

The 'i' Dot
By Joel Engel



When the capital letter I-the ego-is written huge, this is the image the writer has of himself. Surely he is extremely egocentric, a megalomaniac.

A block letter shows culture, someone who reads. This is the capital I found in most books.

The unadorned I shows nothing extra and similarly indicate the person who sticks to the simplest essentials.

The large, ugly I with hooks is the sign of egotism and greed. This writer is all out for himself, willing to avoid responsibilities.

The I that looks similar to the number 1 shows a relationship to numbers. Often these people are found to excel in mathematics.

When the i dot is to the right, it is referred to as the post placed i dot. This writer's thoughts run in front of his actions, and his writing shows speed. His urge is to finish his task without worrying about exact details.

The pre-placed i dot, which is to the left, shows procrastination, caution, lack of self-confidence, repression. The left, represents the past (the writer lives in the past), whereas the i dot to the right of the stem-the post-placed- i dot represents the future.

The exactly placed I dot above the stem is the sign of accuracy, perfection, excellent judgment, excellent memory, strong adherence to details. This writer often has a matter-of-fact personality. He is not only careful in dotting the i, but places it exactly where it belongs. This shows concentration. Many judges and scientists dot their i's in this fashion.

The i dots which are exactly above the i stem are often found among people who are considered highly moral people. They usually take strongly conservative points of view, in contrast to the writers of the post-placed i dots, who are more likely to be liberals. The post-placed writer lets himself go, whereas the exacting writer weighs every action.

The high-flying dot shows the person whose thoughts are high in the sky. He is generally unrealistic, but if he attains his improbable goals, he does so in a big way.

When an i dot is not really a dot, but a vertical line, it is a sign of criticism, of a person who has a strong concern with principles. Not only does the shape of the dot seem like a descending knife, but it can also pass for an exclamation point, demonstrating emphasis.

An i dot formed of a circle reflects the eccentric-sometimes mildly so, sometimes not so mildly. These people show mild neurotic tendencies and are frequently unable to face reality. They go after fads quite often and are of an artistic nature. The late artist Walt Disney wrote a similar i dot. It is interesting that his circled i dot looks very similar to Mickey Mouse's round ears.

The very light 'i' dot indicates a lack of willpower, possibly physical weakness or even illness, as if the person did not have the strength to dot the i properly. (A light t bar obviously shows the same meaning.)

When we see an i dot joined to another letter (and for that matter, any letter that requires a dot or bar), it shows a clever combination of thoughts-doing two things in one shot, so to speak. These are the personalities of chess players, people who can solve abstract and intricate puzzles and make logical deductions.

When the i dot is an arc that opens at the left side, it is a sign of the neurotic, untrustworthy personality. He shies away from the system. The arc, which is regarded as the eye, is looking toward the left indicating a lack of trust in somebody he has been involved with in the recent past. (It is often the untrustworthy person who does not trust others)

When the i dot is in the form of an arc open to the right, it is the sign of the observer. The arc itself looks like an eye staring at something.

When the dot is directly over the stem and heavy, it indicates good memory, sound judgment, and the ability to do detail work. You often find this writer to be very materialistic and in a state of depression. (Heaviness in writing shows the physical, and the physical brings on materialism.) Regarding the depression, it seems to be a weight on the writer's head, carrying an extra load.

When the dots are more like dashes, they signify energy, worry, and irritability. If you go over these dots yourself, you can almost feel liveliness, irritability, and also a certain degree of speed. When the i needs a dot and precision is really necessary, this writer flings his pen in such a manner as to make the dots into dashes. It shows he does not care, because there is something bothering him.

When the i dots look more like commas or arcs, they are signs of humor, wit, and gaiety. If you look closely at them, they resemble laughing mouths.

An i without a dot may simply indicate speed (which would have to be checked with the rest of the writing). Otherwise, the dotless i shows forgetfulness, carelessness, neglect. This is also true of the t bar without the bar.

A note about genius: There is no hard-and-fast rule for recognizing genius through a person's handwriting. However, certain signs often do appear in the script of great-minded men: high upper-zone extension (without loops), and/or very small, or even microscopic, middle zones. (There is no particular guideline to the lower zones.)

Generally speaking, since the middle zone is the social area, the larger it is, the less the powers of concentration. Thus, the great mind tends to show in his handwriting a willingness to give up the social world for more intense powers of concentration.

Since the average size of a zone is 3 millimeters, anything under this size we call small and the smaller in size it gets, the stronger the concentration, usually at the expense of sociability.

Other traits commonly found in the handwriting of the genius are tremendous speed and sloppiness, indicating that the person's thinking is so far ahead of his writing that he has no time for meticulous penmanship.

Although a genius may position many of his t bars and i dots well to the right of the stem, he will place others with great precision, for, however rapidly he may be thinking, much of his work requires exactitude as well as speed.

A form that frequently turns up in the writing of someone with a high IQ is a g made in the shape of a figure 8, showing speed plus a certain grace.

May we digress to the subject of legibility?

The fact of legibility in handwriting and its degree are not so easy to establish. We read whole words at a time, some of us whole phrases. Consequently, one or even several illegible letters in a word will not prevent us from correctly guessing what the word is from the context. As experienced readers, we really do not mind a not wholly legible hand. As graphologists, we must be less lenient.

To establish the legibility of handwriting, we must try to read it word by word. Only when handwriting proves to be legible in a word-by-word examination can it be pronounced legible.

To interpret a hand graphologically, on the basis of its legibility, we must ask ourselves why a person may choose to write, yet at the same time write illegibly. Lip service is the phrase that comes first to our mind. To let the gesture stand for the act is the intent of one who writes but does so illegibly. Or he may consider himself so superior that reading his missive is the recipient's duty; conceit and arrogance, therefore, may also lead to illegible handwriting.

Or we may write the message though we would prefer to keep its contents to ourselves. In this case, it may be affectation of mysteriousness, or neurotic anxiety, or psychotic suspiciousness, or perhaps even a persecution complex that blurs our hand. It was distrust that created cipher or code writing.

Paranoia or persecution mania, to be sure, does not make handwriting wholly illegible. On the contrary, paranoiacs often write meticulously legibly, as though trying their best not to arouse any suspicion. But there simultaneously appear certain isolated illegible characters or words;

they look like corrections, but the result is always almost complete illegibility. Paranoiacs seem to be feverishly bent on improving themselves and apprehensive over what might be misinterpreted and criticized by others, but it probably is part of their mental disorder not to succeed but rather to make things still worse.

A person with an illegible or neglected hand cannot be called either sincere or co-operative. For if he has nothing to hide, or really wants to be understood by his neighbor, why should he write illegibly? We must assume that he does not care whether or not we can read his letter. This is not the way of a considerate person. Indeed, inconsiderateness, carelessness, (in clothing, too), insincerity, and even bad manners may be observed in people with barely legible hands. Very probably, they would also be unpunctual, disorderly, and indolent. There was a time when well-educated people, and especially intellectuals, thought it beneath them to write a legible handwriting. Freud has, I think, interpreted the illegible hand of doctors, for instance, as part of their professional pride and secretiveness; they do not want the layman to understand their notes obviously reserved for other doctors or pharmacists. However, it is quite conceivable that some scientists or thinkers, very much detached from the world, forget that others may also wish to read their writings: (Einstein obviously is not one of these; his handwriting is legible).

People with little training in penmanship do not write illegibly or carelessly. Their writing may look rather helpless, untrained, but it is often remarkably legible.

A person's illegible signature does not admit of any complimentary interpretation. For how much trust can be placed in a document if the signature that is to prove the signer's determination to carry out his promises cannot be deciphered? In a sense, an illegible signature annuls the document it pretends to put in force. (Only an anonymous letter or a ransom note goes well with an illegible signature.) A special kind of illegible signature, the paraph, is used by people who think they are above the necessity of identifying themselves by means of their signature. The best-known case is Napoleon and the man with Napoleonic aspirations. If a man thinks of himself as one whom everybody must know and blindly obey, why should he bother to write his signature legibly? Indeed, a paraph will suffice. If examination of the handwriting sample reveals that here and there, one letter stands for another very plainly, for example, an l for a b or an h for a k, we know from experience that the sample originated with a liar, a swindler, or a cheat.

("Adolf" in Adolf Hitler's signature)

Indistinct figures are made by careless people and people whose attitude in financial matters is not clear. But figures that can be misread, for example, a 5 for an 8, or a 1 for a 7, and so on, are associated with fraudulent intentions on the part of the writer.

Legibility, on the other hand, is characteristic of sincere individuals and of people who have a good capacity for purposeful work. Legible handwriting may also be associated with orators, teachers, and pedants; the style value will tell us whether the hand is that of a great teacher or merely a pedant's.

There are some peculiarities regarding the pace of writing, which we must know in order to draw correct conclusions. For instance, Saudek found that tall letters, such as f, are always more quickly written than minimum (small) letters, such as i; therefore, a small script is always more reluctantly formed than a sizable one. The rounded letters are produced "without pause," angular formations never without "stopping for a fraction of a second before the transition from one direction to the other." The angle writer, therefore, is always a hedger. The same holds true of handwriting with many broken lines, or with many changes in direction, particularly left-tending strokes (in a writing movement, which, as ours, is mainly right tending). "No one is capable of making a dot when writing at a high rate of speed, but will instead produce... a comma or accent." Similarly, a spontaneous writer will not place the dots exactly over the i's. On the other hand, only spontaneity can produce a straight line, a slowly executed straight line being necessarily broken. Moreover, spontaneity will always slant its writing to the right; upright or left-slanted writing is never formed spontaneously.

Joel Engel is the author of "Handwriting Analysis Self-Taught" (Penguin Books)

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