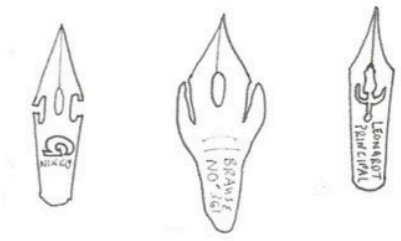


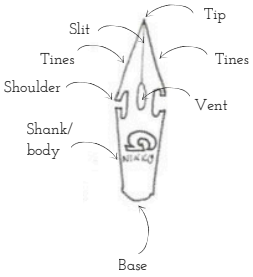
Learn the basics of

Modern Calligraphy

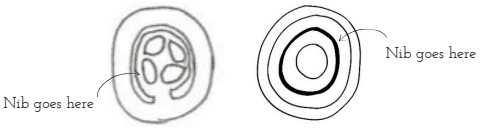
Your Equipment



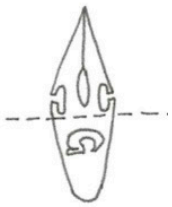
Your nib is a **Zebra G nib** and is great for beginners. Other nibs I recommend are **Nikko G** (great all-rounder), **Brause 361** (excellent for chunky calligraphy)and **Leonardt EF Principal**(good for small, fine projects).



Anatomy of a Nib



This is the top view of a common **pen holder** and is where your nib gets gripped- a **ferrule**, which acts like a clamp, can accommodate many different size nibs. Your pen holder has a simpler **ring groove** holder where you simply slide your nib in. To insert the nib push it into your holder until it is held firmly but can still be removed for cleaning.



This is the line up to which you want your nib to be dipped into your ink- it's called your '**fill line**'.

When your nib arrives, it is covered in **manufacturing oils**. There are several ways to **remove** the oils- toothpaste and brush, isopropyl alcohol, dishwashing soap or a potato (!). We have to remove the oils or the ink won't cling to the nib.

After every use we should **remove the nib** from the pen holder and **clean it** to avoid rust. Store it in a cool, dry place to prolong its life.

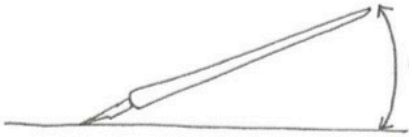
There is a **shelf-life** to nibs as they can get blunt as you use them, the tines can start to come out of alignment and they can rust.

Nibs can also **collect the tiny fibres** from your paper in the slit as you write - you'll notice if this is happening as you'll get smudges instead of lines. To remove the fibres, pull your pinched fingers gently downwards along the slit towards the tip.

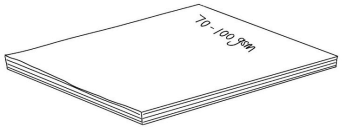
Your Equipment



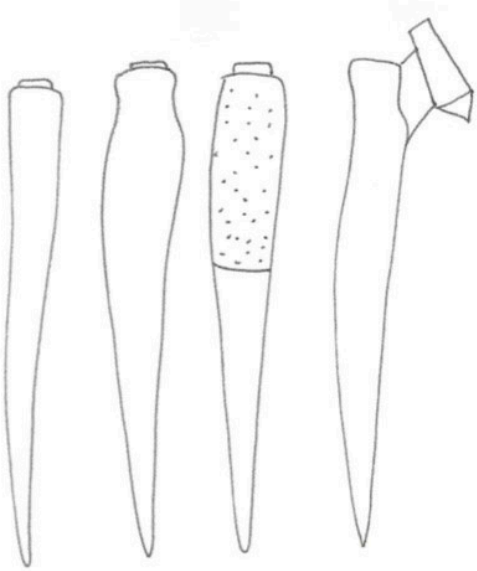
Ink- I recommend black Japanese **Sumi** Ink or **Higgins Eternal** Ink for beginners. For white ink I recommend **Dr. Ph. Martin's Bleedproof White.** For metallics I use palettes and recommend **Finetec**.



Pointed pens work best when held at a **45 degree angle** to the page.



Choose paper of **70-100 gsm** for practisng calligraphy- it has smoother fibres so catches on your nib less easily.



This is your **pen holder**, which holds your nib. They come in all shapes and sizes. L to R- straight, ergonomic, cork-tipped and oblique. As a beginner, a straight pen is easiest to handle.



A **light box** can be a handy addition if you're looking to practise as a beginner. If you have a tablet or phone, download a light box app. It will allow you to **backlight** your work and see examples through your paper so you can **copy.**

Faux Calligraphy- Mastering Up and Down Strokes

The key principle of Modern Calligraphy is that of **up = thin**, **down = thick**. This is because ink will only be released from your nib when you put pressure on it during the downward strokes.

To master this principle, initially we can use **faux calligraphy**.

How do we do it?

Use your pencil to write a word in your normal cursive handwriting, maybe start with your name.

Notice where your pen naturally moves down on the page, in Modern Calligraphy that's your thick stroke.

Draw a second line beside each downstroke and fill that in.

This creates the look of calligraphy without a nib!



Practise here: love ink write

Practise here:

Practise here:

Top tip

Up is always **thin**, **down** is always **thick**.

The Foundational Strokes

There are 8 foundational strokes in Modern Calligraphy. Mastering these makes it easier to start forming letters. Each shape is formed using the principle we touched on earlier- up = thin, down = thick. To achieve the variation, we adjust the pressure on the nib. Lighter pressure gives a thinner line. Start at the dot and follow the arrows.

Upstroke (entry/exit stroke)



Downstroke



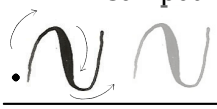
Overturn



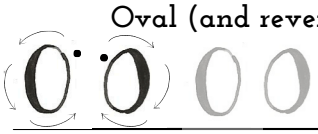
Underturn



Compound Curve



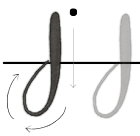
Oval (and reverse oval)



Ascending Loop

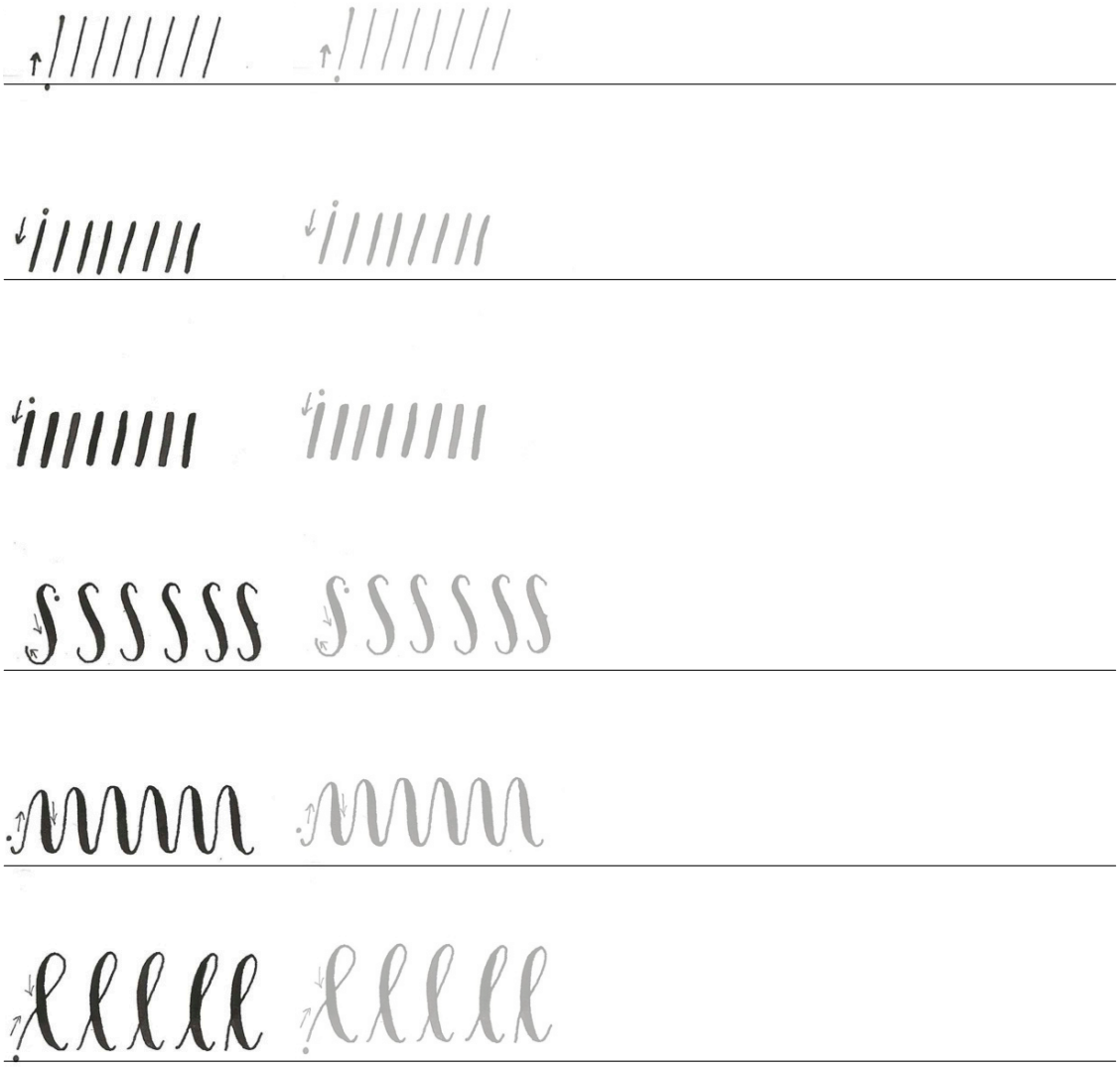


Descending Loop



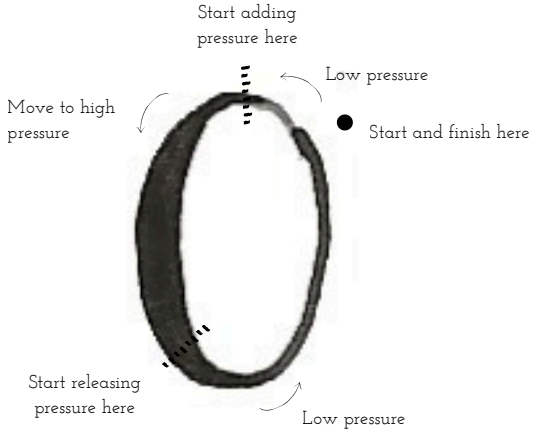
More Shape Practise

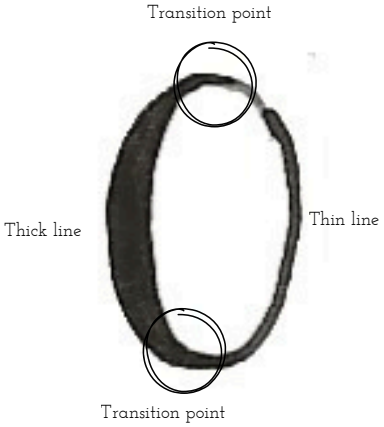
Practising moving your pointed pen in these shapes helps to get you to the point where it's easier to begin forming letters. Focus on staying relaxed, back upright and hand at a 45 degree angle. The key thing is to take is very SLOWLY.



How to ease between parts of the letters

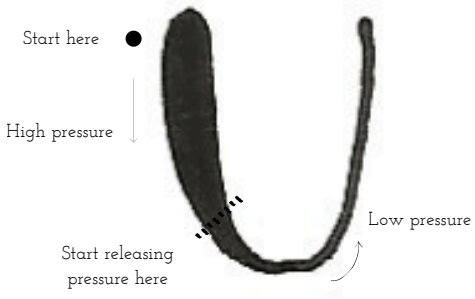
In order to move from thin to thick lines, you need to **adjust the pressure** you put on your **nib**. The more pressure you apply to the nib, the more the tines part and allow the ink to flow, giving you a thick line. When you ease pressure the tines close and you create a thin line. The trick to mastering the **transition** is learning when you need to start easing pressure. It's earlier than you think! You can tell where the transition is because your line tapers.

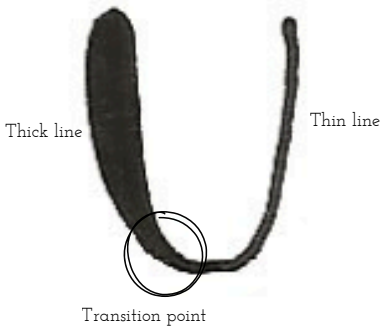




Practise:







Practise:



Entry and Exit strokes

The entry and exit strokes in Modern Calligraphy are what give your words their grace and rhythm.

Entry Stroke

- The thin, upward stroke that begins a letter.
- It's how your pen enters the page.
- Usually made with light pressure (so it's thin).
- Often curves gently upward or diagonally from the baseline.



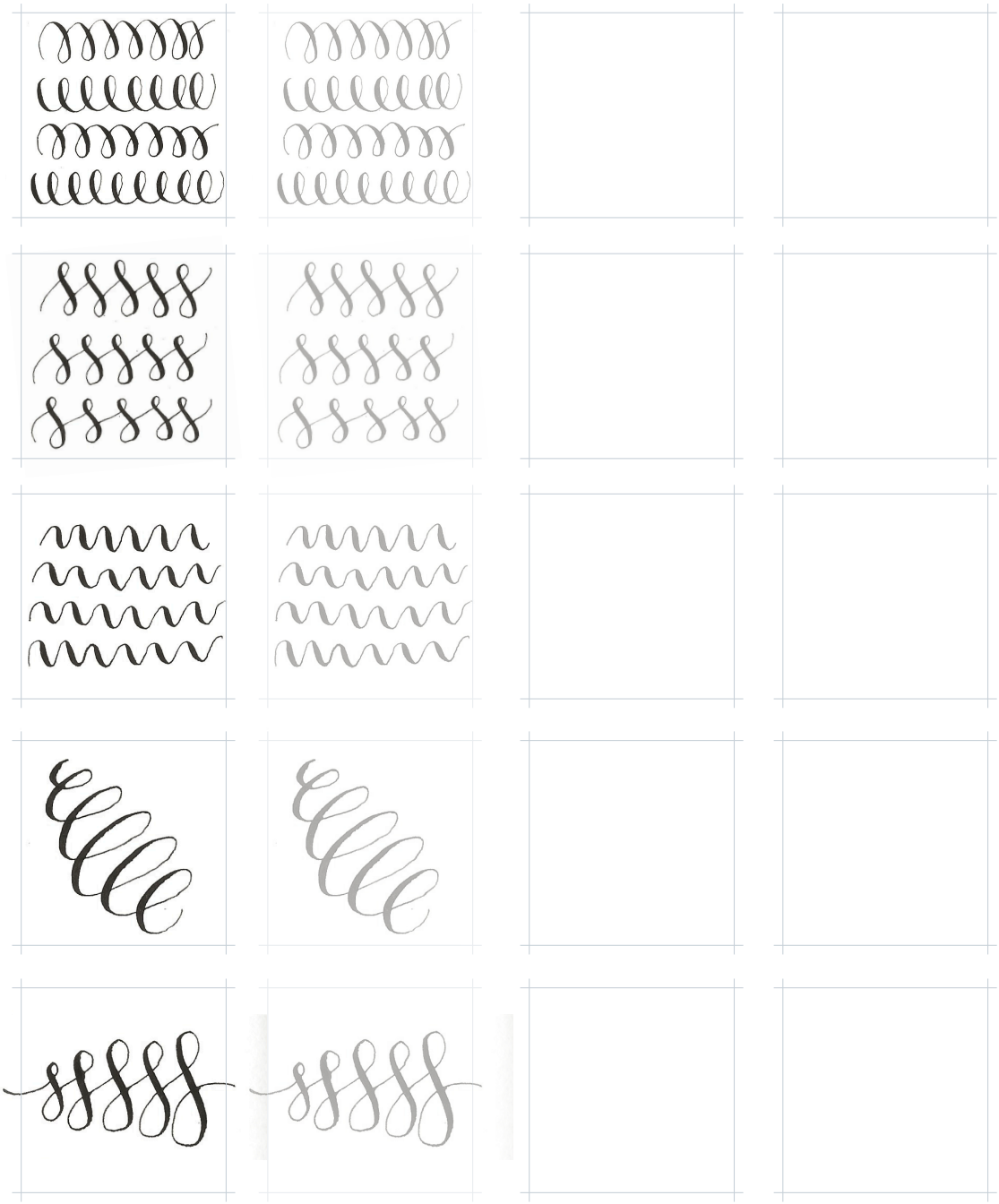
Exit Stroke

- The thin, upward or horizontal stroke that ends a letter.
- It's how your pen leaves the letter and connects to the next one.
- Also made with light pressure, tapering off smoothly.



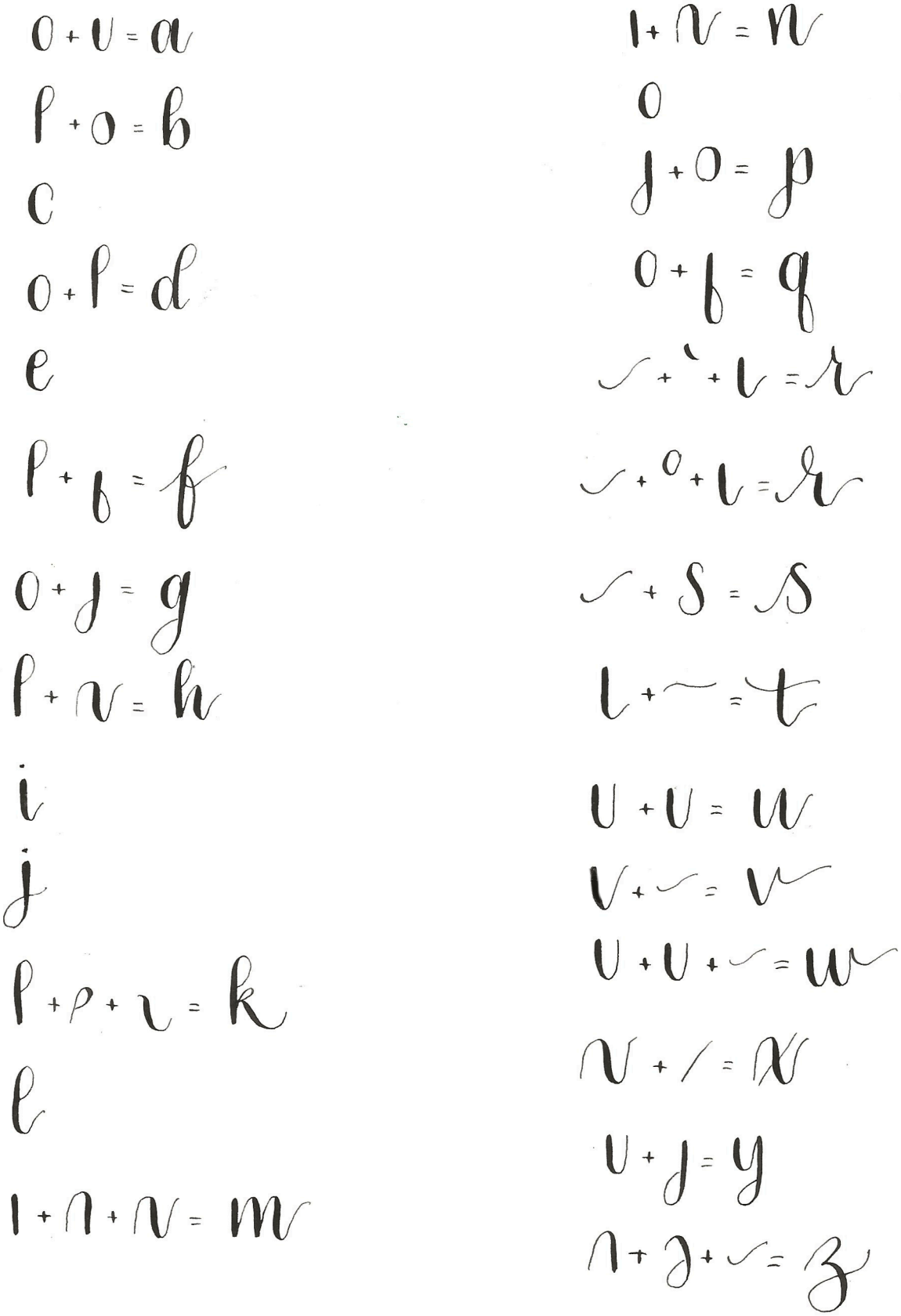
Drills

Drills are a great way to practise your pressure and shapes for Modern Calligraphy. It builds muscle memory for the key curves and bends in the letter shapes and is fun!



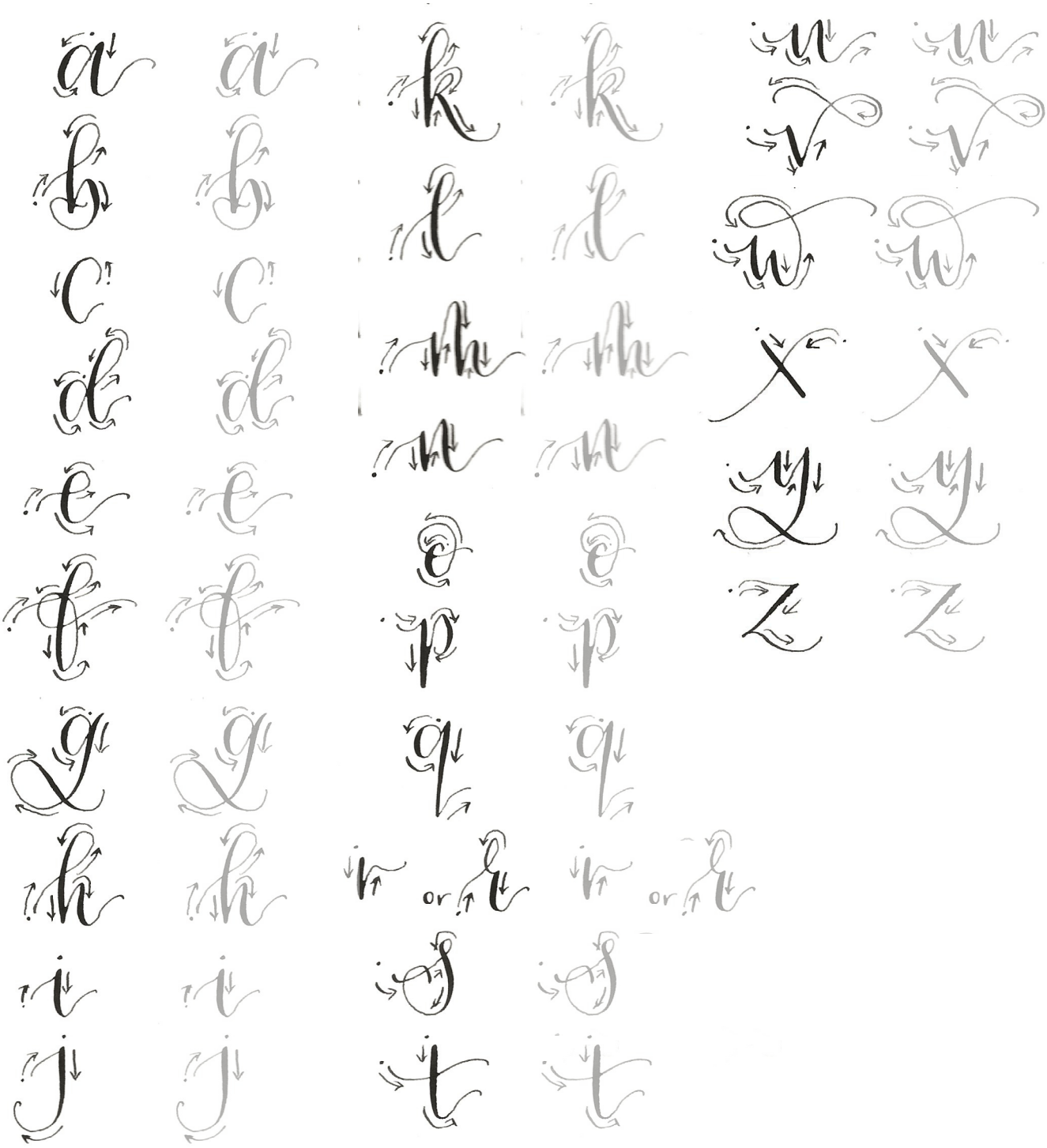
Letters & Ink

Forming Letters



Putting it all together

Once we can form the basic letter shapes, then we can start to develop our own style of Modern Calligraphy alphabet with our own slants, shapes and flourishes. You can see, it starts to get a personality now!



Letters & Ink

More Lower Case Alphabet



Create your own Calligraphy Exemplar: Lower Case

In Modern Calligraphy everyone has their own unique style. To get consistency across projects, it's a good idea to create your own Calligraphy Exemplar sheet which gives you a reference point to come back to- you'd be surprised how easy it is so forget your own style!

Very simply, you write out all the lower case characters in your style.

And the Capitals...

Capital letters always feel like they're where you can develop your personality the most. They can take some flourishing and they are obviously larger in size.

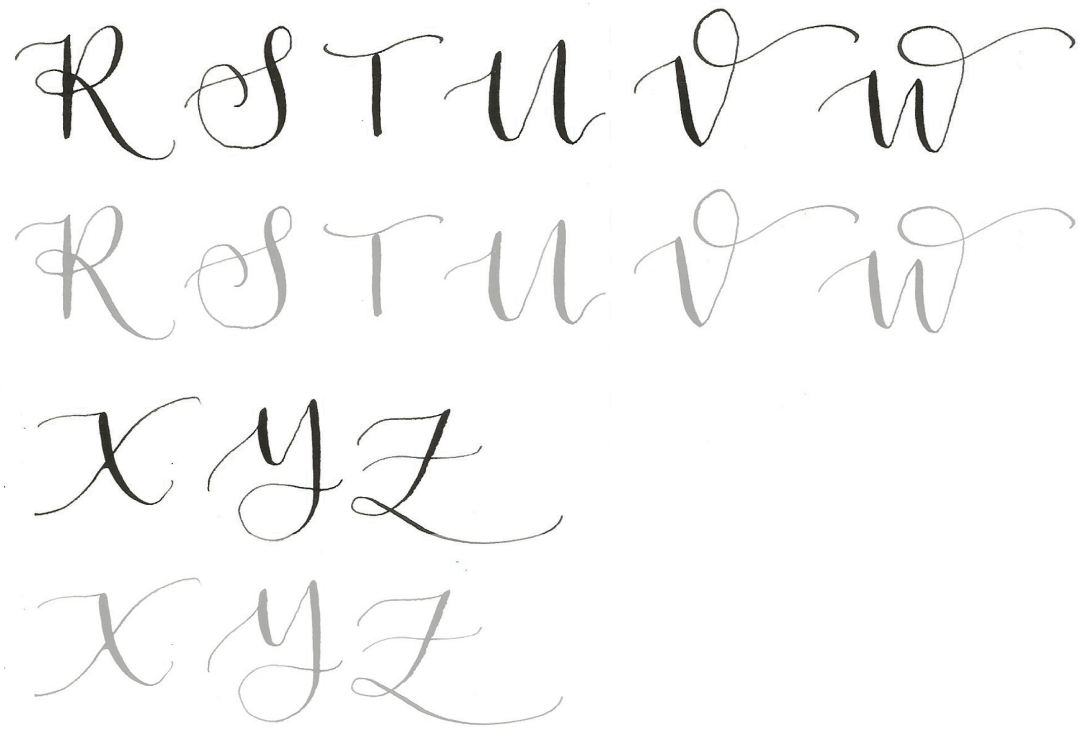


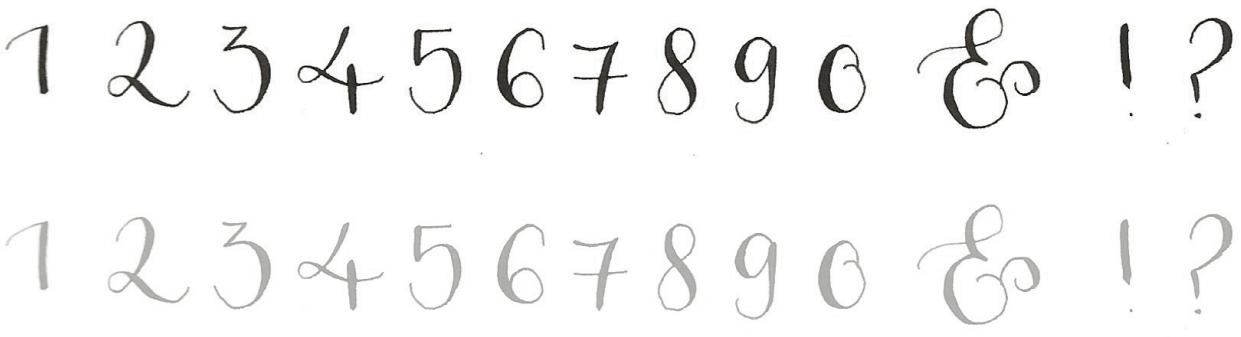




And the Capitals...

Capital letters always feel like they're where you can develop your personality the most. They can take some flourishing and they are obviously larger in size.





Create your own Calligraphy Exemplar: Upper Case

In Modern Calligraphy everyone has their own unique style. To get consistency across projects, it's a good idea to create your own Calligraphy Exemplar sheet which gives you a reference point to come back to- you'd be surprised how easy it is so forget your own style!

Very simply, you write out all the upper case characters in your style.

Joining letters

Once you've perfected letters, you can start to connect them in pairs, which makes things easier when you come on to full words. There are a few different connection types.



Practise words

Once you have all the key letter shapes and joining techniques, you can move on to words. This range of words features a good range of connections and letter combinations so you can try them all out!



Practise words

Once you have all the key letter shapes and joining techniques, you can move on to words. This range of words features a good range of connections and letter combinations so you can try them all out!



Troubleshooting Common Problems

Railroading

When your pen starts '**railroading**' it means you have run out of ink- it creates two 'tracks' instead of a solid line It can look cool sometimes, but we want to avoid this happening in the middle of letters as it's hard to get a consistent look. As you start writing, notice how often your **ink runs out** so you know when you need to **refill** before you 'railroad.' To fix a railroad you can either gently 'drag' the ink already on the paper down into the gaps or refill your pen and lightly fill in the gap.



Blobs

If your ink is **pooling off your nib** into blobs on the page it could be because your nib isn't fully prepped, so start off by **cleaning** your nib. If that doesn't solve the issue, it may be you're using too much pressure- **loosen your grip** and lower the angle you're holding your pen at. The other cause may be that your ink is too thin. You can try leaving the lid off overnight or if you have some Gum Arabic, add a few drops.

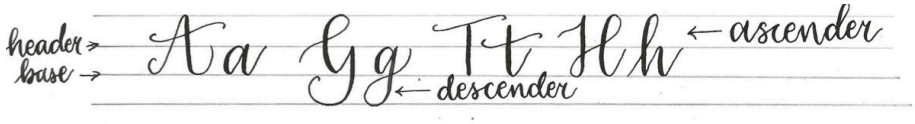


Catching on the paper

Pointed pen nibs are **sharp** and they will **catch** in the fibres of paper. If it's happening often, make sure your paper is smooth enough (70-100gsm) and then ease off on your pressure and lower your pen angle to 45 degrees. If the paper isn't the issue then it could be that your tines have come unaligned slightly and your nib may need replacing.

Some Advanced Techniques

Consistency



Achieving consistency is easier if you use calligraphy paper which shows the guidelines.

Baseline- The main line your letters sit on. Most letters (like a, e, n, o, s) rest here.
Header- The top boundary of the "body" of lowercase letters. This marks the height of letters like x, a, e, n.
The distance between the baseline and this line is called the **x-height.**
Ascender Line- The line above the x-height that marks the top of tall lowercase letters like h, l, k, b, d.
Descender Line- The line below the baseline where letters with tails drop down, like g, j, p, q, y.

Top tip
A good rule is "if **everything** bounces, **nothing** does", so bounce **sparingly**!

Bouncing



Bouncy lettering is a hallmark of Modern Calligraphy. It's what gives it the casual, playful style that makes it feel more fun and lively and less rigid than traditional scripts.

How do we achieve it?

Vary the baseline- so some letters (usually the round ones like a, e, o and s) rise above or drop below the baseline.
Maintain rhythm- Alternate the bounce so it feels balanced. Too much unevenness can look messy.
Watch your spacing- Since letters shift, you may need to adjust spacing to keep the word visually even.
Use guidelines- You can lightly sketch a wavy baseline to plan the bounce.

Some Advanced Techniques

Flourishing

Flourishes are the decorative curves and flows that we add on to our lettering to make it more ornate and pretty. They aren't for any purpose other than design.

The key with flourishes is **moderation**. Too many and the piece will look messy as they'll all merge into one another.

Where can you put them?
Ascenders- the top of h, l, b, k and d can have flourishes above them.
Descenders- you can extend and curve the tails of g, j, y, f, p and q below the baseline.
Beginning or **end** of words- entrance and exit flourishes are a great way to make your writing more ornate. It's great when you're writing out a quote or a longer piece.
As **frames**- sometimes a carefully placed flourish can frame something else in your piece. You can also use flourishes to connect multiple letters.



Top tip
Practise **figure of eights** as a key shape in flourshing.



How to start
Most flourishes follow a **figure of eight curve** so practising those helps develop muscle memory.
Use **pencil** to start with rather than ink as it's easier to get the flow when you're not worried about smudging!
Find **examples** you like and practise them to get the feel for the flow of flourishes you like.
Save shapes you like or when you do something you're proud of so you can repeat it.

Recommended Suppliers

Aside from big chain stores and big online suppliers, I recommend shopping small for your supplies. Here are my go-tos:

Scribblers- for all things calligraphy including ink and nibs, pen holders and brush pens https://scribblers.co.uk

Toms Studio- a beautiful brand with exceptional pens and calligraphy suppliers including the One Dip Wonder https://tomsstudio.com

The Modern Calligraphy Co- lovely range of calligraphy inks and extras https://www.themoderncalligraphyco.com/shop

The Postman's Knock- a beautiful American site with loads of downloads for practise sheets https://thepostmansknock.com/

Cult Pens- great for pens holders and nibs https://cultpens.com

Jackson's- brilliant for art supplies including Finetec palettes. Also, follow their Instagram page as it is BRILLIANT https://www.jacksonsart.com

Letters & Ink

Simple Guidelines

Letters & Ink

Some Inspiration

























Letters & Ink

Some Inspiration

