

National Handwriting Day Is Good For You

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Writer, editor, publisher and fan of all things handwritten.



Happy John Hancock's Birthday! And Happy National Handwriting Day, which falls concurrently. I'm often asked how I celebrate such a minor holiday, and my answer is always the same. It's business as usual for me. I write by hand every day, whether it's in my notebook or journal or in a letter—whether it's an ordinary Tuesday or John Hancock's birthday.

I've developed an affinity for postcards, and I amassed quite a few in 2023, each handpicked at a particularly interesting place, most often a museum gift shop. This year saw me at the Musee d'Orsay in Paris, the Museum of Fine Art in Houston, the Rhode Island School of Design Museum and the Boston Museum of Modern Art, among many others. Another great stop was a small art/gift shop in Providence, R.I., and one in New York, where I purchased too-many cards by local artists. Even my holiday cards for 2023 were postcards.

While first and foremost a greeting, a postcard is also a way to share experiences with friends and family—where I've been and what I enjoy. It's sort of like a vacation update minus the "Wish you were here." Postcards aren't as much of a commitment as letters, so I'm more apt to write more frequently if I know a few lines will suffice.

But writing letters is a particular passion of mine, perhaps because they require time to think about what I want to say and how I want to say it. And there's no fear of hitting the "send" button too quickly, before considering my thoughts and words and the impact they might have on the recipient. Letter writing also connects me with a past that is quickly dissipating, since letters are becoming a novelty whose best days are in the rear-view mirror, I fear. Will they somehow find popularity once again? Probably not, but that doesn't mean they will be totally abandoned.

And, yes, there's my journal. It's something I look forward to participating in every day. At one time I thought the volumes could be strung into a novel in some future world, but today I think of them more as in-the-moment opportunities to connect with myself. I like re-reading them to check the pulse of my emotional growth.

So to give credit where credit is due, National Handwriting Day dates to 1977, when the Washington, D.C.-based [Writing Instrument Manufacturers Association \(WIMA\)](#) declared it an annual opportunity to commemorate the handwritten word. WIMA, founded in 1943, promotes the use of pens and pencils and, of course, writing and the writing instruments industry as a whole.

“Handwriting is a true art form and one of the few ways we can uniquely express ourselves,” affirms WIMA about the holiday it incited decades ago. “There’s something poetic about grasping a writing instrument and feeling it hit the paper as your thoughts flow through your fingers and pour into words.

“This year, we suggest you take advantage of National Handwriting Day on January 23 and use a pen or a pencil to rekindle that creative feeling through a handwritten note, poem, letter or journal entry.”