!!
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Laureth
That's one of my pet peeves too. I have a bigger problem with people who write should of(or could of or would of) instead of should've (could've or would've).
1 week ago | [Like \(7\)](#) | [Report abuse](#)



MockingJay13



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Kansaswrangl

Apparently, I have a different definition of legibility. I had no problem reading what was written (misspelling and poor grammar included). I DO have problems reading many historic letters by people such as Lincoln and Jefferson because of the style of writing in use at the time. This article is ju... [more](#)

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Karloff1313

Just wait until Bieber is strung out on drugs and making a fool of himself on Celebrity Rehab 2021--he won't be able to write even a halfway legible sentence.

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Wyze1SW

Forget handwriting! "Keep doing what YOUR doing"??? I can't believe how many people can't get this right! Is it really that difficult? Contracting "you are" into "you're" was one of the first things I learned when I started learning English.

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Karloff1313

I agreeable with supacowa--its difficult to be an goodly writer these daze.

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supacowa

its harder then you think- you shouldn't of rushed to judgement, when alot of people out their have more pressing concerns.

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OcelotSpot

Good handwriting may be a dying art. I'm personally more concerned about the content of what is written. Sadly, poor grammar has become almost standard. Text message slang shouldn't be written by anyone above the age of 12, I teach at a university and it is disturbing how many students use textin... [more](#)

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Karloff1313

Your thoughts are coherent, but your comment is a good example of poor writing. Please check your grammar and sentence structure.

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Daws1

Indeed my handwriting is crap and will probably always be crap unless I write super slow...it's basically wired into me. The content of what I write though, that's what I care to think about.

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gussie1

Writing well is a lovely skill regardless of whether it's by hand or by keyboard. The use of grammar in the US is at such a low level that I find it impossible to watch a reality TV show without feeling angst for the future of America. Does anyone even know how to use a proper pronoun. She and I -- ... [more](#)

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TenaciousG

A person's handwriting doesn't say anything about them. You know why? Some of the smartest people in the world,

including doctors, scientists, and artists, have the \$hittiest handwriting. AND, some of the world's DUMBEST people, including the bottom 100 kids of my graduating class have bada\$\$ handwr... [more](#)

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TenaciousG

*than

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bolobolo66

Kids who don't gave good handwriting should receive a beating and so should their parents.

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Daws1

They sure should do...

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cemtes

And ppl who don't gave good spelling ability?

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Thepook

While I appreciate that clear, legible handwriting is a wonderful asset, it is also important to understand that handwriting does not reflect one's IQ or abilities in other areas. My entire career as a student was marred by illegible handwriting until I got to college and was diagnosed with dysgraph... [more](#)

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mdbas

One of my strongest memories from childhood was a compliment from my grandmother, a woman who was not big on compliments. While a grade school student, my grandmother remarked that I wrote beautifully; she meant that my cursive was artful and pleasing to the eye. As a boy in school, I often found my... [more](#)

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supacowa

Dixon Ticonderoga #2...tell me I'm wrong!

1 week ago | [Like \(1\)](#) | [Report abuse](#)



TikiMask

Bieber wrote "what your doing." NOT "what you're doing." To me, that's FAR worse than the bad handwriting.

Anyone who says they can read the samples but doesn't comment on the spelling clearly can't spell either.

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Daws1

Indeed supacowa, their a good thing :)

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supacowa

I don't think it works that way


1 week ago | [Like](#) | [Report abuse](#)



cemtes

@ supercowa Thank you Godwin


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