

Old Handwriting Styles

The Gothic handwriting style was in use in Western and Central Europe as well as in the Nordic countries up to the beginning of the 16th century. Typical of the Gothic handwriting style were vertical lines and angular forms. It had developed to an indistinct style and was difficult to read. At the end of the 15th century a new style, the neogothic or German style, developed in Germany.

In Italy a new style developed in the 15th century as a result of admiration of the ancient times. The humanists during the Renaissance considered the Gothic writing as barbaric and developed a new style using old Roman models. The humanistic or Latin writing gradually replaced the Gothic writing in Southern and Western Europe, but the German writing was still used in German language areas and in the Nordic countries.

In Germany and the Nordic countries texts written in the Latin language, as well as names of individuals, were often printed in the humanistic style. The humanistic style replaced the German style in the Nordic countries in the beginning of the 19th century, but in Germany it was in use until the beginning of the 20th century.

The German style changed in accordance with the general trends of styles. Schools for clerks, as well as guides published by the teachers of the schools, had an influence on the handwriting style. At the end of the 17th century the German style was preserved for over 200 years, although the style never was uniform during that period of time. Typical of the German handwriting style was to separate the last shank from the next letter with a redundant loop. This was how the letters *a*, *g*, *q*, *r*, *v*, *w* and *y* were usually treated. Sometimes the letters *b*, *l* and *t* also received a redundant loop.

Some letters were often especially marked to distinguish them from other letters. A curved line generally was added above the letters *u*, *v* and *w*. The letter *y* usually had two dots over it looking like the combination *ij*. The shaft of the letter *y* normally was slanted to the left while *j* in the combination *ij* was nearly vertical. In common combinations the letters sometimes had a different appearance. Such combinations are *ff*, *fft*, *sk*, *ss* (*sz* originally) and *st*. During the 17th century, the first *t* in double *t* combinations was very often written extremely low while the second *t* was written higher.

The use of capital letters and lower case letters fluctuated. Usually the size of a letter is the only distinguishing feature and it is difficult to know which one was used.

Examples of different handwriting styles:

A	<i>A</i>	a	<i>a</i>
B	<i>B</i>	b	<i>b</i>
C	<i>C</i>	c	<i>c</i>
D	<i>D</i>	d	<i>d</i>
E	<i>E</i>	e	<i>e</i>
F	<i>F</i>	f	<i>f</i>
G	<i>G</i>	g	<i>g</i>
H	<i>H</i>	h	<i>h</i>
I	<i>I</i>	i	<i>i</i>
J	<i>J</i>	j	<i>j</i>
K	<i>K</i>	k	<i>k</i>
L	<i>L</i>	l	<i>l</i>
M	<i>M</i>	m	<i>m</i>
N	<i>N</i>	n	<i>n</i>
O	<i>O</i>	o	<i>o</i>
P	<i>P</i>	p	<i>p</i>
Q	<i>Q</i>	q	<i>q</i>
R	<i>R</i>	r	<i>r</i>
S	<i>S</i>	s	<i>s</i>
T	<i>T</i>	t	<i>t</i>
U	<i>U</i>	u	<i>u</i>
Ü	<i>Ü</i>	ü	<i>ü</i>
V	<i>V</i>	v	<i>v</i>
W	<i>W</i>	w	<i>w</i>
X	<i>X</i>	x	<i>x</i>
Y	<i>Y</i>	y	<i>y</i>
Z	<i>Z</i>	z	<i>z</i>
Ä	<i>Ä</i>	ä	<i>ä</i>
Ö	<i>Ö</i>	ö	<i>ö</i>

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z Å Ä Ö a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z å ä ö

Handwritten cursive letters for A-Z, Å, Ä, Ö, a-z, å, ä, ö.

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	1613	1765		1552	1642	1700	1765	1794		
	1533	1673	1700	1775	a	o	n	r	u	z
A	Q	Q	Q	Q	b	o	o	b	o	
B					c
C					d	o	o	d	o	d
D					e	t	.	u	t	.
E					f	f	f	f	f	f
F					g	o	o	g	g	g
G					h	o	o	h	o	g
H					i	i	i	i	i	i
I, J					j	i	j	j	j	j
K					k	o	o	k	o	o
L					l	o	o	l	o	o
M					m	m	m	m	m	m
N					n	m	n	n	n	n
O					o	o	o	o	o	o
P					p	y	y	p	p	
Q					q	q				
R					r	o
S					s	o	o	s	o	o
T					t	t	t	t	t	t
U					u	o	.	u	o	u
V					v	o	o			
W					w	w	u	w	w	w
X					x	x				
Y					y	y	y	y	y	y
Z					z	z				
Ä					ä	ä	ä	ä	ä	ä
Å					å	å	å	å	å	å
Ö					ö	ö	ö	ö	ö	ö

	1615	1630	1644	1671	1678	1700	1734	1757
a	α	α	α	u	u	u	u	u
b	β	β	β	β	β	β	β	β
c	γ	γ	γ	γ	γ	γ	γ	γ
d	δ	δ	δ	δ	δ	δ	δ	δ
e	ε	ε	ε	ε	ε	ε	ε	ε
f	φ	φ	φ	φ	φ	φ	φ	φ
g	γ	γ	γ	γ	γ	γ	γ	γ
h	η	η	η	η	η	η	η	η
i	ι	ι	ι	ι	ι	ι	ι	ι
j								
k	κ	κ	κ	κ	κ	κ	κ	κ
l	λ	λ	λ	λ	λ	λ	λ	λ
m	μ	μ	μ	μ	μ	μ	μ	μ
n	ν	ν	ν	ν	ν	ν	ν	ν
o	ο	ο	ο	ο	ο	ο	ο	ο
p	π	π	π	π	π	π	π	π
q	ϑ							
r	ρ	ρ	ρ	ρ	ρ	ρ	ρ	ρ
s	σ	σ	σ	σ	σ	σ	σ	σ
t	τ	τ	τ	τ	τ	τ	τ	τ
u	υ	υ	υ	υ	υ	υ	υ	υ
v	ϕ	ϕ		ϕ	ϕ	ϕ		
w	ω	ω	ω	ω		ω	ω	ω
x			ξ					ξ
y	ϣ		ϣ	ϣ	ϣ	ϣ	ϣ	ϣ
z	ζ	ζ	ζ	ζ	ζ		ζ	ζ
å	ä	ä	ä	ä	ä		ä	ä
ä	ä	ä	ä	ä	ä		ä	ä
ö	ö	ö	ö	ö	ö		ö	ö

	1615	1630	1644	1671	1678	1700	1734	1757
A	2	A	2	2	2		2	2
B	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
C	C	C		C	C	C	C	C
D	D							
E	E	E	E	E				
F	F	F	F	F		F	F	F
G	G	G	G	G	G			
H	H	H	H	H	H		H	H
I	I	I	I	I	I		I	I
J	J	J	J	J			J	
K	K	K	K	K			K	
L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L
M	M	M	M	M	M		M	M
N	N	N	N	N	N			N
O	O	O	O	O	O		O	O
P	P	P	P	P	P	P		
Q								
R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
T	T	T	T	T	T			
U	U							
V		V	V	V	V			
W	W		W	W			W	
X		X						
Y		Y						
Z			Z					
Å		Å		Å		Å	Å	
Ä				Ä				
Ö		Ö		Ö		Ö		Ö

	1615	1630	1644	1671	1678	1700	1734	1757
ff								
fft								
ss								
sk								
st								
tt								

Source: Alf Åberg, Läsning av gamla handstilar. Skrifter utgivna af Genealogiska Föreningen 5, 1950.