

READ
Read
CURSIVE
Cursive
EAST
Fast

BY KATE GLADSTONE



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 LOOK

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 CODE CRACKER

PART 1

How to Recognize Cursive Letters

CHAPTER 1



Many people think that reading cursive is impossible. But, it isn't too hard. (In fact, it's a lot easier than writing cursive!) This book will teach you how to crack the cursive code. We'll start with learning to read the lowercase letters of cursive.

Some good reasons to start cursive reading with lowercase letters:

- Lowercase letters make up about 98% of written English, in every style. So, once you can read cursive lowercase, you can read almost every word, sentence, paragraph, or page in cursive.
- Most of the lowercase letters in cursive have a lot in common with their printed equivalents. This makes it easy to learn to recognize lowercase cursive letters. However, most uppercase letters in cursive look very different from their printed equivalents. Therefore, learning to recognize uppercase cursive letters takes more time.



The first lowercase cursive letters that we'll be working with are the six that have the most in common with their printed equivalents.

i t e
c a o

In just a few minutes, you will be able to read them easily, and you will know by yourself what letters they are. With just these six letters, you will be able to read hundreds of cursive words!

Let's start with this letter:

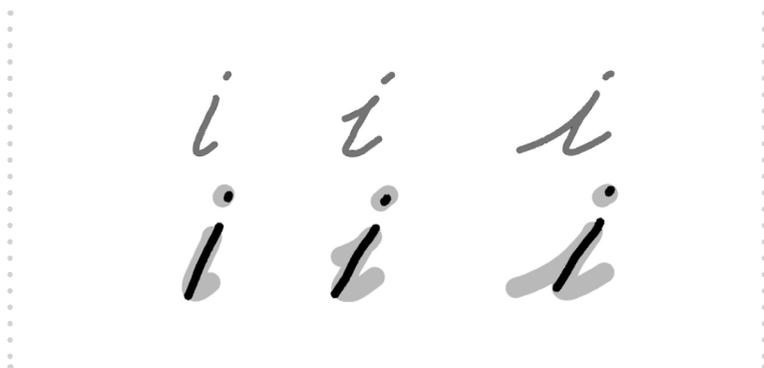
Notice that it has a dot.



Also notice that it is a short letter. It doesn't have any ascenders (tall parts like the tops of "h" or "l") or any descenders (hanging parts like the bottoms of "y" or "j").

The only short letter that has a dot is the letter "i". (Of course you already knew this, from knowing how to read print.) So, this letter is a cursive lowercase "i".

Here are some common ways that the letter i can look in cursive:



(If you like, you can trace the black letters with a highlighter, a pencil, a finger, or in any other way that is safe to use in a book. You can do this for any of the black letters on gray backgrounds in this book.)



No matter how the letters in this example look, or how they slant (or sometimes don't slant), we can recognize them all as "i".



Here are three cursive words which use the letter “i” and some other letters. Can you find the letter “i” in each word?



it tie ice

Below is a “code cracker” to check your answers and to show you what the letters in those three words really are.

1.1



CODE CRACKER

it tie ice

Just as you can tell that a short letter with a dot is an i, so you can tell that a letter with a bar across it is a t. These things stay the same whether the letter is printed or cursive.



Here are some ways that the letter “t” can look in cursive:

t t t t t t

Look back at the code-cracker and see if you can find the letter “t”.

Since many of the “code-cracker pictures” include words with “c” and “e”, you have probably figured out how to tell when a cursive letter is a letter “c” or a letter “e”. Soon, we’ll be learning more about “c”, but for now let’s make sure that you can tell apart the letters we have worked with. So, let’s take another look at some ways the letter “t” can look in cursive:



Now, here are a few different ways that the letter “c” can look in cursive:



And here are some ways that the letter “e” can look in cursive:



Now that you have learned to read a few cursive letters, you can already read hundreds of cursive words. So let’s look at a couple of other letters in cursive:



You might think these two are a little harder to figure out
—but, this “code-cracker” will help:

1.2

CODE CRACKER



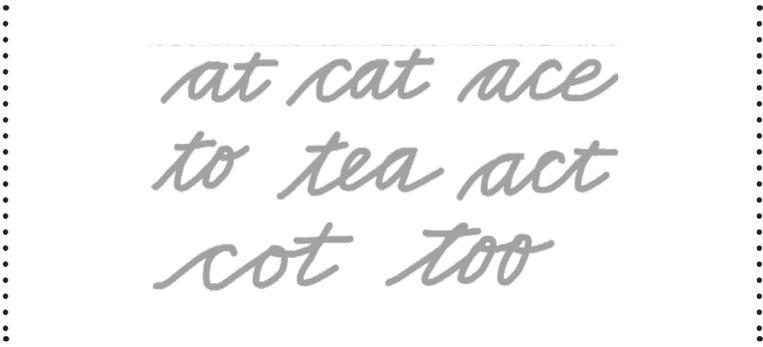
a o

Here are different ways that letters can look in cursive.



a a a a a a
o o o o o o o

Now you can start cracking the cursive code! Here are some
cursive words to read:



at cat ace
to tea act
cot too

Were you able to read them easily? Or did it take a little work?

You can check for yourself below.

at cat ace
to tea act
cot too

1.3

CODE CRACKER



For these next two words, the code has been cracked for the first letter of each word. Try to read the rest of the word on your own:

wait voice

In case you need a code-cracker for these words, there's one below. (But you may not need it.)

wait voice

1.4

CODE CRACKER



Now it's time to strengthen your new skills with a Code Challenge puzzle. Turn to the next page to start!



CODE CHALLENGE

These words include some letters you don't know yet. Can you figure out these cursive words too?

Which cursive word is "ice"?

Which cursive word is "coat"?

Which cursive word is "cocoa"?

Which cursive word is "to"?

coat
to
ice
cocoa

EXTRA CHALLENGE

These next words use the cursive letters you know—and they also use some cursive letters you don't know yet.

Can you use the cursive letters you know—and your detective skills—to figure these cursive words, too?

Which cursive word is "two"?

Which cursive word is "we"?

Which cursive word is "vote"?

Which cursive word is "cave"?

we
two
cave
vote

 LOOK

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 CODE CRACKER

PART 2

Experiencing Cursive Text: Reading All
Kinds Of handwriting

CHAPTER 12

Let's Read Historical Documents: Cursive of the Past



Let's Read Historical Documents

Now that you can read a variety of present-day cursive styles, let's read some historical documents which use older styles of cursive. Sometimes, these older styles use letter shapes which are less common in today's handwriting styles, or which have even gone extinct. So, reading historical documents means that handwriting detectives have to learn a few more things about handwriting than we needed for reading today's typical cursive.



Let's start with a very short document: something that was handwritten in 1791 on the title page of a schoolbook. It's a message from the girl who owned the book. Can you read it? (It may take a while. Her handwriting wasn't great.)

Metildah Upham
her Book 1791
if I this Book do lend
and you it borrow
Pray read it through today
and send it home tomorrow

Were you able to read what she wrote? Here is a transcription, spelled and punctuated exactly the way she wrote it:

Metildah Upham
her Book 1791
If I this book do lend
and you it borrow
Pray read it through today
and send it home tomorrow

Once you make sense of the old-fashioned language (such as “pray” for “please”), this is probably not too different from things you have written in some of your own books.

You probably noticed that she wrote the lowercase letter “d” with a curved ascender:



Writing a lowercase “d” with a curved ascender was a popular option in the eighteenth century, and has also been popular as a handwriting option in some other times. When a lowercase “d” has a curved ascender, it is actually reflecting the history of how the lowercase d originated from the uppercase “D”:



(Our lowercase letter shapes actually all originated as faster variations on earlier letters that we would recognize as uppercase, but those origins are not always obvious.)

On the next page is another schoolbook inscription. This one is from 1790, and was written by a boy called Jabez Backus.

To fit the entire document into this book, we had to use a photo that is much smaller than the original document. So, these next photos are enlarged photos of some phrases from the document, to show the writing at its actual size.



Let's start with the opening of the Declaration of Independence.

When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another,

If you look at the last word in the phrase, you'll notice that this word ("necessary") looks almost like "neccessary." Here is an enlarged version:



necessary,

That unusual-looking s is an old-fashioned cursive letter variant called the **"long s."** Back when the **"long s"** was a part of handwriting, one of the rules about when to write the **"long s"** was that it couldn't be used right after another s. This is why only the first **"s"** in "necessary" was made long. You will see the same long s in other words in this document, such as "assume" and "stations" among others.

Now that you know about the old long **"s"**, here are the first few lines of the Declaration of Independence, including the opening phrase that we showed you above:

IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776.

The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America,

When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation. We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.



Let's enlarge the smallest writing, phrase by phrase, so that you can see and read it more easily. Read the smallest writing, phrase by phrase, before you check your accuracy with the transcription at the bottom of the page:

When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation. —

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. —

[Transcription arranged by phrases:]

When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation. —

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. —

Fun facts about the Declaration of Independence:



After Jefferson finished writing the Declaration, the committee sent out a copy of his final version to have a perfect-looking copy made, which would be signed by all members of the Continental Congress. The big job of copying the document by hand, in the flourished cursive of that time, was done by a professional copyist named Timothy Matlack. Matlack's cursive handwriting, not Jefferson's, is what we see on the famous finished copy above.

The final handwritten copy of the document, in Matlack's near-perfect flourished cursive, wasn't ready for signatures until August 2, 1776 — a month after independence had actually been declared. (This was not Matlack's fault. Writing long documents out by hand takes a long time, especially in flourished eighteenth-century cursive, and Matlack probably also had other copying jobs at the time.) However, all the copies printed by Dunlap were ready on July 4, 1776 — the first Independence Day — just two days after Jefferson had finished writing.

With Read Cursive Fast, now anyone who can read print can read cursive. This carefully paced manual includes step-by-step instruction, along with fun practice reading passages and historical documents that systematically teach you to read cursive. The techniques in Read Cursive Fast have succeeded with children, teens, and adults with and without disabilities. Anyone can learn to read cursive, even if they do not write by hand at all. Learn to crack the cursive code so that you can read handwritten notes and our nation's historical documents.



"This will be an amazing resource."

— Jonathan Dubay, owner of Handwriting Success

"The inclusion of the history of each letterform is, in my opinion, an excellent touch. Many of the children and adults I have worked with have asked about the origins of certain letterforms. The ability to read primary source documents is the major reason many people cite for teaching cursive writing. You have provided an excellent foundation for students in grade 4 and up to 'decipher' the materials required for today's social studies classes."

— Kathleen Wright, Founder and Executive Director of the Handwriting Collaborative, Workshop Presenter, and Independent Educational Consultant

"We really enjoyed this book. My eleven-year-old had fun with it and did really well. My seven-year-old had no problems reading the cursive words in the first few chapters. The book is well organized, has a good pace, and provides historical context and vocabulary for understanding letter forms. We found it enjoyable and rewarding."

— Myles Miller, father of 2 and member of the handwriting improvement group "Rock Your Handwriting"

"This book makes reading cursive perfectly simple."

— Fiona, age 18

"This book is similar to the teaching I had as a young child to learn cursive writing. It will help a child to improve both their penmanship and abilities to read cursive."

— Temple Grandin, Author, The Way I See It and Thinking in Pictures



Meet the Author

Kate Gladstone, M.L.S., is a handwriting consultant, product developer, and the director of the World Handwriting Contest. Kate is an international expert in the field of handwriting who works with students, parents, teachers, physicians, and others who need better, simpler, and less accident-prone handwriting — or who simply need to make sense of cursive when they see it.

