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Art

Student Book

Unit 9



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ART I: UNIT NINE CALLIGRAPHY

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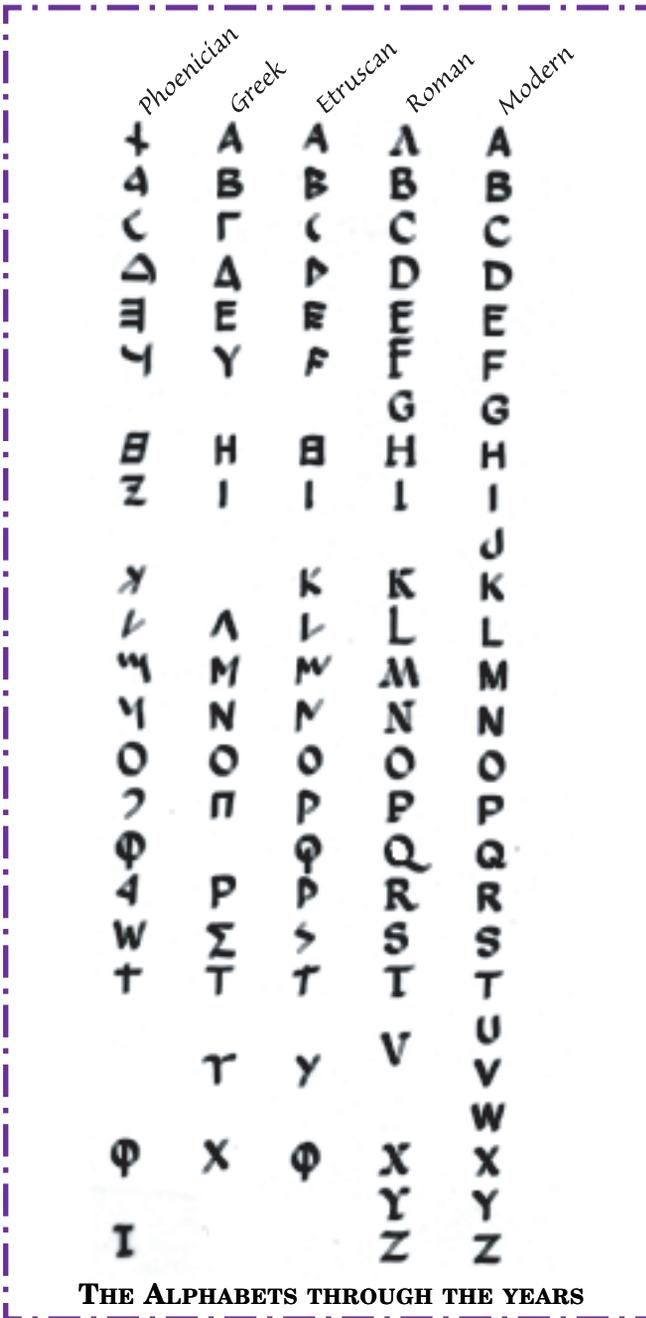
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CALLIGRAPHY

Calligraphy, which means *the art of creating beautiful aesthetic lettering*, has a long and very prestigious history. It is another example of an art form that has significantly altered the history and development of mankind, from ancient writing on stone, to present-day computer typesetting and desktop publishing.



Letters themselves are thought to be the invention of the Egyptians and Phoenicians, who developed a system of symbols that corresponded to sounds and words. These symbols were adopted and improved upon by the Greeks.

Being a very artistic culture, the Greeks not only simplified the system of writing, but made the letters more aesthetic as well. This simplification and beautification was further developed by the Romans into the alphabet we know today. Although many cultures have developed a system of writing, the “Roman alphabet” is the most common in use today.

The story of calligraphy can also be considered the history of the monastic orders. As the Roman legions left Britain and Gaul around A.D. 400, the monastic orders began. It was these orders that are often credited with the preservation of huge amounts of knowledge. One of the primary functions of the monk was to make copies of existing books in order to preserve them. These books were then spread throughout Europe. Imagine, if you can, that at one time every book in the world was written by hand with a quill cut from a feather on paper made from animal hide.

These handwritten books, as much works of art as books of information, were called **manuscripts**, from the Latin word *manus*, which means *hand* and *script*, which means *writing*.

From this type of script, the vocabulary of writing has come to us. Many of the words we use each day have their beginnings in the monastic orders and their manuscripts.

Script, in fact, refers to a particular kind of writing, which was common to a particular area at a particular time. The word **cursive** referred to a style of writing done for speed, where the quill was lifted from the paper as little as possible. This left many of the letters, and often times, entire words connected. **Formata** on the other hand, refers to a style of writing wherein looks became more important than speed. If the look of the text was of paramount importance, perhaps even more important than legibility, the style used was called **textura**.

Our modern capital and lower case letters have their origins in the art of calligraphy as well. A

style of writing that has letters of equal heights, with a minimum of ascending and descending lines was called **majuscule** (our capital or uppercase). If the letters are smaller, and the ascending and descending lines are longer and more pronounced, the text is called **miniscule** (our lowercase). The terms upper and lower case actually come from the Guttenburg press. Printers would keep majuscule letters in an upper drawer and the miniscule letters in a bottom drawer.

During the middle ages, monks would laboriously copy each manuscript by hand. The artistry in the handwritten pieces elevated the scriptures to an art form.

With the development of the Guttenburg movable printing press, the need for handwritten books declined. The art form became, as it is today, saved for the most formal occasions and used to decorate papers of great importance.



Read these objectives. The objectives tell you what you should be able to do when you have successfully completed this Unit.

When you have finished this Unit, you will have:

1. An appreciation for how writing and letterforms have developed and changed over the years.
2. An appreciation for the role aesthetics and design have in language and grammar, as well as in the development of writing.
3. Developed the perception that art and beauty are all around us, and present in every aspect of our lives.
4. Developed small motor skills, and hand-eye coordination.
5. Widened your understanding of job and career opportunities.

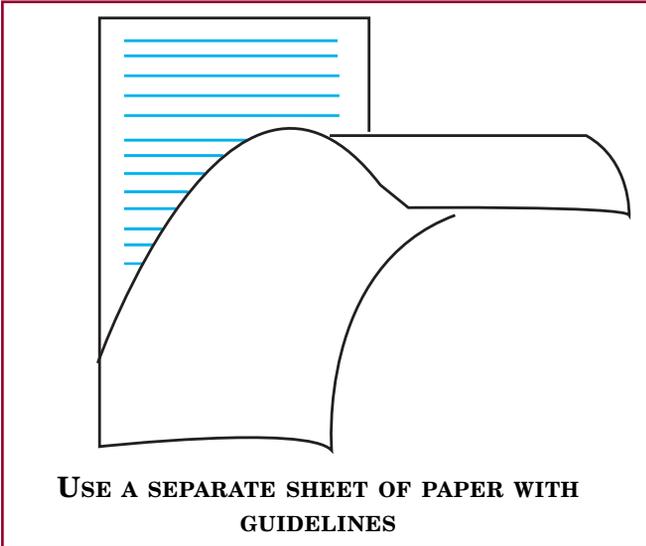


In the space provided below, write what you think you will learn from this Unit, what you would like to learn, and why you are interested in this topic.

I. PRACTICE

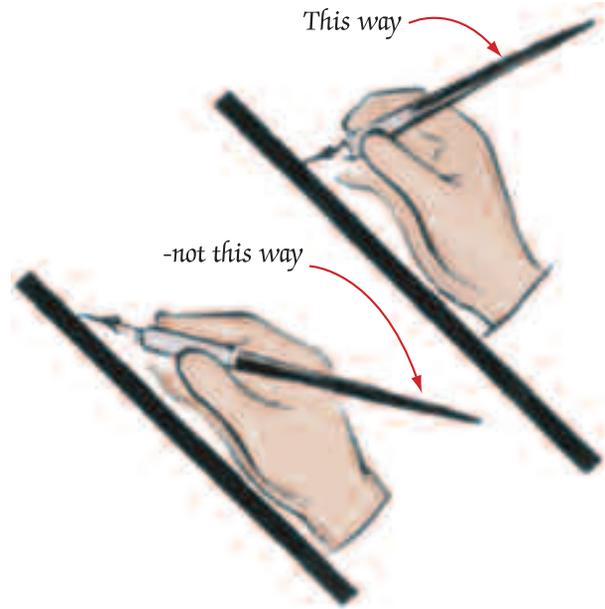
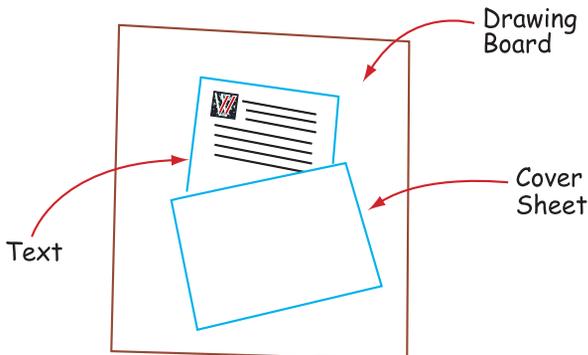
A certain amount of practice is needed to become comfortable with the pen. Creating, or re-creating a classic calligraphic text is quite different from the type of lettering and writing people are used to. Some of the techniques are almost the reverse of what you have been taught for most of your life.

First, make sure your pen and ink are ready. Take a sheet of paper, put the guidelines in place, and tape this to a drawing board. This



will give you a firm drawing surface, which you can tilt at an angle in your lap. You can do this by resting the board against your hips, and resting it against a table or desk surface. By moving your seat closer to or further from the table, you can change the angle/tilt of the board. You will want to sit upright and keep your posture straight. A cover sheet placed over the page will keep you from smearing your guidelines or getting the paper dirty.

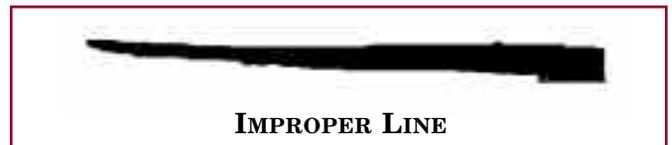
If your pen is new and has never been used before, you will want to wet a tissue and wipe



down the tip. It will have been treated with a coating to keep it from being damaged, and this will have to be removed.

Place the pen on the paper at a fairly steep angle (and experiment as you practice with the angle of the pen). Notice the diagram.

To create a line, the entire front edge must come into contact with the paper. It is easy to rock the pen up on one corner or the other as you write. This will result in a line, which is smooth on one side and ragged on the other.

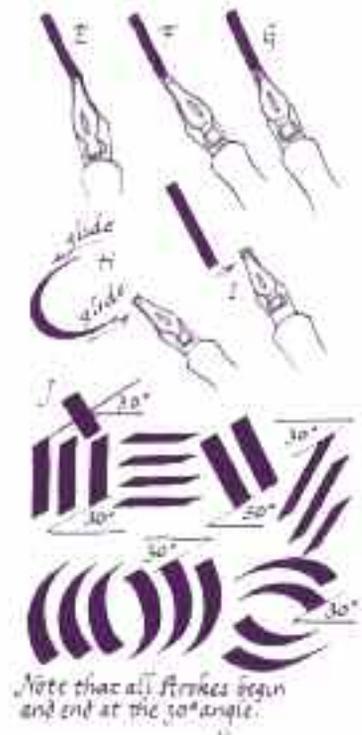


Breathing properly will help you make a good pen stroke. Breathe in when you place the pen on the paper, hold your breath for each stroke, and exhale when you lift the pen off the paper at the end of the stroke. Be sure to stop the pen from moving at the end of each stroke. You do not want to begin running strokes together as in cursive handwriting.

The pen will work best when it is pushed or dragged towards you, not pushed away. Whenever you get to a point where you need to push the pen, it is probably a sign that it is time to stop and start another stroke.

You will want to keep the pen tip at a 30° angle to the bottom edge of the paper. When you write in calligraphy, you will be moving your whole hand, not just your fingers. This keeps the pen in a stable position, and will make cleaner, neater letters. Try the following practice strokes. Fill an entire page with each. This will seem boring and tedious, but it will create the habit of making good pen strokes. Concentrate on each stroke, especially when you begin to become bored with making the same mark repeatedly. You will find that the alphabet styles you will be using will be made up of the same pen strokes. When you have a good grasp of making pen strokes without leaving drips, smears, or ragged edges, and when your pen strokes begin and end in clean and neat marks, you are ready to begin practicing some letters.

Practice writing your script. Attempt to draw the letters freehand if you can. You will notice that each letter (and each alphabet) has a series of arrows and numbers around it. This is the order of pen strokes you will use. The line with the 1 on it is your first pen stroke, and the arrow shows you where to begin, where to end and what shape or direction to mark in.



PEN ANGLES FOR CALLIGRAPHY

On the pages that follow are several types of alphabets, giving you an aesthetic choice. Base that choice on the following questions: Which one will best fit your overall design and concept? Which one has a form that you find interesting and intriguing?



UPPERCASE ROMAN ALPHABET

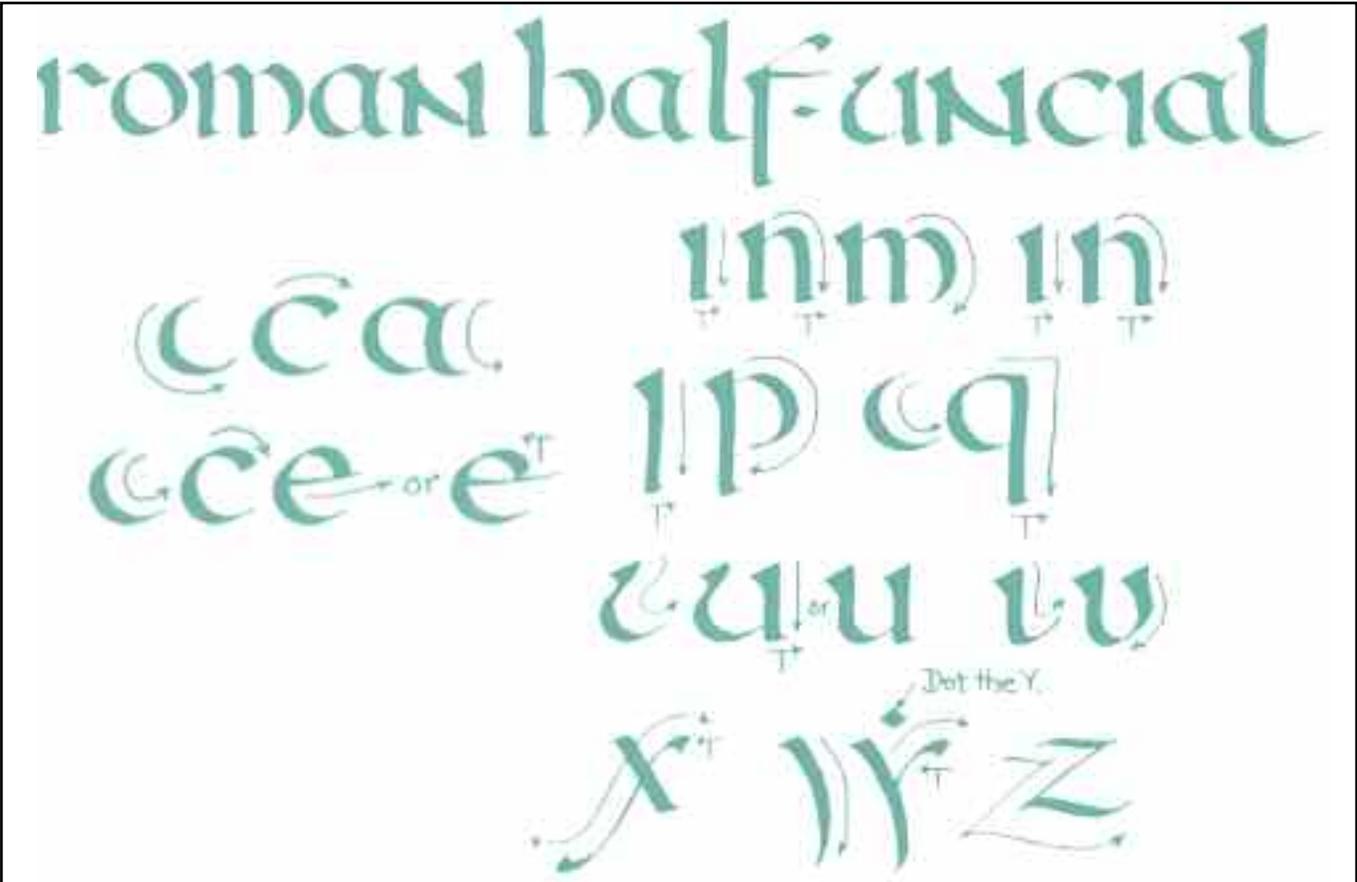


LOWERCASE ROMAN ALPHABET

ROMAN ALPHABET

The Roman alphabet was an extremely beautiful script, but very time-consuming to produce. Scribes were always being pressured to produce more work than was possible. The Uncial script was developed to fill the need for a script that

was simple, could be written quickly, and took up less space. The form of the script made it the first real minuscule script of the day, and eventually evolved into the cursive script we use today.



AN OVERVIEW OF THE ROMAN HALF UNCIAL

UNCIAL

The Uncial is a similar script that was developed because the pen and hand create circles more easily than angles. The letters of the Uncial and half-Uncial scripts, being based on

circular forms and smaller size, allowed for more speed without decreased legibility. These scripts incorporate some of the curves found in the Greek alphabet.



THE UNCIAL ALPHABET AND THE PENSTROKES

CELTIC UNCIAL

Celtic Uncial is a variant that has its origins in the British Isles, specifically Ireland and Scotland, hence the name. The script was found in one of the most famous and beautiful books to come to us from the “Dark Ages,” the *Book of Kells*. The shape is similar to that of standard Uncial, but the proportions of the letters are far more graceful. The proportions are the result of a unique pen being turned as the letter was formed. As you take a close look at the examples,

you will notice that the letters seem to be narrower on the upper parts of the stalks, and wider as they descend. This is because of the serif.

The Celtic scribes would place the pen at the standard angle, use a twisting pull stroke to create the serif in one motion, and then drag the pen down to form the stalk, slowly twisting back to the standard 30° angle. This created the fattening of the letterform.



CELTIC UNCIAL ALPHABET