



Standard Terminology Relating to the Examination of Questioned Documents¹

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1. Scope

1.1 This terminology standard includes terms that relate to the examination performed by forensic document examiners.

NOTE 1—The terms in the Terminology Section refer to typical copy-book styles of writing and do not account for exceptional forms.

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 *ASTM Standards*:²

E444 *Guide for Scope of Work of Forensic Document Examiners*

3. Terminology

apex, *n*—the uppermost point of a character.

ascender, *n*—a stroke that rises above the height of the body of the letter formation.

assisted hand signature, *n*—a signature executed by a writer while the writer's hand, arm, or writing instrument is steadied or stabilized by another.

awkward hand, *n*—see **unaccustomed hand**.

baseline, *n*—the ruled or imaginary line upon which writing or typewriting appears to rest.

character, *n*—any language symbol (for example, letter, numeral, punctuation mark, or other sign), other symbol or ornament.

connecting stroke, *n*—a line joining two adjacent characters.

cross stroke, *n*—a stroke that crosses another portion of the character and is not attached at either end. (For example, the horizontal stroke of the “t”) (cf. crossbar).

crossbar, *n*—a stroke that intersects other portions of the character at both ends. (cf. arm and cross stroke).

cursive, *n*—a type of writing in which the letters are joined and the writing instrument is not lifted after most strokes.

descender, *n*—a stroke that extends below the baseline of the body of the letter formation

drag stroke, *n*—a stroke resulting from incomplete lifting of the pen.

guided signature, *n*—a signature executed by a writer while a writer's hand arm, or writing instrument is influenced or controlled by another.

hand printing, *n*—a style of writing in which the letters are not joined and the writing instrument is lifted after most strokes.

hesitation, *n*—a pause in the writing without the instrument being lifted.

individualizing characteristic, *n*—marks or properties that serve to individualize writing.

indentations, *n*—latent or visible impressions in paper or other media.

line quality, *n*—the sum total of the attributes of the writing movement (for example, speed, pressure, and skill).

loop, *n*—a formation that curves and crosses itself.

manuscript, *n*—see **handprinting**.

model signature, *n*—a signature that is used as a prototype for a simulation or copy, by manual electronic or other means.

patching, *n*—retouching a portion of a written stroke.

pen lift, *n*—an interruption in a stroke caused by removing the writing document from the writing surface.

pen position, *n*—the relationship between the writing instrument and the writing surface.

pen pressure, *n*—the force with which the writing instrument contacts the paper.

retrace, *n*—a stroke written back over the preceding stroke in the reverse direction.

unaccustomed hand, *n*—the opposite hand (or other body part) from that normally used for writing.

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² For referenced ASTM standards, visit the ASTM website, www.astm.org, or contact ASTM Customer Service at service@astm.org. For *Annual Book of ASTM Standards* volume information, refer to the standard's Document Summary page on the ASTM website.

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