

Use hand lettering techniques to make

Calligraphy

What is Calligraphy?



- Calligraphy has developed as a handwriting art across the globe throughout history. Egyptian hieroglyphics, manuscripts from the Middle Ages and many East Asian writing systems are all examples of calligraphy.
- Calligraphy is similar to hand lettering but usually describes cursive script where each letter flows into the next, while hand lettering allows for each letter to be created uniquely.
- You can make your handwriting beautiful and expressive by learning basic calligraphy and hand-lettering techniques.

What materials do I need?



- You will need a calligraphy pen holder with a selection of nibs and ink OR round brushes and watercolor paint, paper towels and water.
- Smooth, thick paper that is gridded or lined can be helpful to practice the size of your letters. You can make your own lined paper with a pencil and a rolling ruler.
- If you don't have calligraphy pens, brush-tipped calligraphy markers are an easy way to learn the basics of calligraphy.

What are the benefits?



- Calligraphy is an inexpensive, meditative and relaxing way to build fine motor skills and memory retention.
- Expressing yourself through artful handwriting engages critical thinking and confidence building skills that will last a lifetime.
- Calligraphy can be used in decorative projects, calendars and journals that offer expressive and organizational opportunities. Calligraphy can also be used in the creation of unique gifts for others which strengthens relationships.

1

Prepare your Paper

Smooth, thick paper will help your writing tool or brush glide easily and will prevent ink or watercolor paint from bleeding through. A slightly textured calligraphy paper will help “catch” ink and keep it from spreading but rough or heavily textured paper will give more resistance as you make your strokes.

Guidelines and sketching are the way calligraphy is completed and perfected. If your paper has no lines, it may be helpful to create some using a [rolling or regular ruler](#). You can create horizontal lines and diagonal lines to help you to keep your letters at the same height and angle. A rolling ruler will keep your grid lines even. You can make your gridlines in pencil so that they can be erased later.

If you are starting out with grid or lined paper, you are ready to proceed to the next step.

2

Select and Prepare your Writing Tool

Calligraphy Pen: Using a pen is the traditional and most commonly used method of calligraphy. Calligraphy pens are a specific type of fountain pen with wider and flatter nibs that produce greater variation in line thickness.



To ink your pen, dip the point of the calligraphy pen, called the [nib](#), into the ink, so that the hole in the top, the [vent](#), fills. To get the nib to open you should hold the pen in between your thumb and first finger, and the angle of the pen needs to be angled close to the paper, around 45 degrees.

Calligraphy Brush: A long bristled round bamboo brush is the preferred type of calligraphy brush, but any brush with bristles that come to a pointed tip will work for calligraphy.



Dip the brush into ink or dark watercolor paint and pull the bristles against the edge to form a point and remove the excess liquid. This will also help you avoid accidentally splattering the ink or paint onto the paper. Keep paper towels nearby just in case.

Brush-tipped Marker, Regular Marker, Regular Pen, Pencil or Chalk: Solid tipped writing tools like these can be used in [Faux Calligraphy](#), which is a way to re-create the effect of calligraphy by duplicating downstrokes.



These fine/solid-tipped writing devices require no preparation.

3

Begin Practicing Strokes

Practice making **upstroke** lines and **downstroke** lines on your paper. With a calligraphy pen, firm pressure causes the tines (either side of the nib) to open and allow ink to flow. When your brush, pen or brush-tipped marker travels toward your body in a downstroke, press down firmly and the lines will become thicker. On upstrokes, when the brush or pen moves away from your body, apply less pressure and use just the tip of the brush or pen to produce a thin **hairline**. Practice making rows and rows of only downstrokes first. Then switch to upstrokes.



4

Learn your A, B, C's

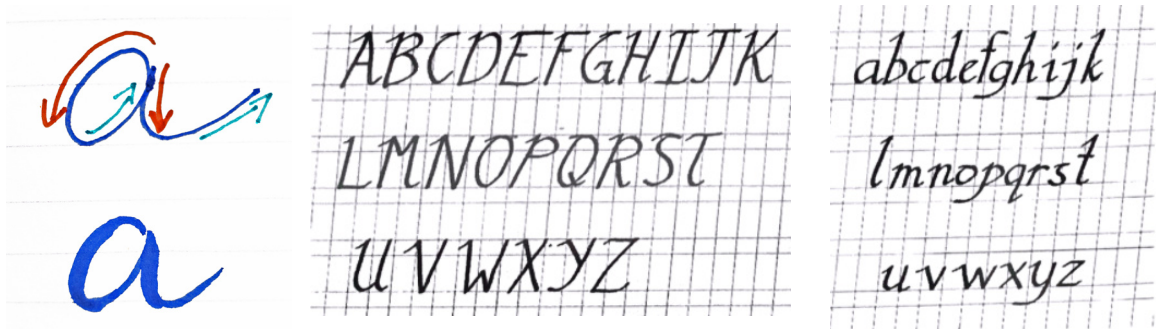
It will take practice to adjust the amount of pressure you apply as you move the pen/brush.

After you've mastered up and downstrokes, start by choosing a single upper-case letter in either cursive or block print. You can adjust the angle of the letter using the grid and draw arrows around the letter as a guide for which will be thin upstrokes and which will be thick downstrokes.

Discover what it takes to build that letter and how the strokes connect. Repeat the same letter until they begin to look uniform. Fill a whole page with that letter. You will eventually be able to write smoothly and without thinking too hard. The key is to concentrate and work with a slow, steady hand.

Next, repeat that process with another uppercase letter. And another, until you have written the whole alphabet in a consistent way. The style is up to you, but try to keep the whole alphabet looking similar. This can be meditative and relaxing as you start to get a feel for the pens and brushes in your hand.

Once your upper-case alphabet is complete, use these same steps to master the lowercase alphabet.

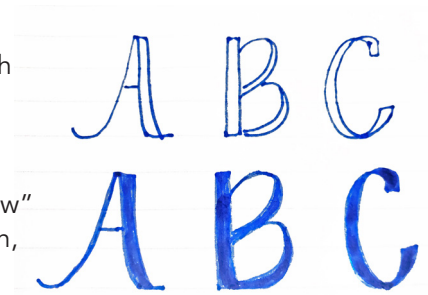


5

Try Faux Calligraphy

If you do not have a brush, calligraphy pen or brush-tipped marker, you can still create letters that imitate the beautiful form of calligraphy with a fine solid tipped writing tool like a pencil, regular marker, regular pen or chalk. It is a great technique if you want to write on surfaces where you cannot use regular calligraphy tools, like wood, glass and chalkboards.

To create faux calligraphy, make your letters as you normally would and then add a duplicate line next to each downstroke. Remember to use directional arrows if you need to. You can practice with a pencil first and go over your letters with a marker after you erase any stray marks. Some people choose to leave their letters with the "hollow" look but you can also fill in the empty space with your pen, pencil, marker or chalk to replicate classic calligraphy.



6

Put it all Together.

Now that you have practiced your alphabet, you can start putting words and phrases together. Many people start by writing their name. With enough repetition, you may be able to graduate beyond grid paper.

Put your new skills to the test by writing a favorite poem or thank-you note on a card and giving it as a gift to a friend or family member. Try addressing the envelope using calligraphy too. Your loved ones will appreciate your hard work.

If you keep a journal, you can practice writing in an artful way, day after day. Or enhance your living space by using your new hand-lettering skills to create a large piece of art with an inspirational message to hang on the wall.

Play around by adding color to your calligraphy. You can start your writing on colored paper. Bold paints and markers can also be used to brighten up your designs.



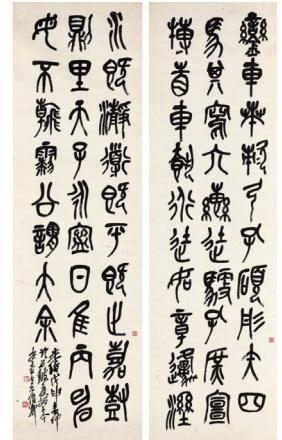


Take it further...

...by studying written language.

Many East Asian written languages are composed of **logograms**, a written character that represents a whole word rather a single letter. In Mandarin this written language is call hanzi. Using calligraphy to artfully draw Mandarin characters is called shufa, "the way of writing". Incredible works of art have been created using this technique. Calligraphic art in many cultures is even more highly prized than paintings and sculptures.

If you enjoy learning about other languages and cultures, language and art history courses could help you develop this interest. As you study the language, you can experiment by using a brush and watercolor paint to recreate East Asian language characters.



Wu Changshuo (1844-1927)
Calligraphy in Stone Drum Script

...by decorating cookies.



www.sweetsugarbelle.com

Use faux calligraphy in cookie decorating to make beautiful and delicious treats. All you need is a great cookie recipe, some royal icing and piping bags. Put a layer of icing on the cookie and let it harden before adding lettering to the cookie with a very small round icing tip. Once you have made your faux letters, fill in the gaps with the icing and share with friends!



www.joanngroff.com

...by painting with calligraphy.

Take inspiration from nature by painting a leaf, tree or fruit using calligraphy brush techniques. Things that you can easily recall from memory make great subjects or you can arrange a still life with items you've collected. Play with line thickness to develop rhythm in the painting.

...by studying typography.



Amarillo font,
Francis John S. Villo, 2016

You may not realize it, but fonts used in typing are created by artists too. Exploring the way letters are formed and spaced to be easily read and reproduced can be helpful as you develop your personal style of calligraphic script. Search for different calligraphy fonts online and notice how different letters are formed, how they are angled, how tall they are and how they are spaced. Try to replicate a few different styles of lettering.



Key Terms

Calligraphy marker: markers that come in a range of tips and colors that allow you to create a variety of narrow and broad strokes, for unique and stunning results.

Calligraphy paper: paper with a slightly textured surface that grabs the ink and prevents smearing and spreading throughout the paper.

Cursive Script: any style of penmanship in which some characters are written joined together in a flowing manner, generally to make writing faster, but can also be used for artful effect.

Downstroke: when the tip of the pen, brush or marker travels downward toward the body where increased pressure is applied and a thicker line is produced.

Faux Calligraphy: a way of drawing letters that imitate the thick and thin strokes of calligraphy using a solid-tipped writing tool.

Gridlines: a sketch outline of the guide you set yourself to follow for your writing, made with a ruler or rolling ruler.

Hand lettering: a style of lettering related to calligraphy where each letter is created uniquely and placed to achieve a desired effect in an overall composition, often seen on signs and chalkboards.

Hairline: the thinnest strokes made with a calligraphy pen, marker or brush.

Ink: there are three types of ink made for calligraphy; fountain pen ink, dip ink, and Japanese/Chinese stick ink. Fountain pen inks are specially for fountain pens, while dip ink and Japanese/Chinese stick ink are used with dip pens.

Logogram: a written character or symbol that represents a word or phrase.

Nib: metal tip that attaches to the pen handle that holds ink.

Pen holder: the calligraphy pen handle.

Rolling ruler: a ruler that contains a cylinder much like a rolling pin inside, allowing it to “roll” along a sheet of paper or other surface where it is being used.

Tines: either side of the nib of a calligraphy pen.

Typography: the style, arrangement, and appearance of the letters, numbers, and symbols to make written language legible, readable and appealing.

Upstroke: when the tip of the pen, brush or marker travels upward on the page away from the body where decreased pressure is applied and a thinner hairline is produced.

Vent: the tip of the nib that fills with ink when dipped.