

- Typography is the art of setting type and creating layouts with typefaces.
- Type design is creating a system of characters which can work in endless combinations.
- Calligraphy is writing.
- Lettering is drawing.

In class lettering practice steps:

#1 Draw the frame (skeleton) of the letter

Start by drawing three letters to fill the entire page — use your natural process. Use the letters: noe

#2 Add weight to the letter

Using a pencil use a light sketch and progressively darker sketch line to define the shape and spaces between the letters

#2b. As an alternate approach try Johnston's Foundational Hand: Edward Johnston.

Take an elastic band or tape 2 pens together (red and green pencil together) — sometimes people use a piece of wood between to expand the width of the stroke —. Make 5 tick marks for height.

Use your strapped pencils to draw letters. This helps to give you a consistent stem width as a starting point. The can be very good to set even thicknesses fast. Drawing the word “onion” is a very good practice word.

#3 Add style details to the letter

Repeat the sketch process but now create serifs, swash details, define your thick & thins, etc.

#4 Add finishing details like incised lines, shadowing, etc.

When drawing your letters think about the angle and direction of the stroke.

The angle and direction of your letters distinguishes formal and informal letters.

A good way to think about it: “How fast are my letters?”

Roman typefaces = upright, stationary structures — it is upright, repetitive consistency.

Slower and methodical.

Cursive or italic = the idea of running — is narrower and more compressed than Roman.

The pen leaves the paper less often. The pen changes direction/angle.

Once you get the lettering style, redraw your letters using a baseline, median line, cap height line, ascender/descender lines and if necessary, add angle lines for your character strokes.

White space is important when lettering.

The white space directly and indirectly effects lettering; It is directly designed into the letter’s architecture and indirectly between letters. For example: for sans serif letters — look at the space inside letters to help define letterspaces. If each letter is two units then the space between the letters will probably be close to one unit. One unit a good place to start as a springboard for letterspacing sans serif letters that are 2 units wide:

noon

For serifs the spacing is almost the same as the counter ~ 70-80% of counterspace.

Set widths in serifs are more irregular while sans serif set widths are more regular in width.

8 Optical compensations to consider when drawing letters:

1. Overshoot: Rounded overshoots are 1-3% larger (usually close to the width of the stem or serifs). Pointy overshoots are a judgment call ~ 1-3% by eye.



2. Going from a straight to a curve: Move side anchor points down ~ 1-3%



3. Straight to round intersections: double click on the outer circle and thin out stroke as you merge into the stem. Horizontally scale the outer circle.



4. Thickness: Vertical thickness vs. Horizontal strokes. H looks heavier than V. Shave off H and add to vertical to make it look equal.



5. Thickness: Straight vs. Round — make the curve a hair thicker than the vertical
6. Thick vs. thin: When strokes are identical (e.g. as in the case of a “V”) they look off because we expect a heavier stroke on the left. Add a hair of thickness to left stroke and shave a hair off the right stroke. Then thin out any crotches. The sharper the angle the more it has to thin out. If stroke is more at a right angle the less it needs to thin out.



7. Thickness: Capital vs. lowercase. Capital strokes are about 4-10% heavier

8. Midlines and Rounds: Move midlines — like crossbars — to better balance the negative space. Rounds — like “O”s — make the O a little thicker and more square at the NE, SE, NW, SW corners so that it is a smidgen more square.



Helpful Hints for Script, Oldstyle, Transition and Modern Classifications:

1. For Script: remember thick strokes are the down stroke and thin strokes are the up stroke
2. For the above classifications: W & M: Weight the 1st and 3rd stroke for the W and the 2nd & 4th for the M.
3. For the above classifications: N: the diagonal stroke is thicker than the verticals.