

We do it every day, on paper, on our phones and on computers. But what do you know about the history of writing? Watch this clip to find out more.

Do the preparation task first. Then watch the video and do the exercises to check your understanding. If you need help, you can read the transcript at any time.

### Preparation

Match the vocabulary with the correct definition and write a–f next to the number 1–6.

- |        |                                                                                  |                    |
|--------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1..... | a kind of soft earth                                                             | a. vertical        |
| 2..... | a geographical area from Western Asia to Northern Africa                         | b. hieroglyphs     |
| 3..... | a writing system from ancient Egypt                                              | c. clay            |
| 4..... | in ancient times, a person whose job it was to write books, documents or records | d. Arabic          |
| 5..... | a language spoken in the Middle East                                             | e. the Middle East |
| 6..... | straight upwards                                                                 | f. a scribe        |

### 1. Check your understanding: true or false

Circle *True* or *False* for these sentences.

- |    |                                                                                                                                      |             |              |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|--------------|
| 1. | The earliest examples of writing come from Europe.                                                                                   | <i>True</i> | <i>False</i> |
| 2. | The presenter shows a tablet which was a record of all the beer rations given to workers.                                            | <i>True</i> | <i>False</i> |
| 3. | Although hieroglyphs look like pictures, most of them actually represent sounds.                                                     | <i>True</i> | <i>False</i> |
| 4. | In the studio, the scribe tells the presenter not to give up.                                                                        | <i>True</i> | <i>False</i> |
| 5. | Nobody knows how to read the writing on the small stone seals the presenter shows from the Indus valley.                             | <i>True</i> | <i>False</i> |
| 6. | The oldest type of writing still in use today is Arabic.                                                                             | <i>True</i> | <i>False</i> |
| 7. | The Roman tablets found in the north of England had important records written on them.                                               | <i>True</i> | <i>False</i> |
| 8. | The presenter thinks the most amazing thing about writing is that it lets us communicate with people who are not physically present. | <i>True</i> | <i>False</i> |

## 2. Check your grammar: gap fill – ‘what’ clauses

Complete the gaps with a clause from the box.

what they wrote with	what you might be used to	what's written	what is now Iraq
what you've got here	what you write today	what's going on in it	

1. The earliest examples of writing come from the Middle East, in \_\_\_\_\_, about five thousand years ago.
2. If you were a leader of a big old city, you'd probably want to keep track of \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Hi Paul! Thank you very much for letting me come to your studio. Could you show me through \_\_\_\_\_ in front of you?
4. These tools were \_\_\_\_\_, back in Egypt.
5. No one knows \_\_\_\_\_ on these small stone seals.
6. Unlike \_\_\_\_\_, Arabic reads from right to left.
7. Perhaps \_\_\_\_\_ could also be read in hundreds or thousands of years' time in the future.

## 3. Check your vocabulary: multiple choice

Some words have several different meanings. Circle the correct meaning of the word or words as they were used in the video.

### tablet

(The earliest examples of writing are on clay tablets.)

1.
  - a. A computer whose screen can be written on with a pen.
  - b. A pill; a kind of medicine.
  - c. A piece of earth or stone used for writing on.

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### going on

(If you were a leader of a big old city, you'd need to write things down to keep track of what's going on.)

2.
  - a. starting
  - b. progressing
  - c. rising

**record**

(In the video, we see a clay tablet which was a record of the beer rations given to workers. There's even a picture of somebody drinking beer on it.)

- 3.
- The fastest, highest, longest (etc.) thing known to exist.
  - A piece of writing that preserves information for the future.
  - A big, black shiny disc made of vinyl used to store music.
- 

**studio**

(A scribe shows the presenter how to write hieroglyphs in his studio.)

- 4.
- A workshop where someone does an artistic trade or craft.
  - A company that makes films.
  - A flat which has the kitchen, bedroom and living room in one single area, not separate rooms.
- 

**rush**

(He tells the presenter to keep the rush vertical and hold it very lightly.)

- 5.
- A sudden forward motion.
  - The stem of a plant that is stiff and hollow and grows by water.
  - To go somewhere or to do something quickly.
- 

**script**

(Arabic script can be very beautiful. Did you know it reads from right to left?)

- 6.
- A text for a play or drama.
  - A written document.
  - A system of characters for writing.
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**4. Check your grammar: gap fill – passive**

Write the word or words to fill the gaps, using the passive and a form of the word in brackets.

1. It's easy to assume that writing's always been around. But like most things, it had to \_\_\_\_\_ . (INVENT)
2. The earliest examples of writing are probably on clay tablets. They \_\_\_\_\_ in the Middle East, in what is now Iraq, about five thousand years ago. (MAKE)
3. This tablet is a record of all the beer rations \_\_\_\_\_ to workers. (GIVE)
4. On this desk I have a selection of different tools \_\_\_\_\_ for writing. (USE)

5. Some types of writing have become forgotten over time and can no longer \_\_\_\_\_.  
(READ)
6. No one knows what \_\_\_\_\_ on these small stone seals. (WRITE)
7. Artists have used Arabic for hundreds of years to decorate buildings, like these tiles from Iran  
\_\_\_\_\_ in mosques, palaces and shrines. (USE)
8. Perhaps what you write today could also \_\_\_\_\_ in hundreds or thousands of years'  
time in the future. (READ)

**Do you like writing?**

What kind of writing do you think is the most beautiful?

Do you prefer writing by hand or on the computer?

Do you think children of the future will need to write by hand, or do you think all written communication will be via computer?

**Vocabulary Box**

Write any new words you have learnt in this lesson.