

scribblers

50 Calligraphy Tips



1. For cleaner pen marks, load the pen by using a brush to feed ink between the reservoir and nib.
2. A reservoir needs to be fitted correctly to the nib to ensure good ink flow. It should be approximately 2mm away from the tip of the nib and the fit must not be too tight or too loose.
3. Copperplate nibs are very flexible and therefore do not use a reservoir. So they are refilled with ink more frequently.
4. Right-handed calligraphers should choose nibs that are square-cut, left-handed calligraphers should choose nibs cut left-oblique.
5. If you are having difficulty getting the dip pen to work try applying a bit more pressure and wiggling the nib from left to right on the spot.
6. The metal globus used in many pen holders rusts easily. So be careful not to get it wet if you clean the nib whilst it's in the pen holder.
7. Some people use lots of pen holders - one per size of nib they use. Some people also write the nib size on the pen holder.
8. Push the nib firmly into the pen holder to be sure it does not move when you write.
9. Wash brushes in cold water after use. You can use washing-up liquid to remove stubborn paint or ink - but rinse thoroughly.
10. Clean brushes thoroughly and store them with the bristles upward.
11. To avoid mixed colours drying up, cover the palette with transparent food wrap or store the paint mix in small squat jars.
12. Mix Gouache Paint to a thin runny cream consistency, then it can be used as an alternative to ink in dip pens.
13. Note the quantities of paints you mixed together to get the desired colour. Then it will be easier to mix up some more if you need to. Use a ruler to measure the length of the paint squeezed out of the tube.
14. After mixing Gouache paint, leave 24 hours before using, to improve the flow.
15. You can never practice your basic letter formation strokes too much....
16. Set aside time for practising your calligraphy - frequent sessions are better than the odd long practice.

17. Learning calligraphy is a bit like learning to play an instrument - you will only achieve results through practice.
18. When you write make sure you have a good source of light; either daylight or preferably from a directional artificial light.
19. When learning a new style it's better to start with larger letters (20mm). Get them to look good and smaller text will look even better.
20. It is best to practise a group of letters with similar characteristics to help get the consistency going.
21. Good calligraphy writing is based on patterns of ovals/circles and lines. All letters are written using a series of ovals and lines.
22. Press lightly when drawing guidelines, otherwise the pencil marks will be very hard to remove and can leave grooves in the paper.
23. To keep a sharp point when ruling-up, gently twist the pencil as you go along against the ruler.
24. Rule up carefully to produce more accurate letters (especially if they have a small x-height).
25. Always cover your paper with a guard sheet to protect your work from the grease and dirt on your hands.
26. For best results prepare a new nib before using it to improve its performance.
27. Every alphabet has a few basic strokes that are common for several letters. Master these strokes first.
28. Attention needs to be given to the choice of paper. The paper chosen will affect the quality of your work. Layout paper is a good choice when practising your letterforms.
29. Letter and word spacing is as important as the letters.
30. When working for a client, make sure the text is accurate before starting!
31. Carefully dry the nibs after cleaning to prevent them from rusting.
32. When learning a new style, after you have written a few letters go back and analyse each letter placing a tick next to the best ones.
33. If the pen-stroke feathers or is not crisp, then an un-even pressure has been applied to the nib.
34. If you are producing blob letters, then either you are over-filling the nib or the reservoir is too near the end of the nib.
35. If it is hard to get the pen to complete a full stroke then the reservoir is probably fitted too tightly.
36. Spacing - Each letter should be centred in the space between its neighbours.

37. Make sure you have adequate light by using an adjustable lamp placed on the opposite side to the hand you use for writing.
38. Tape blotting paper or a thick cartridge paper to your drawing board to give a softer writing surface.
39. Sit square to the drawing board with your non-writing hand resting on the drawing board.
40. If you don't have a drawing board, place a couple of books on the table and lean onto the books a suitable size piece of wood, on which to rest your paper.
41. If you are left-handed, write underarm, with your elbow tucked in and your wrist turned left.
42. It can help left-handed calligraphers, to slant the writing paper to the right to help achieve the correct pen-angle. However, this will make it harder to judge pen-angles and letter slopes.
43. When starting a new tube of gouache paint, gently squeeze and discard the first small amount if any transparent liquid also appears from the tube.
44. Always store paper flat. Make sure your hands are clean and handle the paper very carefully so not to damage it.
45. Cut a hole in a bath sponge the size of the ink bottle. Place the bottle in the hole and this will help prevent the bottle from being knocked over and absorb any minor spills.
46. Warm up to get your lettering loose, relax and don't grip the pen holder too tightly. Relax and remember to breathe!
47. Good pen, good ink, good paper and a pleasant environment will help improve your work.
48. Having a damp sponge nearby to touch on the tip of the nib can help to get the ink flowing better.
49. Check and re-check your spelling. Have a dictionary nearby.
50. Remember that "good enough" is not good enough.

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