

What does your handwriting say about you?

Words by Caroline Robertson

Discover the intriguing world of graphology, where your penmanship unveils more than just words. Certified graphologist Caro Duncan sheds light on how this ancient method offers a unique map to self-exploration, revealing insights into intellect, emotions and even subconscious drives.

Did you know that your handwriting conveys more than just your words? Penmanship can reveal aspects of your personality, offering inky insights into your education, dream career, perfect companion and much more.

So, what does your handwriting say about you? According to certified graphologist Caro Duncan, handwriting analysis is one of the oldest methods used to understand a personality. Duncan was drawn to study graphology decades ago when she noticed her students' writing spoke volumes about their characters. Script can convey personality, intellect, cognitive thinking approach, attachment style, vitality, sexuality and unconscious drives. It presents a map to self-exploration and, unlike psychoanalysis, graphology is a system that provides an unbiased view via written forms, space and movement.

Graphology (also known as graphoanalysis) has been applied to compatibility assessment, criminology, forensics, genealogy, historical study, psychology, recruitment and self-awareness techniques. Handwriting analysis can even paint a picture of departed ancestors for those wanting to know more about their lineage.

Modern graphology blossomed in Bologna, Italy, where the first book on the subject was written in 1622 by physician Camillo Baldi. It soon spread to France where the term graphology was coined by Abbé Jean-Hippolyte Michon in the late 19th century. Writings of Jacques-Hippolyte Michon (France) and Ludwig Klages (Germany) gave graphology a stalwart following. Today, the American Handwriting Analysis Foundation and British Institute of Graphologists offer reputable research and courses in handwriting analysis and therapy.

Handwriting heroes

Great thinkers who held graphology in high esteem include Aristotle, Hippocrates, Anton Chekhov, Charles Dickens, Michelangelo, Sigmund Freud and William Shakespeare, who apparently claimed, "Give me the handwriting of a woman and I will tell you her character."

Writing wrongs

Though graphology is often maligned as a pseudoscience, many studies support its efficacy. One study published in the *Indian Journal of Psychological Medicine* titled "Handprints of the Mind", called graphology a "Useful tool to assess personality traits in children and to use handwriting as remedial therapy to promote positive traits."

Graphotherapy, a branch of graphology, identifies behavioural and emotional issues by analysing handwriting and adjusts writing style to address them. For instance, ADHD children often exhibit challenges such as disorganised written material, inconsistent lettering and slow writing speed, according to a 2019 study led by paediatric neurologist Dr Rony Cohen. Enhancing the handwriting of children with ADHD may lead to improvements in cognition and concentration.

Unfortunately, the decline in handwriting skills due to technology has a detrimental impact on children's development, as warned by The Campaign for Cursive*, a committee of the American Handwriting Analysis Foundation. They emphasise the importance of cursive handwriting for enhancing reading accuracy, fostering individual expression, aiding language acquisition, improving memory, refining spelling, and enhancing cognitive processes. Encouraging activities such as journaling, list-making and writing notes can help integrate more handwriting into children's routines.

Brain writing

"The engine behind our handwriting is not our hand but our brain's central nervous system, which provides a direct link to our subconscious self, our stored experiences and acquired attitudes," The British Academy of Graphology.

The brain fires neural pathways that create writing. Tweaking our writing style triggers neural feedback that moulds the mind along the lines of neuroplasticity. Our writing is a snapshot of our subconscious and as such changes in our handwriting indicate deep shifts.

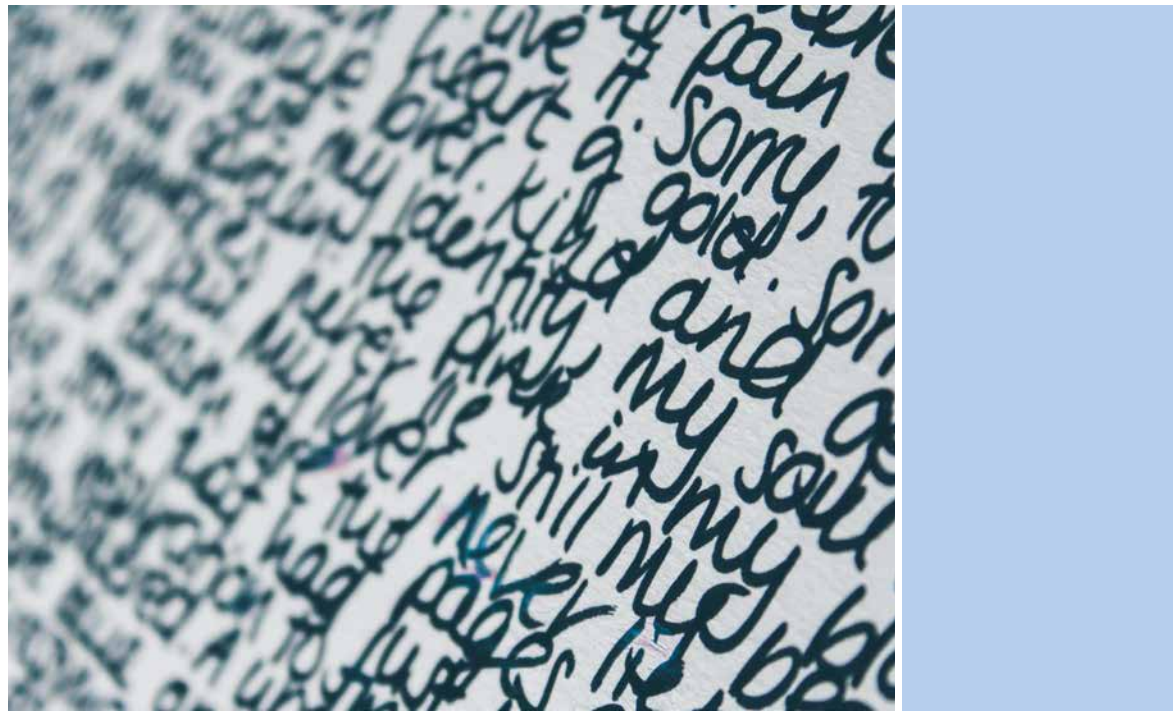
According to Duncan, our handwriting is the manifestation of our entire life experiences, and "as unique as our fingerprints". She adds: "When we write, it is as if everything that ever happened to us comes together and travels down the nerves from our brains and out onto the paper revealing how we think, feel and behave now."

Two types

Over time, two distinct schools of graphology developed – the Trait Stroke method and Gestalt Graphology. Though these systems have correlations and crossovers, they are separate camps.

The Trait Stroke method mastered by Abbé Jean Hippolyte Michon is based on the characteristics of each letter and connections that indicate an individual's nature. Gestalt Graphology, emerging in Germany

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Images: Top left: David Clode, top right: Annie Spratt, lower: Ondrej Machart

around 1895, is a holistic approach to analysing writing style that takes into account psychotherapeutic paradigms such as the id, ego and superego. It considers hundreds of factors including movement across the page and patterns as personality indicators. Gestalt graphologists may chart a “psychogram” to graphically illustrate a subject’s state. This is very helpful for the subject to visually comprehend their patterns and track progress in consecutive sessions. Many graphologists apply a combined approach of Gestalt and Traits for an accurate analysis.

The writings on the wall

For centuries, people have linked personality traits with handwriting. Duncan shares an ancient caution from Confucius, dating back to around 500 BC, advising to “beware of a man whose writing sways like a reed in the wind”. This suggests that if letters exhibit varying slants, the writer might be emotionally confused and unreliable. Remarkably, handwriting analysis can be achieved accurately without even meeting the subject.

British graphologist Emma Bache was asked by CGTN Europe to analyse a piece of anonymous handwriting. She remarked: “Emotionally, they’re all over the shop and quite moody and quite unstable. I’d say the T bars are exceptionally long. So, there’s a determination there which I would say would spill over into aggression.” The author turned out to be the infamous psychopath Charles Manson.

Graphology is sometimes employed by investigators to gather more information about a suspect. In 2011’s *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows*, Holmes deduces: “If one observes the overall slant and the pressure of the writing, there’s suggestion of acute narcissism, a complete lack of empathy, and a pronounced inclination toward ... moral insanity.” Many judicial systems recognise graphology including in India, where under Section 45 of the Indian Evidence Act, it asserts that handwriting analysis is admissible evidence in court.

Graphology session

With a healthy dose of scepticism, I sent two pages of my handwriting to graphologist Caro Duncan. I hardly write by hand anymore and when I do, the style varies greatly. Duncan asked me to write her a “general letter” and sign it. She knew nothing about me except that I was writing this article. After Duncan had a chance to scrutinise my scrawl, we met to discuss. During the session, Duncan accurately and empathetically explained my inner nature and my external façade. I was astonished at how writing could convey such a sharp psychic photo of my character.

Duncan advised me to protect my sensitive side as my writing had rare hearts in it, similar to Mother Theresa’s. Using a magnifying glass, Duncan illustrated how she deduced so many details. “Try to straighten the slant

of your handwriting to be less sensitive and more self-assured,” Duncan advised. She also mentioned bigger loops in my lowercase gs would invite more abundance.

Compelled to show her a teenager’s writing who is close to me, I was moved to tears at her impressions. “She’s a bit lost and tense, she feels she doesn’t fit in and is suffering mild depression,” Duncan says. “See how the sentences slope down? There’s anger and frustration there, too ... note the upward ticks at the end of letters? Encourage her to loosen up with liberating activities like dance.” She was spot on and delicate in her delivery, sharing her insights with a clear benevolent desire to help. “It’s incredible what you glean from handwriting, I used it to guide both my sons’ education and career for the best outcomes,” she says.

Celebrity autographs

“*The conscious writing is an unconscious drawing, sign and portrait of oneself,*” graphology expert Max Pulver.

The writing of well-known figures is often consistent with their character. Vincent Van Gogh wrote with a distant personal pronoun “I”, mirroring his sense of isolation. Picasso’s writing shows a raw verve. Hitler’s small handwriting shows focus with slashes for dots that reflect anger and ts like domineering crosses. Joan Collins’ signature sweeping strokes and swooping loops say: “Ta da ... here I am!”

Oprah Winfrey’s dynamic signature screams self-confidence through the large capitals with the sharp r and n indicating a sharp intellect.

Soul script

Handwriting is a window to one’s world. The curves, loops, lines and dots offer an outer view to an inner world, conveying a clear snapshot of the subject’s subconscious thoughts, feelings and behaviour at the time. We can read a person’s psyche through the writing size, slant, style, spacing, pressure and movement.

Bear in mind these are only tendencies and not always applicable in the context of an overall handwriting pattern. A consultation with a certified graphologist can offer more specific analysis. There is also a free introductory guide to graphology plus complementary rudimentary handwriting analysis at businessballs.com/graphologytest.pdf.

Caroline Robertson is a naturopath and author of seven books including *Keys to Calm* and *The Meditation Manual*. For online or Sydney clinic consultations, visit carolinerobertson.com.au.

Exercise: Write your way to greater self-knowledge

Get a black or blue pen and two foolscap sheets of lined paper. Naturally write a letter or journal entry to fill the pages and sign your name at the end. See how your writing correlates with the following categories.

Size of letters

Small: Academic, introverted, humble, modest, moderate, shy and focused. Albert Einstein had small writing

Large: Confident, attention-seeking, enthusiastic, extroverted, bold and big presence

Average: Able to adjust to environment

Slant of letters

To the right: Extroverted, emotional, expressive and concern for other's opinion

To the left: Introverted, reserved and suppressed

Straight: Clear-headed, independent and logical

Slope of sentences

Downward: Depression and pessimism

Upward: Upbeat and optimistic

Straight: Centred and balanced

Position on line

Below line: Heavy and deep thinker

Above line: Dreamer with high ideals

Spacing

Squashed and tight: Uptight, restrained and perfectionistic

Spread apart: Autonomous, freedom loving, uninhibited and easy

Words close together: Self-imposed restrictions and fears

Words far apart: Needs own space

Page position

Words more to the left: Live in the past and prioritise family

Words to the right: Future focused and broad network

Signature

Legible: Clear communicator, open and honest

Illegible: Secretive and guarded

Big capitals: Showy

Dash: Keep others at a distance

Different from normal writing: Public persona differs from true personality.

Underlined name: Self-important

Writing circles around signature: Self-protective

Decoration/flourishes

Aware of self-image and desire to stand out

As and Os

Closed circles: Secretive and aware

Open at top: Open and can't keep a secret

Ts

Don't cross t all the way: Don't follow through

Cross high on line: Aim high with strong self-esteem

Cross low on line: Unambitious with fragile self-esteem

Cross off the stem: Absentminded fantasiser

Short cross: Lazy and unmotivated

Long cross: Determined and driven

Dots on i

Directly above line: Precise, dependable and organised

Left of the line: Fearful trepidation and shy

Right of the line: Speedy and busy

Dash dot: Critical, restless, rushed and impatient

High or far from stem: Imaginative

Bubble dot: Child-like curiosity and playful. David

Bowie had this.

Top of letters b, d, f, h, l, t,

Short: Lack of ambitions

Average: Realistic

Tall: Ambitious and idealistic

Large loops: Emotional and warm hearted

Narrow loops: Restricted and self-conscious

Lowercase g, j and y

Big loop: Abundant, creative, generous and sensuous like Lady Gaga's.

Tight loop: Financial fears, miserly. Scarcity consciousness

Pressure

Deep: High energy and intense

Light: Ethereal, detached, low vitality and passive

Shape

Round letters: Artistic, feminine, open and relaxed

Tight and pointy: Aggressive, conservative, masculine and tense

Loops and open circles: Calm and receptive

Consistency

Sporadic: Disorganised, nervous, confused and mental instability

Consistently neat: Consideration for others

Omitted 'i' dots and 't' cross strokes

Not detail oriented.