

Trump's team backed an expert review of Epstein note. How would it work?

Handwriting analysis is considered relatively reliable, but original documents are needed for accuracy, experts say.



By [Erin Hale](#) Published On 24 Sep 2025



Anti-Trump demonstrators march near the US Capitol in Washington, DC, on September 2, 2025 [Jonathan Ernst/Reuters]

The White House has said it would support a professional handwriting analysis to prove that United States President Donald Trump did not write a salacious birthday note to the late sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

Handwriting analysis features in legal proceedings around the world, including criminal trials and disputes over wills and inheritance.

While not infallible, the discipline is considered to be relatively accurate when practised by professionals.

In a 2022 study published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 86 forensic document examiners incorrectly assigned a handwriting sample to a writer in just 3.1 percent of cases and incorrectly ruled out a writer in 1.1 percent of cases.

An examination of Trump's alleged note to Epstein, contained in a scrapbook prepared to commemorate the financier's 50th birthday in 2003, would need to meet the same requirements as in any other case to be considered reliable, according to handwriting analysis experts.

Chief among them would be access to the original "birthday book" and samples of Trump's signature from the era.

While the digital image of Trump's alleged signature has been plastered across the internet since Democratic lawmakers released the note earlier this month, handwriting analysts generally do not consider such copies to be reliable.

Tahnee Dewhurst, a handwriting expert and principal examiner at Acari Consulting in Australia, said a document examiner would not only look at the overall shape of the signature in question, but also minor details that make it unique.

"What a document examiner tends to look at is more fine-line features," Dewhurst told Al Jazeera.

"We'll start to look at relationships between letters, such as size proportion, slant proportion, where one letter connects the next letter, where it leaves the letter, height proportion."

Trump has adamantly [denied](#) that the signature at the bottom of the note, comprised of typed text inside the outline of a naked woman, belongs to him.

Earlier this month, the US president filed a \$15bn defamation lawsuit against The New York Times after threatening to sue the outlet over its reporting on the note.

Asked whether the Trump administration would support a professional analysis of the signature, White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said on September 9 that it would back such an examination.

A White House spokesperson referred Al Jazeera to an Associated Press recording of Leavitt's press conference in response to questions about Trump's alleged signature and any plans for an independent analysis.

The spokesperson did not provide a timeline for an examination or further details.

For handwriting analysts, red flags casting doubt on the authenticity of a signature include signs of hesitation or retouching, differences in key elements of the letters, and samples that are too similar, which could suggest tracing.

"No one person can replicate their own signature exactly. We're not photocopying our signatures," Kiki Wong, head of forensics at The Forensics Company in Hong Kong, told Al Jazeera.

Signs of authenticity include indications of fluency in writing and consistent changes in pen pressure, Wong and Dewhurst said.

Variations can also arise from the type of writing implement – a ballpoint pen writes differently from the Sharpie marker often used by Trump – giving possible clues as to the author.

Experts typically report their findings on a scale, based on their degree of certainty that the sample was written by the person in question or someone else, sometimes ending with an inconclusive finding, Dewhurst said.



A birthday letter that President Donald Trump allegedly wrote to sex offender Jeffrey Epstein more than 20 years ago is seen as presented by the Democrats in the US House of Representatives on their X account on September 8, 2025 [Handout/Democrats on the House Oversight Committee via Reuters]



A person walks past a poster with a photograph of Trump and disgraced financier and sex offender Jeffrey Epstein in London on September 3, 2025 [Isabel Infantes/Reuters]

Al Jazeera shared the birthday book sample and three digital samples of Trump's confirmed signature from 1988, 1989, and 2005 with Wong, Dewhurst, and a third expert based in the US.

The observations presented are for informational purposes only and do not constitute formal expert analysis or conclusive evidence.

None would offer a conclusion on whether Trump's alleged signature was genuine due to not having access to the originals, though each of them noted similarities.

Dewhurst said the Epstein birthday book signature "fit well within the range of variation" of samples and showed "no obvious indicators of simulation".

At the same time, Dewhurst said, there was no way to be certain the alleged signature had not been copied and pasted from somewhere else.

"Without having a look at the original material, there's not a lot you can offer," she said.

Wong said she did not see any "fundamental differences" between the samples, but noted that the birthday book sample was of low quality and not the original.

“I’m not seeing any significant differences that would sway me to think someone has tried to simulate this signature, but – this is a big but – I am also not seeing a crystal-clear image of the birthday book signature,” Wong said.

“There are a lot of caveats.”

The US-based expert, who asked not to be named for professional reasons, said Trump’s signature would not be difficult for a skilled practitioner to copy. Photocopies or digital copies could obfuscate further, he said.

“Based upon my examination of a copy of this questioned ‘Donald’ signature, I found that we are dealing with only six letter forms, and this ‘Donald’ signature lends itself to being fairly easy to simulate by a skilled penman,” he said.

“I have already simulated this ‘Donald’ signature, and after photocopying it, any slight imperfections were masked, and a handwriting identification expert would not be able to observe and evaluate the fine and subtle elements of the signature, nor would the expert be able to determine if my photocopied simulation was genuine or non-genuine,” he added.

“This also applies to the reproduction.”