
calligraphy workshop

SECTION ONE

SHOPPING LIST

PEN HOLDERS | [oblique for right handers](#) ([good](#) | [better](#)), [straight for left handers](#)

NIBS | [nikko g](#)

INKS | sumi ink ([yasutomo](#) or [moon palace](#)), [ziller white](#), [ph martin copperplate gold](#)

PAPER | cotton card stock, [rhodia notebook](#), [translucent practice paper](#)

TEMPLATE | bianca mascorro's free [practice grid](#)

MISCELLANEOUS: [lettermate](#), [8B pencils](#), [kneaded erasers](#)

CALLIGRAPHY BASICS

Work at a table that is clear of debris.

Your pen needs to be held at about a 45 degree angle for the ink to flow.

Press down on down strokes.

Do not press at all on upstrokes.

The pressure you apply to the nib is what allows the ink to flow out.

Always clean your nibs with a gentle cleanser (soap) after you use them.

Nibs have a somewhat short life.

SECTION HOMEWORK CHECKLIST

- ☐ master the l shape
- ☐ master the wave
- ☐ master the “pointed wave”
- ☐ master o and reverse o
- ☐ master capital stem

MEET YOUR MENTOR

I am so excited for you to be learning calligraphy with me! My name is Chloe MacKintosh, and I am the voice behind Boxwood Avenue. Boxwood Avenue is a blog dedicated to 'the creative'. I share recipes, DIY projects, and products I love. I had always wanted to learn calligraphy, in fact, I tried to pick it up (without success) in about 2012.

After I got engaged, I knew I wanted to include calligraphy in our paper; however, I was stingy and didn't want to pay for something I could do myself. So, I forced myself to sit down and practice. At first, it was horrible! However, I successfully addressed our save-the-dates, and through the process, became much more comfortable with calligraphy.



I began using the skill in everyday things (such as sending letters, or making printables), and fell in love with the art. I don't consider myself a calligraphist (I believe that title - similar to 'photographer' or 'chef' is reserved for those who have spent years of their lives dedicated to the field), but I do consider myself a hobbyist.

I may not have the answers to all of your questions, and I may not teach the way a true calligraphist would, but I will do my best to help you learn this beautiful skill, and share what worked for me while I was learning.

As we go through this course, I hope we will all get to know each other! Feel free to reach out to me via e-mail, twitter, or Instagram. Speaking of Instagram, I hope that you will post any of your work on Instagram and tag #BAcalligraphy.

SO YOU WANNA LEARN CALLIGRAPHY?

First, order your supplies. If you can't decide what type of oblique pen to buy, (hi right handers!), I suggest you read [this](#) blog post, and watch the video at the end. While you're waiting for your supplies to arrive, you might enjoy watching a few basic videos: [here](#), [here](#), or [here](#)!

Dip pen calligraphy is achieved by dipping a pen with a metal nib attached into ink, the shape of the nib allows a precise amount of ink to flow out creating a mixture of thick and thin lines. A thick line is achieved by applying pressure on down strokes, and a thin line is achieved by applying very little pressure to the pen on upstrokes.

HOW DOES A DIP PEN WORK?

A dip pen...must be dipped! Some artists like to use a dropper to apply ink, which allows for more control over flow, and can be useful for water color work, but during our time together, we will be dipping. The nib is attached into the base of the pen or flange, and then dipped into the inkwell. The shape of the nib allows for some ink to be stored. As you write, the ink will flow out of the nib. When you see your nib's 'breathe hole' is empty, it's a signal that you need to re-dip.

LET'S TALK ABOUT NIBS

For any seamstresses out there, a nib is much like a sewing needle. It needs to be replaced regularly. If you begin to notice your nib is snagging, releasing more ink than it should on down strokes, or you can visibly see it bent out of shape; it's time to replace it!

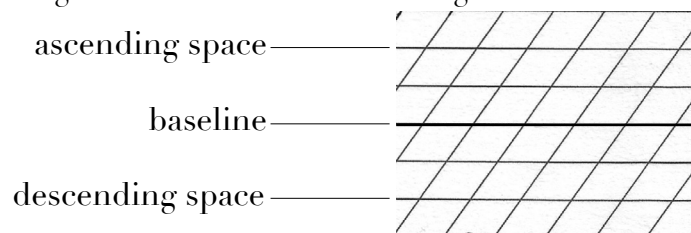
There are many different types of nibs, and each allows for slightly different writing styles. I like using the Nikko G because it's forgiving to heavy handed calligraphy. As you become more comfortable with calligraphy, you might like to try different nibs! I love the hunt for too.

When you look at the nib you've bought, you'll see a breathe hole (ink reserve), and two lines that come together to form the tip of the nib. The nib must be inserted into the pen holder if you're a lefty (or like to use a straight pen), or inserted into the flange (the metal thing coming off of your pen) if you're a righty. However, right handed people can also use a straight pen. I am left handed, so I use a straight pen. If you're a righty, choose what works for you!



HOW TO USE A PRACTICE GRID:

Start with using a practice grid. I love using Bianca Mascorro's, because she has included examples of how high & low the letters should go.



SECTION ONE: PART 1

This is the moment you've been waiting for! When your supplies came in the mail, you couldn't have been more excited! So let's get started!

First, print out 10-20 practice grids from Bianca Mascorro's website onto high quality cotton paper. Insert the Nikko G nib into your handy dandy new pen holder. Open up one of your little glass jars, and fill it up halfway with your Sumi Black ink.

Dip your pen into the ink filled glass jar, **far enough to cover the breathe hole, but not so far that the end of the pen holder reaches the ink.** The breathe hole allows your nib to hold a small amount of ink, as you write, the ink flows out through the tines. When I dip my pen into the the ink, I do a slight jolt, and usually a drop of ink drops back into the dip pot, so that my nib isn't holding too much ink.

To get the ink flowing, gently press the pen onto your paper, and make small lines as such:



Once your ink is flowing, practice making the most basic shape in calligraphy, the l, fill out at least one practice grid:



How did that go? Did you find that you had to dip your pen a lot? That's okay! I dip my pen probably 2 times per word. This may not be what the pros do, but we're just hobbyists here, and I'm sharing what works for me. You might find you only need to dip once a word, but don't worry if you're dipping frequently - it's totally normal.

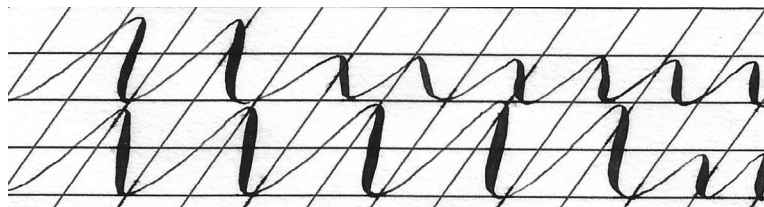
Another problem I ran into, when I started calligraphy, is that my pen kept snagging on my paper. This was super frustrating! If this is happening, make sure you are holding your pen at a 45 degree angle, and that you aren't pressing down on the pen on your upstrokes. Also **try rotating your paper so that it's not perfectly straight.** Since I am left handed, I turn my paper an entire 90 degrees and write sideways! Find whatever works for you!

As you practice, you will begin to develop muscle memory of these movements, so don't feel bad if you're not quite getting it yet. Remember, calligraphy takes practice.

SECTION ONE: PART 2

Let's make waves! Mastering the wave is a great way to help your hand learn how much pressure you need to be using (either more or less), in order to form those beautiful lines. Whenever I warm my hand up for writing, I always do a few waves. Fill out at least one practice grid. As you go, try practicing some l's too!

Start at the bottom left hand corner, lightly press your pen to the paper and move your pen up towards the top right hand corner, then curve downwards, pressing as you go down. Ideally each wave should take up exactly four little squares on the practice grid, but as you can see below, that's harder than it looks! Don't try to be perfect with this, simply use it as a tool to gauge pressure!



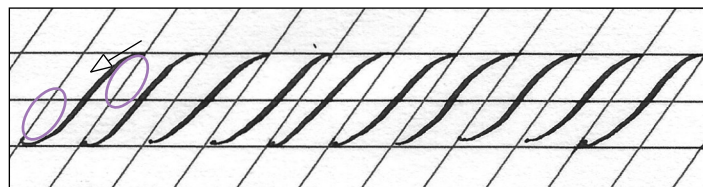
SECTION ONE: PART 3

Okay, so you're a pro at the wave, and you've got the l down. Time to start learning the capital stem. This is vital for capital letters. For any of you math lovers out there, the capital stem is similar to an inverse symbol: \int

The key to this shape is that you start at the top right hand side of a grid, and move your pen down towards the left hand corner of the grid, forming an ovular inverse shape.

Bianca has a great [tutorial](#) on this. You can try printing out her worksheet, slipping it under a page of your translucent practice paper and tracing it with pencil, or just try on your practice grid.

Start at the **upper right hand corner**, and while pressing down, move your pen towards the bottom left corner:



Fill out at least one practice grid.

SECTION ONE: PART 4

You've conquered the l, wave, and capital stem, and now it's time to move on to the o shape. This shape is in a lot of letters, so mastering it now, will serve you well down the road. My uncle in-law, is a master calligraphist, and he always warms up his hand by practicing o's. He says, once he can successfully trace an o multiple times over with exact precision, he is ready to write. We don't need to get that technical, but you get the importance!

regular o: Move your pen counter clockwise, pressing down, and slightly lifting on the up.



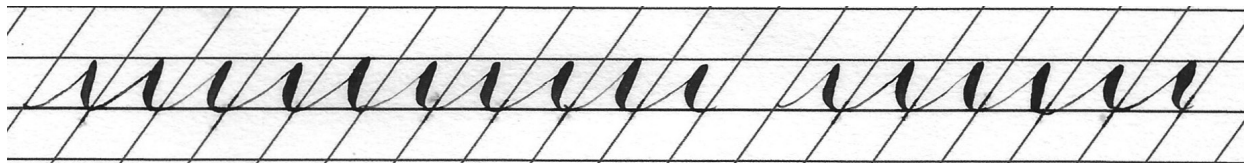
reverse o: Simply move your pen counter clockwise instead of clockwise.
(You can tell this isn't my strong suit!)



SECTION ONE: PART 5

Let's spend today putting all of our skills together. Try connecting your l's and o's. Try making waves, with l's and o's in it. Fill out a few practice grids with these shapes! Be sure to tag your work on instagram with #Bacalligraphy, or tweet any questions you might have! We are all in this together!

So you made it through the week! Or, if you're like me, you knocked this out all in a day. Before moving on, I really suggest spending a few days on these shapes. So, if you went through this whole "week's worth" of information in a day. Let your hand rest for a day, and then come back to it. You want to develop muscle memory before moving onto any letters! Here's a bonus movement for some extra credit:



In the next section, we will be learning our lowercase letters, and how to connect them!

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SECTION TWO

WHO TO FOLLOW ON INSTAGRAM

@INKY_BIANCA
@LHCALLIGRAPHY
@LETTERLOVESTUDIO
@WRITTENWORDCALLIGRAPHY
@HOPESCOTTCALLIGRAPHY

BE SURE TO TAG A SNAP OF YOUR HARD WORK! #BAcalligraphy

SECTION HOMEWORK CHECKLIST

- ☐ master lowercase ascenders (b, d, f, h, k, l, t)
- ☐ master lowercase descenders (g, j, p, q, y, z)
- ☐ master 'other' letters (a, c, e, i, m, n, o, r, s, u, v, w, x)
- ☐ master connecting ascenders
- ☐ master connecting descenders
- ☐ master connecting ascenders with descenders
- ☐ master connecting all letters with word practice

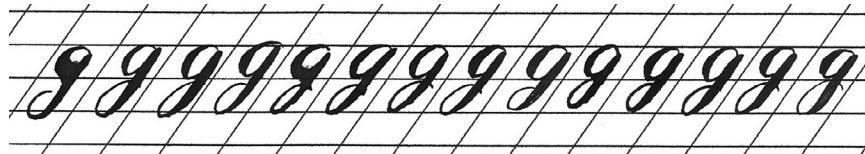
SECTION TWO: PART 1

Let's start this second section off with a bang! How did the last section go? Remember, you can always ask me questions, simply shoot me an e-mail chloe@boxwoodavenue.com, or send me a direct message on instagram!

We are going to start this section off with descending letters. The letters go down toward the bottom of your paper. I think it's best to start with these letters, because you're less likely to snag your pen! Start by practicing g's. Fill out an entire page full of g's. Then repeat for the letters j, p, q, y and z!

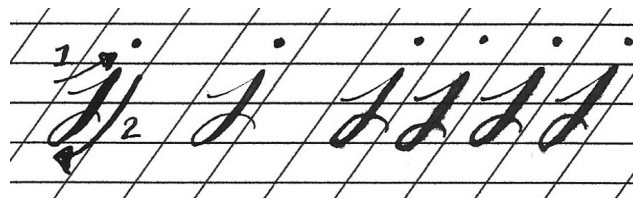
(Some don't consider z a descender, but I do!)

lowercase g:

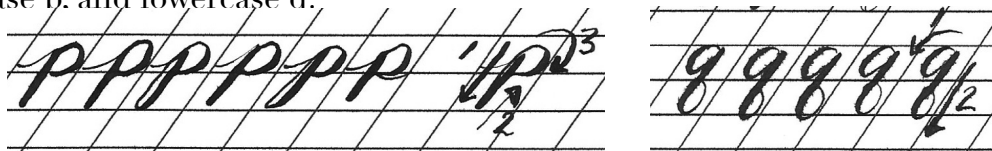


Can you see where I had too much pressure?! That's why this is called practice! You can also see that the paper I was using for j, p, and q wasn't very high quality, and it had a lot of bleeding. I switched to a different paper for y, and z. Can you tell the difference? It's so important to practice with the right supplies!

lowercase j:



lowercase p, and lowercase q:



lowercase y (i and j merged together), and lowercase z:



SECTION TWO: PART 2

After you've tackled your descenders, let's try some ascenders. Remember the key to getting those hairpin lines when ascending, is to not press your pen down at all as your pen moves up! Start by filling out an entire page full of b's. Then repeat for d, f, h, k, l, and t.

lowercase b:



lowercase d (with and without tail):



lowercase f (can be little or big):



lowercase h (my favorite letter):



lowercase k (not my favorite!), and lowercase l:



lowercase t (looped and unlooped):



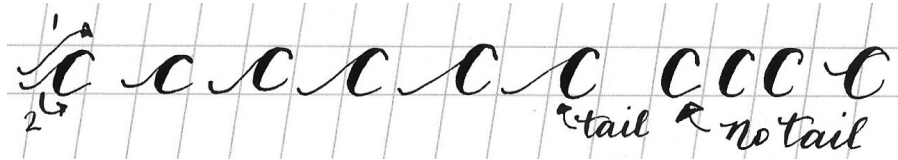
SECTION TWO: PART 3

When I learned calligraphy, I don't remember anyone ever talking about those "other letters". I think I searched online, to figure out how to write them, but I think it's appropriate to dedicate an entire day to these guys. These other letters include: a, c, e, i, m, n, o, r, s, u, v, w, and x. These letters are important, and are very fun to write. R's were one of the hardest letters for me to learn, but after a lot of practice - they are now one of my favorites!

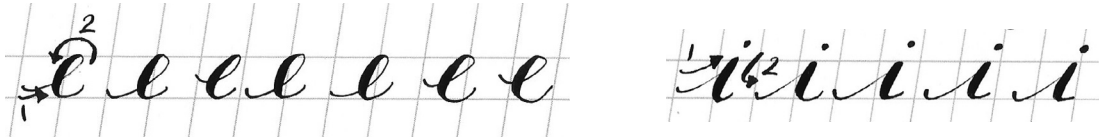
lowercase a (c and an i merged together):



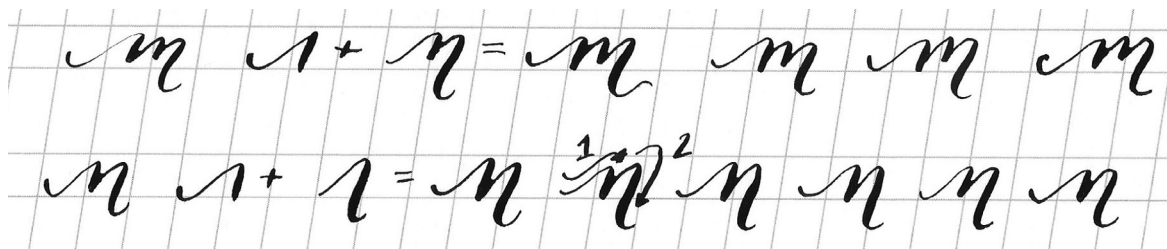
lowercase c (with and without a tail):



lowercase e, and lowercase i:



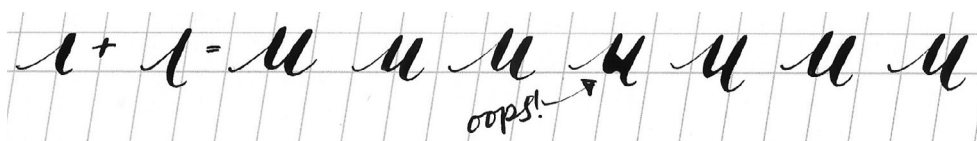
lowercase m, and lowercase n (my favorites!):



lowercase s, and lowercase r:



lowercase u (2 i's merged together):



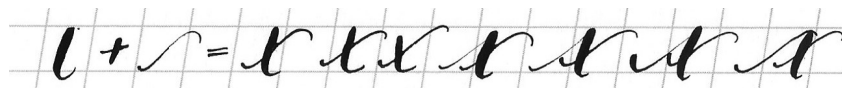
lowercase v:



lowercase w (2 u's merged together):



lowercase x:



SECTION TWO: PART 4

So, now that we've got the entire lowercase alphabet under our belts, it's time to start connecting it all together.

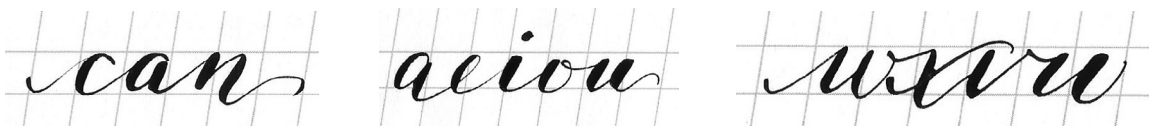
First, start by connecting ascenders (b, d, f, h, k, l, t), try different combinations until you are comfortable with connecting them together.



Next, connect descenders (g, j, p, q, y, z):



Now try connecting the 'others' (a, c, e, i, m, n, o, r, s, u, v, w, x); make up words to create different combinations of connections:



SECTION TWO: PART 5

After an entire page of made up words, try writing real words!! First though, let's try connecting our ascenders and descenders together by making different combinations of the two (ex: bqhlft):



jkqh jh gh

Finally, let's put it all together and write some real words!! Try words that have a good ratio of letters, but are short and sweet. My favorites are: happy, cat, dog, and love.



happy boxwood
snag avenue



bat cat dog



hill like able rise

If you're an overachiever, chances are, you whipped through this entire section in a few hours. I highly suggest taking a few days to go over "part 5's" assignment, before moving on. In the next section we will be learning uppercase letters, and you need to be a true master of lower case letters before you can even think about those pesky uppercase guys. In my opinion lower case letters are the most fun, so spend some time learning and practicing them!

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SECTION THREE

CAPITAL LETTERS

Capital letters are tricky little guys. I find them to be very difficult to master, and pretty much avoid them at all costs. However, as I worked to prepare this week's lessons, I discovered, that just like lower case letters, uppercase letters can be mastered, it just takes a bit of practice.

If you're having any trouble with lowercase letters, spend a few extra days working through them. In my opinion, you should feel very confident with lowercase lettering before moving on to uppercase work.

With that said, uppercase letters are also very versatile. There are multiple ways to write each of them, and it just depends on your personal style when it comes to how you decide to practice. Are you whimsical? Traditional? Organic? You will ultimately decide how many swirls and whirls to add to your capital letters.

The ultimate resource for capital letters is: Antiquaria. You can find examples of different styles of writing each letter, plus they've got the step by step for those extra tricky guys! If you have any questions, I will be happy to answer or do demos, just reach out to me on any social media!

SECTION HOMEWORK CHECKLIST

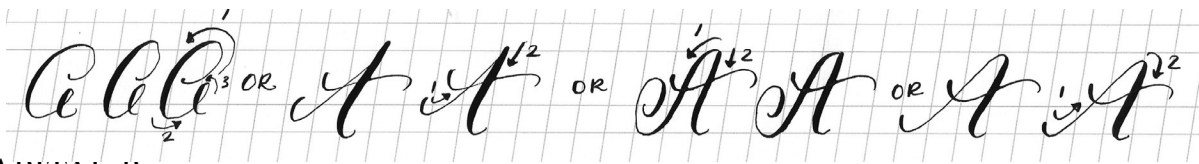
- ☐ review the capital stem
- ☐ master capital letters
- ☐ master capital words

CAPITAL STEM

Remember the capital stem you worked on in section one? Well it's time to put her to use. The capital stem is used in letters such as A, B, D, I, K, M, N, P, R, and T. Spend a few minutes practicing this basic shape. Work through at your own pace, and then combine all that you've learned to start writing words!

CAPITAL LETTERS

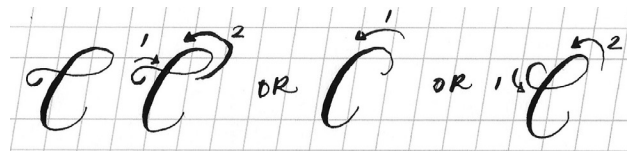
CAPITAL A: You can see, there are many different ways to write a capital A (like most capital letters). In the third example, you can see the use of the capital stem, but in the other options, you don't need the capital stem. Like I mentioned before, you get to decide what styles you want to utilize!



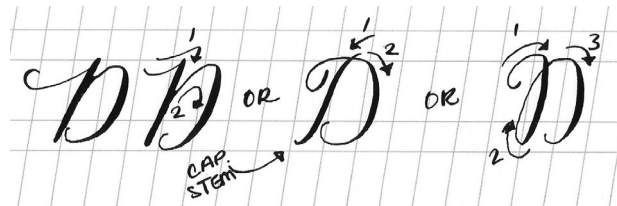
CAPITAL B:



CAPITAL C:



CAPITAL D:



CAPITAL E:



CAPITAL F:



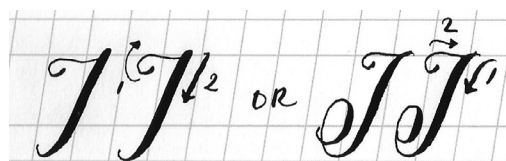
CAPITAL G:



CAPITAL H:



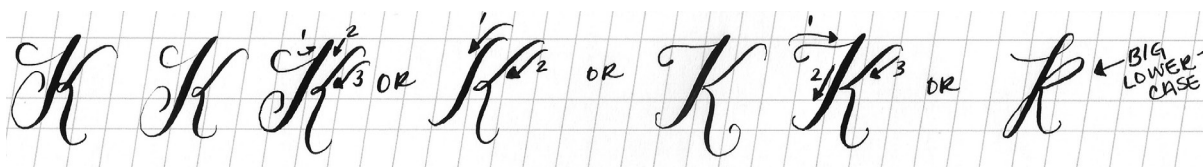
CAPITAL I:



CAPITAL J:



CAPITAL K:



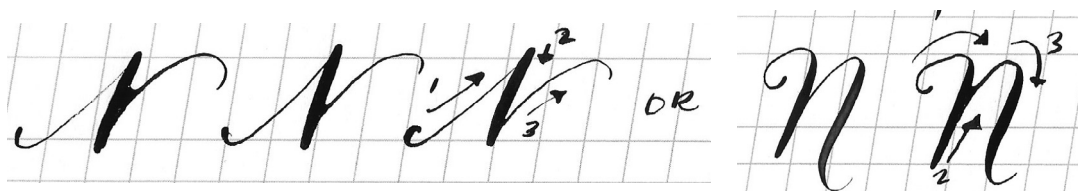
CAPITAL L:



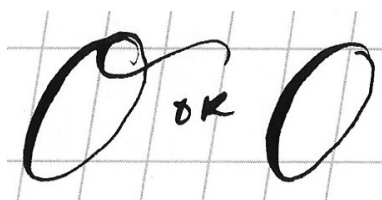
CAPITAL M:



CAPITAL N:



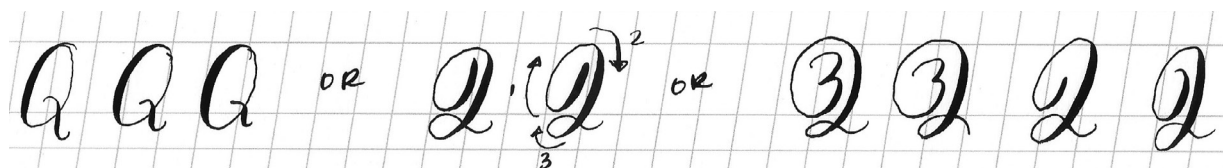
CAPITAL O:



CAPITAL P:



CAPITAL Q:



CAPITAL R:



CAPITAL S:



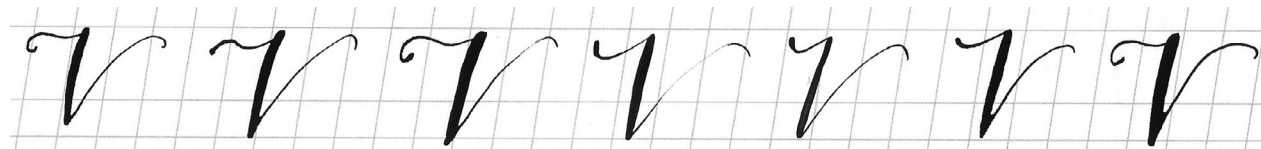
CAPITAL T:



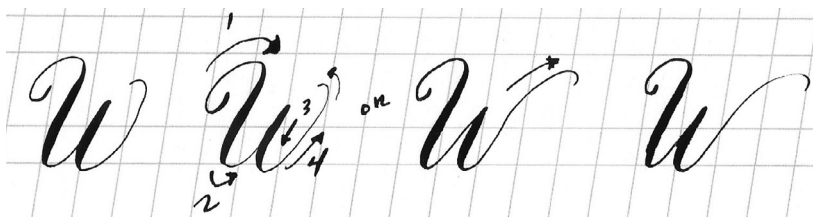
CAPITAL U:



CAPITAL V:



CAPITAL W:



CAPITAL X:



CAPITAL Y:



CAPITAL Z:



How do you feel about capital letters? Did it come naturally to you? Was it challenging? I know making this was challenging for me! Capital letters are not my strong suit; however, with this practice, I am much more confident with them.

I encourage you to experiment with different styles, and find what works for you! Now that you've completed the entire alphabet, start practicing simple words (like your name!), using capital letters. Have fun with this, this is what you've been working so hard towards!

In the next section, we will be going over everyday uses for calligraphy - so if you haven't ordered a [lettermate](#) yet, do so soon!

Remember to tag me in your posts, it makes my day!

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SECTION FOUR

PRACTICAL USE

Well guys, we made it! Four jam-packed sections of calligraphy fun! I hope that over the course of these four sections, you've able to pick up the beautiful skill of modern calligraphy, and I hope you continue to practice. Practicing will only help improve your hand lettering.

In this section we are going to focus on everyday use. Letters, signs, notes, you name it! Anything you can write on, you can turn into a beautiful piece of work.

If at the end of the section you make something beautiful, please share it on your favorite social media! Use #BAcalligraphy on instagram or facebook! This has been so fun for me, and if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to ask!

SECTION HOMEWORK CHECKLIST

- ☐ master swirls and twirls
- ☐ master numbers
- ☐ master common phrases
- ☐ write someone a letter!
- ☐ make something unique!

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

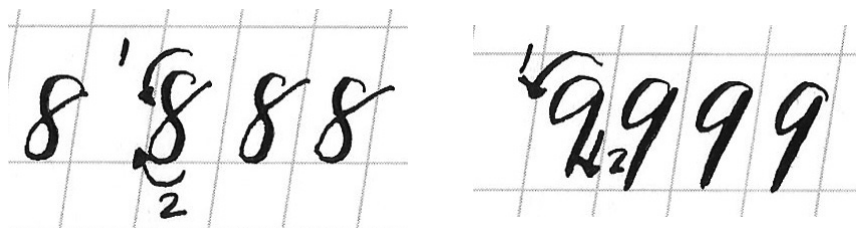
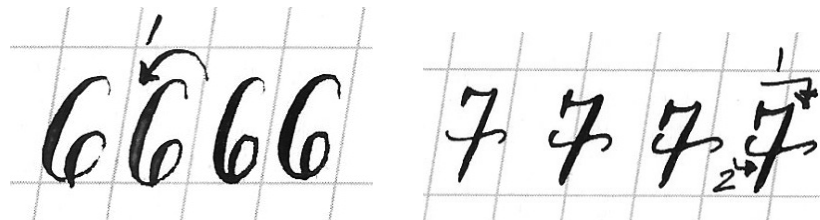
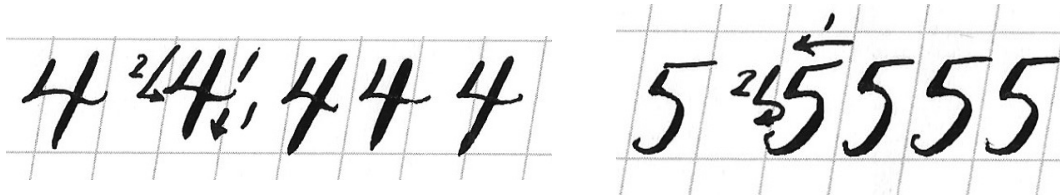
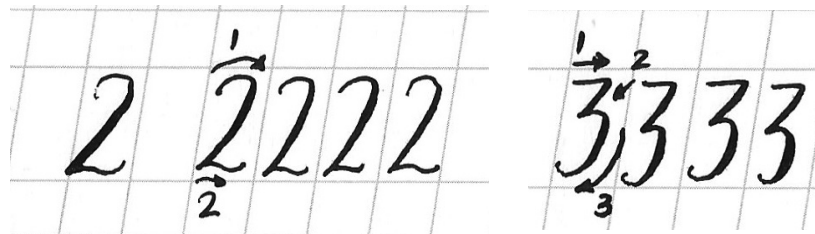
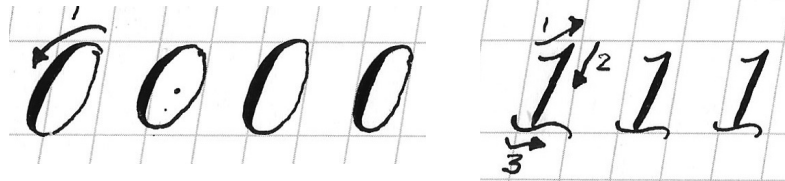
Julie Blanner's ["Learn Calligraphy in 5 Days"](#)

Antiquaria alphabet [cheat sheet](#)

Major Inspiration from [A Fabulouse Fete](#)

NUMBERS

To me, numbers are similar to capital letters, you can write them pretty much any way you please, but if you prefer an example, here is how I write my numbers:



LOWERCASE CHEAT SHEET

a b c d e f g h
i j k l m n o
p q r s t u v w
x y z

COMMON PHRASES

to: from: Mr. and Mrs.

cheers! L

LETTER ADDRESSING

Addressing letters is one of the most common calligraphic uses, so you might as well get some practice in! Try writing your mom a letter, or send me one! My address is below ;)

Here is one way to use The Lettermate to address your envelopes, but really, the possibilities are endless!

Step 1: Use an 8B pencil to draw straight lines on an envelope. Add one curvy line for the recipients name.

Step 2: Dip your pen, then address! Try mixing up calligraphy with print.

Step 3: Once the ink is dry, erase the pencil lines, and add a stamp!



OTHER USES

If you've loved learning calligraphy, then chances are, you're going to want to implement it in your daily life as much as possible. Calligraphy doesn't end at letter writing, there really are endless uses for it. This week I challenge you to make something unique! Try faux calligraphy on a wood sign (I used a sharpie paint pen in the photo below), or even writing on something that normally wouldn't have anything on it, like these cute skipping stones I am using in our wedding (be forewarned - it will ruin your nib). I can't wait to see what you make, and don't forget to tag #Bacalligraphy!

