



*Handwriting and Hand Printing
Identification
Basic concepts for investigators*

How To Use Standard Handwriting Forms

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The following information is provided to assist in using the accompanying known handwriting specimen forms. Each form is specifically designed to obtain known writings for comparison with different types of questioned documents. If the questioned and known writing are naturally written, these forms are useful in the examination and comparison process. If the questioned writing is unnaturally written or disguised, then more nonrequest or collected writing of the individual will be required for comparison purposes. That situation does not render these forms useless, in fact their importance remains the same. With them a baseline of the writer's skills, and writing habits can be determined.

Some of the forms do not exactly repeat the question material, but they very probably contain the same letters and letter combinations in a different context. When these forms are completed by the known writer, the writing on them should be more representative of the writer's normal, natural writing, because the critical text—questioned material—is not part of the material on these forms.

If the questioned writing is significantly different in time than the current date, these forms may not be useful. Each case will have to be evaluated on its own merits and a determination made about using these forms.

Notwithstanding the importance of having these forms for comparison in most cases, it is also important to have some nonrequest or collected known writings written around the same time as the questioned material. The combination of request and nonrequest writings are then used in the comparison process. As with the use of the known handwriting forms, the use and reliance upon nonrequest or collected known writings will have to be made in each case.

It is absolutely vital that **all** known writing submitted for comparison purposes be admitted into evidence at the time of trial. If even one signature or document of nonrequest writing is excluded, and it was used in the comparison process, it will be necessary to conduct a new examination and comparison. Why? Because the opinion reached using the excluded document is no longer valid. Every opinion is based on the observable evidence in the examined documents. Change or exclude one of those documents or writings, the observable evidence has changed.

Completion of every form is not required in each and every case. The following description of the forms will serve as a guide for their use. The accompanying technical paper on "Obtaining Handwriting Specimens," provides more information on the procedures to follow when obtaining requested known writings for comparison. One major point needs to be emphasized here: **At NO time before or during the process of providing known writing, should the writer be shown or allowed to see the questioned document/writing.**

1. Handwriting specimen Forms HSF No. 1 (Cursive) and HSF No. 2 (Printing).

These forms are general handwriting specimen forms. Each form consists of two pages that must be completed by the known writer. Form HFS No. 1 is used for cursive or handwritten samples. Form HFS No. 2 for hand printed samples. In many instances, it is necessary to have the known writer complete both forms, because the questioned writing is a combination of both cursive and hand printing.

These forms contain the following:

- A. A personal information section
- B. The alphabet in capital (uppercase) and small (lower case) letters
- C. Numerals
- D. A series of words containing frequently used letters and letter combinations
- E. Addresses
- F. Numerical and written dollar amounts, and
- G. a section for additional writing.

Excluding the witness signature, the known writer should write **all** of the entries on each page of the form, check whether he writes with this right or left hand, sign, and date each form. The person witnessing the completion of these forms must sign and date each form in the appropriate place at the completion of that form by the known writer.

How many of these forms do I need to have the known writer complete? If the questioned material is all cursive writing, one cursive form should be completed; if all printing, one printing form needs to be completed; if a combination of cursive and printing, then one cursive and one printing form. In most cases one cursive and one printing form is required because the questioned material contains both styles of writing.

2. Handwriting specimen Form HSF No. 3.

This form is used when the questioned material is written on a check. It should be used in addition to the general handwriting forms described above. All of the questioned material on the questioned check should be dictated to the specimen writer, and *at no time should they be shown the questioned check(s)*. The writer should fill in all the information on each check format, indicate whether he wrote with his right or left hand, sign, and date each form.

The writer should provide at least fifteen or twenty of these forms for each questioned check.

3. Handwriting specimen Form HSF No. 4, Form HSF No. 4A, and Form HSF No. 4B.

This form is used when the questioned material consists of an extended body of writing. The text at the top of the sheet repeats the “London Letter.” This text is a frequently used standard for obtaining specimens by a writer when the questioned writing is extended text. If the questioned writing is handwritten, then the known writing on this form should be handwritten; if the questioned writing is hand printed, then the material should be hand printed. Depending upon the circumstances in each case, it may be necessary for the writer to complete one or more of these forms in addition to repeating the questioned material at least ten to twelve times. Additional information will be provided on a case-by-case basis. After completing the text, the writer should check whether he writes with his right or left hand, sign, and date the form.

Form HSF No. 4 uses a pre-drawn baseline, Form HSF No. 4A has no pre-drawn baselines. If the questioned writing is written on a pre-drawn baseline than Form HSF No. 4 should be used. If the questioned material is not written on a pre-drawn baseline, then Form HSF No. 4A should be used. Form HSF No. 4B is the “Jim Elder” letter, another form that can be used for extended writing cases.

The writer should provide at least three samples of one of these model letters.

4. Handwriting specimen Form HSF No. 5.

This form is used when the questioned material consists of signatures or hand printed names. The known writer should write or print the questioned material in the rectangular box. The questioned material should be written on the pre-drawn baseline at the bottom of the box, if the questioned writing is on a pre-drawn baseline.

If the questioned material is not written on a pre-drawn baseline, then the known writing repeating it should be written above the baseline in the middle of the rectangular box. Each box, down to the dotted line across the form, should contain a cursive or printed signature. Below the dotted line, in the spaces on the left column, the writer should print and sign his name. Then, the witness should sign his name under the date box in the space provided.

The writer should provide at least one form for each questioned name.

5. Handwriting specimen Forms HSF No. 6 and 6A.

These forms are also used to obtain known signatures repeating the questioned material. The form is approximately the size and shape of a check.

Three forms are printed on each sheet of paper. One sheet of paper is usually sent to the requester. He should make at least five or six copies of the sheet, cut each sheet into three slips, and each slip given to the writer one at a time. After completing each slip, it should be removed from the writer. The witness then signs his name and the date on each slip and turns the it over so the writer cannot see what, and how, he wrote on that slip.

Where the questioned signature is written on a pre-drawn baseline, Form HSF No. 6 should be used. Form HSF No. 6A is used when the questioned signature is not written on a pre-drawn baseline.

The writer should submit for examination and comparison at least fifteen to eighteen slips, either the Form HSF No. 6 or HSF No. 6A, repeating the same name.

Frequently asked questions:

- How many specimens should I get? No single number is correct. Some general guidelines are provided above. Since each case is different, contact this office for assistance in establishing a suggested number of forms that may be sufficient for your particular case.
- Should a witness be present when the person is writing? Absolutely! That witness is there to watch the person write, control distribution of the forms to the writer, and to insure that only one person writes on each form except for the witness signature. At no time should the witness leave the room while the person is writing.
- Should the writer be shown the questioned material? **NO!! NEVER!!** The questioned writing should be dictated or typed on a separate sheet of paper and given to the writer. The witness should **NEVER** draw or write the questioned material for the specimen writer to use as a model.
- Should the writer be told how to spell words? **NO!** If he asks, tell him to spell the word as he thinks it should be spelled.
- What instructions can I give to the writer? You can ask him if he has more than one style of writing. Does he write the same letter different ways? He can be asked to write printed letter forms rather than the cursive letter form, if one or the other is present in the questioned material. You can ask him to use a certain type of writing instrument, ballpoint pen, pencil, etc., when completing the forms. Typically, the writing submitted for comparison purposes should be written with a ballpoint pen, fine or medium point.

It is strongly recommended that the person witnessing the known writing read the accompanying paper, "Obtaining Handwriting Specimens," before meeting with the writer. There is a lot of additional information in it that will be of assistance.