

## GROWTH CHART of a student's handwriting

*This series of handwriting-samples appears with the gracious permission of its author, technical writer and poet Keith Deshaies.*

*The samples show this student's progress during three months, working entirely by himself with suggestions and materials-recommendations provided by me "long-distance" (via e-mail and phone.) Note that samples for some dates show Keith experimenting with more than one writing-tool and/or writing technique. I encourage students to try various techniques and tools in order to see for themselves what works best for them. (Obtaining the needed tools may be as simple as finding the right pen or pencil.)*

*February 9, 2004 (right after this student found me) -*

...

*all right, Kate, here goes nothing: Here's the  
three writing samples I promised I hope  
these are OK. The particulars: I'm writing this  
fairly quickly with a fine-nibbed (and very  
cheap - Stauffer calligraphy pen.*

*So far today I've taught myself as much as possible about  
Italic, and in the third paragraph I'll show you what I've  
been able to accomplish so far. I used Briem's web site  
as a tutorial. I spent about three or four hours on it. I'm  
not exactly rocky about it, but I think I'm comfortable  
enough with it to write a fairly quick paragraph below.*

*I'm still curious to see where all of this goes. I'm not  
exactly blazing new trails - I'm sure I'm still making lots  
of mistakes, and this paper is pretty cheap, too, but I'm  
encouraged enough to continue. I really need to work  
on my y a lot more, but for an afternoon's worth of  
work, I'm fairly pleased, and will very likely  
write my poetry manuscripts this way.*

|                       |                          |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| <i>Keith Deshaies</i> | <i>February 10, 2004</i> |
| <i>Keith Deshaies</i> | <i>February 10, 2004</i> |
| <i>Keith Deshaies</i> | <i>February 10, 2004</i> |

February 10, 2004 (a formal pre-instruction sample, where this student chose to show me the different ways he'd been writing)

Mati.

This is the cursive style I was using in my journals for the ~~the~~ past 20 years or so. I'm not making any special effort to be tidy or messy; this is just how I used to make my entries

After I read your web site info, and heeding advice from others, I went to what my wife thought was a much more attractive style. I realize it's not italic, but I find it a bit more workable. Italic is next, though, and I'm online right now looking for a fountain pen with a fine, oblique nib. I have no aspirations for calligraphy, but I do find myself paying more and more attention to aesthetics and process these days, and this is one area I'd like to improve.

Thank you for making so much sense!

- Keith Deshaies  
February 9, 2004

February 11, 2004

(copying an essay for practice: I encourage my students to find and copy material that appeals to them) -

2/11/04

## Eloquent Listening

by  
Steve Leveen

"I make a game of seeing what gets people talking most enthusiastically; I hardly say a word and afterwards people say what a great conversationalist I am!" That's what my friend Gene Miller told me. He's a business school professor these days after a long and amazingly successful career as a CEO for several companies and as an editor of Business Week in our recently passed twentieth century, listening skills were put high on the list of abilities desirable, if not necessary, for professional success.

One of the most - oops - One of the century's best-selling books was Dale Carnegie's "How to Win Friends and Influence People." Originally published in 1936, the book is still in bookstores today after selling more than 15 million copies. Chapter 4 is titled, "An Easy Way to Become a Good Conversationalist." Carnegie tells his readers that the secret to being perceived as a good conversationalist is to be an attentive listener. "To be interesting, be interested. Ask questions that the other person will enjoy answering. Encourage them to talk about themselves and their accomplishments."

Millions of Americans took the advice to heart, not only to be popular, but to persuade. Dean Rusk, Secretary of State for presidents Kennedy and Johnson, expressed the idea for many with this line, "One of the best ways to persuade others is with your ears - by listening to them."

Keith Deshaies

~ 20 minutes



February 12, 2004 (copying a catalog entry for practice) -

2-12-04

## Conklin Glider Collection

Keith.  
Deshaies

Modelled in the spirit of the original Glider pens of the 1940s, Conklin introduces its newest collection. Crafted from a brilliant marbled resin, the glider is available in an array of unique colors. Stamped with the famous Conklin logo on the silver band and clip, the Glider represents quality at an affordable price

(growth chart samples continue on next page)

February 14, 2004 (copying another essay for practice) -

## The Power Of Nothing

by

Steve Leveen

One night years ago I was listening to a radio interview of a jazz musician. He said that sometimes what separates the great musicians from the rest is not the notes they play but the notes they don't play. Over the years I've come to think that what he said about jazz musicians applies to most of the arts, as well as the professions, when they are practiced at the highest levels. The best artists and practitioners know when less is more.

A skilled speaker will sometimes use a long pause before beginning. The longer the pause, the more rapt everyone's attention to an engaging opening line. A fine actor can sometimes accomplish with a long, telling look what dialog cannot. The comedian Jack Benny would pause for incredibly long periods, in a way that would unnerve other comedians, yet the audience would laugh all the louder.

In writing, it's often what the author and editor leave out that makes the book a success. And in contrast, how many books have sunk, overloaded with a budge full of words? It is what is left out of a Studs Terkel oral history or an Edward Hopper painting that makes the art that remains, the art that soars.

Keith Deshaies  
2/14/04

February 18, 2004 (once more copying essay for practice) -

## Gifts of a Journal by Steve Leveen

Do you keep a journal? How about old correspondence? Biographers will tell you that ~~the~~ diaries and letters provide some of the best insights into their subject matters and also do good things for their authors. Yet in my dozens of interviews with successful people, only a few kept such personal histories — although many more wished they did.

In his biography of John Adams, the historian David McCullough draws from more than a thousand private letters between Adams and his wife, Abigail, as well as from their diaries. You gain a sense that their letters were not merely a record of their lives, but of life itself. Abigail admitted that she could sometimes say things in ~~pers~~ writing more easily than in person. She got more opportunity than she wished to write her "Dearest Friend," as she affectionately addressed her husband, given their many years of separation when Adams was posted in Europe.

— Keith Deshaies, 2/18/04  
(Fairly fast; probably 10 minutes)



March 8, 2004 (copying a Shakespearean sonnet for practice)

Being your slave, what should I do but tend  
Upon the hours and times of your desire?  
I have no precious time at all to spend,  
Nor services to do, till you require.  
Nor do I chide the world-without-end hour,  
Whilst I, my sovereign, watch the clock for you,  
Nor think the bitterness of absence sour,  
When you have bid your servant once adieu.  
Nor dare I question with my jealous thought  
Where you may be, or your affairs suppose,  
But like a sad slave stay and think of nought  
Save where you are how happy you make those.  
So true a fool is love that in your will  
(Though you do anything) he thinks no ill.

— William Shakespeare,  
Sonnet 57

Keith Deshaies

3/8/04

(At speed; probably 5 minutes)

also March 8, 2004 - the student uses his new handwriting to write original poetry

## STORM

Scattered leaves, scattered time:  
Old Glory straightens out those stripes  
against a mottled gray sky,  
stiff late fall wind forcing collars  
up around cold red ears.  
Downtown little town,  
Northwest small town,  
square corners, lazy streets  
the hub the malls sabotage.  
Traffic lights keep polite pace  
baristas keep polite pace  
barbers keep to meet greet repeat.

Scattered people, scattered time:  
Elements of night in this day,  
dark for noon downtown,  
deep shadows in the maples,  
just ahead of the holidays,  
calm enough for November,  
just before the Santa storm.  
Still deciding, in the promising gloom,  
whether to display a relaxed smile  
or show the dispassioned stare  
our evolutionary cynicism demands,  
I sip my coffee as the autumn leaves  
dance across the street, under cars;  
slip on my gloves and leave  
the coffee shop bustle,  
consulting the clouds, Old Glory,  
the shadows, the maples, the people.

© Copyright 2003, Keith Deshaies  
All rights reserved.

(3/8/04 at speed; ~ 5-7 minutes)



April 6, 2004

(using various fountain pens to copy the back-cover text of a handwriting book I had recommended to him) -

(From the back cover of the Getty-Dubay book, WRITE NOW)

WRITE Now provides a complete program to enable you to develop a clean, elegant, and legible hand. The italic style produces functional handwriting using simple, aesthetic forms that are natural and rhythmic and that satisfy the need for both legibility and speed.

(Esterbrook; stub backhand-fine)

Most of the styles taught in schools were developed in the 19th century and were designed to mimic the ornate copperplate engraving of that era. They abound with loops and flourishes and extreme letter slope. Because of the difficulty involved in mastering these shapes, handwriting is often hard to read.

(Sheaffer Fine Italic)

But there's hope! WRITE Now incorporates the italic style which developed in Europe 500 years ago as a practical and efficient style for everyday use, and is once again gaining popularity in schools worldwide. Italic avoids many of the traps that cause illegibility, even when written in a hurry.

(Sheaffer Lifetime Balance, extra-fine)

April 6, 2004  
Keith Deshaies

April 29, 2004 (snailmail from this student) -

Hi, Kate:

It's been awhile since I sent my last sample, I know. As promised, here's the paper version of my final writing sample. I'm using an old Esterbrook Dollar Pen with a Falcon stub nib. It has quickly become my favorite.

This italic cursive journey has been quite a little ride! I can actually read my journals without squinting now, and when I have to write people notes, I usually get some sort of compliment. This is somewhat strange to me; in aggregate, I don't feel as if I've changed it all that much. But my journals don't lie. And by now, you've compiled quite a little dossier on me, too.

I've gotten busy with tech writing, but don't fear: I still intend to do that article we had talked about. As soon as the decks clear, I'll be giving you a call.

Guess what? You gave me better letters!

Thanks, Kate!

-Heith



K. Deshaies  
1714 E. Hemlock St.  
Rent, WA 98030-6239

Kate Gladstone  
325 South Manning Boulevard  
Albany, NY 12208-1731

