



Standard Terminology Relating to the Practice of Handwriting Analysis

1. Scope

- 1.1 This terminology standard includes terms that relate to analysis performed by graphologists/handwriting analysts.

2. Referenced Documents

- 2.1 *AHAF Standards:*

3. Terminology

air stroke, *n*—a pen lift that continues in the same direction as the stroke on paper.

angle, *n*—two straight lines that join together.

arcade, *n*—a form that is rounded on top like an arch.

arrangement, *n*—the spatial pattern of handwriting on the page, created by the proportion of white space (paper) to the writing.

ascender, *n*—strokes that move into the upper zone.

baseline, *n*—the ruled or imaginary line upon which the writing rests.

block printing, *n*—printed writing using all capital letters.

class characteristic, *n*—characteristics that are common to a group of writers who have learned to write from the same copybook model.

clothesline garland or shallow garland, *n*—a shallow cup-shaped connective form.

copybook, *n*—a particular school model of handwriting that students learn to imitate.

connectedness, *n*—the degree to which letters are joined together.

connecting stroke, *n*—a line that joins letters together.

connective forms, *n*—the various shapes of the line that joins letters together (garland, arcade, angle, thread, and their sub-types, double bow and secondary thread).

cross stroke/crossbar, *n*—a stroke that intersects with other parts of a letter, such as a “t.”

cursive, *n*—writing in which the writing instrument remains on the page, joining most letters together.

descender, *n*—strokes that fall below the baseline.

diacritic, *n*—a sign, such as an accent or a cedilla, written above a letter. May include i dots.

double bow, *n*—a sinuous connective form.

double-looped oval, *n*—the letter “o” where a loop is made at the top of the letter on both left and right sides.

double-joined oval, *n*—the letters “o” and “a” where a stroke makes a complete circle before forming the letter.

ductus, *n*—the writing stroke. Literally, the channel through which the ink flows.

elaboration, *n*—the addition of extra strokes that do not improve the writing.

final stroke, *n*—the shape of the last stroke of a letter at the end of a word.

form, *n*—the shape or style of writing, e.g. copybook, simplified, elaborate, printed, etc.

form level, *n*—the overall quality of a handwriting sample.

garland, *n*—a connective form that is rounded on the bottom.

gestalt, *n*—the overall pictorial makeup of a writing sample.

horizontal expansion, *n*—comprised 20 characters and spaces.

illegible, *n*—the inability to easily read a word taken out of context.

individual characteristic, *n*—letter forms that depart from copybook norm.

letter spacing, *n*—the space between letters.

ligature, *n*—strokes that bind letters together.

line quality, *n*—the character of the ductus.

line spacing, *n*—the amount of space between lines.

lower zone, *n*—strokes that move below the baseline.

loop, *n*—a curved shape that bends around and crosses itself.

manuscript printing, *n*—printed writing formed with upper and lower case letters.

margin, *n*—the borders of the written text.

middle zone, *n*—lower case letters that include the vowels, the letters c,m,n,r,s,v,w, and parts of upper and lower zone letters that do not rise above the middle zone or fall below the baseline.

movement, *n*—the third dimension of writing, comprised of rhythm, speed and pressure as the writing instrument crosses the page.

neglect, *n*—the overall writing breaks down and becomes illegible.

paraph, *n*—a flourish after a signature, or underlining a signature.

pastosity, *n*—the ductus appears soft and doughy due to a long pen hold.

persona writing, *n*—the writing appears carefully drawn, rather than naturally executed.

PPI, *n*—the personal pronoun I.

pressure, *n*—the force exerted on the writing substrate by the writing instrument.

primary thread, *n*—letter forms that begin to break down due to speed, but are made with pressure.

printing, *n*—writing that is made by forming individual, unconnected letters.

printscript, *n*—a combination of printed and cursive writing.

retracing, *n*—the downstroke overlays the upstroke.

rhythm, *n*—the regular, repeated pattern of movement in upstrokes and downstrokes, especially as seen at the baseline.

ruler writing, *n*—handwriting produced with a ruler at the baseline, with or without a printed line.

secondary expansion, *n*—narrow letters with wide spaces between them.

secondary thread, *n*—a combination of all writing forms, done with light pressure and spread out so that it appears formless and illegible.

sharpness, *n*—the ductus is clean and clear on both sides; due to a short pen hold.

signature, *n*—the writing of a person’s name as a form of identification.

simplification, *n*—the removal of unnecessary strokes in writing.

size, *n*—may refer to the overall size of writing, or the proportions of middle zone height/width to upper zone height/width, or middle zone height/width to lower zone length/width.

slant, *n*—the degree to which a letter slopes in a particular direction when measured from the baseline. May refer to writing in any zone.

speed, *n*—the velocity at which writing is executed.

trend, *n*—the general direction in which the writing is moving.

upper zone, *n*—strokes that rise above the middle zone.

word spacing, *n*—the space between words.

x-formation, *n*—forms that resemble the letter “x.” For example, the final stroke of a letter that

inappropriately falls below the baseline and is crossed by the initial upstroke of the following letter.