



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 copybook 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).

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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.

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.