

Charter Calligraphy Basics

INSPIRATION AND LEARNING:

There are a lot of published books and websites available that can teach a new Calligrapher how to correctly handle a calligraphy pen in order to form the letters of our modern alphabet in various pleasing ways. Once this knowledge is obtained, the key to becoming an accomplished Calligrapher is to "Practice, Practice, Practice".

In the Society for Creative Anachronism, the ultimate goal of the Calligrapher is to learn to comfortably create letter forms that mimic the forms of Medieval Lettering.

There are a couple of published books that delve into the various named Medieval Lettering Styles. For the beginner re-creationist Calligrapher, Marc Drogin's book Medieval Calligraphy – Its history and technique offers graphic instructions on how to form each letter of a number of basic Medieval Styles. Later, extant manuscripts can guide a more experienced Calligrapher in developing a personal ductus for a favorite style or two.

BEST PRACTICES:

In learning penmanship, the most important rule to follow is to make use of guidelines. For beginning Calligraphers, practicing with both horizontal and vertical guidelines help the hand to learn the habits of forming proper calligraphic shapes. Later, when the hand has been well trained, vertical guidelines can be left behind, but horizontal guidelines are always a must for neat and proper work.

Secondly, match the design of your lettering style to your illumination design. For example, do not use the Younger Futhark with a design drawn from an Elizabethan inspiration. Likewise, do not place a beautiful Gothic Quadrata hand with a Jellinge Style Animal design.

Your calligraphy should be in balance with your illumination design. Not too tall, not too short, not too thin, not too heavy, and always when writing, the letters should come into contact with your guidelines. Use your nib width to define proper letter proportion (see the article Using the Correctly Sized Pen Nib). Keep your calligraphy neat, clean and crisp.

Do not break words to completely fill a given space, unless the style you are mimicking does that and you have permission from Their Majesties to copy the technique.

Do not use foreign or pseudo-foreign calligraphy unless it meets with Their Majesties approval and if you do, do not gloss the text unless it also meets with Their Majesties approval.

If your design style calls for it, do make letters that are intended to be filled in with color, but do not fill in large letters yourself, with black. Let the Painters do that. Also, if your design style calls for it, use letters inside of the actual illumination design.

Always remember to leave adequate space for recipient's names and award dates to be filled in by the Royal Scribe. Some names are very long and it is recommended that you leave an entire row of lettering space blank.

Use the charter texts given to you by the Royal Scribe unless you have permission to do otherwise.