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Cursive Writing Making a Comeback

If you're a Baby Boomer and your memory is long, you remember the time in grade school when teachers laboriously watched over your shoulder as you tried to make the perfect cursive alphabet, then began the creative task of creating your own signature.

With modern computer technology, the Internet and e-signatures only a few clicks on a screen, it's thought that old-fashioned loops and curves to form letters and words has gone the way of the slide rule. Not so fast!

Alabama and Louisiana passed laws in 2016 mandating cursive proficiency in public schools, the latest of 14 schools to do so. Joining them last fall was the New York City public school system, which teaches 1.1 million students and is the largest regional school system in the country. Teachers there are encouraging students to learn cursive in the third grade.

Diane Neikam, supervisor of elementary curriculum in a Pennsylvania school district, explains how this is taught. "The students receive a handwriting book, the teachers show them the strokes and letters and how to

connect the strokes. They'll do a small, quick mini-lesson, and then the students will practice it on their own."

There are several advantages to this approach. First, it improves hand motor skills.

Second, it helps students comprehend documents that are hand-written. Third, it improves students' note-taking skills. Some students become more proficient at writing notes than typing on a computer.

Critics question whether printing might be advantageous over handwriting, and if taking the time to teaching cursive would be spent learning something more useful.

Still, there are times when mastering cursive would be helpful. New York State Assemblywoman Nicolee Malliotakis began arguing for cursive education after she encountered an 18-year-old at a voter registration event, who could no more then print his name in block letters.

"I said to him, 'No, you have to sign here.'" Mailliotakis recalled. His reply: "That is my signature. I never learned script." ■

A Disney World Bucket List

The world's most popular entertainment facility just keeps on growing. But once you get to Disney World, you can't do everything! So here's a to-do list to get you a good taste of Walt Disney's imaginative theme park.

- ▶ Ride the Magic Kingdom doubleheader bus;
- ▶ Have a picture made with Mickey Mouse, but also meet Chewbacca at Hollywood Studios;
- ▶ Take a selfie with the groovy 1970s scientist animatronic inside Spaceship Earth at Epcot Center;
- ▶ Sit in the middle seat, top row, on Tower of Terror at Hollywood Studios; sit in the middle section, top row, in Soarin' Around the World at Epcot;
- ▶ Conquer Summit Plummet at Blizzard Beach and/or Humunga Kowabunga at Typhoon Lagoon;
- ▶ Participate in the Candlelight Processional at Epcot;
- ▶ Eat a Dole Whip, even if you don't like pineapple;
- ▶ Order the Kitchen Sink from Beaches and Cream at Disney's Beach Club (for the uninformed, eight scoops of ice cream is just the start);
- ▶ Take the Express Transport option between WDW theme parks;
- ▶ Take a horse-drawn carriage ride at Fort Wilderness;
- ▶ Take the Marceline to Magic Kingdom behind-the-scenes tour;
- ▶ Watch fireworks from one of the water vessel options at Epcot or Magic Kingdom;
- ▶ Spend a night in a room with a savanna view at Disney's Animal Kingdom Lodge;
- ▶ Be selected as an actor in the Enchanted Tales with Belle attraction at Magic Kingdom;
- ▶ Experience an emergency evacuation from a major ride such as Pirates of the Caribbean or It's a Small World, where you have to be "rescued" from your ride vehicle;
- ▶ Be inside Space Mountain with the lights on!;
- ▶ Pilot the monorail.

Whew! ■



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READ EARLY & OFTEN TO YOUR CHILDREN

If you want your kids to get a flying start in their learning and contact with the world, parents should read early and often them. So says Lisa Baker, executive editorial director at Scholastic, capsulating its most recent Kids & Family Reading Report.

1. Read to Newborns and Keep it Going after 5

Lisa says have fun with reading to children. More parents are reading to children at 3 months and younger. Change voices, and don't feel frustrated if your child gets distracted. It's part of the learning process.

2. Get Kids Books They Like

In the study, 41% of kids say they have trouble finding books like they like whereas only 29% of parents recognize this. Look for subjects kids like and find books that make them laugh or allow them to interact.

3. Teach Kids Diversity

While kids and parents "want good stories," it's a good idea to point out different backgrounds and identities and to help children find themselves in books.

4. Use Your Resources

Kids say teachers and school librarians (81%) offer the best book recommendations. Young kids like school book clubs and fairs, while older kids find suggestions on social media. One key observation is that kids read most from the books that they pick out themselves.

5. Make Books Accessible

Though this is obvious, make books available by having low book shelves and to keep them everywhere around the house and transportation vehicles. ■