Curriculum Overview:
Getty-Dubay® Italic Handwriting Series for K–6

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Abstract

The *Getty-Dubay® Italic Handwriting Series* is a handwriting instruction program for grades K-6 based on the italic script that provides a proven, efficient curriculum to support English language proficiency goals.

Research indicates that handwriting plays a key role in literacy development for children learning to read, and handwriting instruction continues to be important for writing development through middle school. Regular, sequential handwriting instruction using evidence-based best practices supports English Language Arts (ELA) and other curricula by providing an avenue for communication through language that no other mode can offer.

However, some handwriting systems require significant classroom time in grades 2 and 3 to accomplish a transition from a print style to a joined-cursive style. These continous cursive methods typically have low retention rates; older students who have learned handwriting in this manner tend to create their own style of writing by using a mixture of manuscript and joined letters based on models commonly found in type.

By contrast, the Getty-Dubay® Italic handwriting program provides a sequential transition to cursive, building on previously-learned concepts. Print and cursive modes are unified — letterforms of cursive italic are essentially identical to those of basic italic. Cursive italic joins most, but not all lowercase letters. Italic letterforms generally resemble those found in type.

The *Getty-Dubay® Italic Handwriting Series* consists of seven consumable workbooks A-G with built-in formative self-assessment and an *Instruction Manual*, supported by alphabet cards, desk strips, wall charts, digital fonts and letter tracing mobile apps. As an option, the Handwriting Success™ App provides the Getty-Dubay® Italic curriculum content as ebooks for tablet and stylus, available for Apple, Android and Google Chrome devices.

What is italic handwriting?

Modern italic handwriting — not to be confused with "italicized" (slanted) font style — is based on an historical script that was in use in Italy as early as the sixteenth century. Clean, legible and distinctive, this script is the progenitor of the substantially more ornate nineteenth-century Spencerian script, which Palmer and others later adapted for handwriting instruction in the United States.

Italic letterforms are similar to those commonly seen in type or on screen. They are based on elliptical shapes that conform to natural hand movements with few lifts of the pen or pencil. Capitals are taken from historical Roman models. Getty-Dubay® Italic recommends a 5° slope for all grades.

Current instructional practice in the United States typically assumes a sequence from a print mode of writing used in K-2 to a cursive mode for 2nd grade (or 3rd grade) and older students. Continuous cursive styles commonly used in this sequence involve 100% joined letters, with cursive letterforms that are dissimilar to those of print mode.

With italic handwriting, however, print ("basic italic") and cursive ("cursive italic") are unified. This sequence builds on previously learned concepts; basic italic lowercase letterforms are essentially identical to those of cursive italic. Small entrance and/or exit serifs are added in the cursive italic form of 15 of these letters to facilitate joins, and the cursive **f** has a descender.

Basic italic capitals are undecorated. Italic cursive capitals contain serifs. Only one capital letterform changes in the transition from basic italic to cursive italic: capital **Y**.

Cursive italic does not contain the loops that are prevalent in conventional cursive styles taught in the United States.

Basic italic lowercase

l i j   k v w x z   h n m r   u y

a d g q   b p   o e c s   f t

Cursive italic lowercase

l i j   k v w x z   h n m r   u y

a d g q   b p   o e c s   f t

Getty-Dubay® teaches lowercase letters first, in eight family groups of similar shapes, progressing from simple vertical strokes to arches and ellipses. Capital letters come next, because they account for less than 4% of all letters in English.

Basic italic capitals

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P
Q R S T U V W X Y Z

Cursive italic capitals

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P
Q R S T U V W X Y Z

Cursive italic joins

Getty-Dubay® Italic utilizes two join types: a diagonal and horizontal.

EXAMPLE OF DIAGONAL JOINS — village

EXAMPLE OF HORIZONTAL JOINS — town

These two join types are executed in eight specific ways to connect most — but not all — letters. Getty-Dubay® Italic joins essentially report the movement of the pen on the paper as it moves from one letter to the next. They support the natural and rhythmic movement of the hand and promote legibility and speed. Students may choose from among many join options to explore what works best for them.

A quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

How does italic differ from other handwriting styles?

Italic consists of one script that transitions from print to cursive modes by joining most, but not all letters. All other common handwriting curricula in the United States are based on a continuous cursive model that requires students to learn two scripts: one for print mode, another for cursive mode.

The cursive forms of Palmer, Zaner-Bloser, D'Nealian, Handwriting Without Tears and similar styles are looped letterforms of 100% connected writing, whereas italic letterforms are not looped and are connected only where they facilitate speed without a negative impact on legibility. With Getty-Dubay® Italic, many of these joins are optional for the student.

Zaner-Bloser and similar continuous cursive styles require students to learn between 31 and 42 new letterforms (depending on the method) to make the transition from manuscript to cursive in grades 2 and 3, usually with a different slope from the print mode. Getty-Dubay® Italic recommends only one optional letterform change from print to cursive modes, and no change of slope.

Basic italic letterforms have few pen lifts: Twenty of the basic italic lowercase letters require no pen lifts, and the remaining six require only one pen lift. This generally translates into more ease in drawing lowercase letters.

Basic italic letters are based on oval shapes rather than the circles or teardrop shapes found in other systems. Italic's traits tend to help younger writers and those with special needs (e.g., motor skill issues, dysgraphia and dyslexia).

HANDWRITING PROGRAM	CHANGE FROM MANUSCRIPT TO CURSIVE SHAPE CHANGE		
	CAPITALS	LOWERCASE	SLOPE CHANGE
Italic	1	0	None (all 5°)
Zaner-Bloser	16	23	0° to 30°
D'Nealian	16	26	None (all 17°)
HWT	16	17	None (all 0°)

THE TRANSITION FROM BASIC TO CURSIVE MODES IN COMMON HANDWRITING METHODS.

THE TRANSITION FROM BASIC TO CURSIVE USING SAMPLE LETTERS a, f, Q, r AND z IN COMMON HANDWRITING METHODS.

RED INDICATES A LETTER PATH CHANGE (A CHANGE IN STROKE SEQUENCE, STARTING POINT, OR BOTH).

DOWNLOAD THE COMPLETE CHART HERE:

# What does the research reveal about continuous cursive methods?

Studies over the last thirty-five years show that the retention rate for continuous cursive is typically less than 1 in 3.

Continuous looped cursive handwriting methods such as Handwriting Without Tears, Zaner-Bloser and D'Nealian require significant classroom time in grades 2 and 3 to accomplish the transition from print to cursive, because these systems expect students to learn as many as 42 new letterforms. Motor planning and motor execution are different for print and cursive modes in these continuous cursive handwriting methods (Meulenbroek & van Galen, 1990).

This investment of time and effort is not generally effective. A 1985 study evaluated 756 students in the 11th grade, all of whom had received instruction using a continuous looped cursive program in elementary school, and then no instruction in handwriting following that. By 11th grade, only 13% used the continuous cursive model they were taught, while 47% wrote in styles with italic traits (Duvall, 1985).

More recent research affirms that even by 5th grade, students tend to abandon the continuous cursive letterforms they learn in 2nd and 3rd grade. (Bara & Morin, 2013). Only 15% of US high school seniors use conventional cursive (College Board, 2007).

A 1998 study of legibility and speed in 9th grade writing also indicates that, depending on the task, only 30% to 35% follow through with the 100% joined looped cursive style they are taught in elementary school. Most adopt a writing style that combines print and cursive. This style is faster and as legible or more so than 100% connected cursive writing (Graham, Berninger and Weintraub, 1998). This spontaneous style has commonalities with italic handwriting.
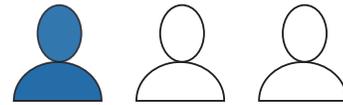
RETENTION RATE FOR CONTINUOUS CURSIVE IS TYPICALLY LESS THAN 1 IN 3.

CURSIVE ITALIC — 5° slope

CONTINUOUS CURSIVE — 30° slope

Angela, Barbara, Cecilia, David, Eugene, Fifi, Gregory, Hannah, Irving, Jojo, Kirk, Lillian, Malcolm, Nancy, Otto, Philippa, Queequeg, Richard, Susan, Trent, Ursula, Vivian, Woodrow, Xerxes, Yonny, Zanzi

Standards alignment

The research is abundant and compelling, and suggests handwriting plays a key role in literacy development for young children.

"Handwriting is not a purely motor or visual activity; it is 'language by hand,' which shares common processes with other kinds of language (listening, speaking and reading) ... Mastering handwriting is very important for children, as it places the earliest constraints on writing development." (Bara et al, 2013).

"Handwriting experience can have significant effects on the ability of young children to recognize letters ... Handwriting serves to link visual processing with motor experience, facilitating subsequent letter recognition skills." (James, 2017).
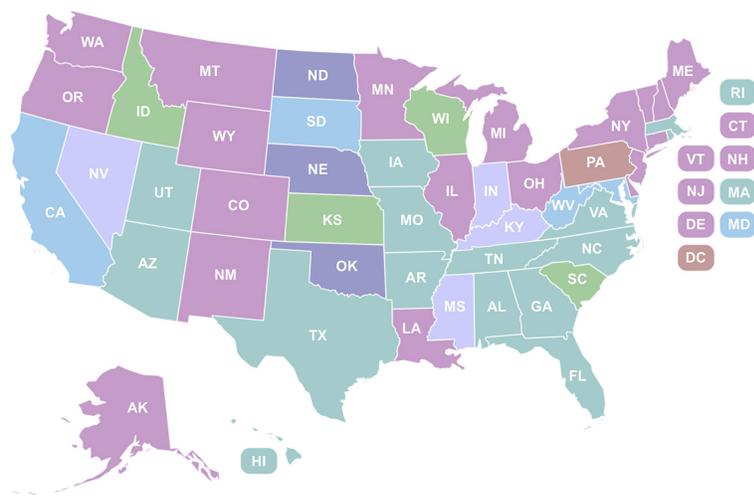
Regular, sequential handwriting instruction using evidence-based best practices supports English Language Arts (ELA) and other curricula by providing an avenue for communication through language that no other mode can offer.

The *Getty-Dubay® Italic Handwriting Series* supports handwriting content standards and legislative mandates where they exist in all fifty US states. See the interactive tool or more information at handwritingsuccess.com/handwriting-standards/.

Background

The *Getty-Dubay® Italic Handwriting Series* was created in 1979 by Barbara Getty and Inga Dubay. The authors Getty and Dubay are internationally known handwriting and calligraphy experts and educators. They have trained over 4,500 medical professionals in handwriting best practices and have presented their work at the World Health Organization in Copenhagen, Denmark and the International Patient Safety Conference in Florence, Italy. Their *New York Times* Op-Ed ("The Write Stuff", September 4, 2009) makes the case for italic handwriting.

The *Getty-Dubay® Italic Handwriting Series* is currently in use in public, private, charter and home schools nationally and abroad. The program is a proven, efficient curriculum that allows classroom handwriting instruction to meet English Language Arts content standards.

Getty-Dubay® Italic supports structured literacy by providing a sequential transition from print to cursive modes that promotes handwriting automaticity.

Getty-Dubay® Italic, www.handwritingsuccess.com. Published by Handwriting Success, LLC, P.O. Box 19088, Portland, Oregon 97280, 971-254-8695.

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What are the necessary materials of the Getty-Dubay® Italic program?

The *Getty-Dubay® Italic Handwriting Series* incorporates formative self-assessment and developmentally-appropriate content. A unique "Look, Plan, and Practice" system is built into the student workbooks. Worksheets are designed for students to learn within their zone of proximal development by incorporating content from science, language arts and social studies, and by providing many personal-choice options. Digital fonts and a free online app allows teachers and students to create worksheets for basic italic and cursive italic practice using their own text, for informal acceleration and to support other curricula (e.g., via vocabulary lists, lists of state capitals, poetry, etc.).

Each grade level of workbook A-G is self-contained. Books C through G (for grades 2 through 6) include a review of basic italic, as well as instruction and practice in cursive italic letters and joins. Therefore, implementation in schools may be made in all grades at once.

Consumable instruction workbooks for student grades K - 6

Book A (Kindergarten), 4th Ed. 2016, 72pp. (ISBN 978-0-9827762-3-0)
Book B (1st grade), 4th Ed. 2016, 64pp. (ISBN 978-0-9649215-6-6)
Book C (2nd grade), 4th Ed. 2016, 68pp. (ISBN 978-0-9827762-0-9)
Book D (3rd grade), 4th Ed. 2016, 88pp. (ISBN 978-0-9649215-7-3)
Book E (4th grade), 4th Ed. 2016, 64pp. (ISBN 978-0-9649215-8-0)
Book F (5th grade), 4th Ed. 2016, 64pp. (ISBN 978-0-9649215-5-9)
Book G (6th grade), 4th Ed. 2016, 64pp. (ISBN 978-0-9827762-5-4)
A teacher Instruction Manual for all grade levels K - 6, 4th Ed. 2009, 108pp. (ISBN 978-0-9649215-4-2)

Teaching Aids

Alphabet Cards – basic italic and numerals
Wall charts – cursive italic and numerals
Desk strips – basic italic, cursive italic and numerals

Digital Media

Getty-Dubay® Italic Fonts — 72 styles for making practice sheets
The Handwriting Success™ App and Letter FUNdamentals I & II Apps

SEE FULL CATALOG

Citations

Bara, F. & Morin, M-F. "Does the Handwriting Style Learned in First Grade Determine the Style Used in the Fourth and Fifth grades, and Influence Handwriting Speed & Quality?" *Psychology in Schools*, Vol. 50 (6), 2013.

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Duvall, B. "Evaluation of 11th grade students' Writing Supports Teaching Italic Handwriting." Institute of Education Sciences, ERIC.ed.gov, ED263608, 1985.

Graham, Berninger, and Weintraub. "The Relationship between Handwriting Style, Speed, and Legibility." *The Journal of Educational Research*, 91(5):290-297, 1998.

Graham, S. "Want to Improve Children's Writing? Don't Neglect Their Handwriting." *American Educator*, Winter 2009.

James, Karin. "The Importance of Handwriting Experience on the Development of the Literate Brain." *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, Vol. 26(6) 502–508, 2017.

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Scope & Sequence

Program Goal
To write neat, legible handwriting
with automaticity and without prompts
as a scaffold to English Language Literacy.

The Student...

The Student...	K	1	2	3	4	5	6
	25-50 min/wk	30-100 min/wk	45-100 min/wk	60-120 min/wk	60-120 min/wk	60-120 min/wk	40 min/wk
holds and uses writing tool correctly	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
sits correctly	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
positions the paper correctly	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
writes letters in a top-to-bottom progression (except d and e)		▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
writes all lowercase letters (8 family groups)		▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
writes his/her name in basic italic		▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
writes numerals		▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
writes words and sentences in basic italic		▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
writes with a consistent letter slope		▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
evaluates his/her own handwriting according to letter shapes, slope, and strokes		▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
uses correct spacing within words and between words to develop legible handwriting		▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
writes words, sentences and paragraphs in basic italic			▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
uses margins and headings appropriately			▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
writes the cursive italic joins 1-5			▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
continues to use basic italic for maps, charts, posters, forms, etc.				▓	▓	▓	▓
reads continuous looped cursive				▓	▓	▓	▓
writes cursive italic joins 1-8				▓	▓	▓	▓
writes cursive italic capitals				▓	▓	▓	▓
writes his/her name in cursive italic				▓	▓	▓	▓
is able to make various join option choices				▓	▓	▓	▓
can discern among various historical scripts							▓
experiences writing with an edged pen							▓