

THE INKCRAFT GUIDE

to Modern Calligraphy & Lettering

A beginner-friendly starter book: strokes, tools, practice sheets,
and a clear path from your first line to your first finished piece.

INKCRAFT LETTERING

1. Lettering vs. Calligraphy

The two words get used interchangeably, but they describe different crafts. **Calligraphy** is the art of writing letterforms with a tool that naturally varies its line weight — a brush pen, a dip pen, or a pressure-sensitive digital brush. Every letter is written once, in a single flowing motion. **Lettering** is the art of drawing letters. Nothing is written in one pass: you sketch, build up the shape, and refine it, the same way you would draw any other illustration.

This guide focuses mainly on calligraphy fundamentals — because once your hand understands how a stroke behaves, drawn lettering becomes far easier too. Everything here works equally well with a real brush pen on paper or a pressure-sensitive stylus in an app like Procreate.

Why start with calligraphy fundamentals?

- It trains your hand to control pressure, which is the foundation of every lettering style.
- It gives you a rhythm and a consistent slant you can reuse in any project.
- It's fast to practice in short daily sessions — ten focused minutes is enough.

2. Tools You'll Need

On paper

A brush pen with a flexible tip (small or medium size) is the easiest way to start. Look for one described as "soft tip" or "brush tip." Smooth, slightly coated paper (often labelled "marker paper" or "bleedproof") keeps the tip from fraying and gives you cleaner edges than regular printer paper.

Digitally

Any pressure-sensitive stylus and drawing app will work. In Procreate specifically, a round brush with pressure mapped to opacity *and* size gives you the closest feel to a real brush pen. The custom brush pack that comes with this guide is built exactly for that: import it, pick a size, and the pressure response is already tuned for lettering.

Either way, the goal is the same tool behaviour: light pressure produces a thin line, firm pressure produces a thick line.

3. The Core Principle: Pressure = Weight

Almost every calligraphy letterform is built from a small handful of repeated strokes. Master the pressure changes below and you already know how to construct most of the alphabet.



Thin upstroke: light pressure, moving away from your body / upward. Used for connecting strokes and entry lines.

Thick downstroke: firm, even pressure, moving toward your body / downward. This is what gives calligraphy its signature contrast.

Pressure swell: a smooth increase and release of pressure inside a single curve — used in bowls, loops, and connecting curves.

Practice each one in isolation before combining them. Speed is not the goal here; a slow, controlled, slightly wobbly line is completely normal at first and evens out with repetition.

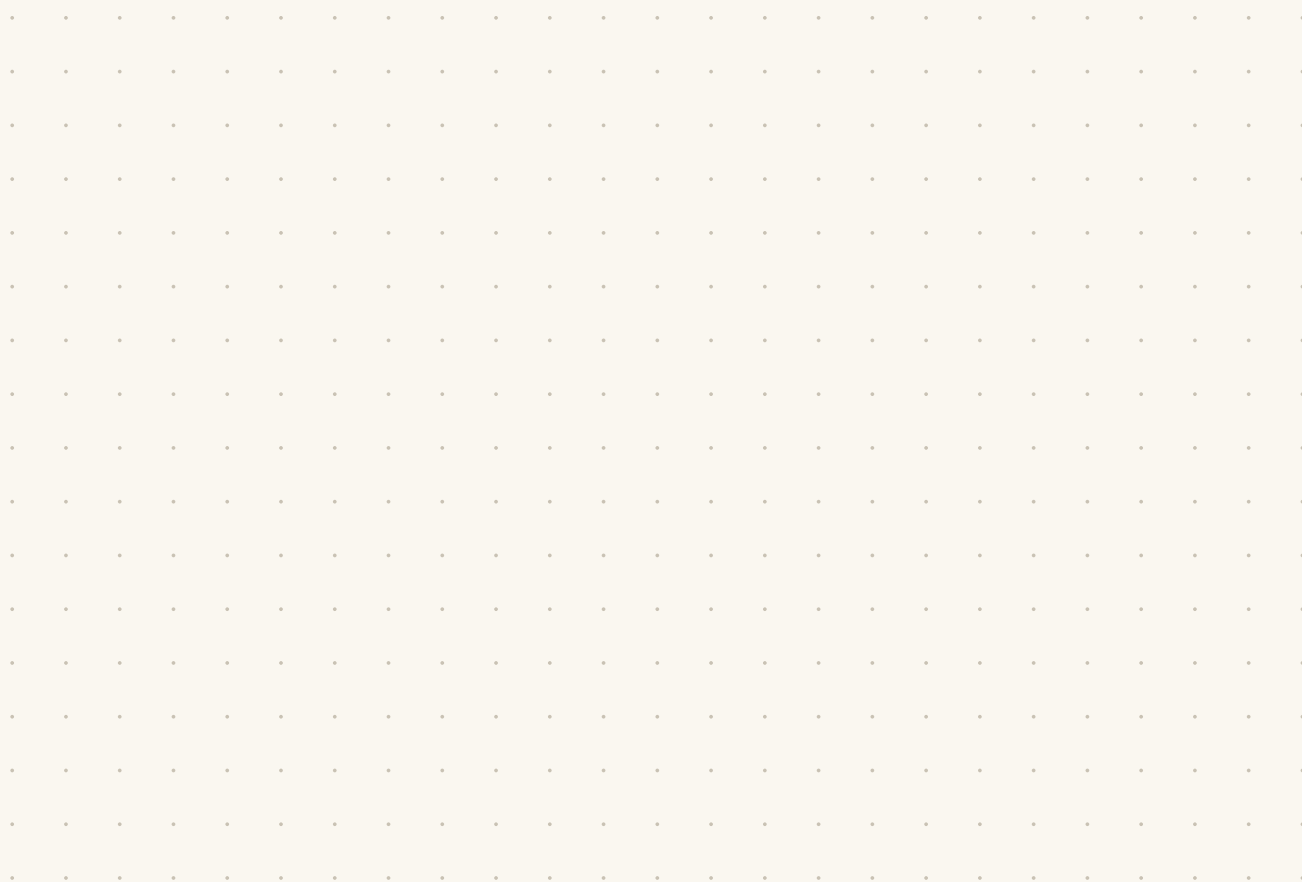
4. Practice Sheet — Basic Drills

Trace the pattern in your head first, then fill each row. Keep a consistent slant using the diagonal guides. Repeat this page as many times as you like — that repetition is where the muscle memory actually forms.



5. Practice Sheet — Freeform Warm-Up

Use the dot grid to test spacing between letters and words at a consistent rhythm, without the pressure of straight guide lines. Great for five-minute daily warm-ups.



6. Composition & Spacing

Give letters room to breathe

Beginners consistently space letters too tightly. Aim for the visual gap between letters to look roughly equal, not the literal distance — a curved letter next to a straight one needs a slightly different gap to **look** even.

Establish a baseline and stick to it

Even in loose, expressive lettering, an invisible baseline keeps a word from drifting up or down as you write it. Sketch it lightly first if you need to.

Vary scale on purpose, not by accident

In lettering compositions (as opposed to plain calligraphy lines), intentionally making one word larger than the rest creates hierarchy and guides the eye. Uneven sizing only reads as a mistake when it looks accidental.

7. Common Mistakes & Quick Fixes

Mistake	Likely cause	Quick fix
Inconsistent slant	Wrist twisting mid-stroke	Angle the paper instead of your wrist
Shaky thick strokes	Too much speed, not enough pressure	Slow down; practice the downstroke alone first
Letters look cramped	Spacing by letter, not by visual gap	Squint at the word; even the gaps by eye
Line breaks / skips	Pen lifted mid-stroke or too little ink	Keep continuous contact; refill more often

8. Where to Go From Here

Once the basic strokes feel steady, string them into full lowercase letters, then words, then short phrases. Practice in short, frequent sessions rather than long, rare ones — ten focused minutes a day builds muscle memory faster than one long session a week.

If you're practicing digitally, pair this guide with the free InkCraft brush & stamp pack: a set of pressure-tuned brushes and ink-texture stamps built specifically for lettering work.

Thank you for downloading this guide.

InkCraft Lettering — free resources for people learning to letter.