

Historically, culturally, and in the individual's life, writing is subsequent to speech or signing and presupposes it. Aristotle expressed the relation thus: "Speech is the representation of the experiences of the mind, and writing is the representation of speech" (On Interpretation). But it is not as simple as this would suggest. Alphabetic writing, in which, broadly, consonant and vowel sounds are indicated by letters in sequence, is the most widespread system in use today, and it is the means by which literacy will be disseminated, but it is not the only system, nor is it the earliest.