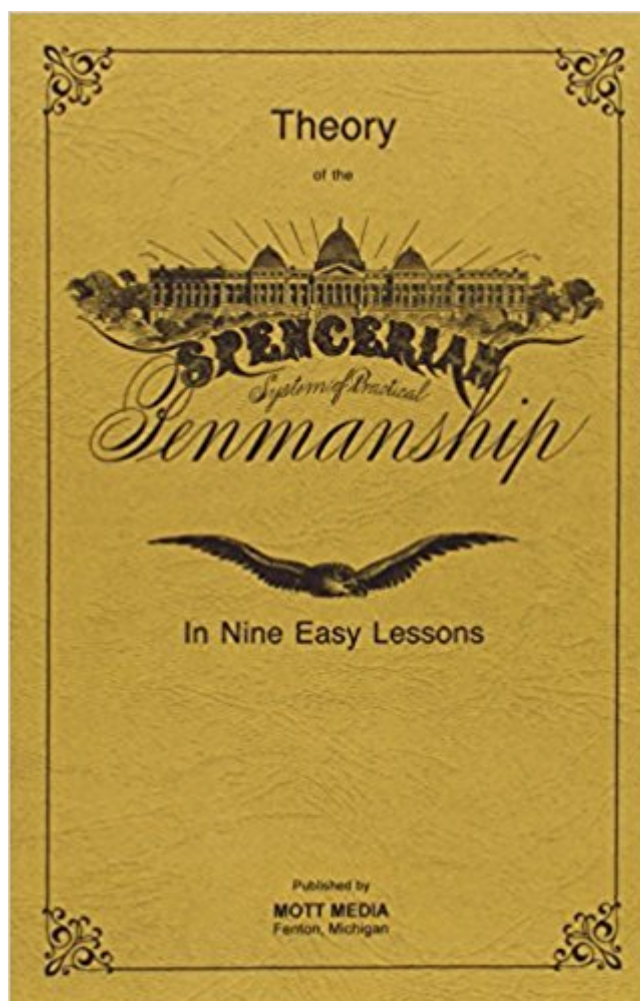


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# Spencerian Penmanship (Theory Book Plus Five Copybooks)



## Synopsis

In the mid-1800's, the Spencerian form of penmanship became a standard. An elegant handwriting was much prized. Today, in our computer age, a fine, beautiful, and legible handwriting brings a warm personal touch to our correspondence. These books, 5 copybooks and a theory book (available separately or as a set), may be used to introduce cursive writing to second or third graders or to improve the handwriting of older students or adults.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

These books are a (relatively) quick and practical guide to skills from a time gone by -- this is a part of its charm. If you want to purchase this, I say go for it, but try to keep in mind what you are signing up for: The Spencerian method depends on a decent-sized writing desk or table with ample room to "sit properly" as the theory book will explain in detail. It will be difficult to use Spencerian script in casual setting if you are holding a notepad in one hand and the pen in another. (You would have to master "whole-arm movement" first, and even then it gets tricky.) Good penmanship will only come if you commit to holding and wielding the pen in a way that is very counterintuitive for people of this day and age, and it will take a lot of effort and a little discomfort to do it correctly while still being able to relax the muscles you are using and not get cramped up. If you are serious about adopting this method, bite the bullet. It's very doable with practice. But you have to be willing to keep yourself from lazily resting your hand on the page at all, and only letting your ring finger and little finger skim the surface of the page. If you only want to copy what the letters look like without using the right muscular movements, then this style will be a lot more difficult, tiring and forced than it needs to be.

In short, it won't be the real deal, and you will probably get discouraged over time. There are plenty of free examples of Spencerian letters for those who aren't interested in learning the right technique. The paper in these bindings is truly subpar for the kinds of pens and inks they were originally intended for, but don't let that discourage you unless you are genuinely purist and don't have the time to make your own practice sheets. No doubt the original editions had better-quality paper, but then, they were probably relatively more expensive. For everyday pens and pencils, they should work fine. Personally, I used the workbook exercises as a guide for ruling my own sheets of paper to practice on. These books don't delve into the strokes necessary to make any kinds of punctuation marks and other symbols. They equip you with just capital and lowercase letters and numbers 0 - 9. There is no instruction for indenting paragraphs, handling flourishes, drawing birds or any of the other skills that tend to fall into either the practical or the more calligraphic side of the Spencerian method. That being said, it's a great starting point if all you want to do is learn what makes this style "tick" and how to pull it off. You can use most pens and pencils for these exercises, but I don't recommend ballpoint pens because of the difference in the physical sensations you are looking for when learning the strokes, the way the ink behaves coming off of the tip, and because of the difficulties of using ballpoint pens for shading. It's easy, when learning this style of handwriting from a modern perspective, to over-stress the upward strokes. Historically, the down strokes usually carried the most weight, even when avoiding any shading. It is easier to feel the push and pull of the strokes and develop a good technique using any other kind of tip than with ballpoint (yes, even with pencil). For a real advanced-level learning experience, you might even want to try your hand at practicing with a dip-pen/quill and some good ink. Don't feel pressured, though. Figuring those kinds of pens out involve their own set of skills. Don't misunderstand what a "copybook" is for. The point isn't just to reproduce the images in each exercise. Each one is a puzzle. "How do I manage to make strokes that look like that using the muscles that the theory book is asking me to use? How do I do it without tensing up? How do I do it quickly without getting sloppy? What should the scratching of the pen against the paper sound like when I have it up to speed?" The method that this book is pushing is industrial, to say the least, and embraces this kind of mechanized teaching philosophy. That philosophy is part of what went into designing the Spencerian script in the first place. One final note on this product: If you do decide that it's worth the hassle to stick to it, you can definitely get amazing results. Keep in mind, though that, for the passionate hobbyist, this is just the beginning. There are many other styles of "modern" penmanship-- even within the umbrella of the Spencerian system. There are more in-depth (and more complicated) resources on the IAMPETH website at [www.iampeth.com](http://www.iampeth.com), which you can download for free. What this product has to offer is a simplified,

comprehensive guide to breaking into Spencerian without having to read a lot of text and organizing lessons for yourself. That is why I think it is still worth buying, despite the amount of free and open resources you can find online or in libraries. This product is a great resource, not only for dedicated calligraphers and other hobbyists, but also for everyday folks who are willing to invest a little extra time into a skill in order to reap its practical benefits. Other resources out there are for more patient and passionate people who have the time to make sense out of it all for themselves. Best of luck!

Platt Rogers Spencer, the developer of the Spencerian method of penmanship in 1840, published this short book about the "theory of proper penmanship" in 1870, along with five Copybooks, making his teaching method the gold standard for handwriting instruction in the late 19th Century. It is almost unimaginable for us in the 21st Century, but there was a time not that very long ago when there were no computers, no typewriters, and all banking and bookkeeping records were done by hand. Poor handwriting could be disastrous: a misplaced space in a will could mean that instead of receiving "tobacco, two hogsheads" (loosely 2,000 pounds of leaf tobacco, and quite valuable), the nephew of a deceased Southern gentleman might receive "tobacco, two hogs heads", which might be a single pouch of tobacco and two cheeses made with the heads of pigs (far less than valuable). Handwriting was important. Under Spencer, it was also quite regimented. The theory book describes how writing classes for boys and young men should be implemented (women couldn't work as bank clerks or secretaries yet). From the beginning, the class was as regimented as Marine Corps boot camp. While there are four positions "allowed" for sitting at the desk-- Left-side, Front, Right-oblique, and Right-side-- the author insists that the class should all maintain the same, uniform position (note: there's no more allowance for left-handers than for women, although at least left-handers could learn to write with the non-dominant hand!). Everyone was told to sit the same way, "easily upright, and keep the shoulders square", to avoid becoming "hollow-chested or round-shouldered". Then, on the instructor's commands, they would "open copybooks", "open inkwells", and "dip pens", all in synchronization. Individual letters were broken down into their components-- students were taught to respond to questions such as "What do you call an angle of 7 degrees greater than 45 degrees?", and had to be able to identify multiple points and angles of a circular diagram, with a special emphasis on "What is the slant of 52 degrees in the Spencerian writing called? The Main Slant. Why is it so called? Because it is the slant given to most of the main or downward strokes." This is not the handwriting class of my childhood. It was also too complex to last. In 1894, Austin Palmer published his "Palmer's Guide to Business Writing", which was a much simplified variation on the laborious and slow (though beautiful) Spencerian method. It supplanted Spencer's

completely in short order, and was taught in American schools not only as handwriting but as a means of instilling discipline in young minds. It required too much manual dexterity for young children, though, so in the 1950s children began learning to use manuscript (block) letters in first grade and to write connected letters using the Zaner-Bloser method in third and fourth grade (usually just referred to as "print" and "cursive"). Zaner-Bloser was yet another simplification of the Spencerian method, and users of the one can usually read the other without difficulty. And then along came computers. Now, many schools no longer teach handwriting beyond the manuscript-style printing kids learn in first grade and from Sesame Street-- why bother, when no one writes by hand anymore? The Spencerian Penmanship Theory Book is a glimpse at an earlier world, and a proof that not all progress is completely positive. Handwriting could once be far more beautiful than a text on the smartphone's screen.

I didn't think I would need to do all the book work, but having done all of these, now I know why muscle memory is crucial. I learned Spencerian within three months while serving in Afghanistan. Now my wife has me writing our Christmas cards using this new skill. Very happy and proud!

I guess this book really should be 5 stars. It covers the theory and directions for each letter within the Spencerian system. This system uses several basic letter forms to build other letters. Each of these letter forms are created by several discrete geometric structures - specifically defined line shape. This book does not include any copybooks. It is just theory. The complementary book 'Spencerian Handwriting' 978-1-61243-528-2 contains the above theory but also includes a copy book section to practice the individual letter forms. I also ordered the: Clear Acrylic Writing Slope, For Better writing posture, 20 Degree Angle, by Playlearn

Interesting glimpse of history. Beautiful penmanship but not suited for today's cursive writing with ball/roller pens. If you have interest in cursive writing, for yourself or your children, well worth the price and time to review.

Have you forgotten how to write "properly?" Do you want to improve your writing?" Then this is the definitive book. I didn't go through the whole thing but I refer to parts whenever I forget the "proper" way to write and make it easier for others to read my writing.

A little hard to understand due to the older language but all in all, a very good booklet. I bought yhe

workbooks to go with it finally and after a month of practice, i see a major improvement in my handwriting and have been given complements on the professional touches to hand written reports

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