

The Importance of Having a Signature that is Difficult to Imitate or Forge

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Commentary

Having examined and compared signatures for the past ten (10) years I have seen everything from legible to non-legible, complex signatures.

However I have one statement repeating itself: the importance of having a signature that is difficult to forge.

What does it mean to have a signature that is difficult to imitate/forge? This article is intended to give suggestions to improve your signature so that it cannot be easily forged. Your signature identifies you.

Reed Hayes, in his book *Forensic Handwriting Examination*, states that a person's signature serves as a 'trademark' and that one's signature can either be tangled, illegible shapes or a series of clearly decipherable letters that distinctly spell out a person's name. However in many cases they bear no resemblance to the writer's name, but are merely identifying marks [1].

In the case of a person who is illiterate a letter X is used as their identifying mark and the word his/her is written above the X and the word mark written below.

Signature is defined as- a person's name, written in a distinctive manner; a legal form of identification or authorization [2].

Signatures are the most practiced and therefore the most automatic or habitual example of one's writing behavior. Good signatures usually exhibit one's best level of writing skills and fine motor control.

If written with a combination of speed, fluency, and deft fluctuations of pen pressure in the habitual manner of that person, a well written signature is difficult to successfully simulate.

According to Susan A. Greenfield *Handwriting*, especially a signature is the only universally accepted outward sign of an individual [3]. Moreover, it is a sign that is accepted as consistent.

Because signatures still play an important role in modern life, how easy do you think your signature can be forged?

Have you ever considered any of these when writing your signature?

What aspects do you think make your signature more or less easy to forge? Is your signature consistent or complex and therefore forgery-proof?

You can make your signature less vulnerable to being forged by following these suggestions: [4]

1. Develop a complex signature with numerous changes of direction that cannot be easily imitated.
2. Develop your handwriting skill until you attain a high level, which is difficult to duplicate.
3. Write rapidly.
4. Stylize your writing. The more individual the writing, the more difficult it is to imitate.
5. Be consistent in your writing. It is also advisable to have more than one style of signature, one for correspondence and one for signing financial or legal documents.
6. Illegible writing is more difficult to imitate.

Complexity

Dr. Bryan Found describes complexity (Figure 1) as the number of changes of direction of the writing and intersections [5].

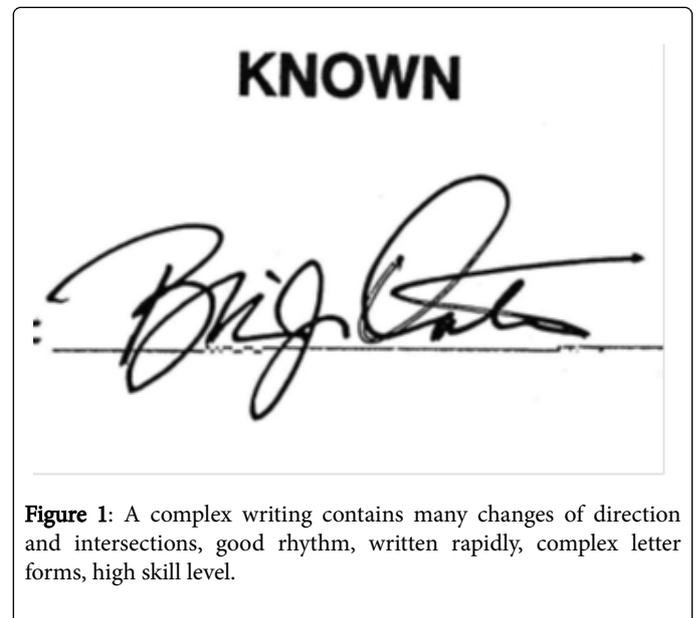


Figure 1: A complex writing contains many changes of direction and intersections, good rhythm, written rapidly, complex letter forms, high skill level.

Consistency

Consistency is the agreement among things or parts (Figures 2-4).

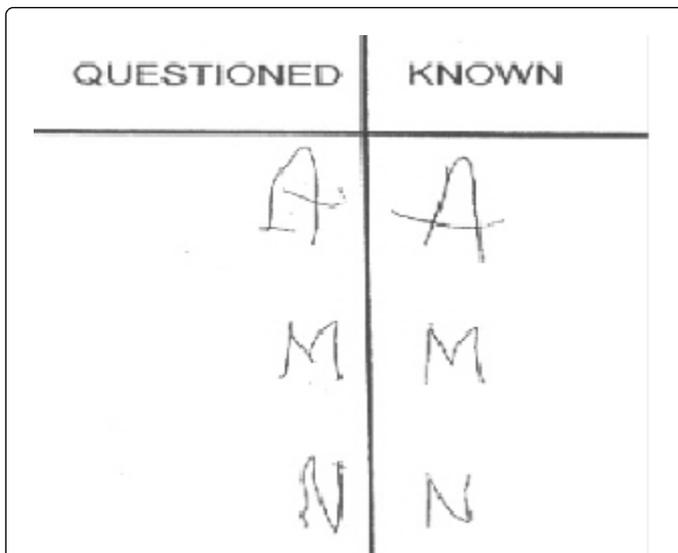


Figure 2: In relation to handwriting it is the agreement of handwriting characteristics with less variation.

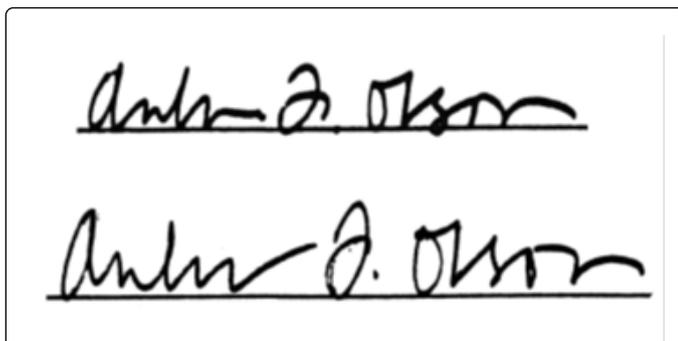


Figure 3: It is easier to identify handwriting when the writing is consistent.

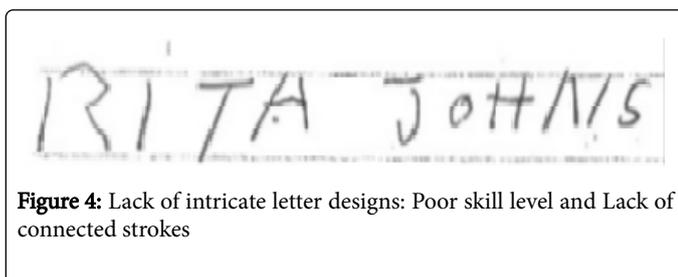


Figure 4: Lack of intricate letter designs: Poor skill level and Lack of connected strokes

Lack of Complexity

Where a person over simplifies his or her signature it can be easily forged; that is a signature with few flourishes or change in direction of

strokes. Where it is slowly written it provides forgers a better handle on imitating it as forgeries are usually drawn slowly and carefully (Figure 5).

To prevent yourself from falling victim to forgery, take a closer look at your signature and adopt these protective measures.

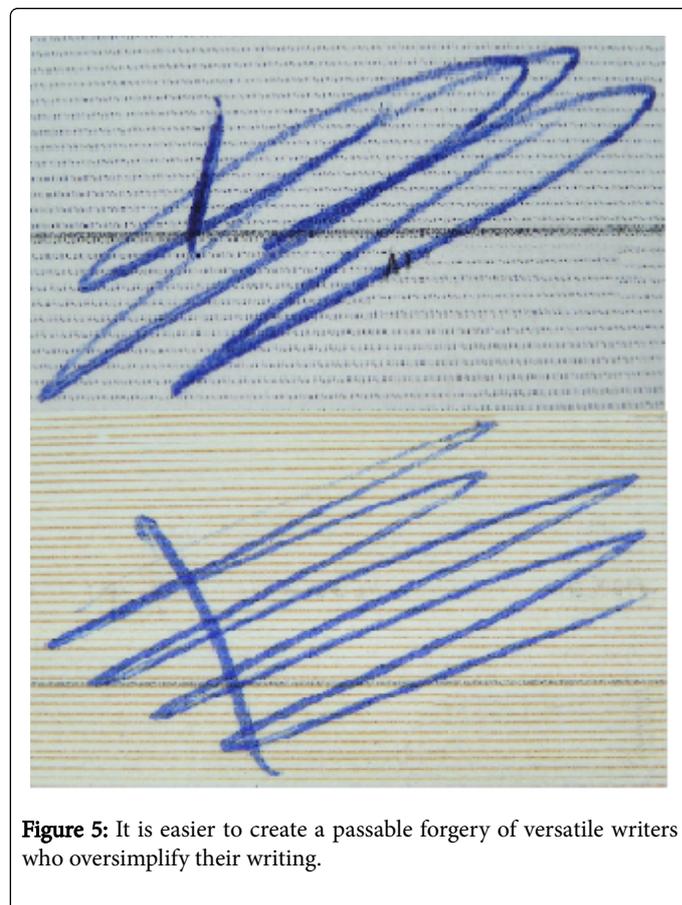


Figure 5: It is easier to create a passable forgery of versatile writers who oversimplify their writing.

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