

A Beginner's Guide to Calligraphy: History, Lessons & More

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Material

- 2 Pencils
- Ruler
- Black pen (ball or gel)
- Printing white paper
- Eraser



Calligraphy is a form of visual art related to writing.

- It is technically, the use of lettering by hand with a brush, pen, or broad tip instrument, giving form to writing in an artful and expressive fashion.
- The word itself comes from the words “kalli” (beautiful) and “graphia” (writing).
- Modern calligraphy can be seen in formal documents everywhere, from wedding invitations and logo design to religious art, memorials, maps, art reproductions, and government documents.
- In the West, calligraphy is an aesthetic skill and an art form.
- Calligraphy also plays an important and integral part of many cultures, most notably in East Asia.

Calligraphy History

Western calligraphy has its roots in the Latin writing system, which emerged circa 3,000 BC.

The Romans typically wrote on long rolls of papyrus using reed or quill pens.

Later, Christian churches developed writing through the copying of Biblical texts and other manuscripts, which were produced in the hundreds of thousands during the Middle Ages.



The advent of print in the 15th century and beyond had a lasting impact on the volume of illuminated manuscripts and handwriting.

However, calligraphy itself enjoyed a modern revival near the end of the 19th century when Edward Johnston (a British craftsman) began teaching calligraphy courses in London.

Johnston's work was responsible for the revival of modern penmanship, which was later taken up by Graily Hewitt in the twentieth century at the Central School of Arts and Design.

In East Asian cultures, the history of calligraphy is more rich and complex.

For example, some of the oldest calligraphy in the East is found on Chinese jiǎgǔwén, or shell bone scripts.

Literally, characters were carved on tortoise plastrons and ox scapulae.

In 220 BC, the Chinese emperor Qin Shi Huang imposed a “character unification” system of calligraphy, composed of over 3300 standardized characters.

Chinese calligraphy centers on the “Four Treasures of the Study,” which describes the brush, ink, ink stone, and paper used in the Chinese tradition.

The oldest existing brushes in Chinese calligraphic history date back to 202 BC.

hello

A red 'X' mark is drawn below the word 'hello' on the left page of the notebook, indicating that the handwriting is incorrect.

hello

A green checkmark is drawn below the word 'hello' on the right page of the notebook, indicating that the handwriting is correct.



Types of Calligraphy

Calligraphy takes many forms throughout many cultures but is most often tied to religious expression.

Manuscripts of the West

- Biblical

Eastern expressions

- Tibetan prayer wheels
- Mosque walls in Arabic
- The letters of the Dalai Lama

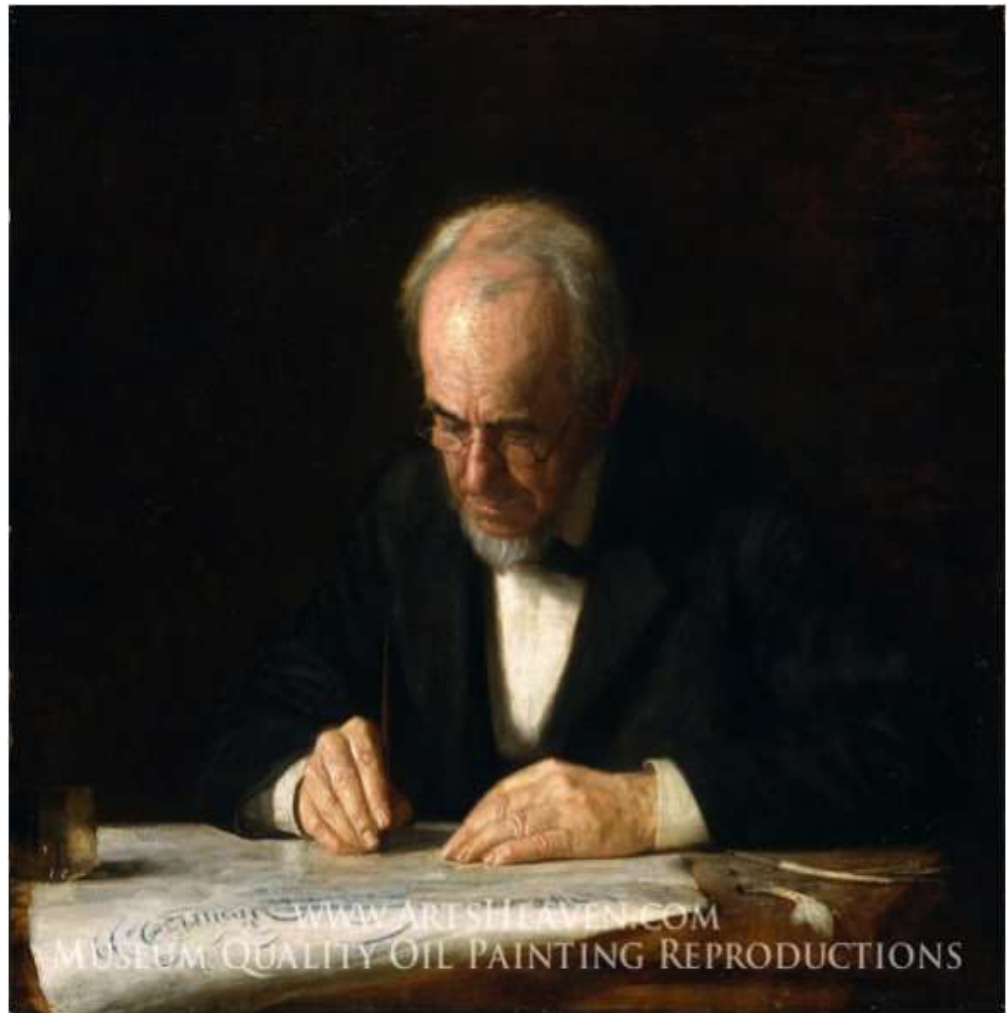
Traditionally, Western calligraphy most often uses

- A brush
- Flat-balled
- Round-nibbed pen
- Water-based ink
- Parchment or Paper
- Templates
- Knives
- Light boxes (for producing strict, uniform patterns)

Many Biblical manuscripts offer typical examples of this type of calligraphy.

Modern calligraphy is also frequently used in Western graphic design:

- Movie Credits
- Art Reproductions
- Digital Permutations of the form such as calligraphic and script fonts offer alternatives to traditional handwriting.



Eastern Calligraphy tends to be more improvisational and less rigid, with a wider variety of ink brushes, ink densities, and paper quality.

Chinese Calligraphy often employs the use of ink stones, paperweights, and desk pads.

Indian Calligraphy has a rich and varied calligraphic history, often using surfaces such as birch bark, copper, palm leaves, and clay for their calligraphy.

Islamic Calligraphy is closely tied to the Muslim religion, as the form is considered the language of the spiritual world.

Learning Calligraphy is not the same as learning handwriting.
The tools are much more specialized, and the options are as diverse as the tradition itself.

What tools you need will depend on what kind of calligraphy you plan to produce:

Hard-Edged and Structural, or Artistic and Improvisational?

Do you want to make your own wedding invitations, or pen a beautifully handwritten letter?

Will your calligraphy be more functional or decorative?

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Whatever your choice, you will first need a brush or fountain pen.

Pens and brushes are available online or at office supply stores, along with ink cartridges.

Enterprising calligraphers could even make their own feather pens using duck feathers.

Steel-pointed pens tend to work best for bold, hard edges or detailed work, while ink brushes will be better for improvised, expressive calligraphy.

Paper also makes a big difference in the quality of calligraphy

Beginners may want to start with plain notebook paper

The more advanced will often use expensive parchment, rice paper, or watercolor paper.

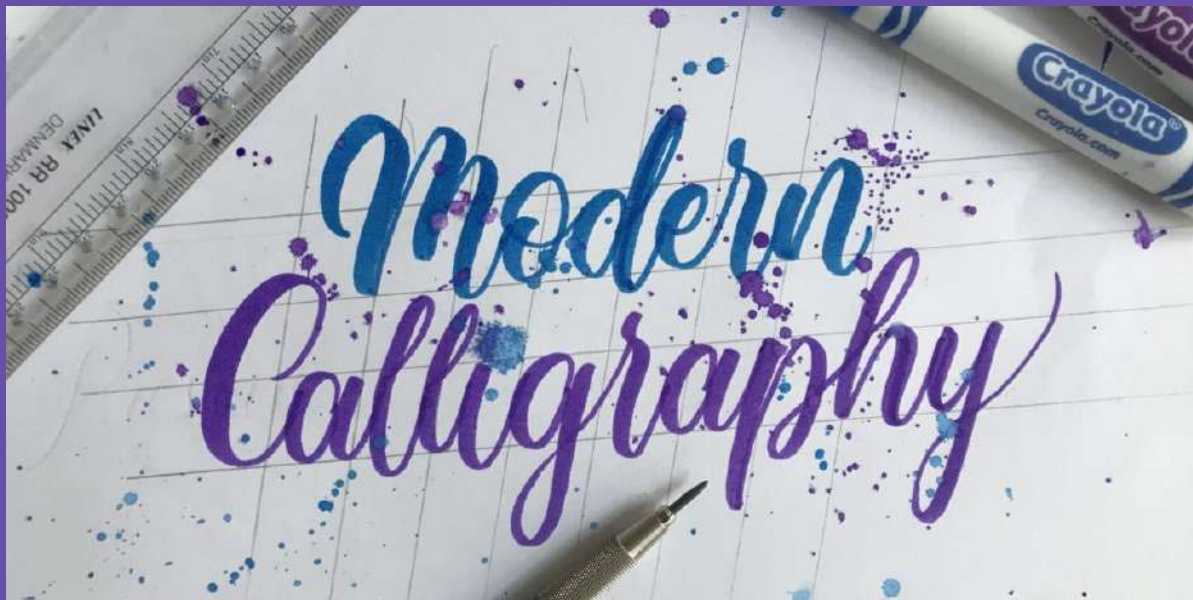
As your skill and enthusiasm increases, you may even find yourself using vellum or your own hand-made paper.



HOW TO DO MODERN CALLIGRAPHY

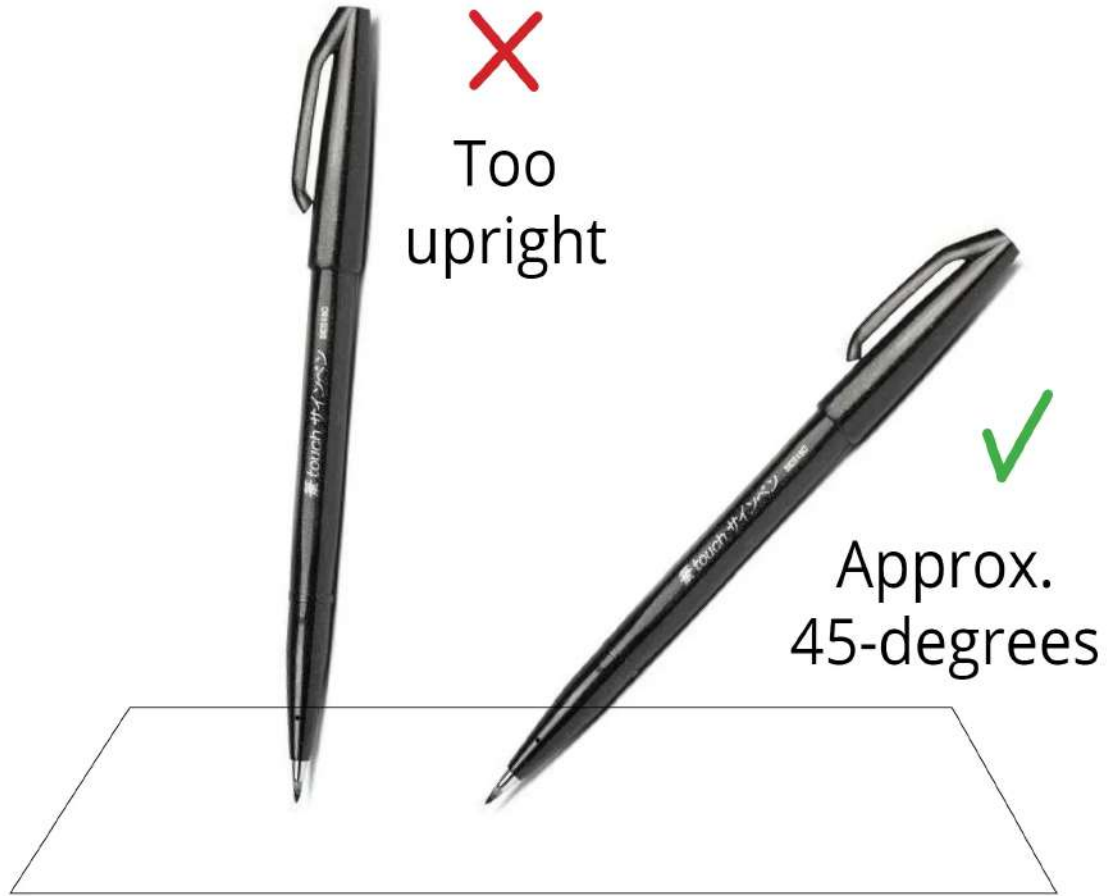
3 POPULAR STYLES

by Lettering Daily



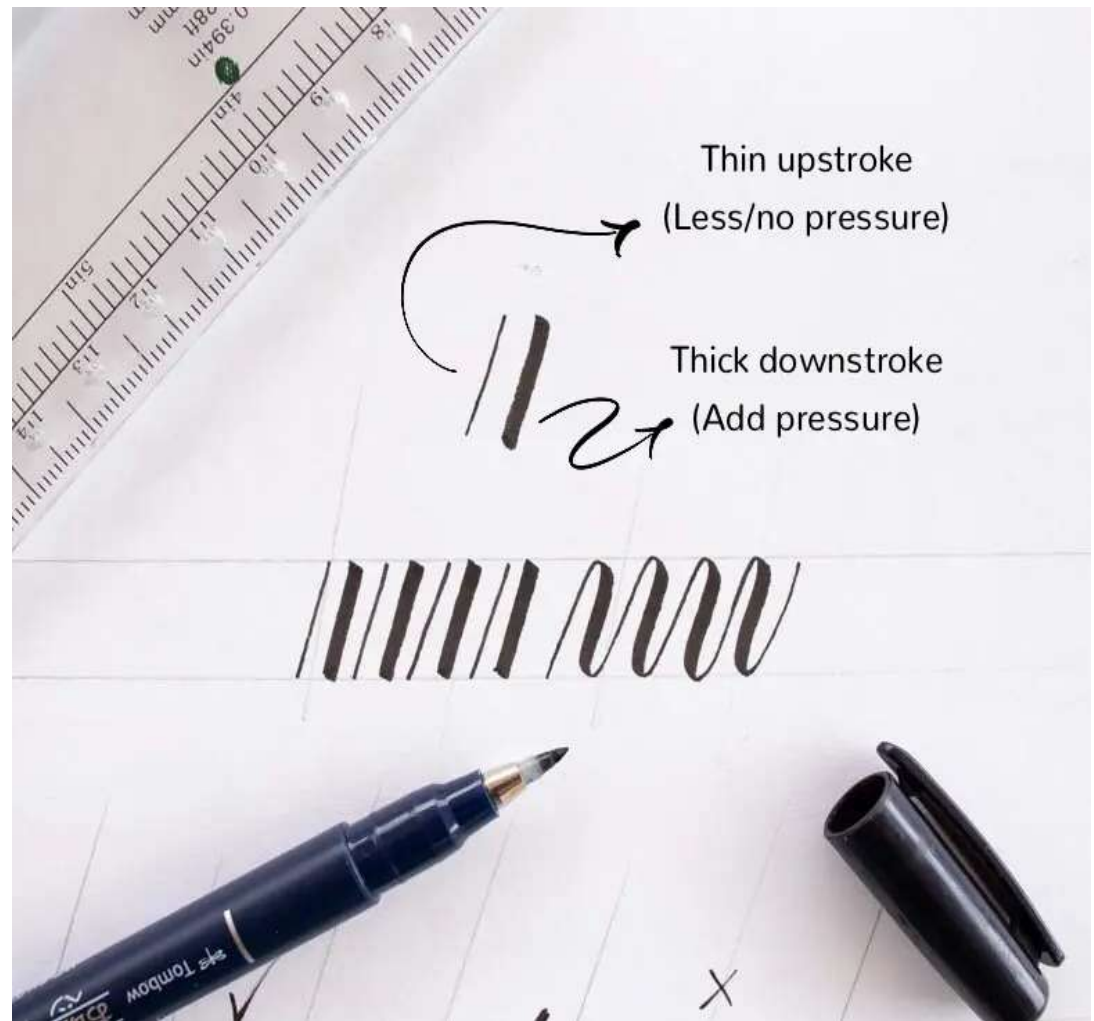


Holding the pen too upright will not give you the desired effect (thick and thin contrast) and it will also damage the tip of your pen.



The general rule is that your strokes going up are thin while the ones going down are thick.

The thick down strokes are created by applying pressure while the up strokes are done with the tip of the pen – without applying any pressure



The Basic Calligraphy Strokes

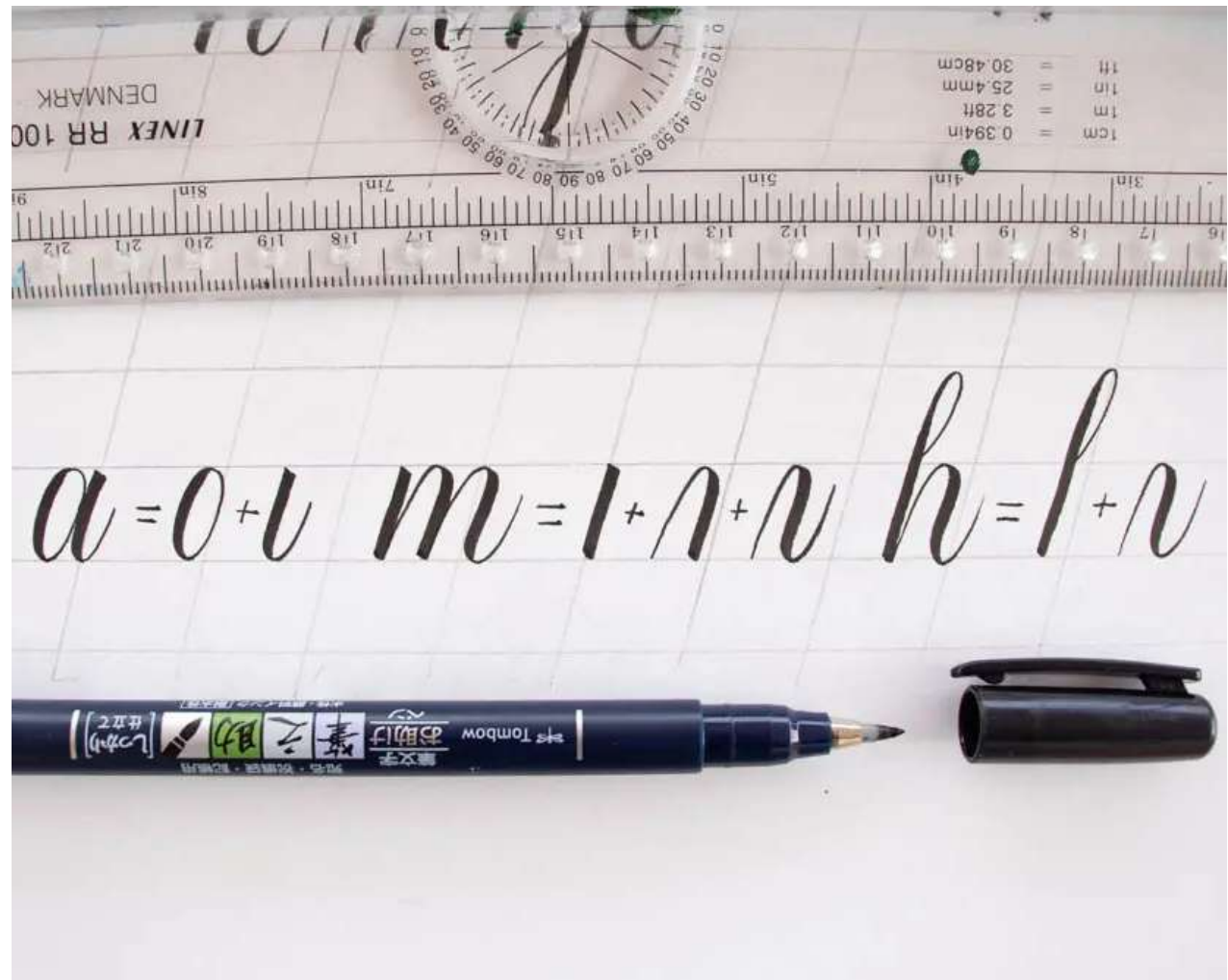
Once you feel comfortable enough using the brush pen, we can move forward and start learning the basic calligraphy strokes.

In case you haven't noticed, a lot of letters contain similar shapes.

There are 7 basic strokes and by combining these basic strokes we can create nearly any letter of the lowercase alphabet.



A quick example of combining the different basic strokes in order to create letters and even words.



Consistency

Keeping our letters consistent helps to increase the overall visual harmony. (something pleasing to the eye)

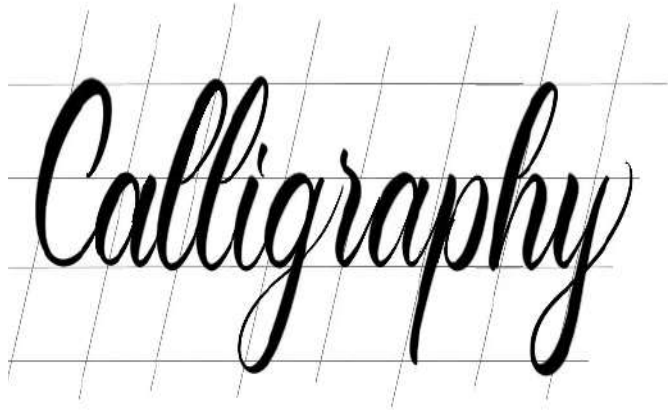
In order to keep your letters consistent **you MUST use guidelines.**

Consistency in modern calligraphy doesn't mean that you have to aim for perfection and mathematical precision.

As you can see in the example, it has plenty of imperfections.

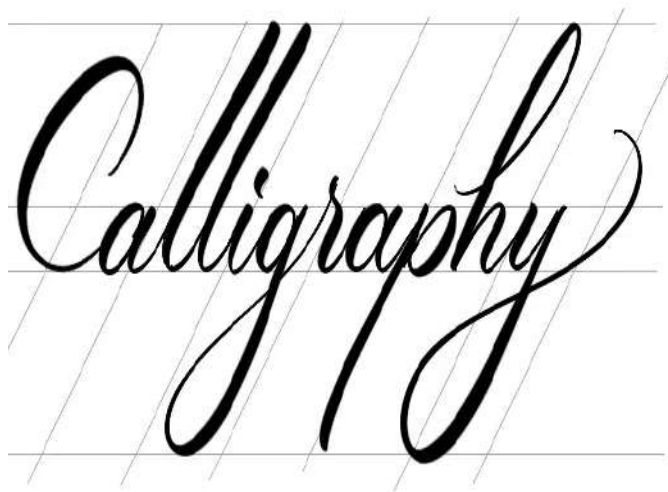
However, the letters do follow the



A cursive calligraphic word 'Calligraphy' written on a set of three horizontal guidelines. The letters are slanted to the right, and the ascenders and descenders are proportional in height to the x-height of the letters. The word is written in a dark, flowing script.

Variation 1#

The ascenders and descenders
are proportional to the x-height.
The slant of the letters is very soft.

A cursive calligraphic word 'Calligraphy' written on a set of three horizontal guidelines. The letters are more slanted to the right than in the first sample, and the ascenders and descenders are significantly taller than the x-height. The word is written in a dark, flowing script.

Variation 2#

The ascenders and descenders
are much bigger than the x-height.
The letters are more slanted than
the example above.

What sizes should I use?

Considering we are
talking about modern
calligraphy here, you
are free to determine
your letters:

- The Height
- Size
- Angles

Avoid Doing This:

Here is an example of what you should avoid doing.

This is what happens when you don't use guidelines.



Spacing

Good spacing between the letters helps you to keep a high level of legibility.

If the letters are too squished together that could have a negative impact on your calligraphy – of course, we want to avoid that.

In order to maintain a good and consistent spacing you need to go slower, lift your pen between each stroke and also keeping an eye on the space of the previous letter pair.

Again, this is something that will just



5 different letter groups:

Straight letters

i, l, t, f,

Branching letters

n, m, h, b, p, k, r

Reverse Branching letters

u, y, a, d, g, q

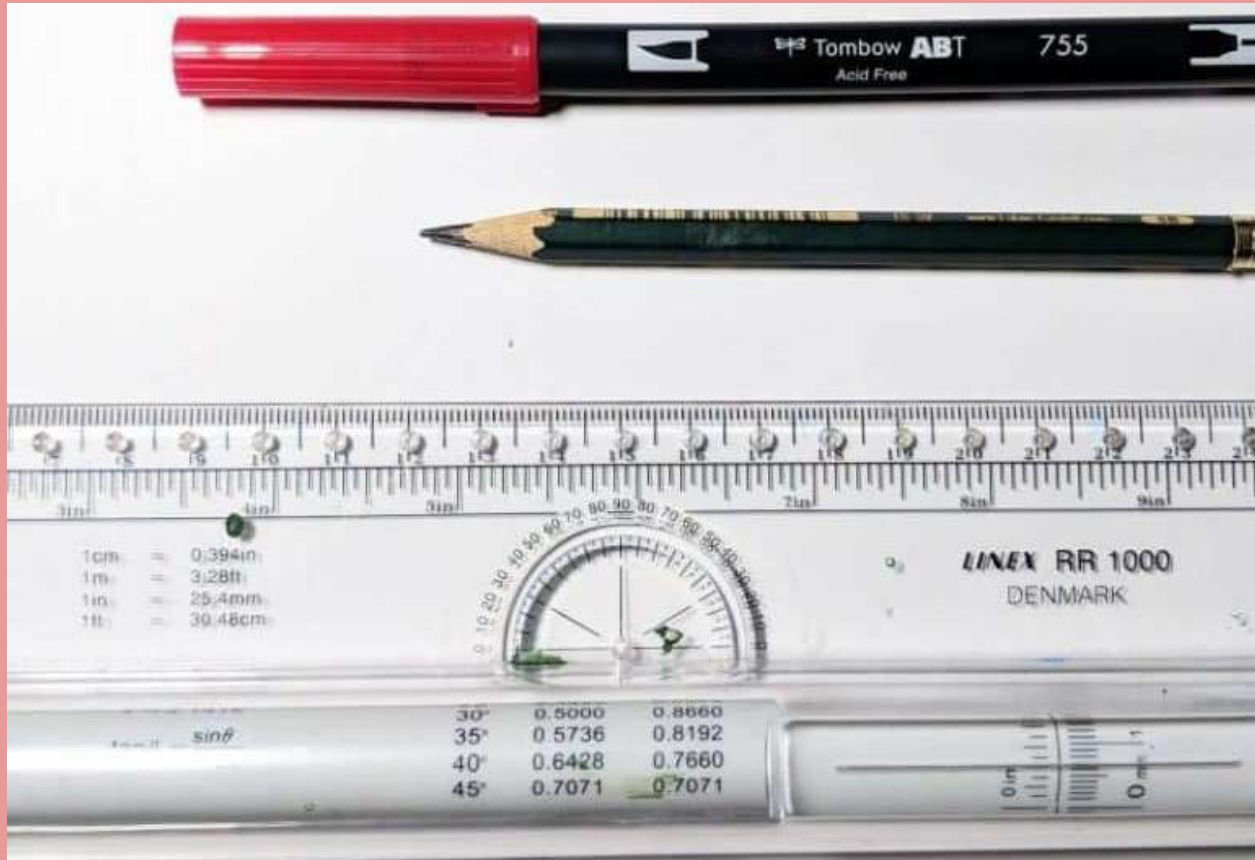
Oval letters

o, c, e

Diagonal letters

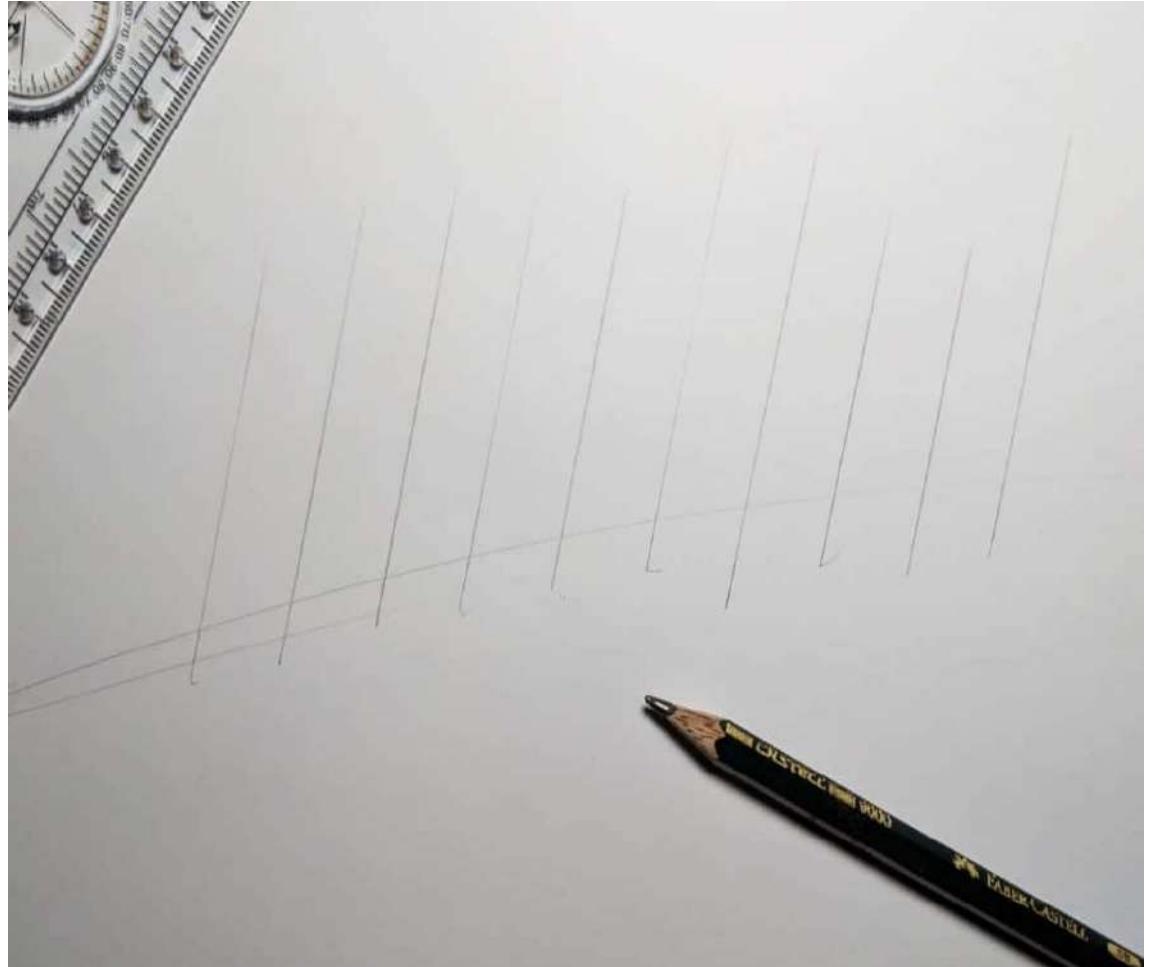


Basic Steps



Step 1:

This style has more of a "flowy" feel to it, therefore instead of drawing a straight grid im just going to keep a hand-drawn underline and with the ruler i'll make some straight angle lines (keeping the slant consistent)





Step 2:

Using your pencil start writing a rough sketch of your letters, only this time extend the ending strokes of the letters.

Step 3:

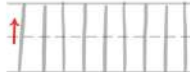
Try to keep a consistent amount of spacing between each letter – it doesn't need to be perfect, just don't make it too obvious!

Once you are done writing with your pencil it's time to grab your brush pen and go over the pencil sketch.



Kelly Sugar Crafts
Art * Lettering * Design
Basic Strokes - Brush Pens
First trace, then try on your own

Upstrokes



Downstrokes



Overturns



Underturns



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How to use Lettering Worksheets in Procreate

Download & Open File

1. First download the Procreate file, you may need to save it to a cloud service such as iCloud Drive or Dropbox.

* If you're using the iPad to click on the download link, and it opens a new window that has an option to open the file in Procreate, choose this option. You can skip the next step.

2. Open the Procreate app. While in the Gallery screen, click on "Import". Search for the Procreate file, it should be imported into the app once you click on the file.



Here are a couple of actionable tips on how to practice more effectively

- **Practice daily!** – i know that many of you have tight schedules and struggle finding time for practice. However, it's much better to practice daily for even 15-20 minutes than twice a week for two hours (consistency over intensity).
- **Warm up drills** – before you jump straight to writing your words, warm up your hand muscles by filling in a sheet of the basic drills for example (included in the freebie). It will take you only a few minutes and it will make a difference!
- **Proper posture and placement of the tools** – you practice calligraphy by sitting at a desk period! I've seen people practicing while sitting on the couch, laying in their beds, etc. If you plan to practice like that, don't expect much progress. Check out these [YouTube videos](#) from Paul, where he explains it further in depth.
- **Use guidelines!** – as mentioned earlier, guidelines will help keeping your letters consistent.
- **Stick to the basics** – avoid multiple words (layouts) and any excessive effects. For the very first weeks focus on the basic strokes and on incorporating them properly to create single words. Focus on keeping your letters consistent – build your foundation first!

Resources:

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About the Author: Clare Tames is a self-employed freelance graphic designer, formidable cook, an avid reader. She has written on contemporary and classical art in various print publications and is just now beginning a writing career online. She works out of her home office in California, where her two children attend high school.

<https://www.artsheaven.com/a-beginners-guide-to-calligraphy-history-lessons-more/>

How to do Modern Calligraphy - 3 Popular Styles

<https://www.lettering-daily.com/modern-calligraphy/>

Video Links:

How To Do Crayola Calligraphy - My Tips, Tricks & Hacks for Beginners

<https://youtu.be/38r7hjYK9vI>

How To: Calligraphy & Hand Lettering for Beginners! Easy Ways to Change Up Your Writing Style!

<https://youtu.be/Jzlx9TMCsVA>

How to Learn Calligraphy for Beginners | Free Template (Basic Strokes Tutorial)

https://youtu.be/1cH_ghjeJvg

Calligraphy with Pencils

<https://youtu.be/OgOIsUwJd5M>

Kelly Sugar Crafts: Art-Lettering-Design

<https://www.kellysugarcrafts.com/brush-lettering-practice-basic-strokes/>