

A Guide to Writing

The Secretary Hand.

Utilizing William Panke's 1591 *A most breefe, easie and plaine receite for faire writing* along with rules and exemplars from other contemporary publications

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ABSTRACT

This work offers a guide to writing, and by extension, reading, the secretary hand based on 16th century published instructions and copy books. Most significantly, a newly edited and re-ordered version of William Panke's (1591) unique stroke-by-stroke instructions for writing the secretary hand is presented. These instructions are supplemented by period graphics and extracts from several Tudor publications on education and writing.

The most frequently used style of English and French handwriting between the 15th and late 17th centuries, the secretary hand appears largely illegible to modern eyes, in part due to the existence of multiple letter formations and the use of textural abbreviations. Although several excellent modern aids exist to teach historians how to read (but not write) this all important hand, calligraphy manuals by and large overlook it. The secretary hand, therefore, remains a barrier to non-professional historians wanting to undertake primary research, and calligraphers must search out exemplars and employ extensive trial and error to recreate the look of this hand. This guide is intended to help individuals learn to write the secretary hand (and perhaps to cut quills and make their own ink) by allowing them ready access to primary source materials on just these topics.

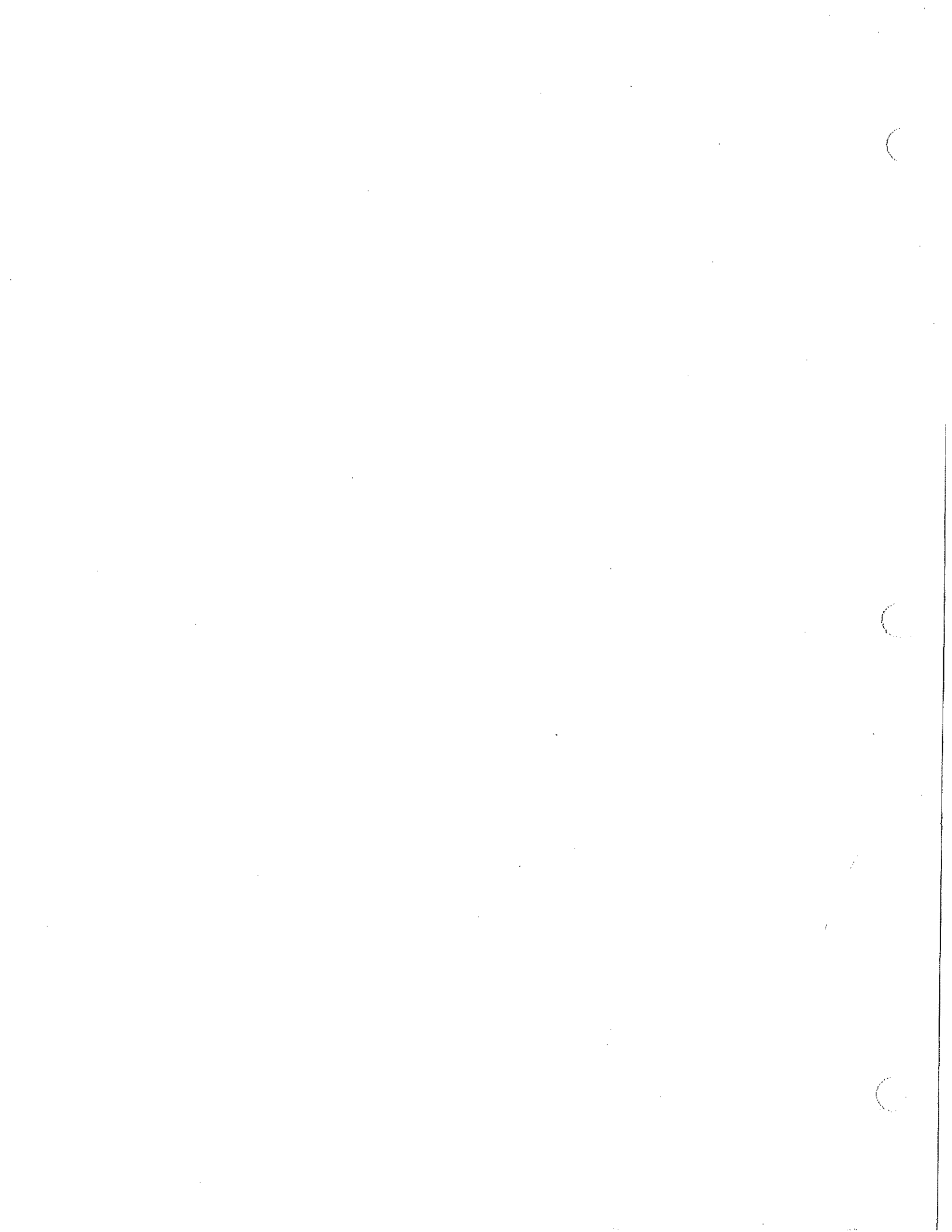


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INTRODUCTION

This present work offers a guide to writing, and by extension reading, the secretary hand. The most important style of English and French handwriting from the 15th through 17th centuries, the secretary hand is encountered in private letters, governmental documents, commonplace books, and probate records. Unfortunately, the secretary hand appears largely illegible to untrained eyes, creating a significant barrier between non-professional historians and primary source materials. The difficulty arises in part from the existence of multiple individual letter formations, the use of textural abbreviations confusing to modern eyes, and highly irregular spelling.¹

Several excellent modern aids exist to aid historians in learning to read this important handwriting style, offering visual examples from period books and manuscripts but without offering meaningful instructions on learning to write the hand.² The notion that learning to write the secre-

¹ For example, the incorrect reading of *y* as *ye* instead of the correct interpretation, *the*.

² One of the most visually comprehensive being *Elizabethan Handwriting 1500-1650* by Dawes & Kennedy-Skipton (1966). The venerable Muriel St. Clare Byrne's early article "Elizabethan handwriting for beginners" (*Review of English Studies*, 1927) provides a good introduction. Alf Ison's *Secretary Hand ABC Book* (1982, 2000) is an excellent little reference volume to have along when working in archives and libraries because of its compact size and multiple illustrations.

tary hand would be a useful modern pursuit is generally absent. An interesting exception to this appeared in 1927 when R.B. McKerrow asserted "In the study of any form of handwriting the most important point to be understood is the method of writing the letters, the order and direction in which the strokes are made."³ McKerrow's recommended students study manuscript pages closely to determine the thickness and thinness of the lines of ink from which they can determine the order and direction of pen strokes, adding they should use only quill pens in their own attempts.

Close study of pen strokes on archival documents is obviously not a reasonable option for anyone other than graduate students and academic professionals. Modern calligraphy manuals, unfortunately, have not produced useful instruction in the secretary hand. Most overlook it entirely, offering instructions to the contemporaneous (and easy to read) Italic hand instead.⁴ To help amateur historians as well as calligraphers overcome the barriers to learning the secretary hand, this manual has been compiled directly from Tudor books on the art of writing.

³ R.B. McKerrow, "The capital letters in Elizabethan Handwriting," *Review of English Studies* (1927), page 29.

⁴ A notable exception is *The Calligrapher's Bible* (David Harris, 2003), which contains several models of the secretary hand that are strangely inaccurate compared to late 15th and 16th century usage.

Learning to write in Tudor England

For Tudor men and a tiny minority of women,⁵ the art of writing was considered a secondary concern compared to learning to read. Spelling needed to be taught concurrently with reading, but it was not thought necessary to teach writing at the same time. Pedagogue William Kempe felt the need to justify the teaching of writing within mainstream elementary education, arguing that the ability to write was of such "singular use and commodity in the exercise of Grammar," that teachers needed to instruct students how to hold their pen, form letters, and join them in cursive writing.⁶ To aid teachers in this task, printed copy books began to appear in Europe over the course of the sixteenth century. Offering engraved illustrations of alphabets and sample texts in a wide range of handwriting styles including the secretary, italic and chancery hands, copy books freed teachers from the 'drudgery' of setting copy for their students to follow and theoretically allowed them to devote additional time to one-on-one instruction.⁷ The first copy book was printed in Germany in 1519, but it wasn't until 1570 that one was printed in England. Addi-

⁵ At best 15% of Tudor men and 5% of Tudor women had the ability to read and write. See Cressy and O'Day.

⁶ William Kempe, *The Education of Children* (1588). The book is not paginated..

⁷ Herbert C. Schulz, "The teaching of handwriting in Tudor and Stuart times," 412-413.

tional English copy books followed in 1585, 1590, and 1591.

Students were to begin by tracing the examples in the copybooks with a dry pen before attempting to write in ink.⁸ Copybooks and other educational publications included advice on writing related topics such as quill cutting and how to choose the best paper, but they did not include actual instructions on how best to form the letters seen in the engravings. Such instruction would have come directly from the writing master; those without access to a master would have had difficulty teaching themselves to write with only copybooks as a guide. The first English book to attempt a step by step (or rather, stroke by stroke) explanation of how to write the Secretary hand is William Panke's *A most breefe, easie and plaine receite for faire writing*, published in 1591.⁹ Specifically conceptualized as an aid "for anyone of ordinary years and capacity...[who] may in a short space...and by their own private practice attain to write both the secretary and Roman hand, to serve very good uses either in office or otherwise,"

⁸ Kempe.

⁹ Panke includes similar directions to writing the Italic hand, which I do not include here.

¹⁰ Panke covers both the long and short forms of the letter s, but forgets to include instructions for

the *Receite for faire writing* combines text instructions on each lower case letterform with actual handwritten illustrations.¹⁰ Blank spaces were left in the text when printed, which were filled in prior to sale, presumably by Panke. The book does not include the type of illustrations found in copybooks, nor does it address the shaping of capital letters. Surviving in only a single copy and unavailable in a modern edition, this ancestor to the modern calligraphy manual can be downloaded in digital form via the Early English Books Online subscription database.¹¹

Presenting the Secretary Hand to a Modern Audience

A straight transcription of Panke's *Receite for faire writing* was used as the basis for a class held at the January 2006 meeting of the Windmasters' Hill Baronial Scriptorium. It was this experience that suggested the best way to present the secretary hand to a modern audience was to combine Panke's instructions with the type of visual information found in copybooks. Students additionally suggested reordering the presentation of letterforms, changing from the straight alphabetical progression

z.

¹¹ The original is at the Huntington Library in California. The EEOB database can be accessed free of charge from subscribing libraries, such as Duke University.

¹² From his prefatory letter to the readers.

used by Panke to general grouping based on core shapes. Alongside this reordering the following modifications and additions have been made.

In most cases, wherever a blank space was left in the printed text for handwritten additions, I have inserted underlining and rewritten the illustration above it by hand. In a few cases I was able to isolate good quality images directly from the digital copy of Panke, allowing me to include them in their original positions. Calligraphy instructors using this guide in class may wish to distribute copies with the stroke illustrations removed but the underlining retained. Students can then write in each illustration themselves as the class progresses.

The handwritten shapes in Panke do not always show up well in the digitized copy, causing significant confusion in some sections. As it is not possible to exercise Panke's promise "to such as shall buy his book, that whatsoever either in the same or otherwise belonging to writing shall seem hard, that he will gratis show it [to] them by word of mouth, if they repair unto him,"¹² I have sometimes had to make my best guess at what was originally written. Any time I have been unsure of the original content I have placed [square brackets]

around the text. This occurs primarily in the section dealing with how to join letters together. To recreate Panke's penstroke illustrations I have used a Pentel 0.8 mm pen.

Multiple examples of letterforms have been isolated from digital copies of period copybooks and added throughout the text. Because Panke does not discuss capital letters at all, the section devoted to capitals contains only visual examples to guide students.

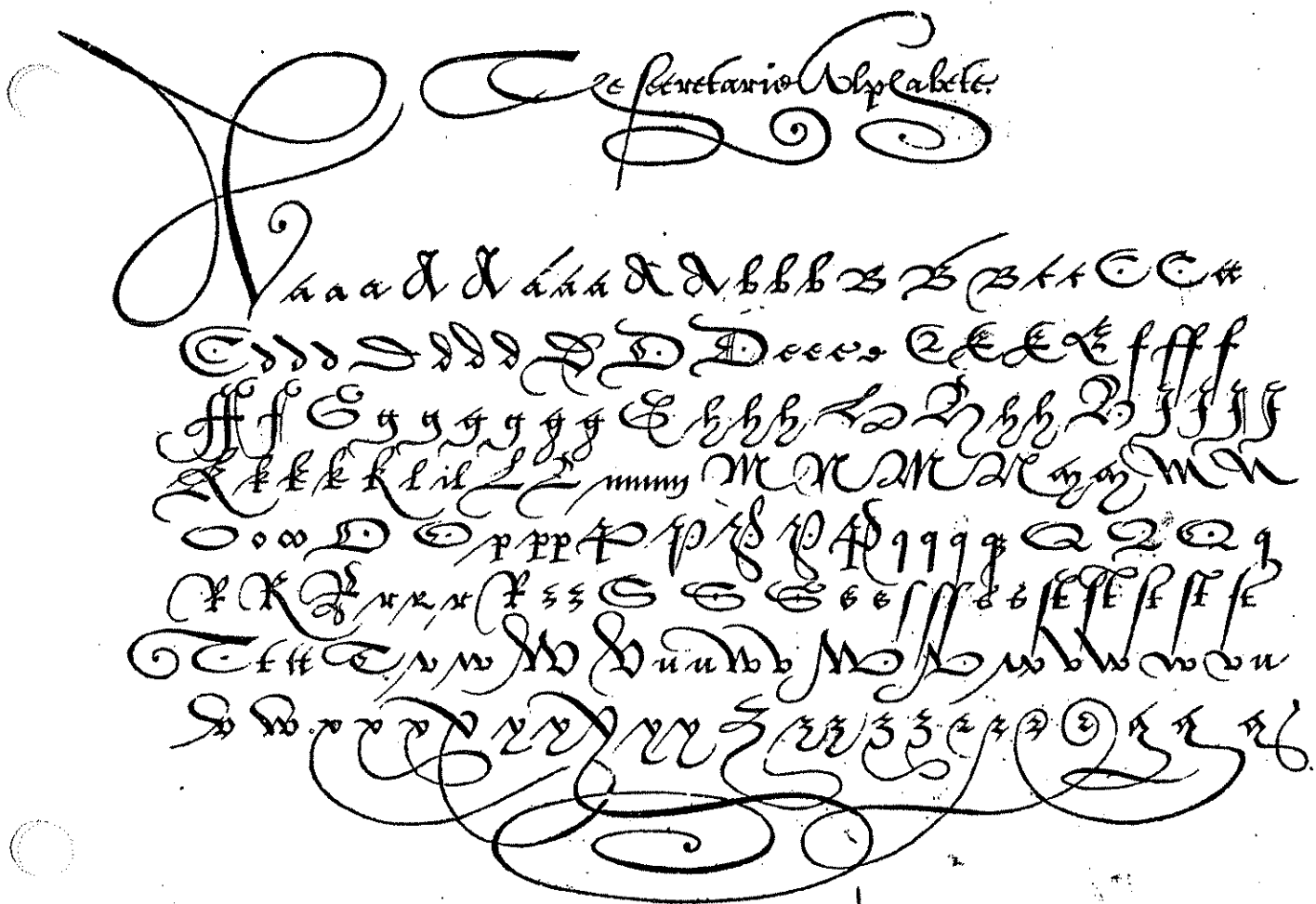
The last chapters in this manual offers additional instructions not covered by Panke,

such as rules for punctuation and abbreviation, the cutting of quill pens, proper posture when writing, etc. Spelling and verb forms have been modernized throughout this guide for ease of reading, and editorial observations placed in italic text.

This is still a work in progress. Written commentary will be greatly appreciated.

Kateryn Rous (Marybeth Lavrakas)

February 2006



ILLUS. i: Probably the most widely reproduced printed secretary alphabet, found in all sixteenth century editions of Chesne.

First I haue thought good to
begin with the breaking of eue-
ry perticular letter.



A your *a* the plainest and
easiest waye is y^e you make
the first parte round thus *o*
(foz to make it otherwise
will seme hard to a learner)
then, from the v^ttermost
parte therof, towards your
right hand, make a small
stroke thus *o* which done, set on your pen where
you fastned your last stroke, and from thence draw
down a straight stroke no lower then your first
compasse thus. *o o a*

your *b* is thus made. first make a slope stroke
thus *o* at the vpper end wherof set your pen, and
turning it ouer a little towarde your leste hand
thus *o* bzing it straight downe so far as your lyne
that you w^rit vpon thus *o* which done, set your
pen a little behinde the end therof thus *o* and bzing
ing it straight fo^rward thus *o* then turne it vp
round in this manner *o*

Your *c* is easily made with a straight stroke
thus *o* which done, set your pen on the toppe of it,
and with the edge as small as you can drawe a
stroke from your right hand fo^rward, halfe so long
as your first straight stroke thus *o*

Your *d* is made with the halfe of the first parte
of your *a* thus *o* which done, make a straight slope
stroke

ILLUS. II: The first page of instruction in William Panke's *A most breefe, easie and plaine receite for faire writing* (1591).


II. LOWERCASE LETTERS:
WILLIAM PANKE'S INSTRUCTIONS FOR WRITING THE SECRETARY HAND,
REARRANGED

Panke presents his instructions alphabetically, but experimental classroom use suggests it is more useful to group letters according to common elements. While I have therefore re-ordered Panke's text, the stroke by stroke directions are his. Following each set of directions, I have included relevant examples from period copy books and made note of important letter form variations. Students can, of course, use the extra white space to practice writing.

Group 1: Round Body

a, d, e, g, o, q, the round s

For your <a> the plainest and easiest way is that you make the first part round thus o (for to make it otherwise will seem hard to a learner). Then, from the uttermost part thereof, towards your right hand, make a small stroke thus o which done, set on your pen where you fastened your last stroke, and from thence draw down a straight stroke no lower than your first compass thus, a .



Your <d> is made with the half of the first part of your <a> thus o which done, make a straight slope stroke joining to the highest part of your former compass thus d and so at once close him round, so as it may still keep his compass as an o thus d .



For your <e> make your first part of the <d> thus ċ which done, join to the head of it another like compass, half as big as the first thus ċ.

ċċċċ

Panke's <e> is unfortunately not the most common version you'll find in period documents. Readers should be aware of this version as well, which is basically the modern cursive <e>, written backwards. ċ

Your <g> is make with the first stroke of your <a> thus ċ turned round at the foot just as high as the first stroke thus u which done, set your pen where you last took it off, and drawing it down as low as the head of your g is long thus g turn it quickly with the edge of your pen towards your left hand thus g and close it at the head in the same manner and with the same stroke as you made your <c> thus g.

g g g g g

Your <o> is the first part of your [a] thus o.

o o

Your <q> is simply your <a> saving that you must bring down the first stroke of your <a> as far below the proportion of your <a> as your <a> is long, thus q.

q q q

Your <s> which we call the round or little <s>¹ is easiest make with your <o> thus o at the highest part whereof toward your right hand set your pen and draw a little slope stroke thus which turned backward a very little towards the left hand makes your o.

o o

Group 2: Long Stroke

b, f, h, k, l, the long s, t

Your is thus made. First make a slope stroke thus / at the upper end whereof set your pen, and turning it over a little towards your left hand thus ? bring it straight down so far as your line that you writ upon thus l which done, set your pen a little behind the end thereof thus l and bringing it straight forward thus l then turn it up round in this manner b

b b b

For your <f> the plainest and easiest way for a learner, is to make it as you made the first part of your thus l and then strike the same stroke somewhat longer

thus l f

~~ff~~

(Footnotes)

¹ The <little s> is used only at the end of words.

Your <h> is made with the first part of your thus l which done, set your pen in the lowest part of it, and with the edge of your pen make a very small stroke, and carry it slope a little ways thus h which done, turn it round thus h and in the turning it from the end of the compass, draw a slope stroke towards your left hand near the length of the body thus h then set your pen at the end thereof and turn it up round lightly towards the belly with a reasonable compass thus h.



Your <k> is made with the first part of your thus l with the same foot that your <?> is before it is turned round thus l then make a small compass which is the eye, as near the middle as you can thus h and in the middle just between the eye and the foot make a stroke through thus k.



Your <l> is likewise easily made, for it is only the first part of your <k> thus l.



Your <s> which we call the long <s>² is best made as you make your <f> (till you be more perfect) except that the lowest part of the head must be somewhat further off from the body of

it thus f.



² Use the <long s> to begin words and within words.

Your <t> is a straight full stroke, saving that the top of it is somewhat slope thus └ and the stroke through the same must you make no nearer nor higher from the foot of it than that between the same stroke and the foot you may easily make an [o] thus └.

t tt

Group 3: Short Straight Stroke

c, i, m, n, p, r, v, w, x, y

Your <c> is easily made with a straight stroke thus └ which done, set your pen on the top of it, and with the edge as small as you can draw a stroke from your right hand forward, half so long as your first straight stroke thus └.

c

Your <i> is easily made, for it is simply the first part of your <c> or the last stroke of your <?> └.

i

Your <m> is made with the first part of your [c] thus 1 then set your pen at the foot of the same stroke and carry it up your hand a slope from the foot to the head with the edge of your pen thus 2 then from the top of the same stroke bring down such another stroke as your first and no lower, thus 3 then from the foot of the second straight stroke, carry up another slope stroke as you did before: and so from the head of that slope stroke bring down a third straight stroke thus 4 and your m is made.



Your <n> I need not stand upon, for it is the two first straight strokes of your <m> thus 1.



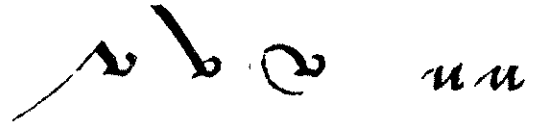
Your <p> is made with the first part of your <c> or saving that it must be somewhat sloped towards the right hand, and thus turning back a very little towards the left hand thus 1 then at the foot thereof and a little behind it set your pen and make the same compass as you did to the belly of your thus 2 then setting your pen where you took it off last and make a straight stroke as low as the first part of your <?> 3



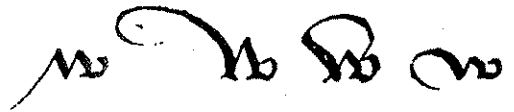
Your <r> is easily made also, for if you mark it, it is but the first part of your <p> thus l
then setting your pen just in the middle of the lowest flat stroke thus u carry up your hand
directly as high and no higher than your first stroke, and withal with the edge of your pen at
the top of the same stroke, strike the like small stroke as you did to the head of your <c>
thus h.



Your <v> is already showed you, for it is the first whole part of your <p> thus v.

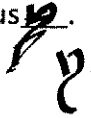


Your <w> is likewise your [n] saving that the last part is your single <v> or the head of your
<?> thus w.



Your <x> is made with a slope stroke thus \ turned up round from the foot to the head thus
then setting your pen where you last took it off, compass it round to your right hand thus x.



Your <y> is very easy, for it is but the first part of your <c> thus 1 with the tail of your <h> joined to it thus .



Panke does not include the letter <z>.



III. UPPERCASE LETTERS

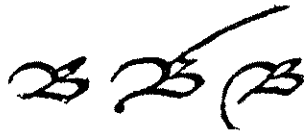
Lastly, you must write the first letter of every proper name, and of the first word of every sentence, and verse, with those that we call great or capital letters...As also when we put a letter for a number, as V. for five, X. for ten. L. for fifty. C. for a hundred. D. for five hundred. M. for a thousand. Lastly, when we put a letter for a word, as L. for Lord. LL. for Lords. B. for Bishop. BB. for Bishops.
-Edmund Coote, *The English Schoole-maister* (1596)

Panke does not include instructions on the formation of uppercase letters. To help students, I have isolated examples of individual capital letters from period copy books and grouped them below. Students should experiment until they find the best way to replicate letters while lifting their pen from the paper as few times as possible.

A. From Chesne



B. From Chesne



C. From Chesne



D. From Chesne



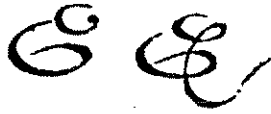
E. *From Chesne & Anon.*



F. *From Chesne & Anon.*



G. *From Chesne & Anon.*



H. *From Chesne & Anon.*



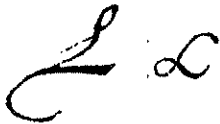
I/J. *From Chesne*



K. *From Chesne*



L. *From Chesne*



M. *From Chesne & Anon.*



IV. JOINING LETTERS

The secretary hand as written in 16th century England is not fully cursive, and Panke attempts to explain when and how letters should be joined together. Some of his instructions are confusing, in part due to poor digital reproduction of the handwritten portions and in part due to his wording. Therefore I have had to exercise a heavier editorial hand here than with his earlier instructions and have not attempted to reproduce all of the handwritten exemplars. In particular, I have left out certain handwritten rows of letters that appear immediately before the start of each short paragraph as they are more confusing than illuminating. Once again, I have added illustrations from period books wherever possible (the first two are from the relevant paragraphs in Panke, although I have had to touch them up). Additional copybook illustrations appear on pages 38–40. Underlining indicates examples handwritten by me.

First you must specially mark how many of your letters have whites or compasses. And every one of them in words as they fall out, must you as near as you can make of like bigness [i.e., make the body of letters roughly the same size, whether or not there are ascenders or descenders], as for example a b d e g h o p q r s x

and your blacks which is all the strokes in every letter also must be of like fullness as near as you can: yet for your f and f it is tolerable that you make them fuller than the rest.

All [these] letters are to be joined [at] the foot...thus a b ar ad id in il la ma

There is no other letters to be joined but these that follow, and they must be joined thus

ln bn bu li

all the rest must stand as close as they that join, as thus bd bl

saving ["e" and "o"] which you may join thus be bo

Must you join all your letters alike as

<illegible>

and as you thus join your [c] to every to every of these particular letters, so must you do also all your other letters excepting [b, l, h] which you may closely set by thus

rb rl rh

All your [other] letters must stand close not joining to the belly, [such] as

ho hc ht

etc. I set no more examples [of these].

It is sufficient that you set the usual letters that follows it in this manner **qu** for you shall never have any other letter follow [q] besides [u].

[After writing the long s] you must set every letter that follows it as near to the body of it as the rest of your letters stand from [one] another, thus

so sa

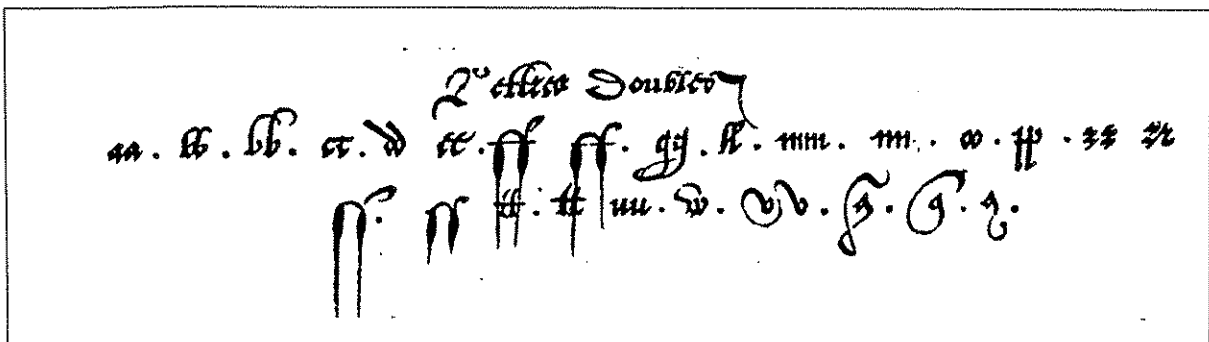
[Panke does not mention joining the long 's' with the letter 't', as is often seen in copy books.]

f

[After writing the letter y] you must set all the letters thus

yo y ya

For the setting of your words, the distance of them is usually known: viz. between every word the space of an [o] and as you keep equal distance between your words, the like care must you have for your letters, that they stand not one wider or closer, or one bigger or lower than another.



Illus. iii: 'Letters Doubles' from the 1590 edition of Chesne



V. PUNCTUATION AND ABBREVIATIONS

Selections from Edmund Coote's The English Schoole-maister (1596). This work is essentially a text book for teachers to follow, instructing them how to teach children how to read. He includes the following notes on punctuation, abbreviation, and the use of capital letters. I have added the bolding; the use of parenthesis is his.

You must observe also those which we call *points or stays in writing: as this mark (,) like a small half moon, notes a small stay: two pricks thus (:) marks a longer stay, and one prick thus (.) is put for a full stay, as if we had ended.

When a question is asked, we mark it thus (?)

When some words may be left out, and yet the sentence [is] perfect, it is noted thus () as teach me (I pray you) to read, but for the true framing of your voice in all these, you must crave¹ the help of your Master.

You must also know the short kind of writing used in some words: as a stroke over any vowel for m, or n. as m^â for man, c^ô for con, y^e for the, y^t for that, y^u for thou, w^t for with, &c for and so forth. In written hand there be many others. And so a word ending in a vowel does lose it sometime when the next word begins with a vowel, as thintent for the intent, which exactly should be written thus, th'intent.

[*The points are thus called: (,) a comma. (:) a colon. (.) a period. (?) an interrogation.

() a parenthesis.]²

¹ Ask for

² The text included here in brackets is printed in the side margin of the actual text.



VI. SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS FROM PERIOD WRITING MANUALS

1. *From William Kempe, The Education of Children (1588). In an unpaginated section titled "The Method of Schooling," Kempe advises schoolmasters teach children to write as a way to help them remember how to read.*

For Orthography, which teaches with what letters every syllable and word must be written, and with what points the sentence and parts thereof must be distinguished, is a practice of the same knowledge, but expressed by the hand, as the former is by the tongue. Which expressing and skill of the hand, belongs properly to the Art of Painting, and not unto Grammar, so that the best Grammarian is not always the fairest penman. Nevertheless, seeing it has singular use and commodity in the exercise of Grammar, the Master shall teach his Scholar to write by precepts as holding the Pen, of forming the letters in due proportion, of joining them aptly together: by practice, of drawing the Pen upon the figures of shadowed letters, then of writing without shadowed letters by imitating a Copy, lastly, of writing without a Copy. In this exercise of writing, the Scholar shall spend but two or three hours in a day at the most, employing the rest of the time in reading, until he be about seven years old.

2. *From the English versions (1571, 1590, and 1592) of J. de Beau-Chesne's A Booke containing divers sorts of handes.*

Rules made by E.B. for his children to learn to write by.

To make common ink of wine take a quart,

Two ounces of gum, ¹ let that be a part,

Five ounces of Galls, ² of copper[as]³ take three,

Long standing does make it better to be:

If wine you do want,⁴ rain water is best,

And as much stuff as above at the least:

If ink be too thick, put vinegar in:

(Footnotes)

¹ Gum Arabic

² Oak galls, which must be well ground up.

³ Spelled "coples" in the original. Copperas is iron sulphite.

⁴ Lack

For water doth make the color more dim.

In haste, for a shift when you have great need,

Take wool or woolen to stand you instead,⁵

Which burnt in the fire the powder beat small,

With vinegar, or water make ink with all.

If ink you desire to keep long in store,

Put bay salt therein, and it will not hoare.⁶

If that common ink be not to your mind,

Some lampblack thereto with sum water grind:

Each painter can tell, how it should be done,

The cleaner out of your pen it will run:

The same to be put in horn or in lead,

No cotton at all, ⁷ when long it has stayed,

The bottom will thicke, put more common ink.

And it will be good well stirred, as I think.

Make staunch grain⁸ of alum, beaten full small,

And twice as much rosin beaten with all.

With that in a fair clout knit very thin,⁹

⁵ This line no longer rhymes with the one before; originally it read "to stand you in steede."

⁶ Grow mold, presumably.

⁷ Presumably this means there will be no growth of mold.

⁸ As the succeeding lines make clear, this is a powder used to treat the writing surface to prevent the ink from running or feathering.

Rub paper or parchment, before you begin.

Take quill of a goose, that is somewhat round,

The third or fourth in wing to be found:

And if at some time of these you do want,

Take pinion as next, when Raven's quill is scanty,

And rive¹⁰ it just in the back, as may be.

For ragged your slit else shall you see,

A middle the slip that rounds up the quill:

Wear it of gander you do it not spill,

The feather shave of the quill do not pare,

The stronger your pen in hand you may bear.

Make cleft without teeth your pen good, and hard:

Thinner, and shorter on right hand regard:

The cleft somewhat long, the nib not too short,

Then take it in hand in most comely sort.

Your thumb on your pen as heist bestow,

The forefinger next, the middle below:

And holding it thus in most comely wise,

⁹ A thin piece of fabric tied closed.

¹⁰ Split.

Your body upright, stoop not with your head:
Your breast from the board if that you be wise,
Least that you take hurt, when you have well fed.

Your penknife as stay in left hand let rest,
The metal too soft nor too hard is the best:
Too sharp it may be and so cut too fast,
If it be too dull, a shrewd turn for haste:
For whetstone hard, touch that is very good,
Slate or shoe sole is not ill but good.

You body upright stoop not with your head,
Your breast from the board when you have well
fed:
Ink always good store on right hand to stand,
Brown paper for great haste, else box with sand:
Dip pen, and shake pen, and touch pens for hair,
Wax quills and penknives see always you bear:
Who that his paper doth blur or else blot,
Yields me a sloven¹¹ it falls by lot:
In learning full slow write at beginning,
For great is your loss, and small your winning,
If at the first time an ill touch, ye catch,

¹¹ Shows that the writer is lazy.

Use only is cause of speedy dispatch.

To write very fair your pen let be new,
Dish dash long tale fly false writing eschew:
Neatly, and cleanly your hand for to frame,
Strong stalked pen use best of a raven,
And comely to write, and give a good grace,
Leave between each word small a letters space,
That fair and seemly your hand may be read.
Keep even your letters at foot, and at head:
With distance alike between letter and letter:
One out of others shows much the better.
Scholar to learn it may do you pleasure,
To rule him two lines just of a measure:
Those two lines between to write very just,
Not above or below write that he must:
The same to be done is best with black lead,
Which written between is cleansed with bread.
Your pen from your book but seldom remove.¹²
To follow strange hand with dry pen first prove.
Many one writes the example lying by,
Whoso one the same doth never set eye:
But he that will learn with speed for to write,

¹² An important piece of advice to modern calligraphers.

To mark his example must have delight,
Letter and tittle¹³ to make as the same,
So shall the scholar be void of all blame.

And one thing well mark yourself well to case,
That none but best hands may always best
please:

Both far off, and near for fair hands do seek,
And them safe as gold, see that the one well
keep:

And never let rest your hand for too frame,
Until that you write as fair as the same.

To writing belongs good things two or three,
As drawing, painting, and also geometry:

The which, I would wish each wight¹⁴ should
obtain:

But surely to some it were too great pain.

So fare you well, now with out book well learn,

These few rules I give, which are as the stern,

To rule a good scholar, which does his mind
bend,

To follow good counsel, and so do I end.

¹³ According to the OED, a tittle is "a small stroke or point in writing or printing."

¹⁴ Person.

3. From Peter Bales' *The writing schoolemaster (1590)*. Bales devotes sections to shorthand and correct spelling, then ends with several pages offering advice in prose and poetry on how to write well. His '*Key of Calygraphie*' does not include instructions or models of any specific hands.

Provide a good knife, right Sheffield is best.¹⁵

A razor is next, excelling the rest...

In some kinds of hands, by making these three letters, *a, b, m*, rightly, you shall get three quarters of the letters and so have you but six letters more to make...

Lastly, leave nothing undone, that adds or gives a grace to your writing, in whatever hand it be, keeping always uniformity therein, as near as you can...from beginning to end. But in any case beware you write not too fast, until you can write well: for striving to write fast and carelessly is the chief cause that the greatest number of Clerks and pen-men at this day do write so ill, that there is neither order, goodness, grace, nor comeliness in their writing...

4. From Francis Clement, *The petie schole (15)*. What follows presents the same basic advice as in Chesne, but in prose form.

The writer must provide him these seven: paper, ink, pen, penknife, ruler, desk, and dust box; of these the three first are most necessary, the four latter very requisite.

CHOICE OF PAPER. The whitest, finest, and smoothest paper is best.

TO MAKE INK. Put into a quart of water two ounces of right gum Arabic, five ounces of galls, and three of copperas. Let it stand covered in the warm sun, and so will it the sooner prove good ink. To boil the said stuff together a little upon the fire would make it more speedy for your writing, but the unboiled yields a fairer gloss and longer endures. Instead of water, wine were best for this purpose. Refresh you ink with wine or vinegar when it waxes thick.

¹⁵ It's interesting to note the prominence of Sheffield in blade making, a fame the city maintained for more than 300 years.

TO CHOSE THE QUILLS. Of quills, the fairest, whitest, and roundest are best, the third and fourth of the wing of goose, or raven. But where these are not, the pinion quill has no fellow.

TO MAKE THE PEN. Pare not off the bark and over part of your pen's stalk; rather, cut the feather away, for the stronger stalked it is in hand the better will it deliver the letters. If your quill be "horrish and skirtie"¹⁶, scrape off the same with the back or heel of your pen knife, and turning the end of the quill toward you, first cut it slantwise on the back part downward about the quarter of an inch from the end. Then turn the other side, and do with the likewise, but cut it somewhat higher than the other. That done, enter a rift with the edge of your knife, even in the mid-back of your quill, then rive the same scissor half an inch into the quill, but, I day, just in the bark, lest happily it show ragged and grinning teeth, for then will it never prove good. When the rift or scissor is thus made, turn the same down upon the inside of your right thumb, and half a quarter of an inch above the said rift on the contrary side bring down a flash with your knife, and from that place cut on each side a little at once until the nib of the pen be made sharp. But let the right side thereof be cut somewhat smaller and shorter than the left. Leave the rift of your pen half a quarter of an inch deep when your pen is made. Let the cheeks in the inside of your pen be almost a quarter of an inch above the nib. Cut the same nib upon your left thumb nail: first a scant toward you, then in that midslant, with the knife edge turned more down toward your nail trim it off. Lastly, from a quarter of an inch on the other side above the pens cheeks bring also a slant cut down to the same, straight to the middle of the quill, or something deeper, and then your pen is made.

¹⁶ Presumably this description refers to a dirty quill, possibly one with little trailing bits of feather near the base of the shaft.