

Writing media

Gouache and watercolour

You have to dilute the paints with water before writing. Consistency for broad-edged nib should be similar to milk and somewhat denser for the flat brush. As they are pigment-based, they flow slower than fountain pen ink. After it dries out, the gouache is opaque and has a matte finish, while watercolor is transparent. Adding a drop of liquid gum arabic will help with the flow of the paint.

What I use:

- Talens Extra Fine Gouache,
- Winsor & Newton Designers Gouache,
- Schmincke Calligraphy Gouache,
- Ecoline (liquid watercolour)

Ink

There are countless types of ink available, but we can generally divide them into two categories: waterproof and non-waterproof. For the nibs, it's usually better to use the former, as the waterproof inks tend to contain shellac and clog the nib, but if you are careful, you can use both types. If the ink is too thick, you can dilute it with water. If it's too runny, adding a drop of gum arabic might help.

What I use:

- Manuscript Calligraphy,
- Higgins Eternal,
- Pelikan 4001

Ink stick

Both Chinese and Japanese ink sticks are excellent media for calligraphy. You'll also need a grinding stone to prepare the ink for writing.

Tools

Nibs

For starting with Italic, I recommend using larger-sized nibs (3 mm is excellent). As you get more proficient in the style, it's good to practice also on a smaller scale. Even if you don't intend to write longer texts, it's a good way of deepening your understanding of the script. You can also mix different sizes of nibs. For example, use the smaller nib to add details.

Remember to prepare the nibs before attempting to write. To clean the protective coating, you can hold the nib over a flame for a few seconds.

What I use:

- Brause – an excellent all-round nib. Both large and small sizes are great.
- Speedball C – requires a lighter touch; a very flexible nib. I use larger sizes (from c2 to c0)
- Mitchell – for small writing. I don't use a reservoir.

Pilot Parallel Pen

The most beginner-friendly tool there is. Sizes up from 3.8 mm are great for starting to study the script. Smaller sizes are also suitable for practice, but I recommend using the nibs for more meaningful work. It requires cartridges. The ink tends to bleed on some kinds of paper.

Other writing tools

For learning this style, I recommend nibs and Pilot Pen. Still, there is a great variety of tools that you can use for both formal and experimental calligraphy. These can include a flat brush, folded pen, quill, bamboo pen, balsa stick, ruling pen, cola-pen, etc.

Paper

Practice paper

Good quality sketch or layout pads are great for practice. The paper shouldn't be too heavy so that you can see the guidelines through. For all my workshops, you'll need A3 pads. It's best if the paper has a smooth surface but with a bit of texture so the nib doesn't skid on it.

What I use:

- Fabriano Accademia
- Fabriano Schizzi
- Daler Rowney sketch pads
- Canson Layout pad

Quality paper

There's a range of papers that you can use for your more important work. Each one has a different characteristic and gives a different outcome.

You can use quality watercolor papers, printmaking papers, cotton rag paper, or papers for drawing techniques (pastel papers come in many different colors).

What I use:

- BFK Rives
- Arches Velin
- Arches Watercolor (CP, HP, Torchon)
- Saunders Waterford Watercolor
- Hahnemuhle Copperplate
- Canson Moulin du Roy
- Canson Edition
- Bockingford
- Fabriano Rosaspina
- Fabriano Roma

Additional supplies

Pencil

Use the pencil for drawing the guidelines, sketching, and making notes. I recommend 0.3 mm automatic pencils for the thinnest line quality.

Ruler

For drawing the guidelines.

Rags

It's good to keep some rags or napkins if the ink spills. They are also helpful when attaching the nib to the holder.

Old brush

Loading the nib with a brush instead of dipping it right into ink is better.

Kneaded eraser

Obviously, you can use it for erasing the pencil, but it's also helpful when retouching with a razor.

Extra supplies

Gum Arabic

For thickening the medium and making the paint more resilient to wiping off.

Sandarac powder

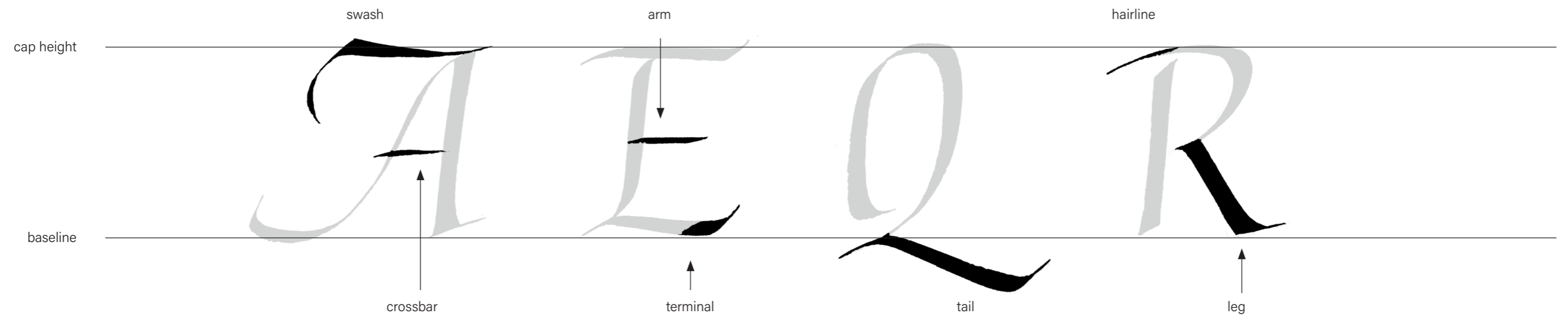
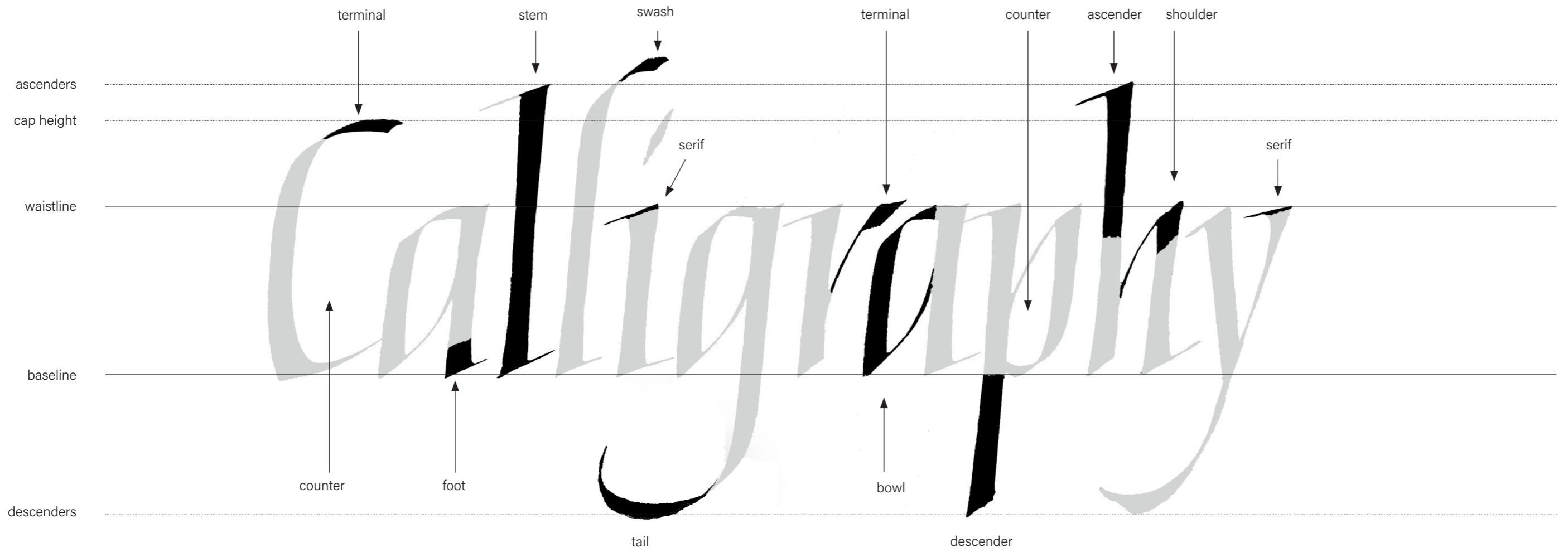
If the paper is bleeding, sprinkling it with sandarac powder should make the strokes sharper. Too much of it will clog the nib.

Razor

You can use a razor (or a scalpel) for retouching small mistakes.

Folding bone

A useful tool for tearing the paper evenly. Also suitable for smoothening the retouched surfaces.





Alignment

How the text is set in relation to the page. Most common options include flushing text to either side, centering, or justifying.



Aperture

Defines the openness of the letters. How much space is between the counter and the outside of the letter.



Arch

The rounded part of the letter connecting two vertical strokes. Arch in letters such as *h*, *n*, and *m* is also called the shoulder.



Arm

A horizontal stroke that is open on one or both ends.



Ascender

A part of the minuscule letter that goes above the x-height.



Axis

An imaginary line defining the angle of stress. It is related to the angle of the nib.



Baseline

An imaginary line upon which the line of the text rests.



Bowl

A rounded closed part of the letters such as *a*, *b*, *p*, *D*, or *B*.



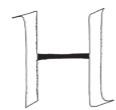
Branching

A part of the letter that branches from the main stem, such as in the letter *n*.



Counter

An enclosed or partially enclosed negative space of a letter.



Crossbar

A horizontal stroke connecting two stems or intersecting a central vertical stroke, such as in the letter *t*.



Cursive

Writing in which the letters are made quickly, which results in joins between them. Usually, but not necessarily, less formal and with everyday use in mind.



Descender

A part of the minuscule letter below the baseline.



Ductus

The order and direction of strokes in the letter. In many cases, we can alternate between different ways of writing letter.



Ear

A minor decorative stroke protruding from the upper-right part of the *g*.



Fillet

A rounded connection between the two strokes – usually a connection between the serif and the primary stroke.



Flourish

Any decorative stroke. It doesn't have to be connected to the letter.



Hairline

The thinnest stroke that a tool makes.



Leading

Pronounced “ledd-ing” – a vertical distance between the lines of text. The term comes from the lead stripes used by early typesetters.



Leg

A short, descending stroke in the lower part of the letters, as in *k* or *R*. Sometimes referred to as a tail, mainly when used with a more decorative approach.



Ligature

Two or more letters joined together to form one character. They are used for better spacing and decorating the text.



Majuscule

Uppercase letters.



Minuscule

Lowercase letters.



Rhythm

In calligraphy, a repetition of forms, shapes, direction, and spacing.



Serif

A minor stroke added at the beginning or at the end of the main strokes.



Stem

The primary, vertical or diagonal stroke of the letter.



Swash

A decorative stroke being a part of the letter. It can be exaggerated serif, stem, tail, etc.



Tail

A descending stroke in *Q*. Also, term to describe the descenders of *g*, *j*, *p*, *q*.



Terminal

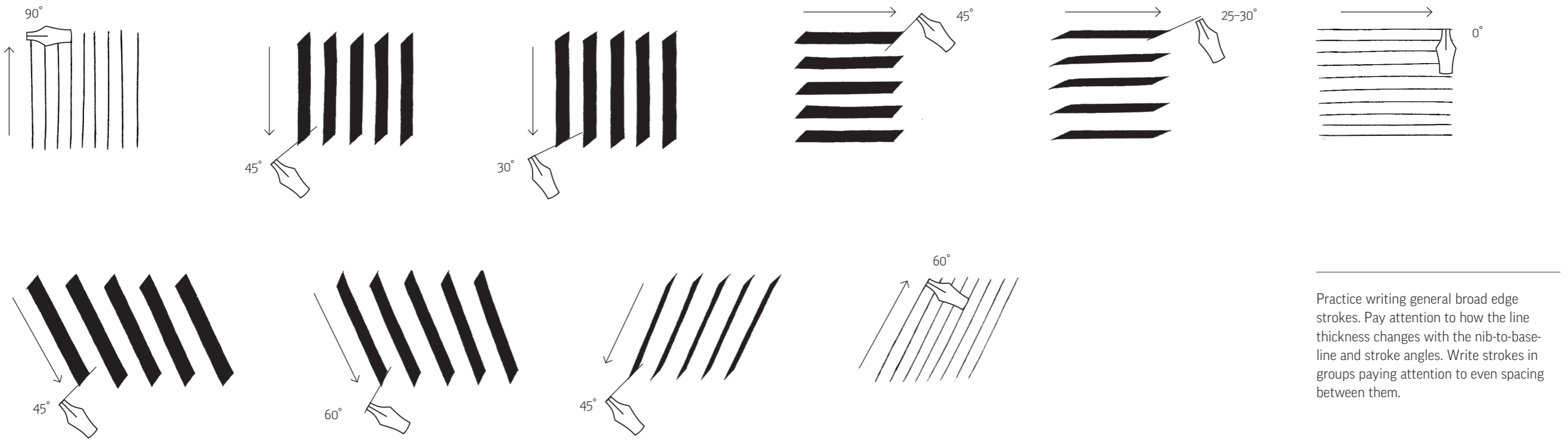
The end of a stroke, which doesn't have a serif. It can be plain or decorative.



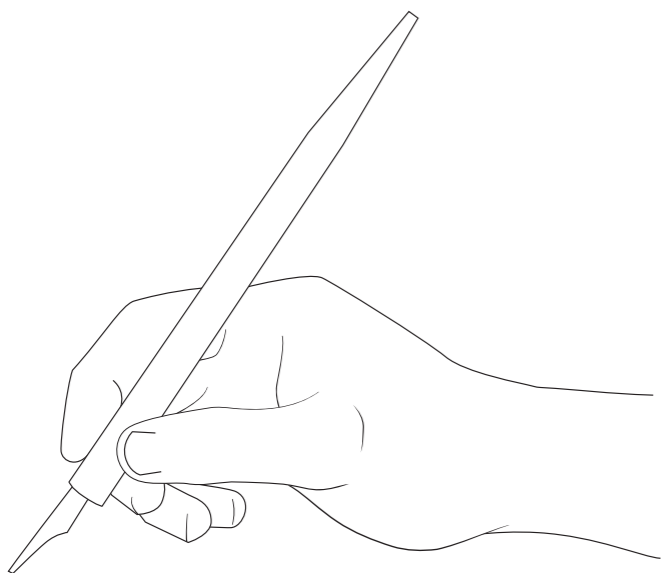
X-height

A distance between the waistline and the baseline of the alphabet.

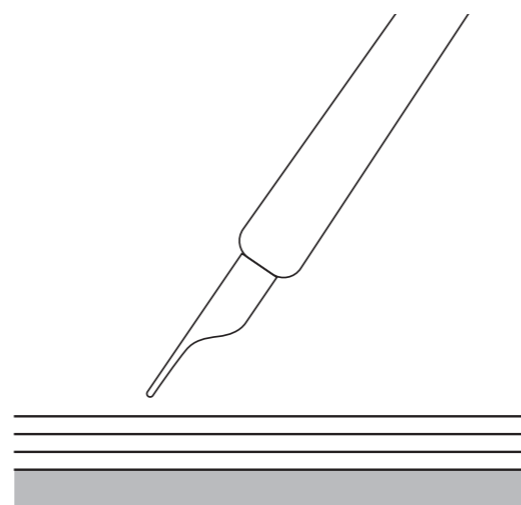
general strokes to practice



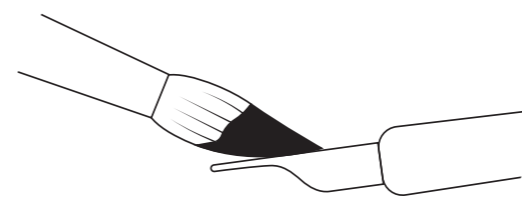
Practice writing general broad edge strokes. Pay attention to how the line thickness changes with the nib-to-base-line and stroke angles. Write strokes in groups paying attention to even spacing between them.



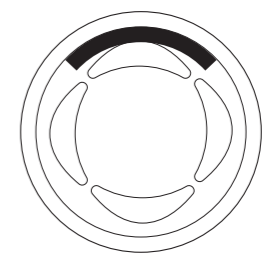
Hold the pen somewhat steeply. Rest your hand mainly on the forearm and the pinky finger. Hold the pen firmly but don't clench your fingers.



Always put a few sheets of paper beneath the one you write on. Doing this will provide padding for the nib and will make writing easier.

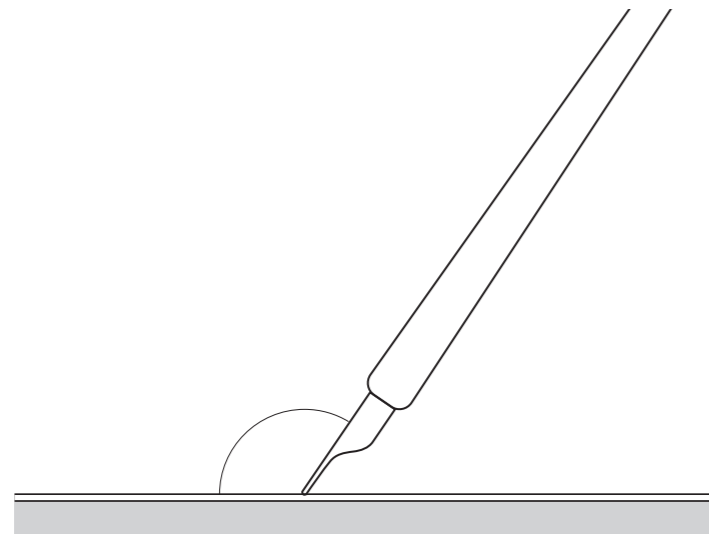


It's better to use a brush than to dip the pen to load the broad nib with ink.

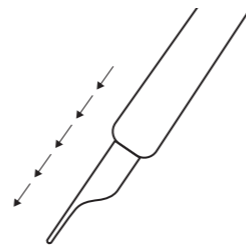


Insert the nib to the flange's outer rim inside the pen holder. Hold the nib through a rag or paper towel while doing it.

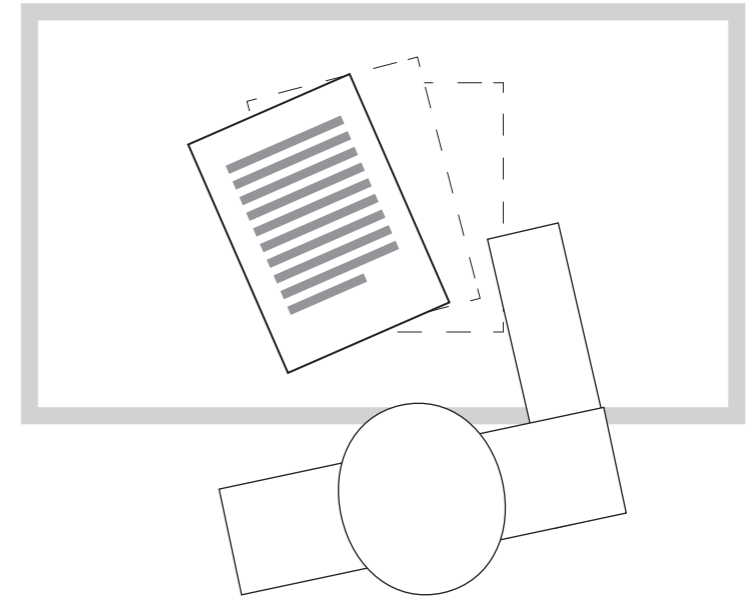
writing on a flat desk



1

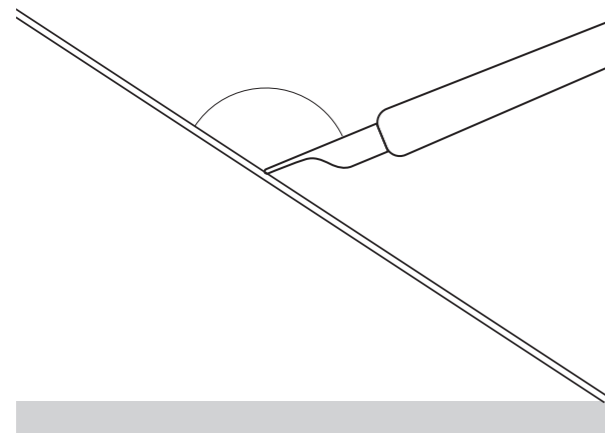


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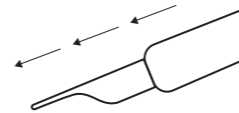


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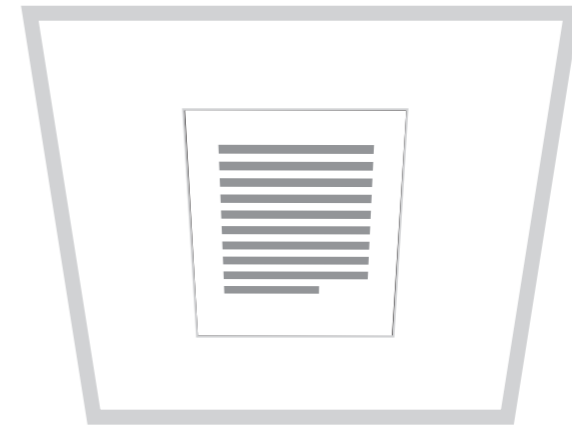
writing on a slanted desk



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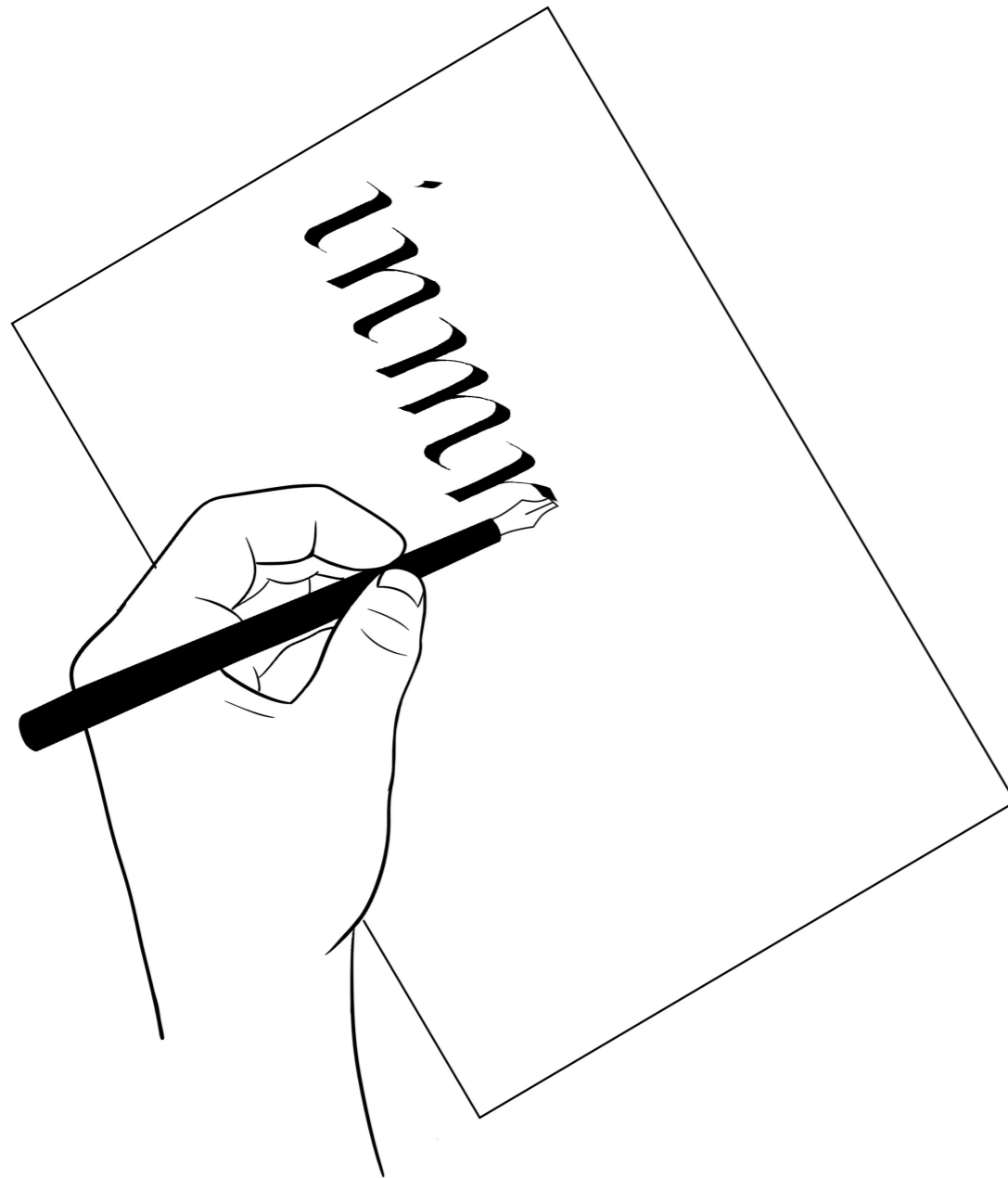


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Flat desk:
The angle of the pen to paper is the same as the angle of the pen to the ground (1). This causes the ink to run faster than with the slanted desk (2). Paper is easy to move and rotate. You can slightly turn your body to rest your forearm on the desk (3).

Slanted desk:
The angle of the pen to paper is steeper than the angle of the pen to the ground (4). This causes the ink to run slower (5). It is a little bit more difficult to move and rotate the paper, but still possible (6). Easier to maintain a good posture.

Both methods of writing are viable. I prefer to use a flat desk when using a large scale of letters. However, I tend to use inclined writing surfaces for smaller type sizes and longer texts.



When writing with your left hand, you may encounter difficulty in positioning your nib at the correct pen angle. There are two pen grips that you can try to help adjust your pen angle.

The first method involves placing your hand beneath the baseline while turning the paper clockwise. You might need to rotate the paper as much as 90 degrees to achieve the correct nib angle. This method takes some getting used to, as you'll be viewing the letters from the side.

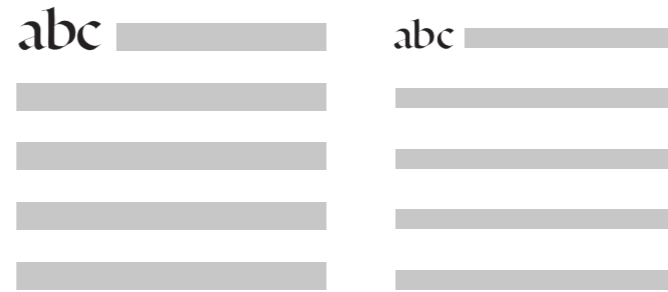
The second method is to hook your hand above the letters and write the strokes from top to bottom, effectively reversing the ductus. The advantage of this approach is that you'll see the letters as you normally would, but it's easier to smear the ink with your hand.

There is no single perfect grip for left-handers, so it's important to experiment with different hand positions and paper angles. Additionally, you can use left-handed nibs with a slanted cut, which makes adjusting to the angle easier.





The more words on the line of text, the more line spacing you need.



Smaller type size requires more generous line spacing than larger one.

*Typography must be as beautiful as a forest
not like the concrete jungle of the tenements.
It gives distance between the trees, the room to
breathe and allow for life.*

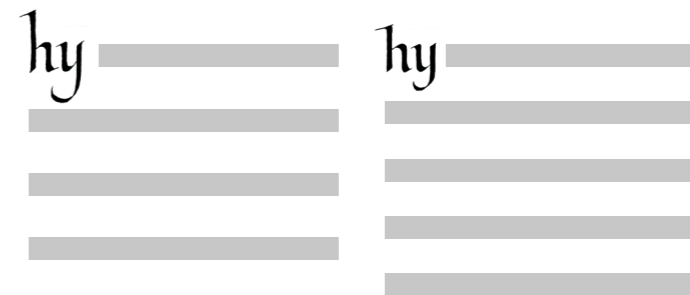
Aim for the line spacing that allows for the even, grey "color" when writing longer texts that have to be legible.



Wider letters require more generous line spacing than narrow ones.

*the,
quick
brown
fox*

Short texts allow for narrower line spacing. 2-4 word phrases allow for almost no spacing between the lines.



Consider ascender and descender length and shape when evaluating the line-height.

Line spacing is the distance between the two lines of text. In typography, it's also called leading, line height, or inter-line space. It has a significant impact on the readability and aesthetics of the text block. Unfortunately, there is not a single rule for a proper line-height.

Above are some general rules that will help you determine the line spacing for your work.