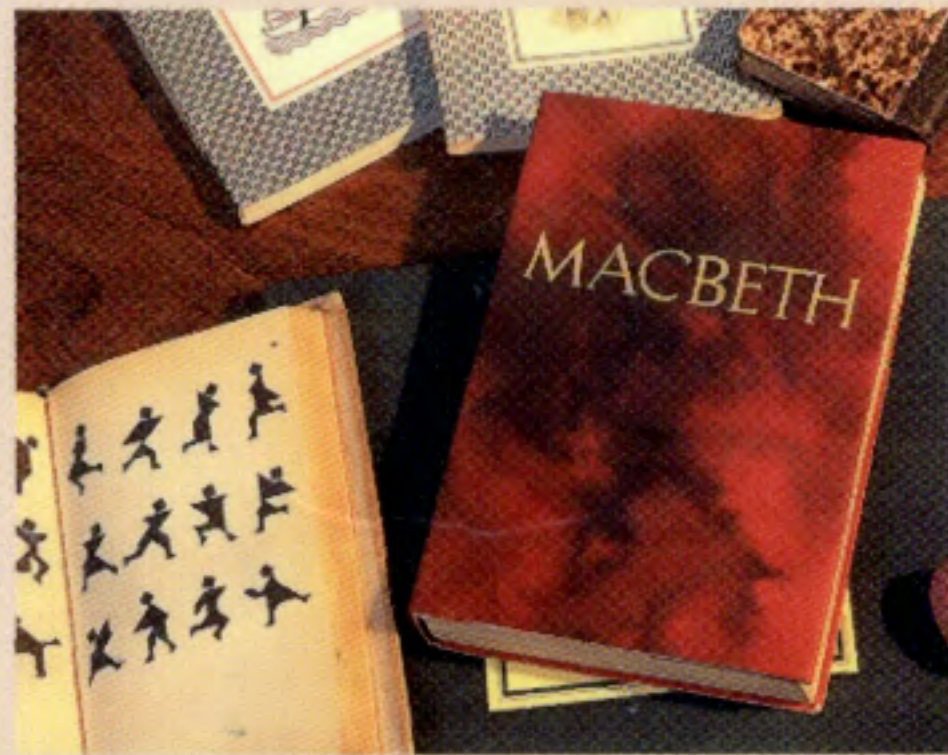


THE CREATIVE

CALLIGRAPHY

SOURCEBOOK



Adrian Waddington

A comprehensive guide to calligraphy

Includes 24 classic alphabets to copy

and 50 inspirational project ideas

The Creative
Calligraphy
Source Book



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Source Book



Adrian Waddington

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Introduction

Letters – their structure, form and overall shape – are fascinating. Each day we are surrounded by letters in many different forms – on such things as packaging, advertising hoardings and neon signs – and yet hardly ever do we give them a second glance. Every day we use a pen to write without stopping to think that passages of text, words and letters can be beautiful things in their own right.

Whether you are a beginner to calligraphy and drawing letterforms, or an experienced calligrapher, I hope that you will be inspired to use letters creatively, for uses and on objects that you may not previously have considered. Through trying the various techniques, in different mediums, you can achieve pleasing results and at the same time develop your calligraphic skills. The projects included in this book will introduce you to the fantastic versatility that letters and the variety of mediums available allow. Instead of covering a recipe, address or scrap book with images, why not give it character or personalize it with decorative lettering that relates to its contents? Alternatively, simple labels for various objects around the home are not just practical, they provide a very good reason to practise and improve your letterforms.

The book is divided into ten sections, each showing a different style of letterform, arranged in chronological order. In each section there is a brief explanation of how the letters were developed, followed by projects that use the letterforms creatively. Each section concludes

with at least two whole alphabets, illustrating the order in which to make the strokes, heights of the letters and any particular points to note – all that is needed to construct each letter. Using these alphabets as a starting point, you will be able to draw a variety of different letterforms, and as your confidence grows, you should be able to adapt and develop your own forms. While the styles of some letterforms lend themselves more to certain types of projects than others, you can take letters from one section and use them for projects in another section. In the same way, the tip boxes throughout the book can be applied to whatever letterforms you are using. There are also materials and techniques sections at the front, which beginners will find useful.

Letters are the basis of the calligrapher's art. Since the first alphabet was designed in the time of the Roman Empire, and through the work of scribes during the Dark and Middle Ages, distinct styles have emerged at different times in history, from the well-proportioned, open forms of the Caroline alphabet to the heavy, angular forms of Black Letter. Since the advent of printing, calligraphers and type designers have continued to develop letterforms in styles that reflect their time, and have expanded the uses to which lettering can be put and the types of materials with and on which it can be produced. This diverse heritage of lettering styles provides a rich source of inspiration for contemporary calligraphy, for both practical and decorative objects.



Materials

You do not have to outlay a lot of money on materials and equipment when taking up calligraphy. All you need to make a start are the basic requirements of a pen, ink and paper. You will, however, discover that there are many types of pens, brushes, inks, paints, papers and boards produced with the calligrapher in mind. Naturally you will adapt to using new writing

implements and mediums, and in doing so discover which materials you prefer. I enjoy trying new mediums and practising with them on different surfaces in order to discover what effects can be achieved with each. Only by experimenting like this do you discover how different inks and paints behave and which work best on each surface.

Writing implements

Metal nibs and pens

Usually used with ink, but can be used with watercolour or gouache.


Fibre-tip pens

Ideal for practising lettering and layout of designs because you do not have to keep refilling or loading with ink.


Brushes

Available in a variety of shapes and sizes. Flat brushes can be used for drawing letters, and round brushes for loading nibs and metal pens.




Crow quill





Poster pen with reservoir





Plain-stroke or speedball nib




Witch pen




Automatic pen or standard calligraphy pen




Automatic pen



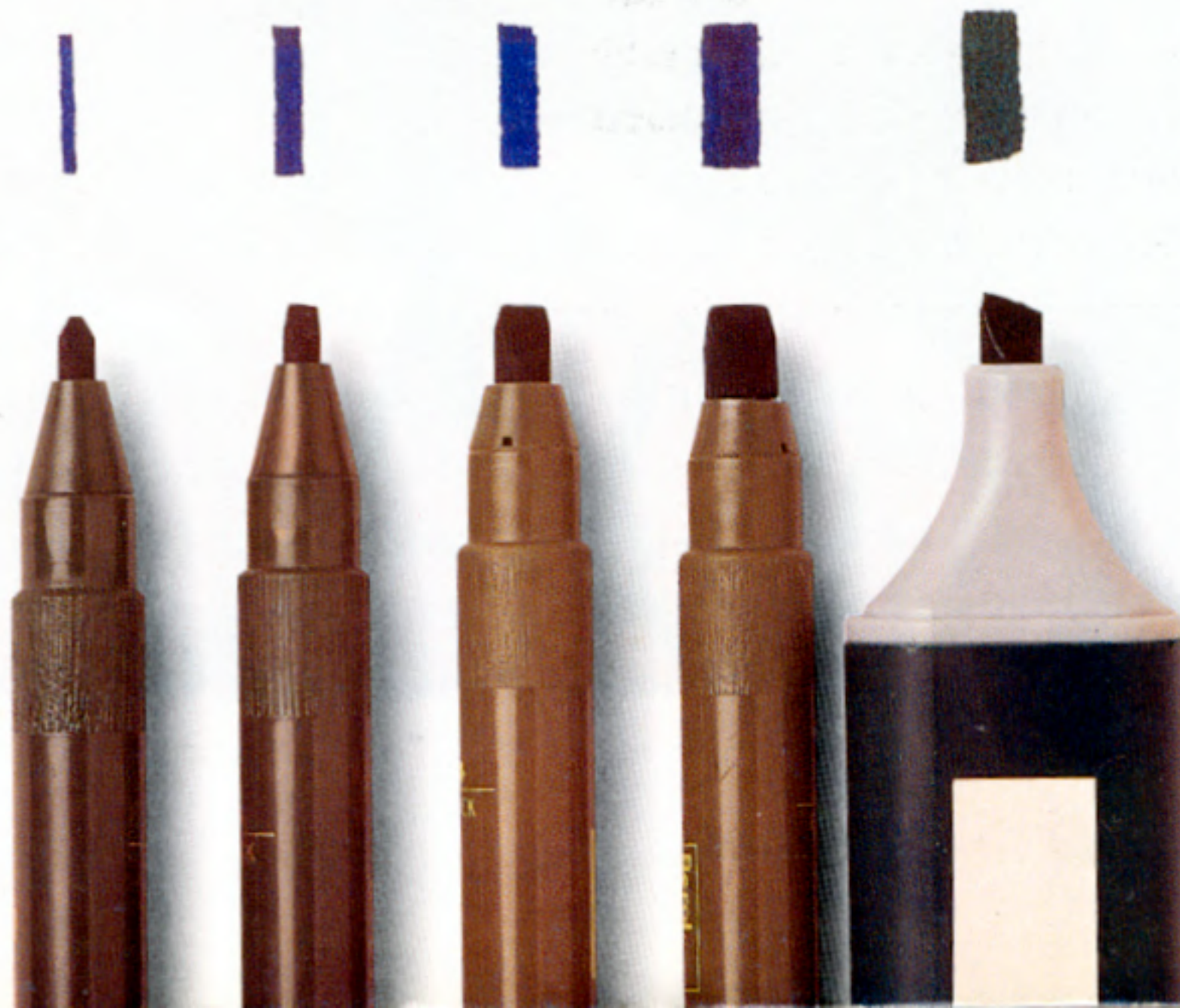

Split automatic pen




Multi-split automatic pen

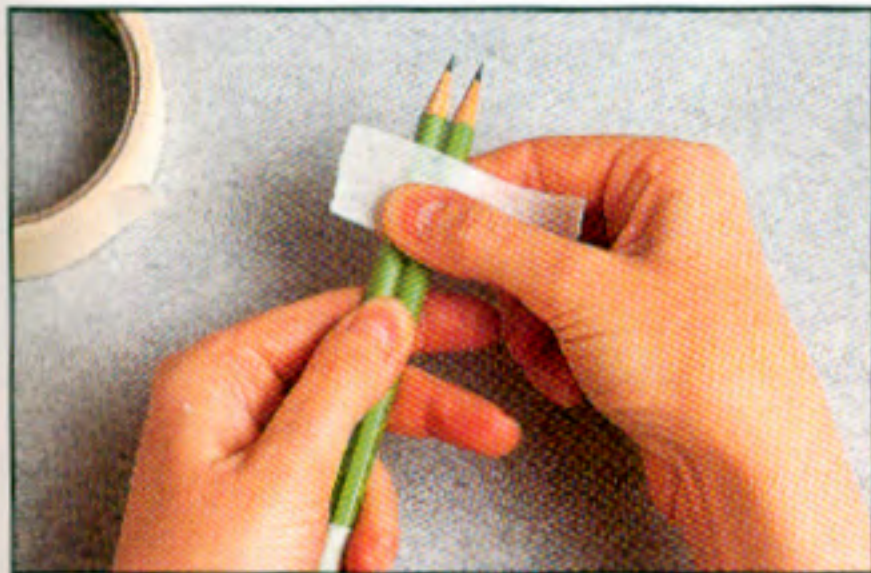
Oblique-shaped felt-tip pens of various widths

Wedge-shaped felt-tip pen

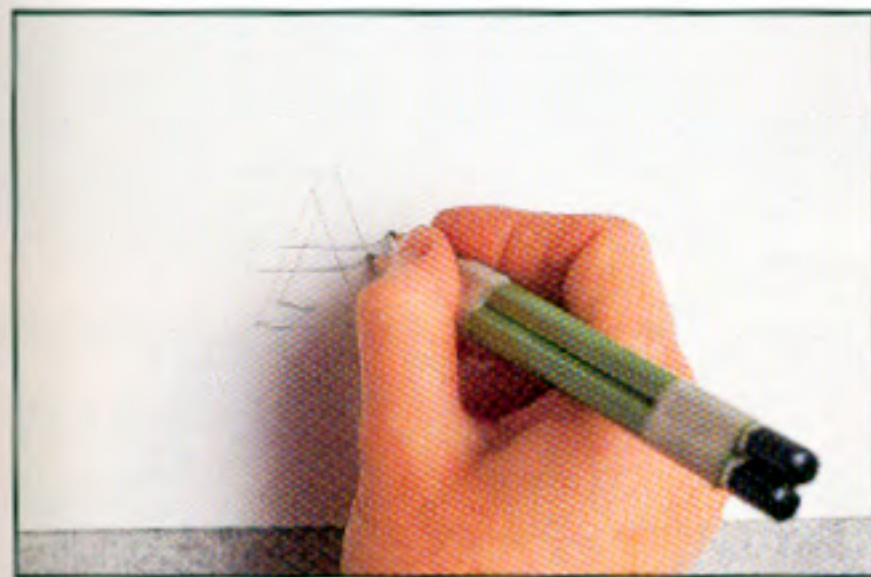


Using two pencils

Two pencils taped together is an ideal way to highlight, and increase understanding of the construction of letterforms.



1 Tape two HB pencils together at both ends.



2 Draw letters with the two taped pencils, keeping both pencil points on the surface of the paper and retaining a constant writing angle. The two lines indicate the marks made by each edge of a pen. They are concealed when drawing letters in ink, as shown below.



Fountain pens with interchangeable nib sections



Chinese brush



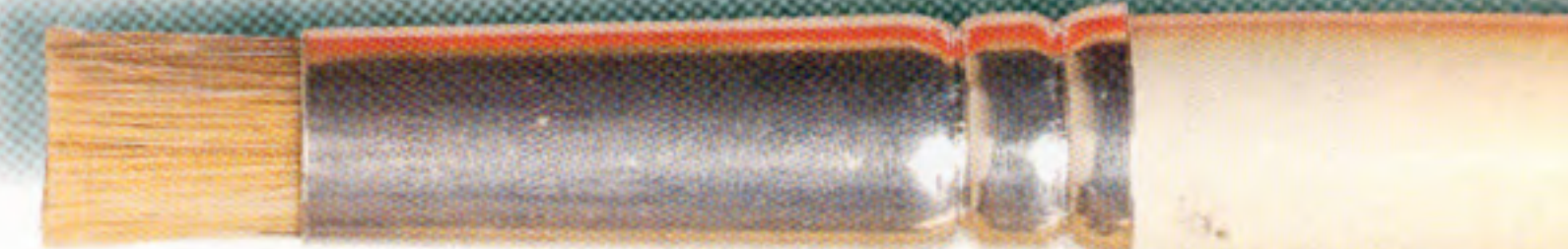
Round long brush



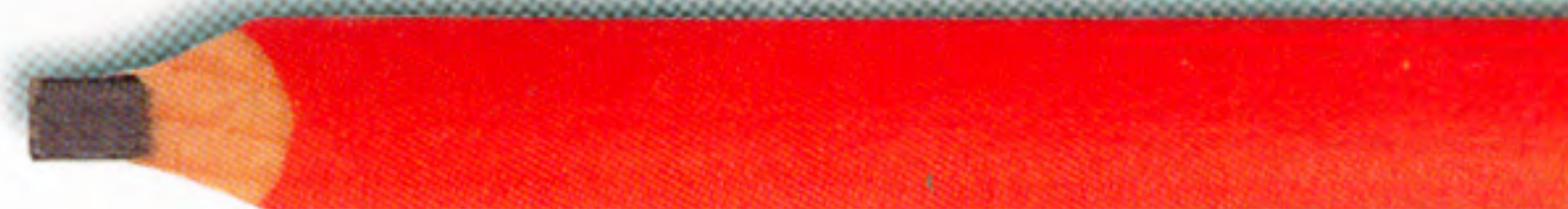
Flat brush



Large flat brush



Stencil brush



Carpenter's pencil



Two pencils taped together

Inks and paints

Waterproof and non-waterproof inks

These inks flow freely, dry quickly and do not harm paper or pen.

Watercolour paints

Available in tubes or pans, watercolours are the ideal medium for writing in colour.

Gouache

Used in the same way as watercolour but is opaque.

Enamel paints

Not a calligraphy medium, but used on metal surfaces to fill in areas of letters.

Acrylics

Ideal for practising lettering and layout of designs because you can cover large areas with a brush.



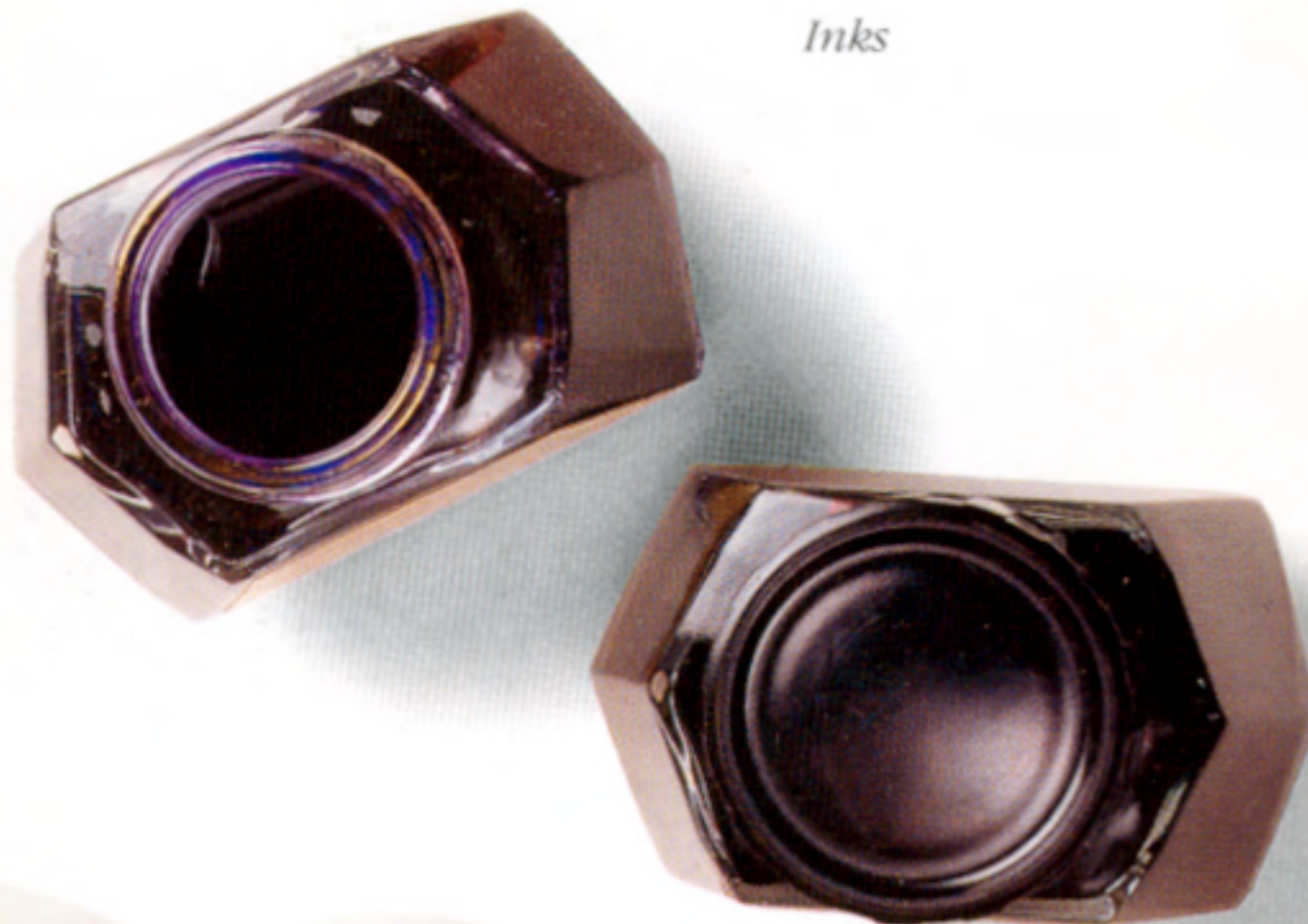
Acrylics



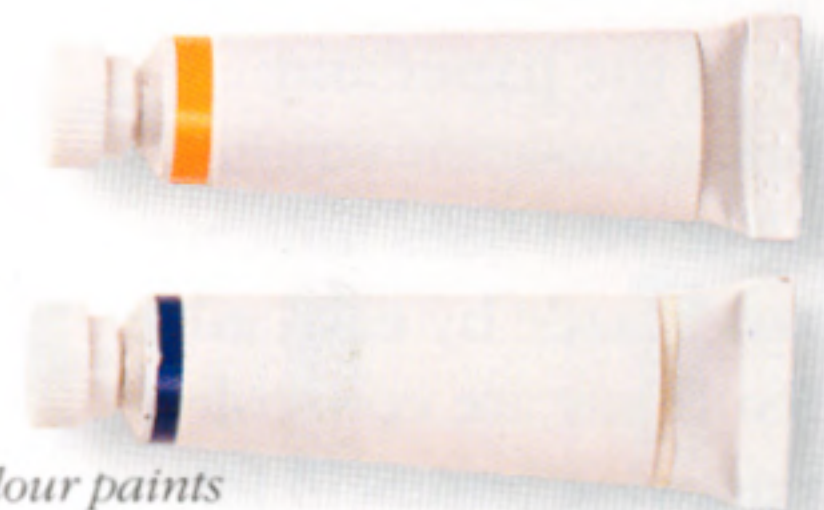
Inks



Enamel paints



Palette to hold paints and inks



Watercolour paints



Gouache paints

Loading ink into reservoirs



In order to control the amount of ink in the pen reservoir, apply the ink with a small paintbrush.



Pens with a reservoir under the nib should be filled in the same way with a paintbrush.



An eyedropper can be used instead of a paintbrush. In all cases, avoid getting ink onto the wrong side of the nib.

Spray paints

Ideal for using with stencils, on almost any surface.

Ceramic paints

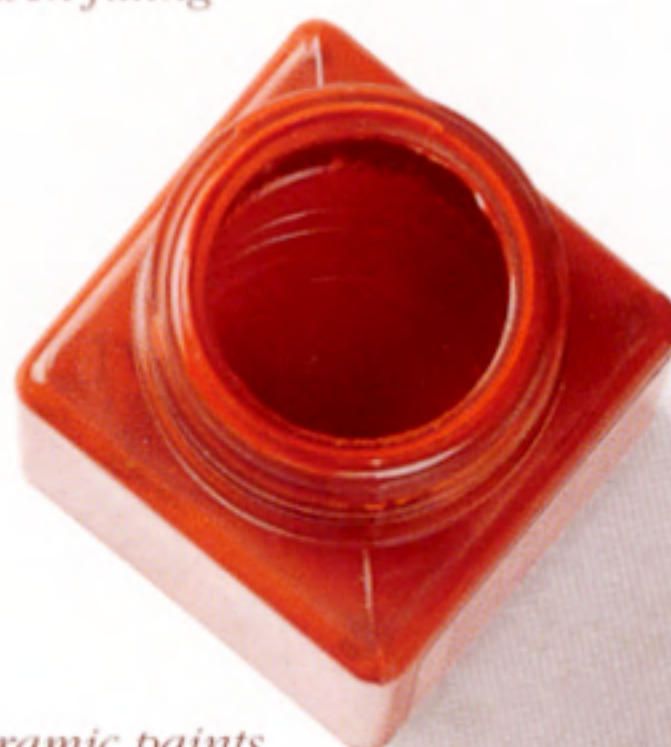
Not a traditional calligraphy medium. To be applied with a brush onto pottery, tiles, glass and similar surfaces when filling in letter shapes.

Masking fluid

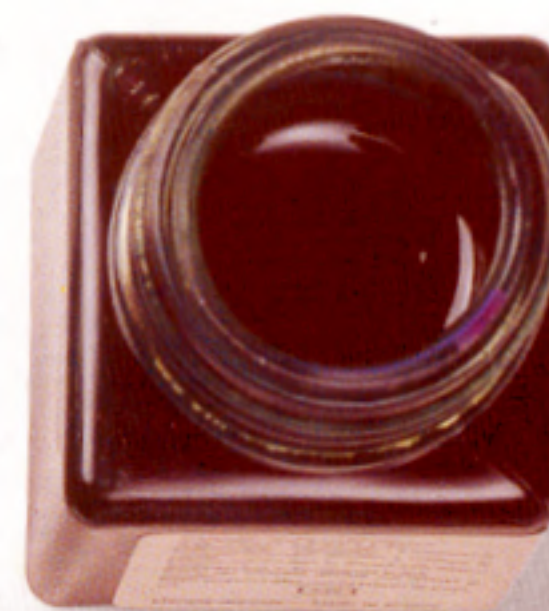
Apply with brush or pen. When dry, lay colour over it. After the colour has dried, rub off the masking fluid with your fingertip to expose the paper colour beneath.



Spray paints



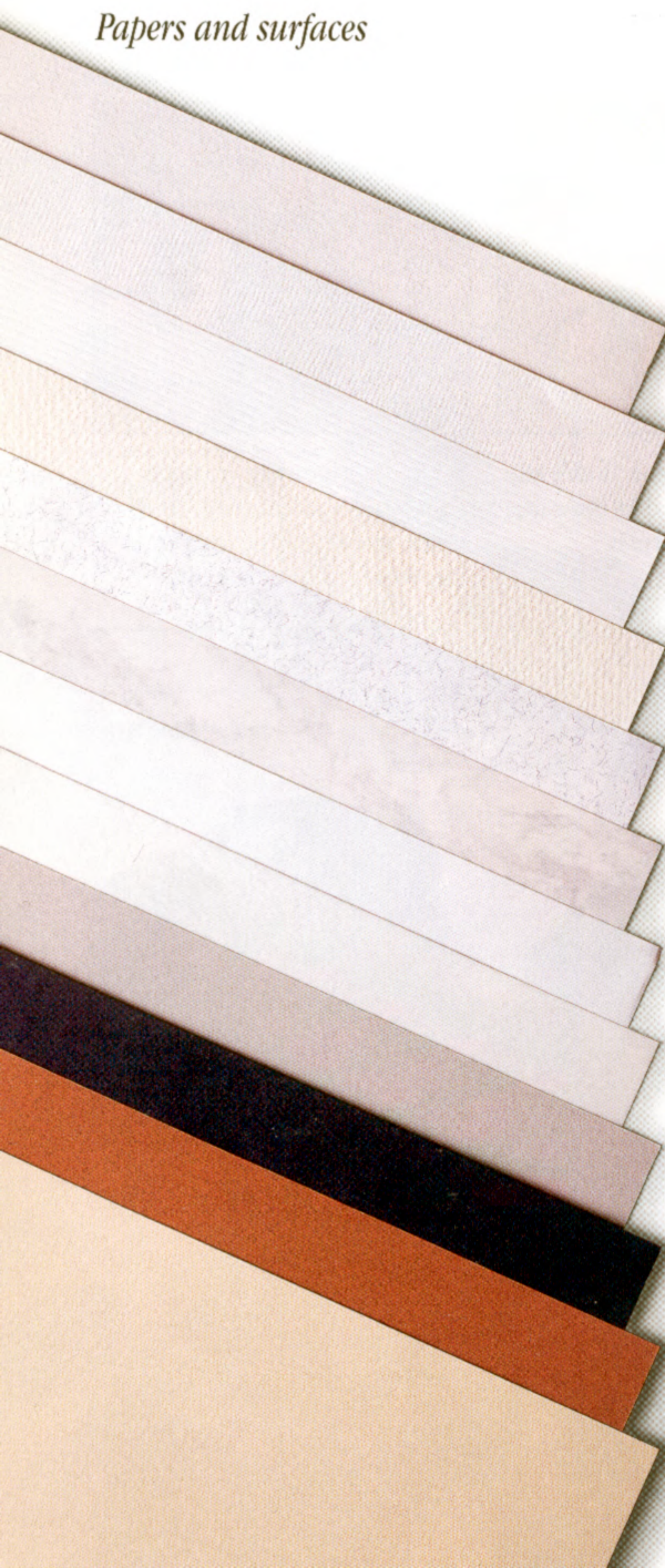
Ceramic paints



Masking fluid



Papers and surfaces



Papers

Available in various colours, textures and finishes. Try experimenting on odd bits and pieces before buying larger amounts. Some papers will absorb and others resist ink.

1. *Laid textured paper*
2. *Textured paper*
3. *Lined paper*
4. *Textured paper*
5. *Speckled paper*
6. *Marbled paper*
7. *Cartridge (drawing) paper*
8. *Watercolour paper*
9. *Coloured paper*
10. *Dark-coloured card*
11. *Coloured, lightly textured paper*
12. *Cover paper (thick drawing paper)*

Stretching paper



1 To prevent paper from warping when water-colour or inks are applied, it needs to be stretched. You will need cartridge (drawing) paper, gumstrip (kraft tape), a sponge, a wooden board larger than the paper and clean water in a tray or sink.



2 Cut four pieces of the gumstrip (kraft tape) to match the dimensions of your paper. Submerge the paper evenly under the water and leave for one to two minutes.



3 Place the wet paper on the board and smooth it out. Dampen the gumstrip (kraft tape) with the wet sponge so that it is sticky but not too wet.



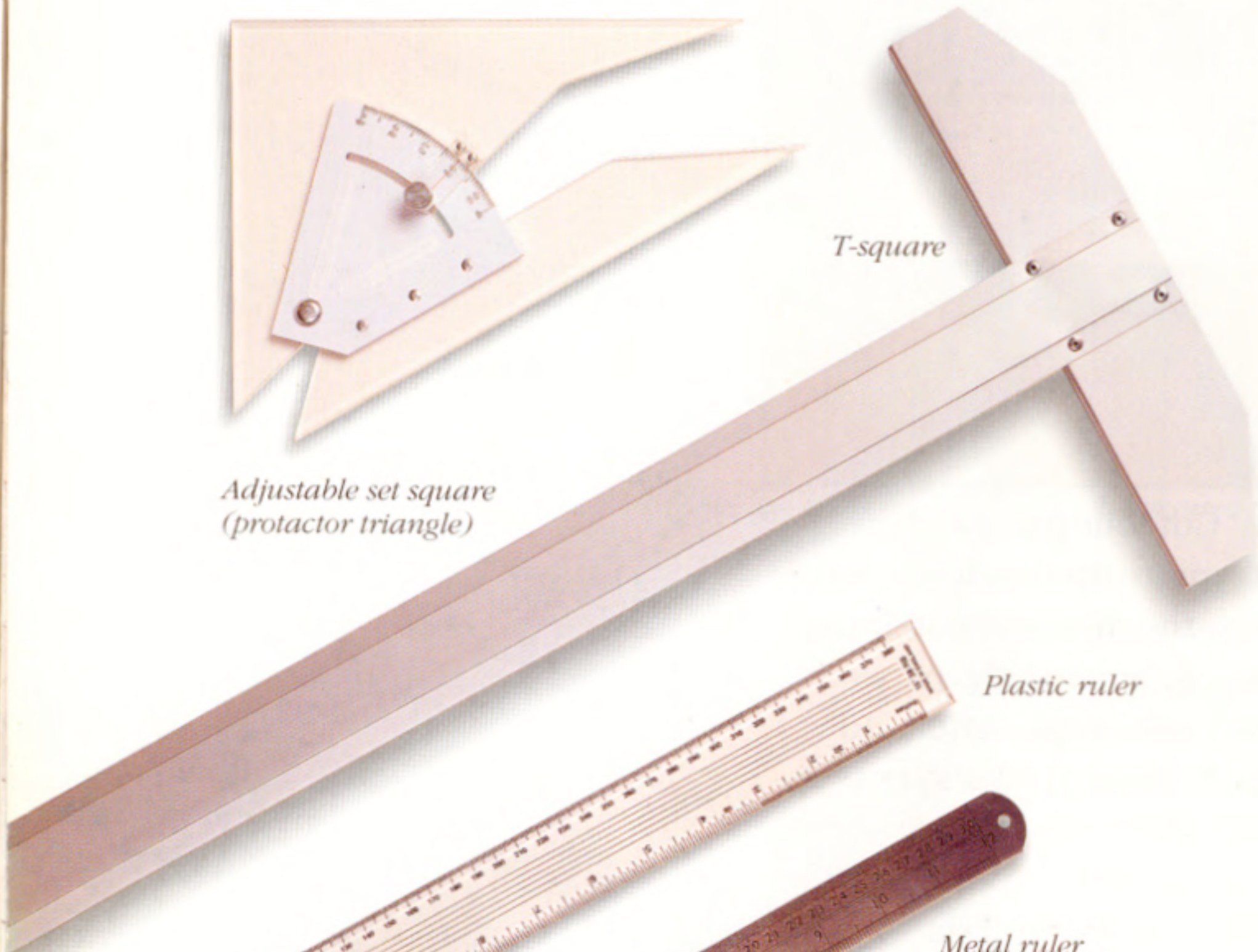
4 Place a piece of gumstrip (tape) along each edge of the paper. Remove any excess water with a cloth. For security, you can place a drawing (straight) pin in each corner of the paper. Leave the paper flat to dry for six hours or overnight.

Other equipment

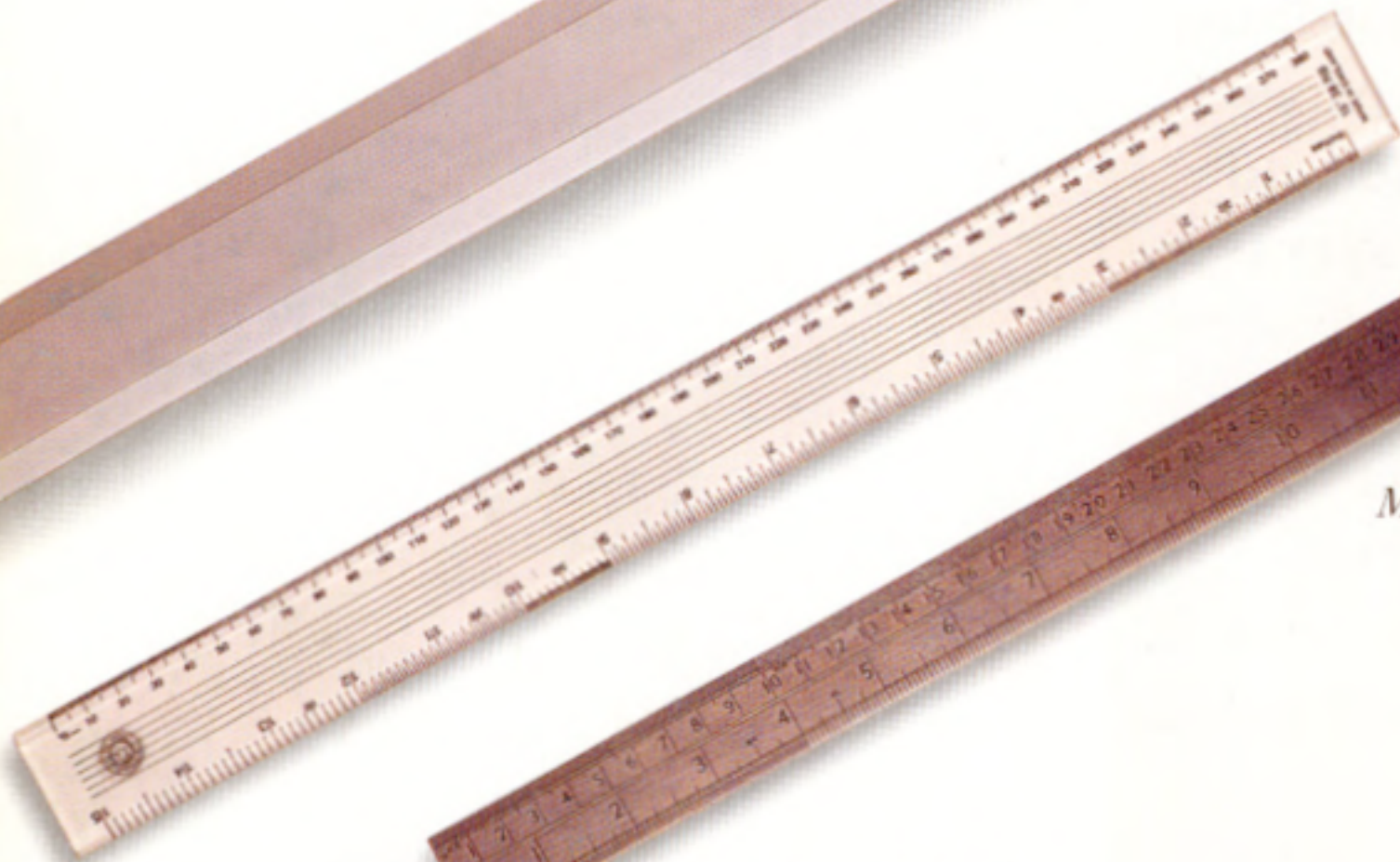


*Adjustable set square
(protractor triangle)*

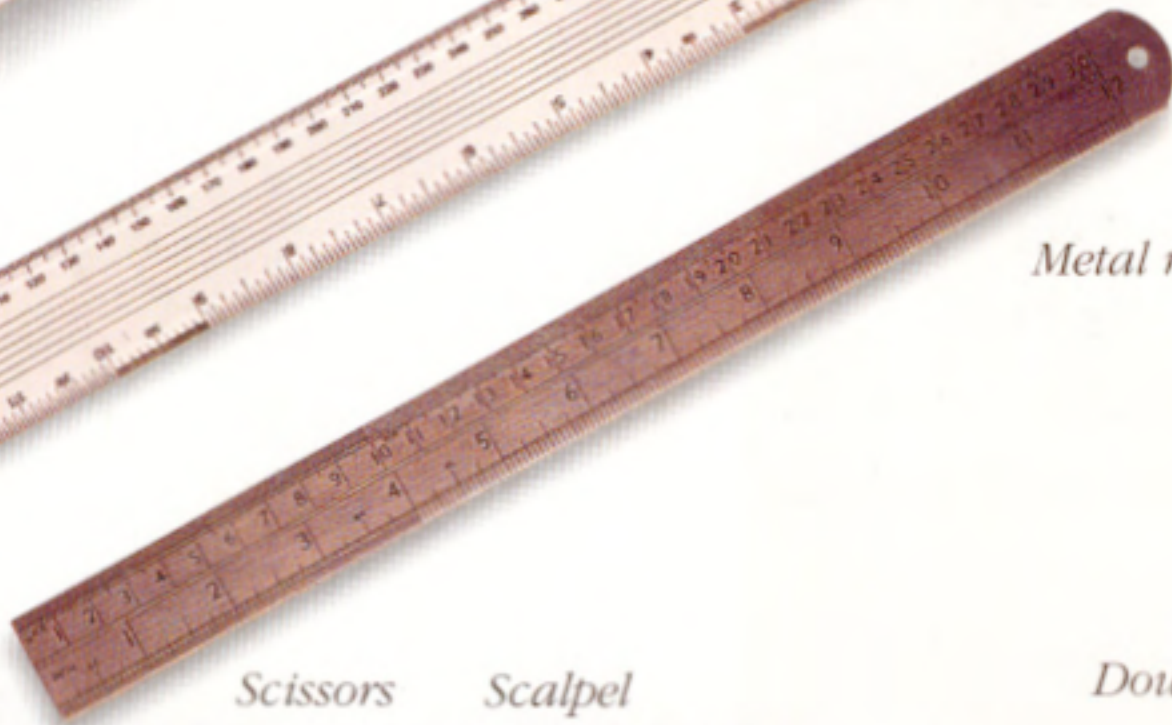
T-square



Plastic ruler



Metal ruler



Eraser

Scissors

Scalpel



Cutting mat

Double-sided tape



Craft (mat) knife



Masking tape

The following items will be needed:

Adjustable set square (protractor triangle)

T-square

Plastic ruler

Metal ruler

Double-sided tape

Masking tape

Cutting mat

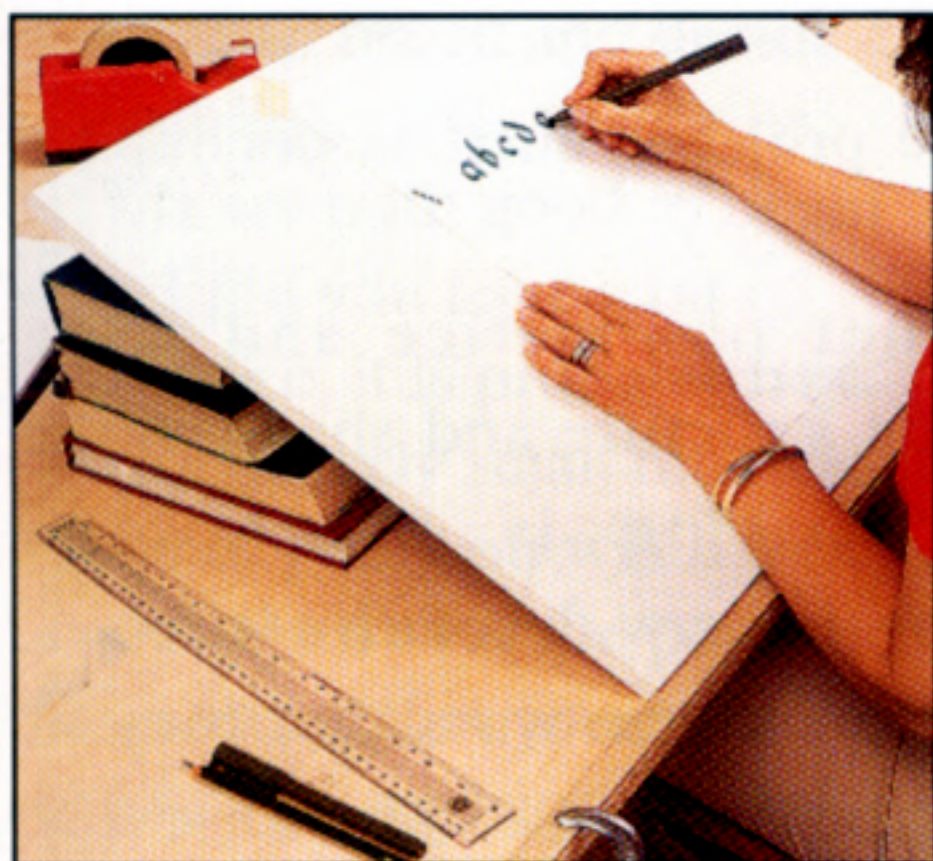
Scissors

Eraser

Craft (mat) knife

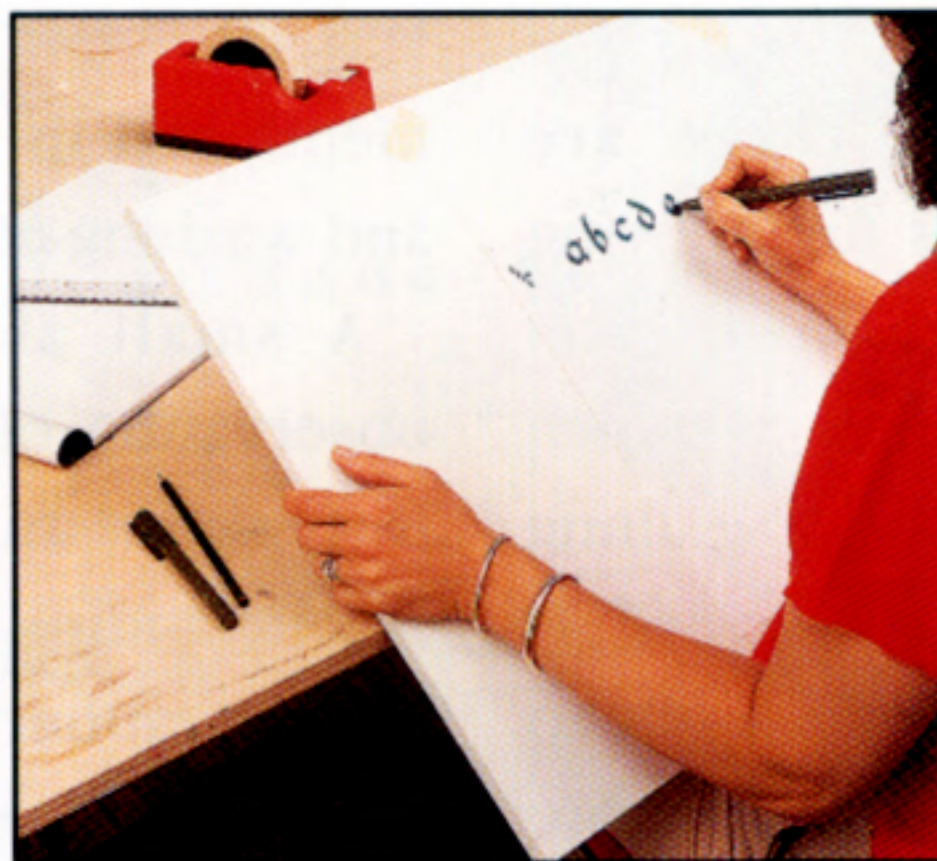
Scalpel

Improvised drawing board



It is important not to work on a flat tabletop or surface, because your pen will be upright and so almost at a right angle to your work. On a sloping surface the shallower angle of the pen makes letterforms much easier to draw and also helps the ink to flow more smoothly. The ideal surface is a drawing board, which need not be expensive.

Although adjustable drawing boards can be purchased, you can quite easily improvise. Use a piece of hardboard (Masonite) or laminated shelving board, both of which are available at most timber merchants (lumberyards), and place it on a tabletop, supported by a box or pile of books, so that the board slopes towards you at an angle of between 30° and 45° .



The same surface can be created by resting the board in your lap and leaning it against the edge of the table.

Alternatively, if you are handy at simple woodwork, it is not difficult to construct a tabletop drawing board.

Whichever method you decide to try, you need to be comfortable and unrestricted. Do not sit cross-legged or lean too far forward.

Basic Techniques

In each section of the book, there are instructions, guidelines and hints for drawing the various letter styles. The pen angle given on the alphabet pages refers to the angle at which you hold the pen in relation to the line along which you are writing.

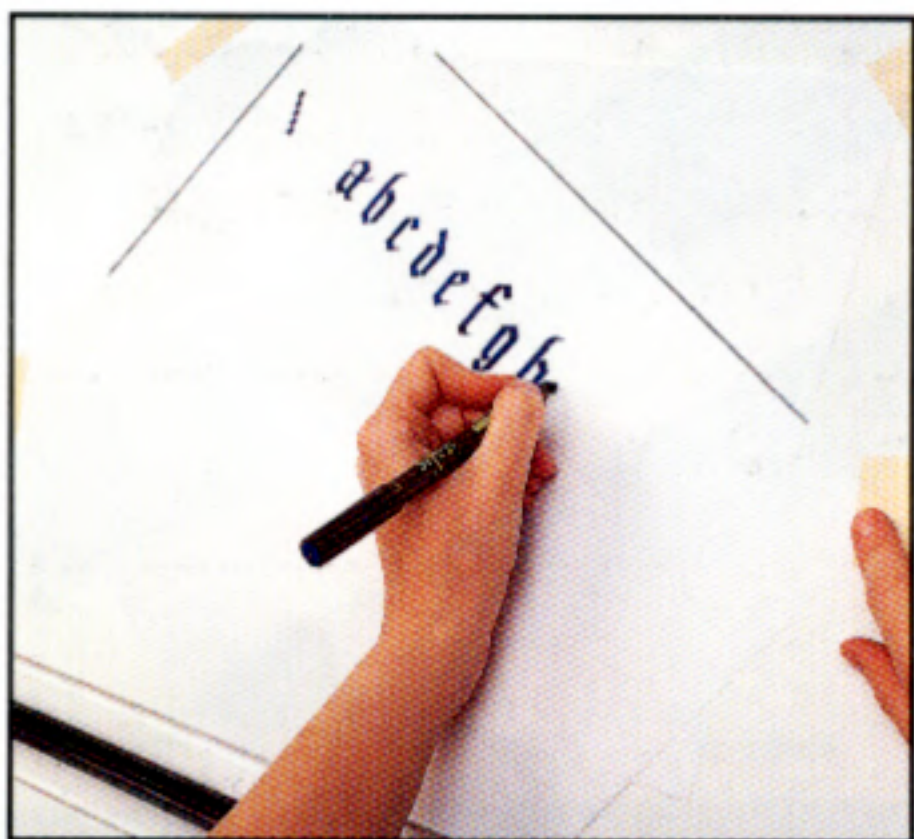
However, there are some points that apply to whichever alphabet you choose, and these are mentioned here. In addition, practical notes are given here on other techniques that are

mentioned in the projects, such as découpage and washing-off.

A small amount of practice and close observation of the structure and shape of the lettering and spacing is the key to understanding how to draw decorative letters.

Calligraphers vary in the ways that they sit and hold the pen, but these are some basic tips. When you find an unrestricted and comfortable writing position, keep to it.

Notes for left-handers



If you are left-handed you will already have overcome most of the difficulties of living in a right-handed world, and calligraphy can be mastered too. Owing to the position of the fingers and hand, left-handers initially find it difficult to keep the angle of the nib to the writing line consistent. Once you have overcome this however, your ability will develop quickly. Part of the problem is that your hand will

obstruct the work, although you may find that by moving your fingers further up the pen, away from the nib, you can give yourself a better view of what you've already done. Another useful point to keep in mind when practising is to move your whole arm, not just your wrist and fingers.

To start off, try using an oblique-nibbed pen (made especially for left-handers). These nibs are available in a wide variety of sizes. You should concentrate on constructing the shape of the letterforms and producing a consistent rhythm throughout the letters. Never mind if, initially, your serifs or finishing strokes appear strange, they can be worked on later. You might find it useful to position

the paper further to the left than usual so that your elbow does not become obstructed by your ribs. It may also be worth placing your paper at different angles. When you discover the best angle, draw a quick template or note it down so that you are able to recreate the angle later.

Left-handers often find Uncial letterforms easier than the others, perhaps because the pen is held horizontally during execution.

Notes for getting started

Set up your board and decide on your letterstyle. Italics or Uncials are both good to begin with. Until you have a bit of experience, it is probably best to use relatively small nibs and widths of pen. You will have more control over the pen, and will also find that your mistakes are easier to spot and correct.

In the beginning, concentrate on keeping the pen nib at a consistent angle to the paper. The angle of the pen varies depending upon the letter style, and the correct angle is given for each alphabet. The height of each letterform is dictated by the width of the nib and relative proportions are given for each alphabet, along with numbered arrows to show the order of the strokes.

On a practical note, you should consider both your seating position, so as not to strain your back, and the lighting conditions. Daylight is best, but angle-poise (extension or arm-swing) lamps are good if you need to work in artificial light.

Finally, do not forget to clean pens and brushes thoroughly immediately after use. This will prolong their life and avoid the frustration of the pen or brush not responding as it should.

Direction of light



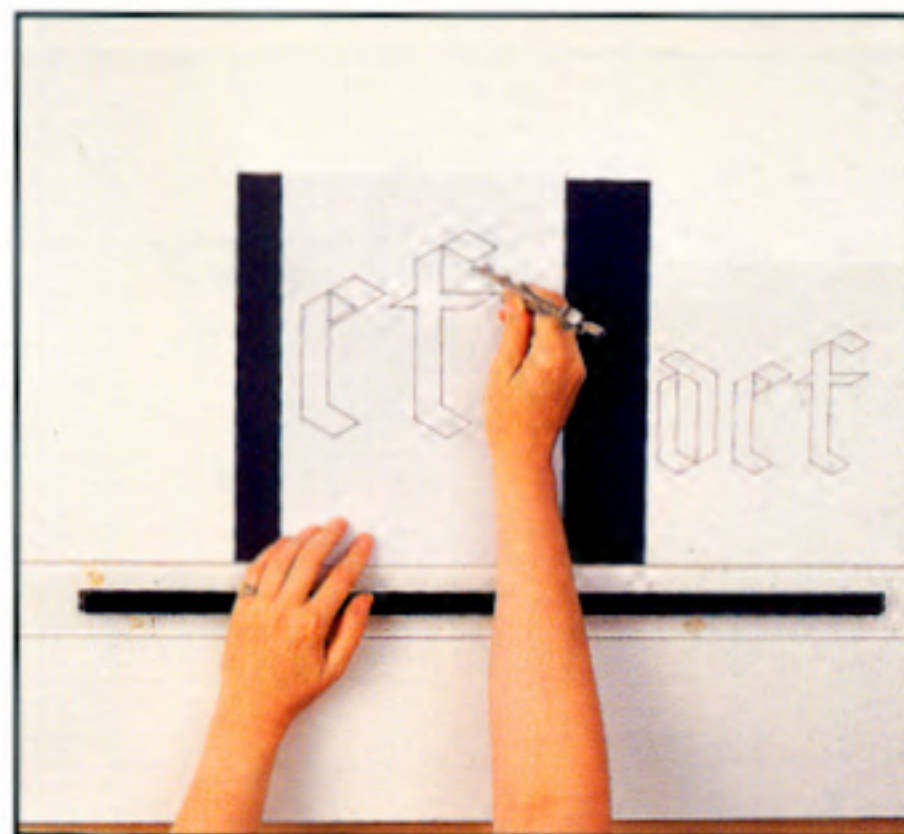
The lighting for a right-hander should come from the left, and from the right for left-handers. You should not work in your own shadow; also be careful that the light is not so strong that it causes a glare.

Position of pen



The position of the pen may not be as you write normally. Start off by holding the pen between thumb and forefinger, resting it on the third finger. Use the fourth and fifth fingers to rest on the paper. Make sure you keep your wrist straight and move your arm.

Transferring a design



When transferring a design from layout paper, either use carbon paper and then trace the outline of the letters or, if transferring onto surfaces other than paper, use a compass to make small indents through the layout paper onto the surface.

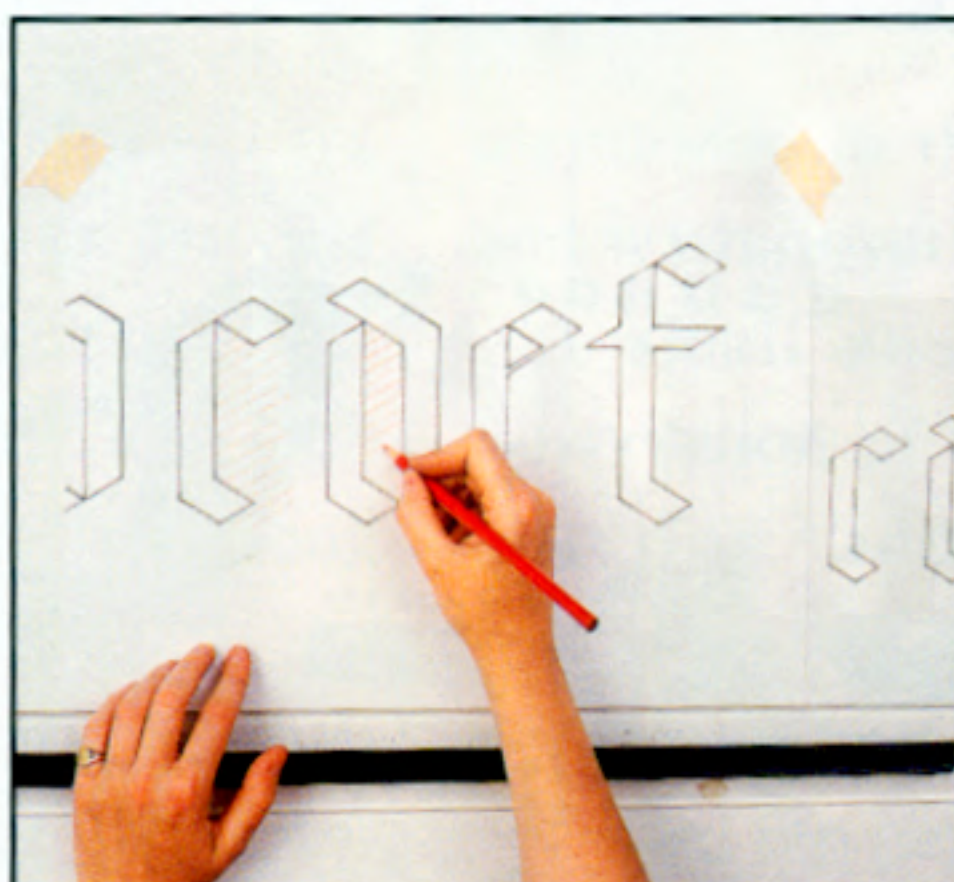
Protecting work



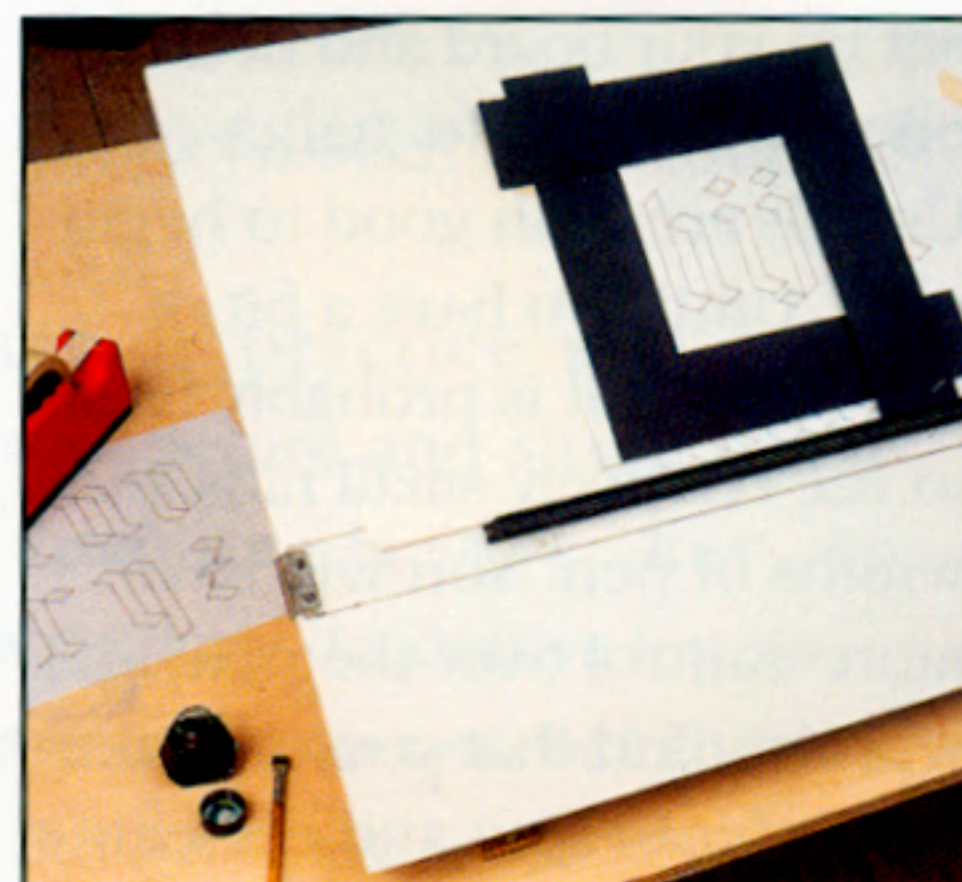
You may want to use a spare piece of paper to protect your work from fingermarks, smudges or drops of ink. Use masking tape to fix it over your work and to your board.

Layout & design

Analyzing letterforms



When studying or analyzing new letterforms or alphabets, it is useful to learn about the construction and form of the letters by concentrating on the counters or shapes in and around the letterforms. Observing these proportions helps when drawing the letters.



Cut out two relatively large L-shaped frames from black card. Use these when composing a piece of lettering to help your eye concentrate on the shapes of the individual letters and their proportions within the overall field.

Ruling lines



Use the T-square on your drawing board to make guidelines of the appropriate height, to use for practice in repeating letters. The spacing between the lines depends on the alphabet type and the size of your pen.

Using a guideline sheet



When you are using a letter style for the first time, make a guideline sheet and place it under layout paper so that the guidelines show through. This saves you having to rule guidelines every time you want to practise.

Word spacing

Even spacing between words will come with practice. You will soon notice when spaces are uneven or too large. A good rule of thumb is to leave sufficient space to fit an o between the written words.

Line spacing

Use multiples of the lower-case x height between each line. Two x heights between each line of lettering is usual, but you can vary this. If the lines are further apart the lettering will tend to be easier to read.

Letter spacing

The aim of letter spacing is to make the spacing of letters seem equal. Different letter combinations require more or less space, depending if they are straight-sided or curved. The counters (enclosed spaces) of letters also need to be considered. Analyze the spaces between three letters at a time.

Balancing large & small

When you have mastered the spacing of letters, words and lines, try using letters of different sizes and styles together. Reassess each letter combination and use the counters and spaces in between letters to create a pleasing overall design.

Additional techniques

Washing-off is an effective technique for creating layers of lettering, some more faded or washed-off than others, in a semi-controlled way. This technique relies on the fact that only slight marks are left behind by water-based paints and watersoluble inks after they are washed off, while waterproof inks retain their intensity.

Washing-off



1 Stretch some paper, as shown on page 13, or choose a sturdy line-and-wash board. Paint either a solid-coloured or patterned background with gouache and allow to dry.



2 Wash off the gouache paint, either in the bath or sink, using a shower or spray nozzle. You may need to lift the paint off the surface of the paper very gently with a brush. The more gouache you wash off, the lighter the mark remaining on the paper.



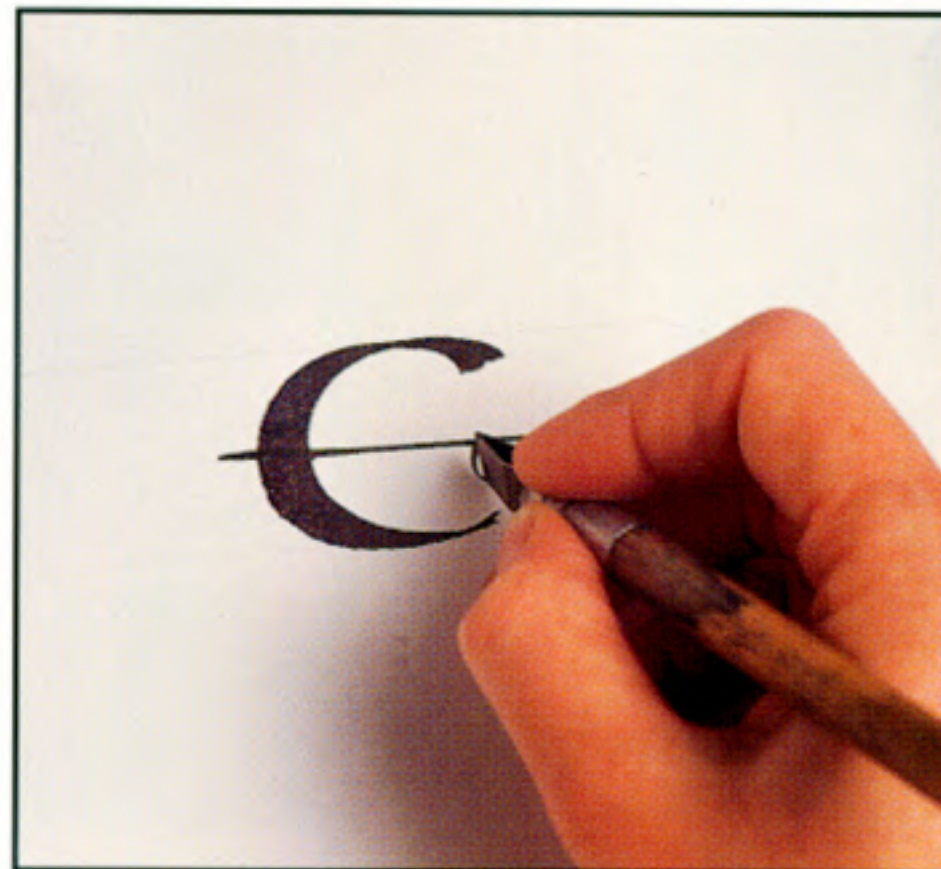
3 Next add lettering in gouache and wash this off also to leave a faint image or stain. Keep adding more lettering in either gouache, watercolour or waterproof ink, and wash it off again. You can do this many times to create different depths and layers.



4 Any lettering drawn in waterproof ink will remain stronger than that in gouache and watercolour. Continue to build up the lettering and images until you are satisfied with the design.

Flourishes and hairlines

Use the corner of a metal, felt-tip or fountain pen to create a hairline finish on letters. Practise twisting and lifting the nib onto one corner all in one swift movement as the stroke is finished. Choose letters that lend themselves to this technique.



Horizontal strokes often require a shorter and slightly different hairline. On reaching the end of the horizontal stroke, bring the pen back to the left and twist downwards at the same time.



1 Extended strokes and flourishes are ideal for joining letters and balancing a design. Build up ascenders and descenders in separate stages. For example, on this h, make a stroke that starts from the top of the ascender and bring the pen around and down.



2 To make this ascender look as if it has curled back on itself, add a stroke from the left to join the end of the previous stroke. Experiment with extending strokes, particularly ascenders and descenders, and linking different letters together.

Flourishes and hairlines are endings and extensions of letters, and are used to decorate and embellish lettering. Often added to balance designs or fill awkward spaces, flourishes should blend with the lettering and appear to flow naturally. Practise simple flourishes, and always plan them out on layout paper before applying them to your final design.

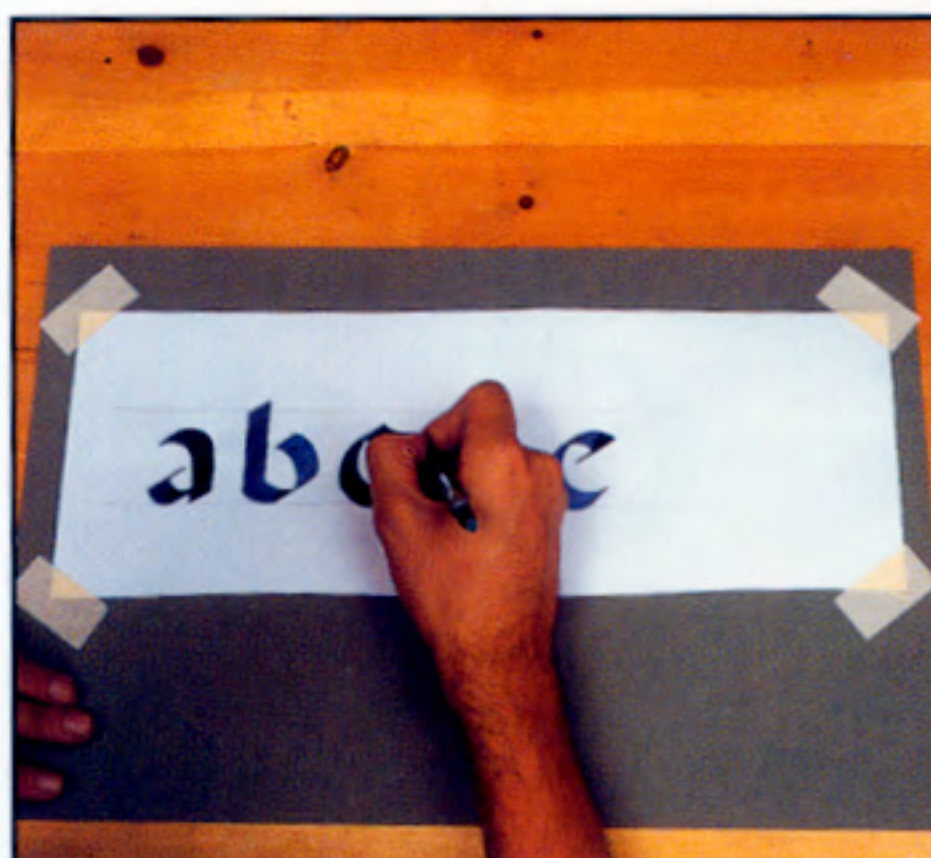


Combined techniques

Stencilling provides a superbly flexible and quick way of achieving stunning results. Stencils can easily be made from pieces of cardboard or pieces of plastic sheeting. Most paints can be used for stencilling, so choose a type that is suitable for the surface onto which you are working.

These techniques are not usually associated with calligraphy or decorative lettering, but when used with appropriate letterforms, interesting and unusual effects can be created.

Stencilling



1 Before making a stencil draw your letters onto a piece of paper, leaving plenty of space between each. Then transfer the letters onto thick card (to be the stencil). To make a durable and hard-wearing stencil use acetate instead of card.



2 Cut out the letters carefully, using a sharp scalpel. You will discover that care has to be taken cutting the counters of certain letters. Practise cutting out letters on layout paper beforehand.



3 Tape the stencil in place. Draw centre-points or vertical and horizontal lines on the stencil to aid in lining it up before applying the paint.



4 Stencil brushes are available in many sizes and can be used to apply watercolours, inks, acrylics and ceramic paints. Other methods of applying colour include sponges and spray paints. Experiment by mixing colours within each letter.

Découpage

1 This technique involves cutting out paper images and gluing them onto objects. The surface of an object needs to be correctly prepared by sanding and applying primer or undercoat.



2 Apply a thin coat of paint to the object. Household emulsion or artists acrylic paints can be used. You may want to execute a paint technique, such as sponging, stippling or marbling before adding the cut-out letters.



3 Cut out the letters or shapes from the paper. It is best not to use paper that is very thick, especially if the object to which you are gluing the shapes is curved.

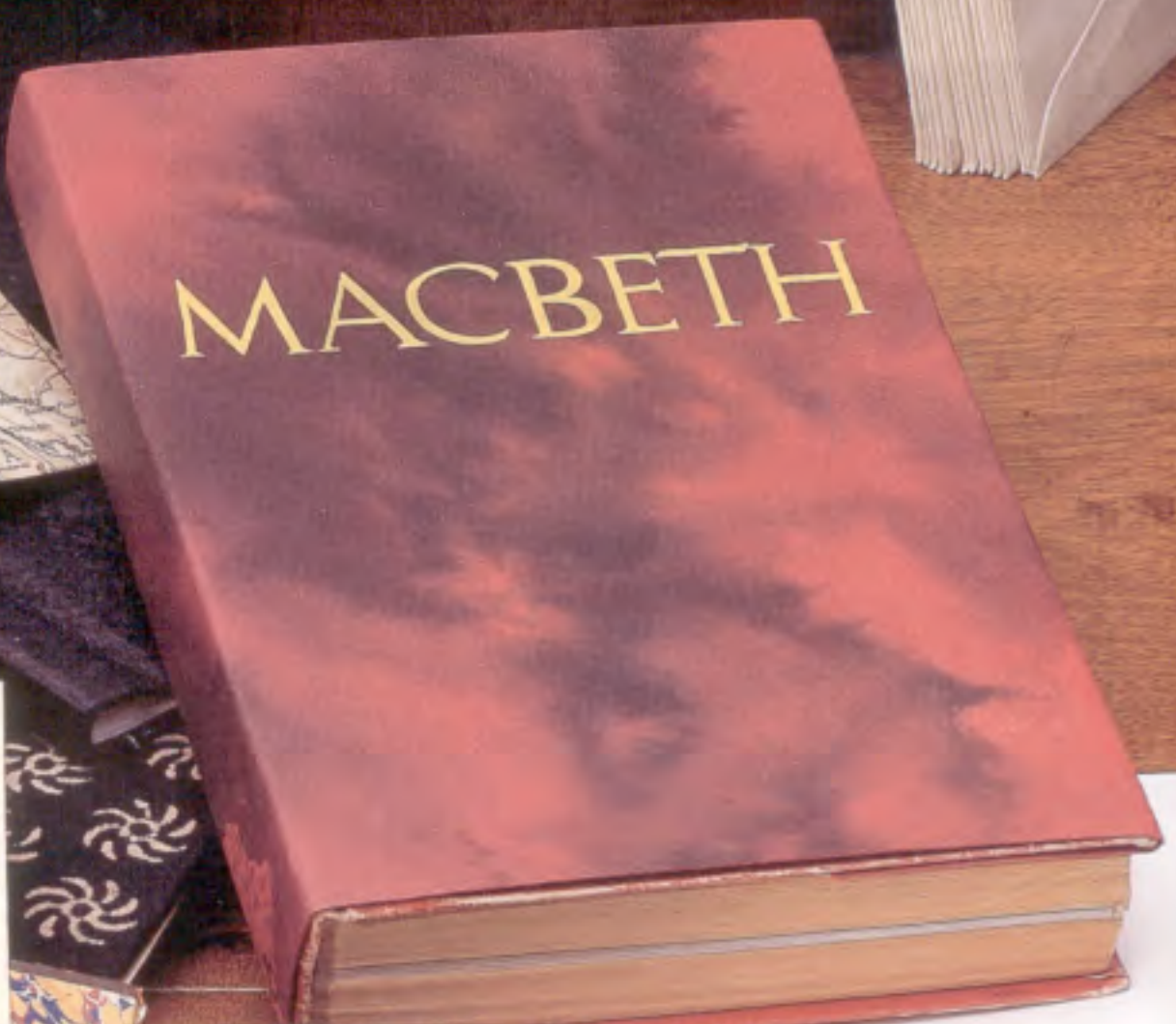


4 Fix the cut-out letters to the object with either PVA (transparent-drying glue) or spray fixative. If using spray fixative spray the cut-out shapes in an old cardboard box to contain the spray mist.

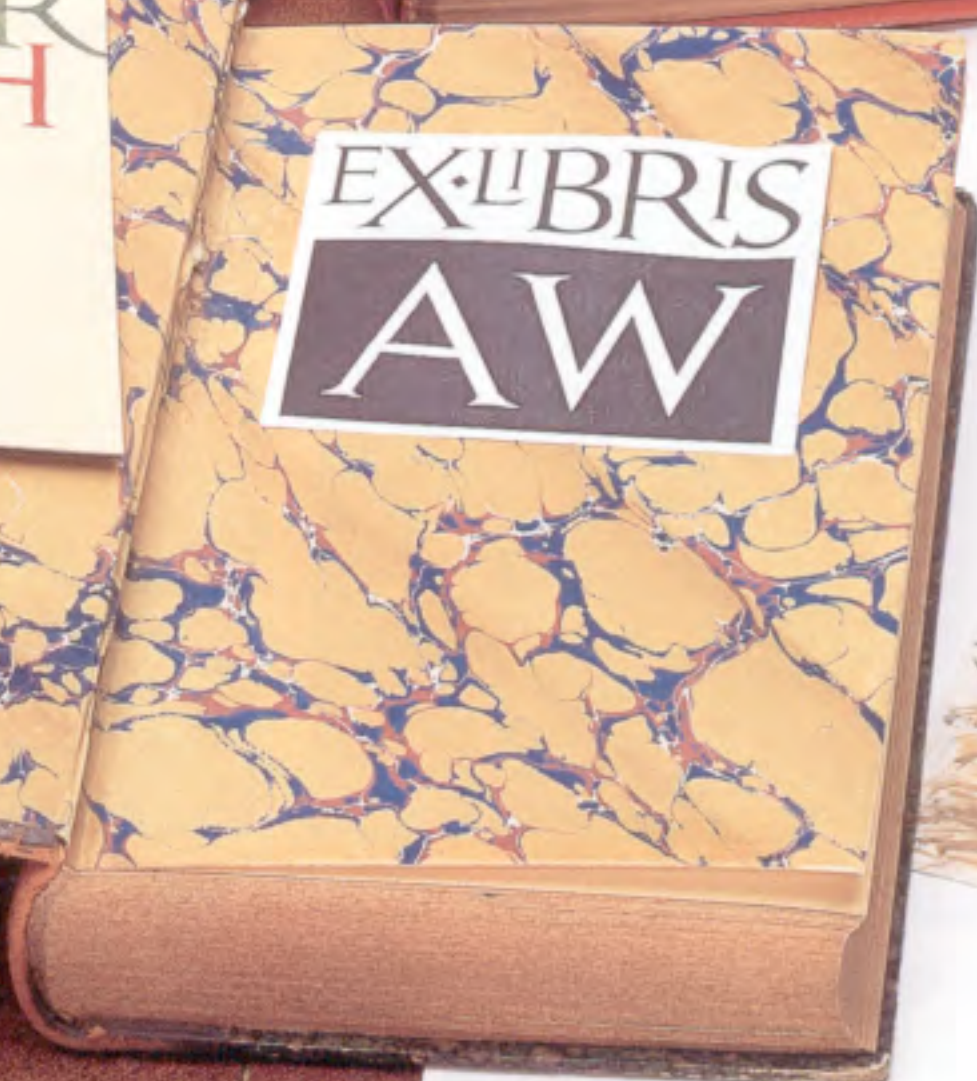


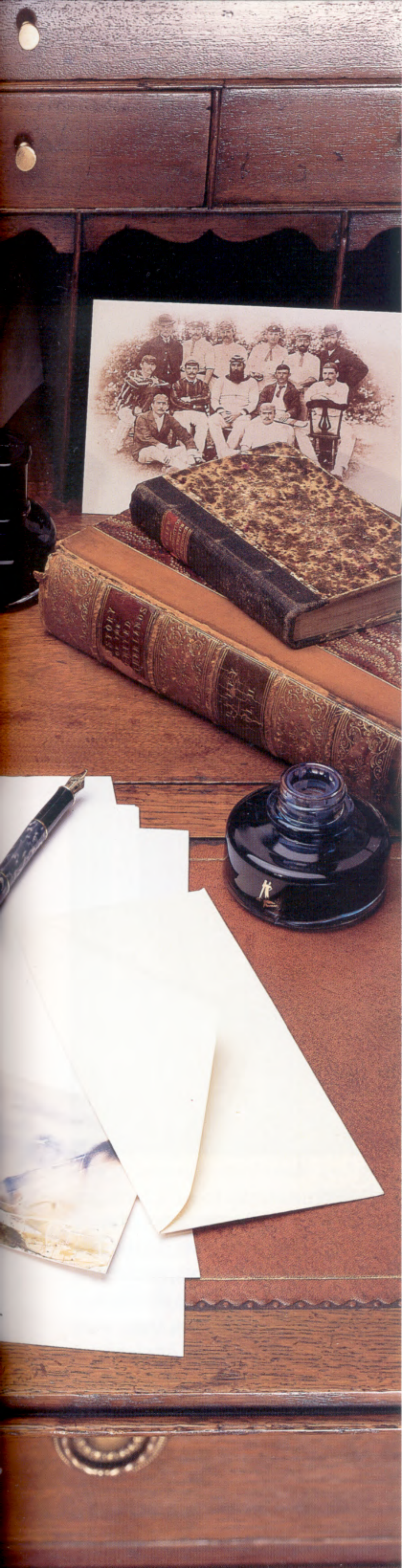
5 Finish off the *découpage* with several layers of varnish to seal in the cut-out letters. Two or three coats should be sufficient, but ideally you should varnish until you can no longer feel the edges of the letters.

EX·LIBRIS
EX·LIBRIS
AW



LIVRE
BOOK
LIBER
BUCH





Roman

The origins of the modern Western alphabet date from the 1st century AD, and the 23 letters that were used throughout the Roman Empire.

These most elegantly formed letters are based on the square and the circle, and although they can be constructed with a brush, their true strength is shown when they are carved – enabling the fall of light and shadow to enhance their characteristics.



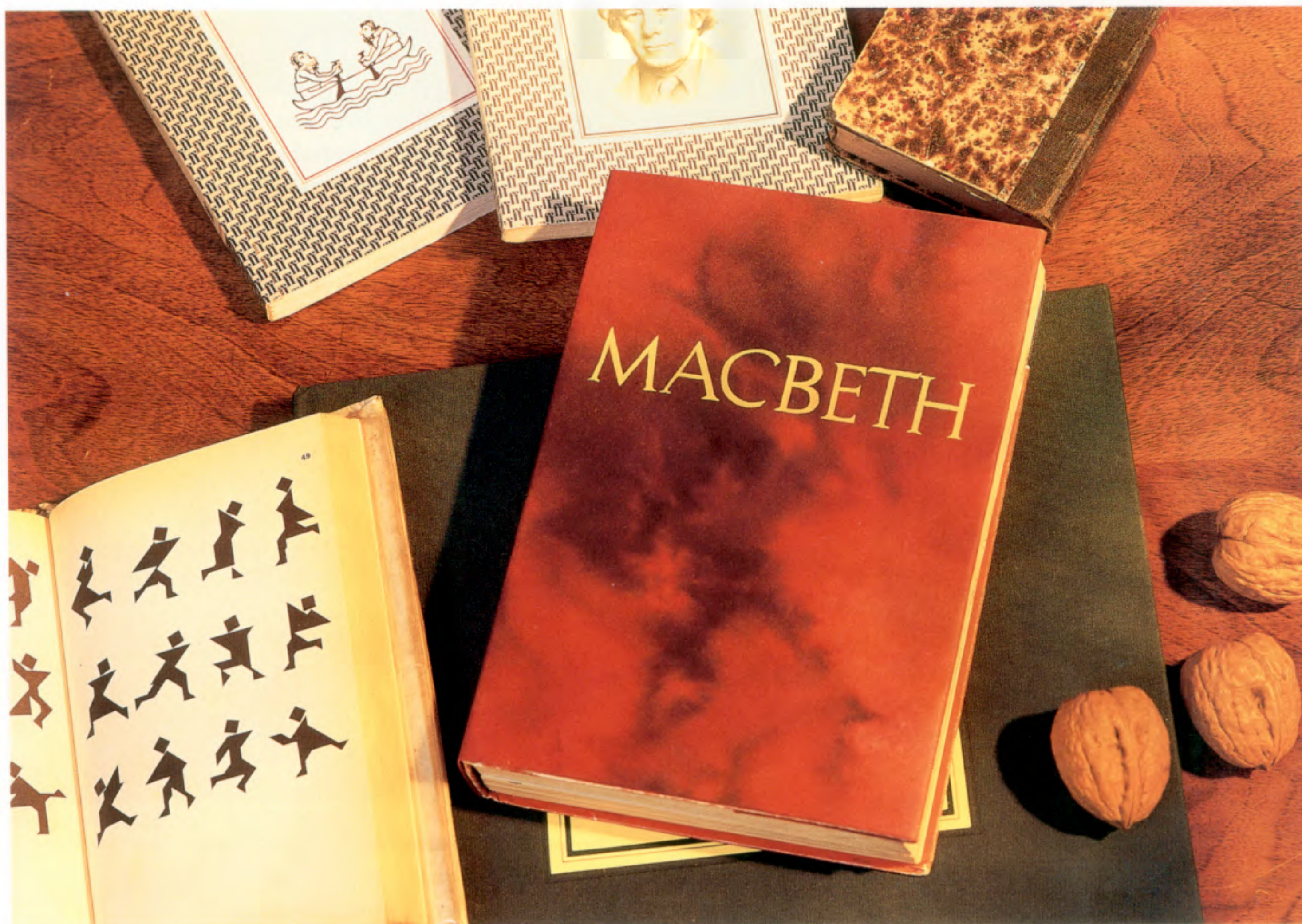
Memorial stone

The beautifully carved Roman capitals on this memorial stone at Ostia in Italy show clearly how the fall of light and shade give the letters strength and character.

The origins of the Roman alphabet

Western society owes much to its Greek and Roman ancestors, including the origin of the alphabet that we use today. In the 5th century BC, written accounts of myths and histories appeared in Greece in an alphabet that had been derived from the abstract symbols of the cuneiform language of the Babylonians and, before that, the hieroglyphics, or picture symbols, of Ancient Egypt. As the Greeks travelled extensively throughout the Mediterranean area, trading and founding colonies, their script spread to several countries, including parts of Italy.

When the Roman Empire displaced Greece as the leading civilization in Europe, it adopted the Greek alphabet and used it



as the basis for its own square capital letters, which were originally designed for carving. The Roman alphabet consisted of 23 of the 26 letters in the modern European alphabet, J, U and W being added in the Middle Ages to accommodate some of the northern European languages.

The Roman Empire was a well-organized and literate civilization that expanded rapidly in Europe and the Middle East. The maintenance of trade and government over such a wide area required a lot of administration and therefore provided much work for professional scribes and stone carvers. Many Roman monumental inscriptions carved in stone or marble can still be seen today all over Europe, on arches, buildings, statues and tombs, using the elegant Quadrata or Roman square capitals, and they relay to us much of Roman history.

Construction of the letters

The Romans considered lettering an important art, and carvers and scribes devoted considerable time to perfecting letterforms. The classical Roman capitals are based on the square, letters occupying a specified vertical division of the square - half width,

Book cover

The background for this book cover was worked on red paper that had first been stretched (see page 13). The paper was rewetted and black ink was applied gently and allowed to run. More water was added and the whole board was agitated to create an atmospheric, cloud-like background. The paper was left to dry and then cut from the board. The dimensions for the book cover were lightly marked in pencil, and the title of the book drawn in gouache with a brush.

Remember to select a sheet of paper that allows room for the spine, back cover and front and back flaps as well as the front cover. When the cover is finished and all the lettering is dry, cut out the cover, lightly score and fold it along the fold lines and wrap it around the book.



Carved A

Creative calligraphy includes experimenting with materials other than pen and ink and on surfaces other than paper or card. Carved or relief lettering, for example, can be very effective, and Roman capitals are the perfect letterform to carve. In addition, as you will need to observe the letters closely in order to carve them, you will learn much about their construction and shape.

The letter A illustrates the strength and impact that can be created from the fall of light and shadow on carved Roman letterforms. To accentuate this effect, you could paint the carved letter, perhaps in two colours, one for each side of the strokes. The piece can be mounted in a painted wooden frame to hide the uneven edge of the plaster-of-paris block.

three-quarter width and so on. Round letters are based on the circle, which fits into a square. They discovered that in order to make lines of letters look even in size and spacing they had to use optical illusion and visual spacing. The round letters were therefore enlarged fractionally compared to the others, and the spaces between different letters were varied. The basic geometric structure of the letters, the relationships between thicks and thins, curves and straight lines, and the construction of the serifs were all carefully considered and convey both strength and beauty. In terms of design and proportion these Roman square capitals have been acknowledged as the closest to perfection of all letterforms.

These square capitals were also drawn with brush and pen, but they could not be so easily constructed with these materials because the forms were originally designed by stone carvers to suit the shape and action of the chisel. As the use of written documents increased, so did the demand for an alternative lettering style that was better suited to writing materials, and this led to the emergence of Rustic capitals, an ideal alphabet for handwritten manuscripts. Compressed and less formal, these letters were easier and quicker to produce and took up less space, making them more economical in time and materials. Headings and initial letters remained in square capital form, just as they do today.

The basis of western alphabets

Having survived and developed over the last 2,000 years, the Roman alphabet has provided letters that form the basis for a wide range of handwritten and calligraphic styles, and many varieties of lettering styles have been based on the skeletal structure of these distinctive letterforms. In this book the various letter styles are placed in the order in which they were created or developed through the ages. If you are a newcomer to calligraphy you may find it easier to try some of the other letterforms, such as Uncials or italics, before attempting classical Roman square capitals. Owing to their origins as carved letterforms, square capitals are not easily constructed with edged pens. The serifs and finishing strokes in particular require patient practice and a delicate touch, although you may not find them difficult to master once you have become accustomed to calligraphy tools and materials. Having said this, it is worth studying, or at least referring to these historically important letterforms before embarking on other forms, as so many of them have been based on, or at least echo, characteristics found in Roman forms.



Plaster of paris

Plaster of paris (available from art and craft stores) is very manageable, and is easy to carve into with a scalpel or sharp craft (mat) knife. You do not need expensive equipment or materials to produce interesting designs. To make a block for carving, line a tin or box with a piece of plastic taken from a plastic bag. Mix the plaster of paris with water according to the instructions and pour it into the tin or box. When it is dry, turn out the lump of plaster; the plastic should peel off easily, revealing a smooth surface. Carefully draw your letter with a thin felt-tip pen, then carve it with a scalpel or knife, keeping the knife at the same angle to the plaster. You may find it useful to draw a guideline down the centre of each stroke before you start removing the plaster of paris.

Ex-libris plate and bookmark

If you are a keen book collector, ex-libris plates provide a good opportunity to practise calligraphy. First create your image using a black felt-tip pen on white paper. When you are happy with your design, reduce it on a photocopier until eight copies will fit onto one sheet of paper. Make eight copies and paste them onto a sheet of white paper and make small cropping marks at all four corners of each plate. Photocopy this sheet as many times as you need to for the number of plates you want. Cut out the plates using the crop marks and paste onto the inside front covers of your books.

The design for the bookmark was planned on layout paper. To do this, first draw all the letters on layout paper and cut round them, then move them about and overlap them until the composition is satisfactory. Tape the pieces down and trace the whole design onto another piece of layout paper. Transfer this onto the bookmark card and then, using gouache and a paintbrush, fill in the letters. The letters can each be a single colour or, as here, they can be multi-coloured (see page 68).

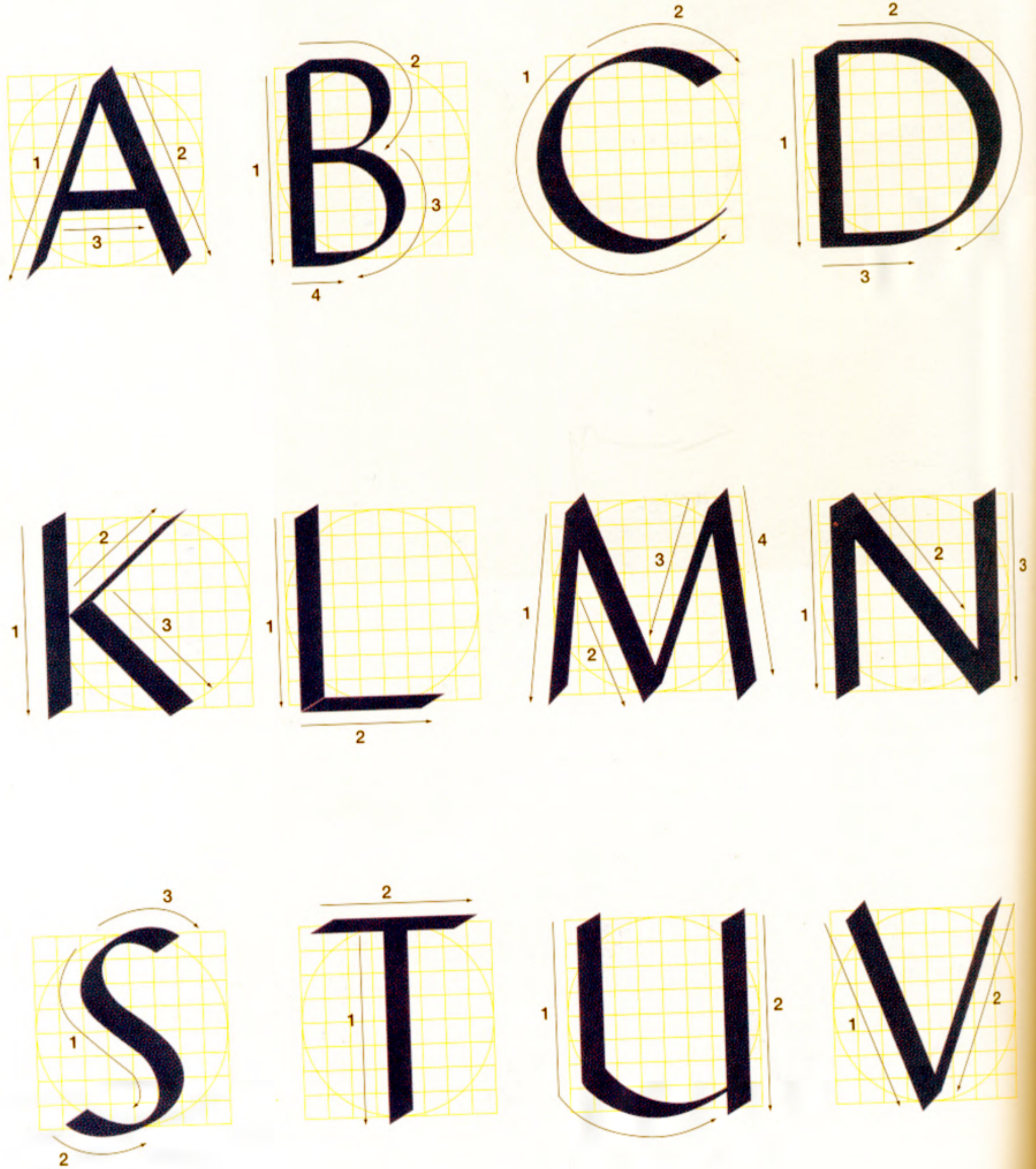
Roman capitals

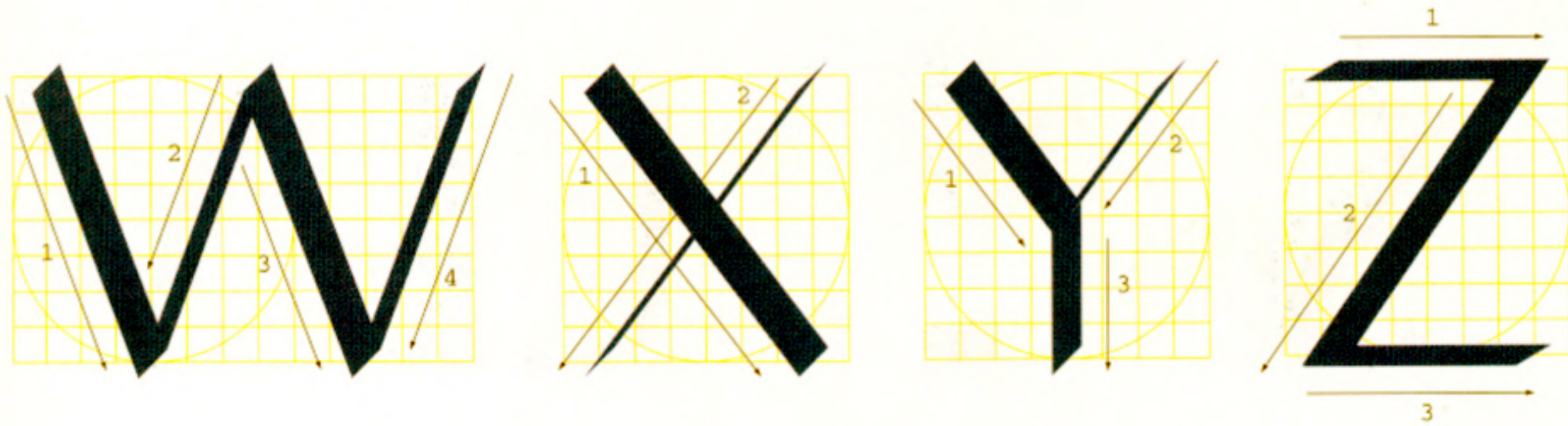
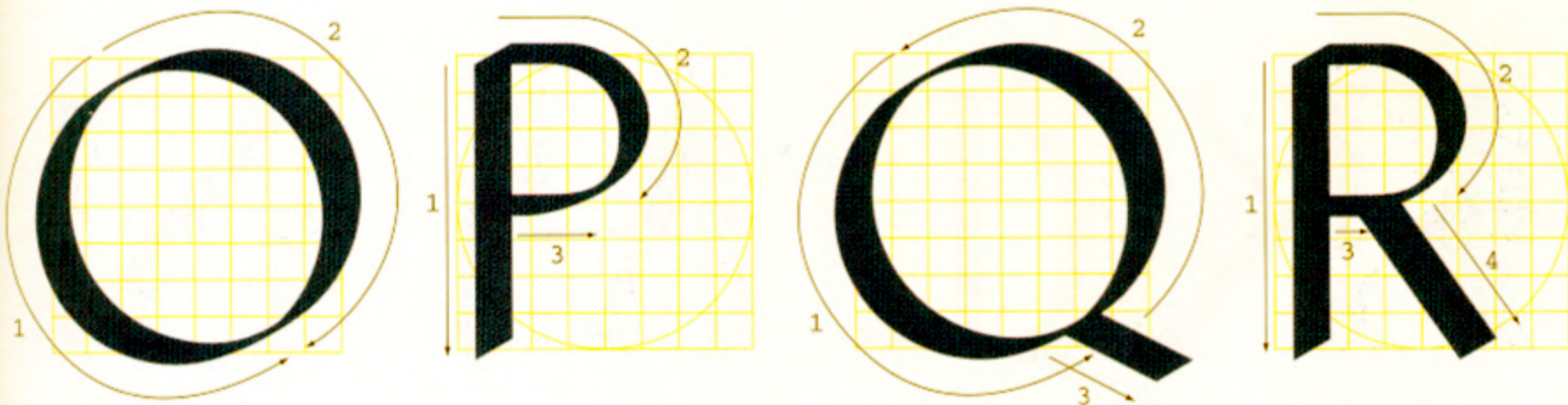
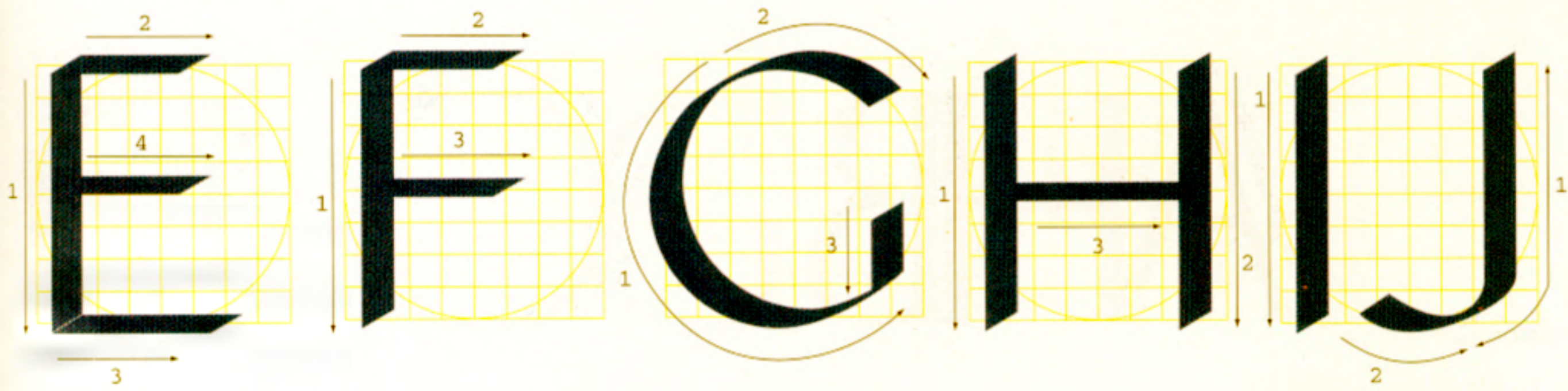
Cap height: 9 nib widths

Pen angle: 30° or 45°

The proportions of Roman capitals are based on a circle and square.

Most letters are drawn with the pen held at 30° to the line of writing. Use a pen angle of 45° for the A, M, N, V, W, X, and Y. Draw the diagonal stroke of the Z with the pen held horizontally.



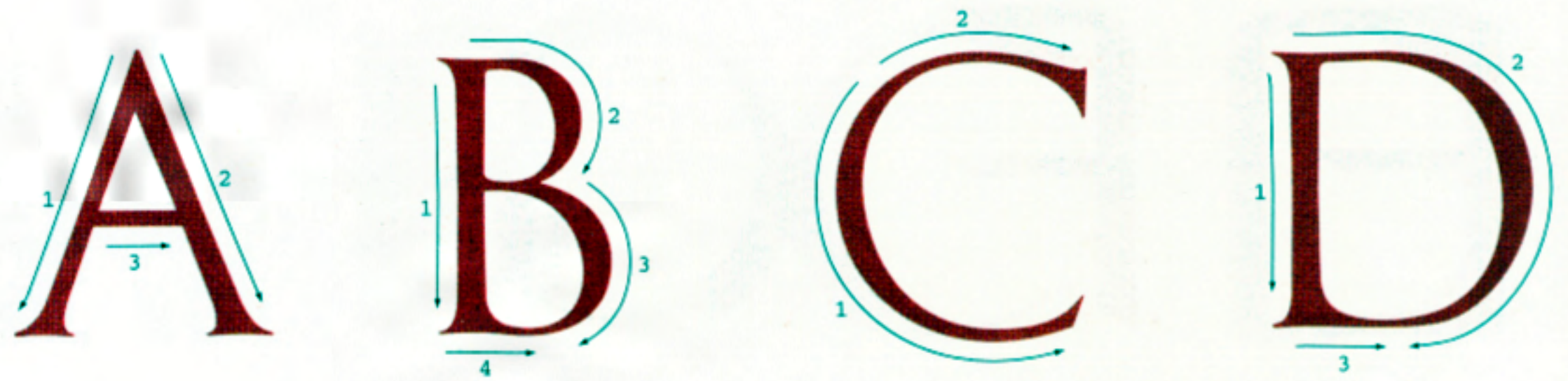


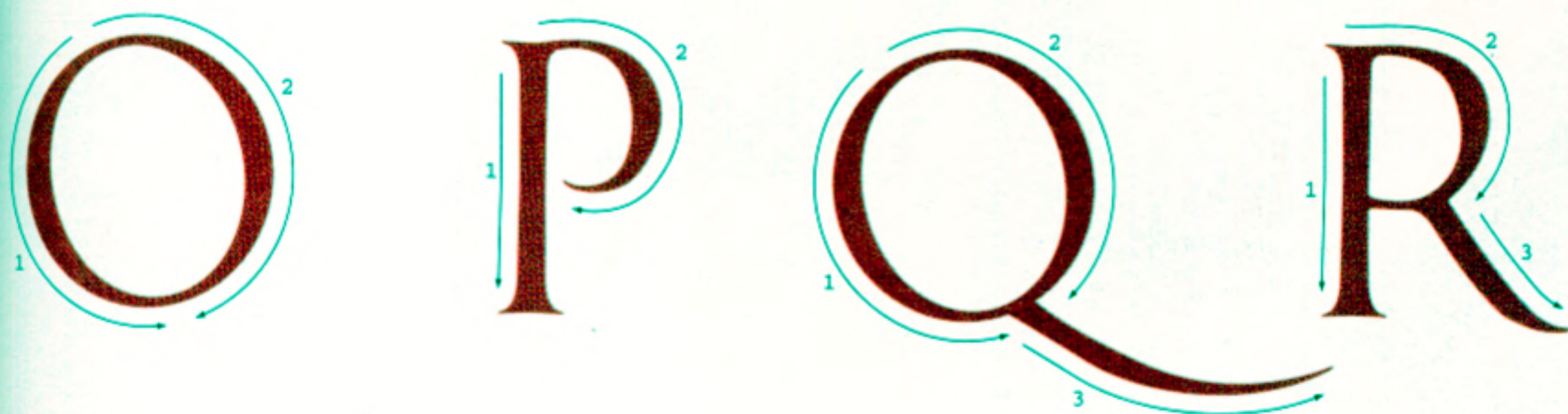
**Condensed
Roman capitals**

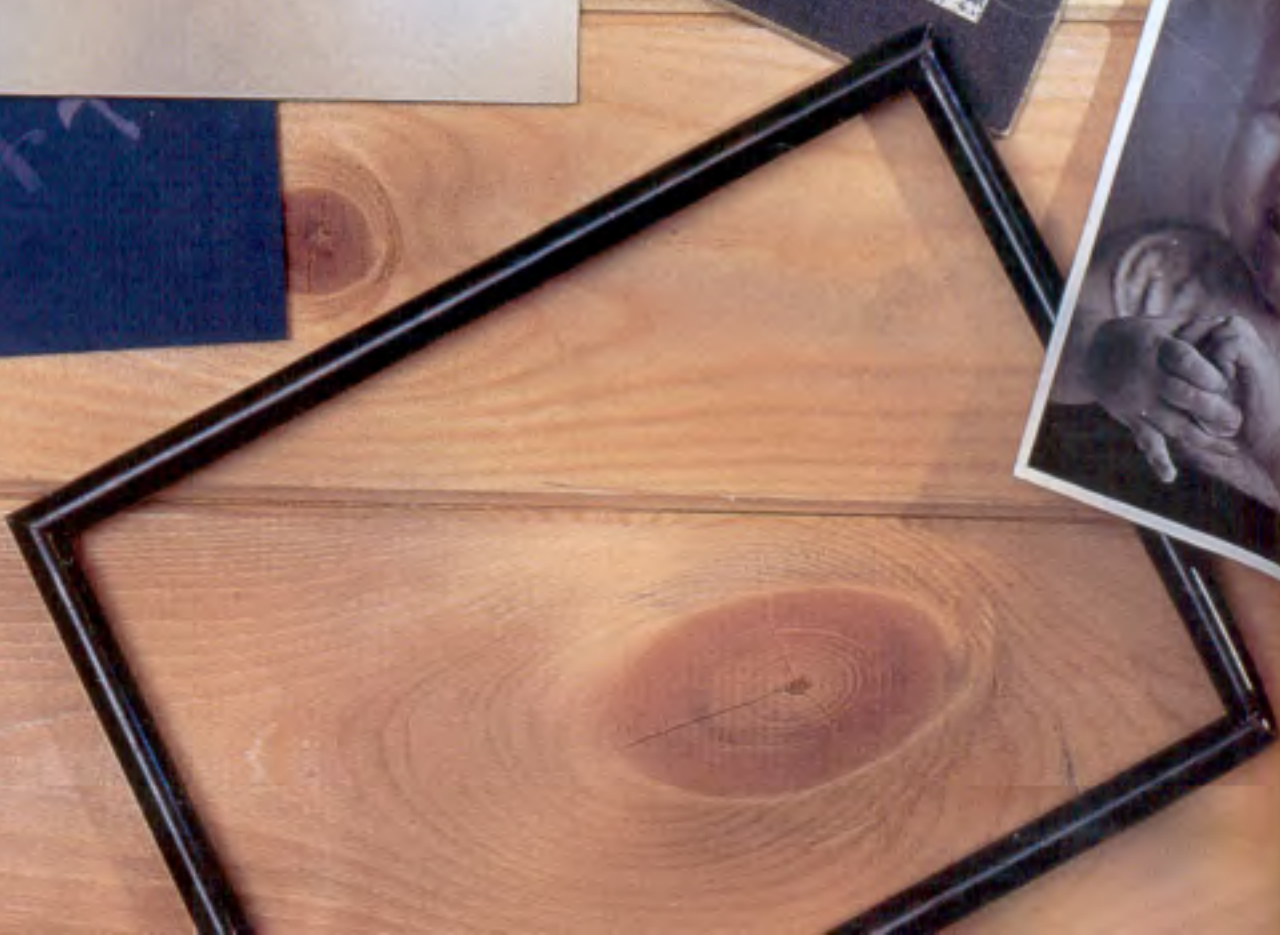
Cap height: 9 nib widths

Pen angle: 30°

These letterforms are constructed in the same way as those on pages 30 and 31. The serifs are created with two strokes. When drawing the second part of a serif you will have to use the corner of the metal pen or nib.









Uncials

Weighty, rounded forms with emphatic contrasts in the thick and thin strokes, Uncials are acknowledged as the inspiration that produced the famous Book of Kells and the beautifully decorated Lindisfarne Gospels. Upright and bold, these letters have a simple construction. They produce a pleasing texture and combine well with other scripts.

The Book of Kells

This page from The Book of Kells shows the Genealogy of Christ, from St. Luke's Gospel 'xp' to St. Matthew. Produced in the 8th century, the pages are extremely detailed; many are decorated with images painted in and around the letterforms.



The development of Uncials

Uncial letters appeared during the 4th century AD as a development of both Roman square capitals and Rustica letterforms. For a time the Romans were using all three letterforms, with the Uncials providing the transition from majuscule (capitals) to minuscule (lower-case) forms. This new script became the main book hand for late Roman and early Christian writings and it continued to be in regular use until the 8th century.

During this time formal documents were written on parchment and vellum, with the reed pen increasingly making way for the quill, and these materials allowed for greater speed and flexibility. Uncials were originally contained between two



horizontal guidelines, giving a fixed letter height, with only small ascenders and descenders. The Uncial was then followed by the Half-Uncial, in which, for the first time, some of the letters cross the writing line (the band formed by the two guidelines), forming ascenders and descenders more as we tend to recognize them today, and this development gradually led to the increased use of minuscule lettering. It took time for Uncials to become popular, and for scribes to realize that these highly decorative, round characters provided a refreshing change to previous letterforms.

Uncials became the standard script of the early Christian Church. Throughout northern and western Europe, evangelists and missionaries began writing the Gospels in highly decorated books using Uncial and Half-Uncial letterforms. Excellent examples include the Lindisfarne Gospels and the Irish Book of Kells. Although Uncials are closely identified with manuscripts of the early Christian Church, they have a contemporary feel both as individual letters and when used for blocks of text. It is probably this aesthetic quality that has influenced and convinced scribes and calligraphers throughout the centuries to continue to use the Uncial letterstyle.

Photo album

The background on this hand-made photograph album exploits the regular texture created by a repeat pattern of Uncial letters. The letters are drawn in blue ink with an automatic pen on fairly thick card. By drawing larger Uncials in a square format with pen and ink, and then drawing over them with diluted bleach, it is possible to make some rows of lettering appear to recede. The four large-scale initials, drawn with more freedom and with slightly flourished serifs, come forward from the other letterforms and catch the eye first.

This photograph album is simple to make. Fold a large piece of card in half, and make two holes through both thicknesses on the folded edge with a hole-puncher. Insert as many sheets of paper as you need, also with holes punched in them; thread raffia or string through the holes and tie at the front.

The characteristics of Uncial alphabets

Constructed with the end of the pen nib held parallel to the line of writing or at a very slight angle, these open, rounded letters have a friendly appearance, which is perhaps partly responsible for their popularity. In addition, the position of the pen or brush creates a distinct contrast between the thick and thin strokes of each letter. As the characters have fairly thick verticals, Uncial letterforms appear quite squat, and you can use this quality in your designs. Rows of words, or groups of letters such as someone's initials, written in Uncial letters, can produce a regular texture that is ideal for creating a repeating pattern.

Careful choice of papers, inks and colours enables you to create very different images and results. Try using rows of repeated Uncials, perhaps an alphabet or the name of a friend or relative on wrapping paper for a present. Plain wrapping papers are available in a range of different surfaces, and when inks and paints are applied by brush or calligraphy pen to some of these, unusual and interesting effects can result.

Once you have mastered the Uncial characters, experiment with creating serifs in different ways. Instead of drawing the more precise serifs shown on pages 40-43, use the corner of a metal pen to produce hairline (very fine) finishes to certain strokes (see page 21). This can be done by quickly twisting the pen nib while moving it in a continuous curve at the end of a stroke, just before lifting the pen from the page. This is much easier to execute than it sounds. Try it out on a layout pad and you will be surprised at how quickly you can achieve control of the corner of the nib. Practice should give you the confidence to try more elaborate flourishes and extensions to letters.



Uncial alphabet

Alphabets are excellent vehicles for designing interesting compositions. This Uncial alphabet, arranged in a rectangular block, was drawn in red ink with an automatic pen. When designing this type of composition, take plenty of time planning it on a layout pad, first working out how the letters should join, overlap or sit alongside each other in order to achieve balance and good spacing.

Sealing and gluing on a wooden surface

Before sticking paper, card or lettering onto wooden items, you must prepare the surface correctly. After sanding, priming and painting the surface with your chosen paint technique, seal it with either a varnish and PVA solution or just PVA solution. Paper with lettering on it can be fixed to this surface with undiluted PVA.

You can seal the paper to the wooden object with several layers of varnish, as with the *découpage* technique on page 23.



Picture frame and mounts (mats)

The repeat-pattern quality of Uncials can be used to create rich borders around blocks of calligraphy. If the letters are drawn very close together, or if they touch or slightly overlap, their dense textural character creates an intricate abstract border pattern. Picture frames and mounts (mats) are ideal vehicles on which to exploit these effects.

The wooden picture frame uses Uncial letterforms cut out from wrapping paper and glued onto the frame (see opposite). The mounts (mats) have been created by repeating letters drawn in ink and then in a bleach solution (see page 135) with automatic pens on pieces of mount-board (matboard) in a selection of colours.

Storage-jar labels

Because they are very legible, Uncials can provide a refreshing style of lettering for single words, for decorating or labelling objects, even when the lettering is turned on its side and runs vertically.

These labels have a simple, pale background wash applied to stretched paper (see page 13) with a large, flat paintbrush. The lettering was added in a darker shade of the same colour, in gouache.

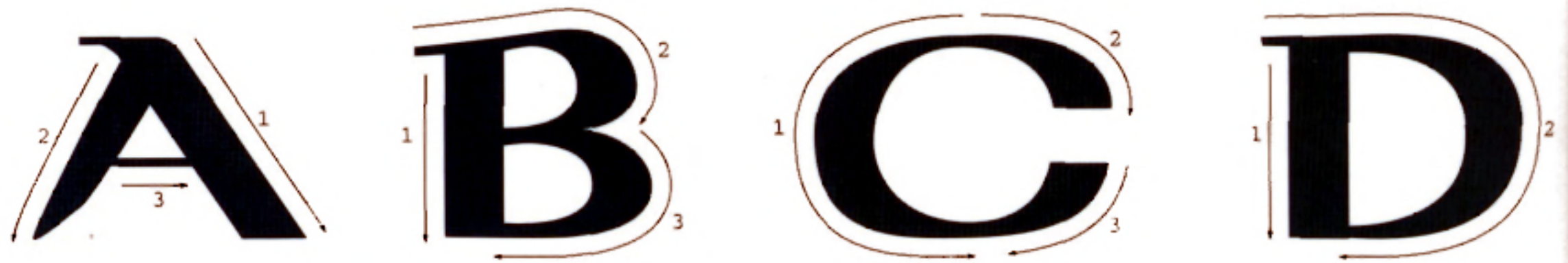
The labels can be secured to the jars with double-sided tape.



Uncials
Upper case

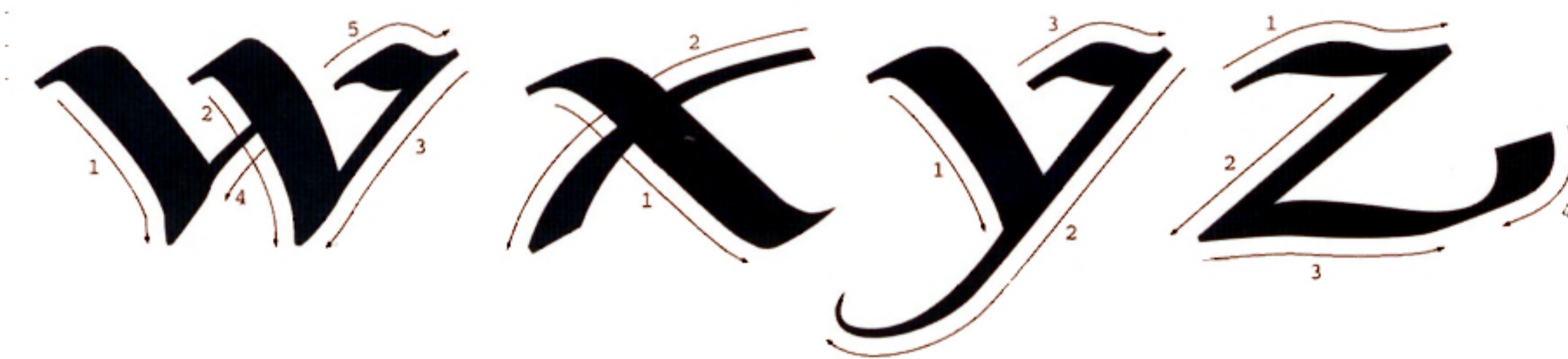
Cap height: 4 nib widths

Pen angle: 0° (horizontal)



Uncials are relatively easy and quick to draw. You may like to change the pen angle to 20° to create an Uncial alphabet with a slightly different look.



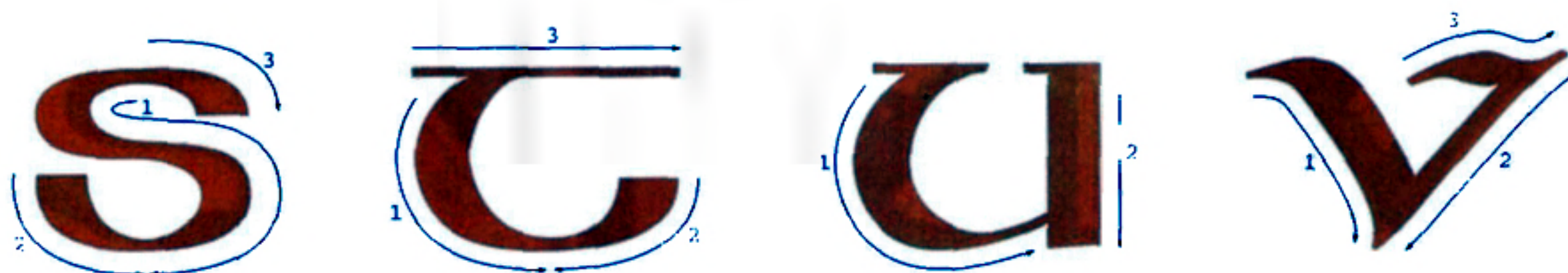
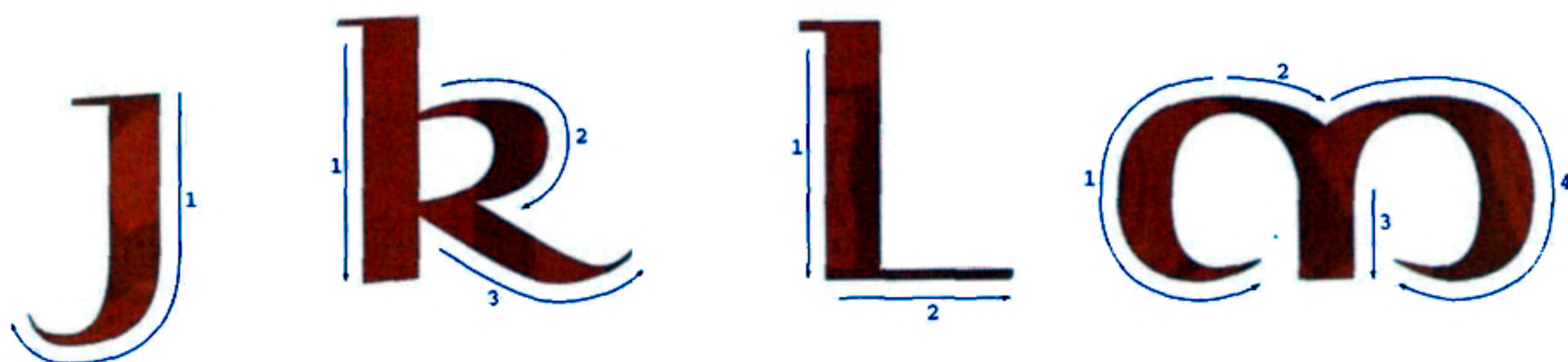
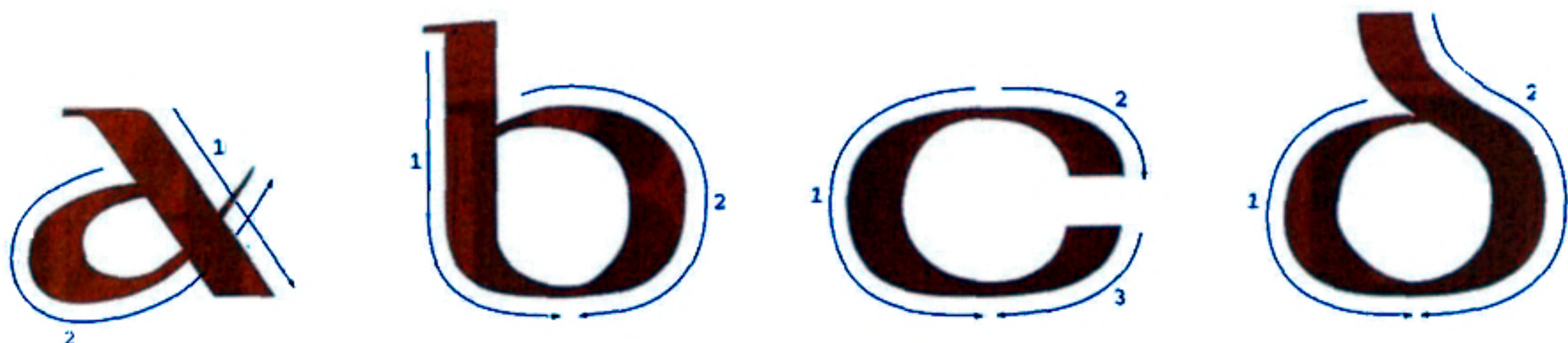


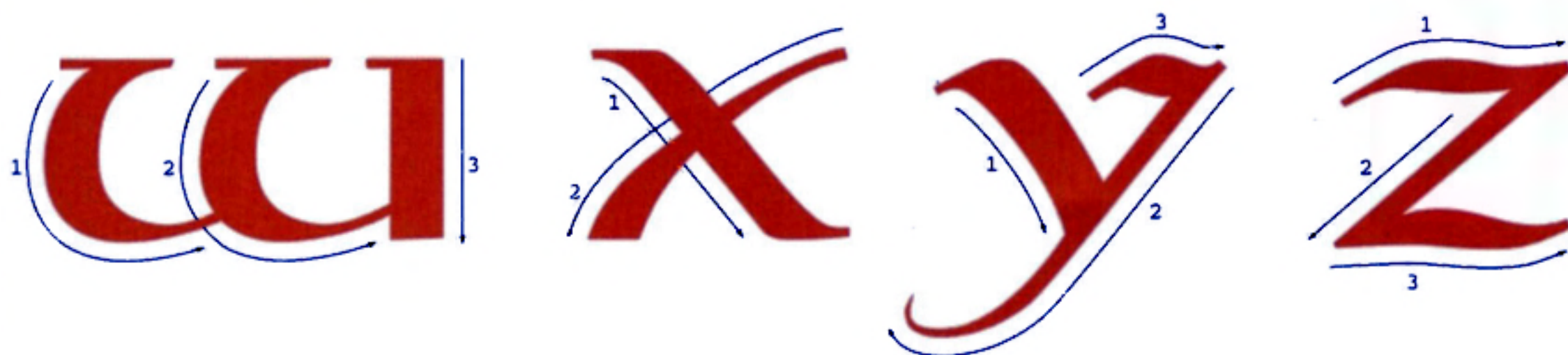
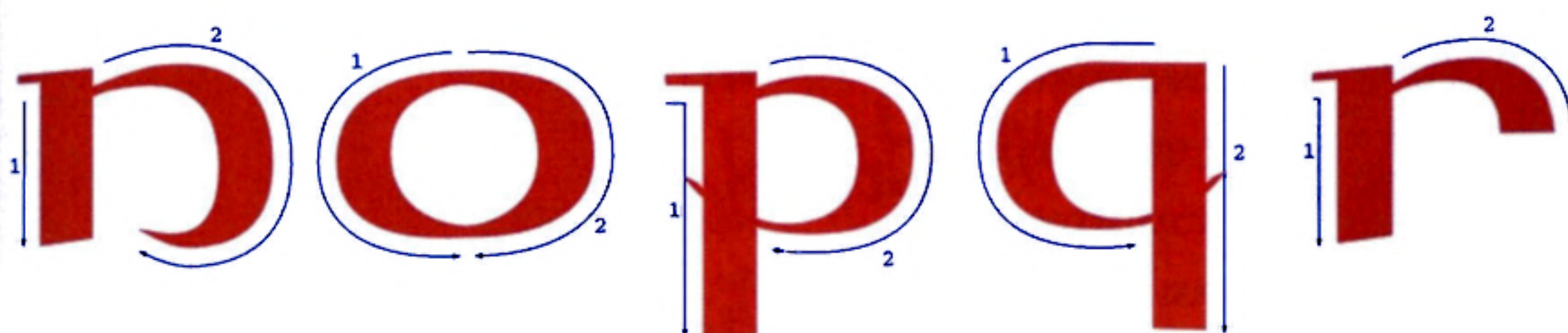
Uncials
Lower case

x height: 4 nib widths

Pen angle: 0° (end of nib parallel to writing line)

The position of the pen creates a distinct contrast between the thick and thin strokes of each letter.







Pliny's Natural History

This decorative page in Caroline Manuscript is from Pliny's Natural History, and was produced in Italy during the 15th century.

The first lower-case alphabet

Following the collapse of the Roman Empire many variations on the Roman scripts, particular to different areas, began to appear throughout Europe. At this time itinerant priests provided the main link between religious centres in different regions, and they spread new ideas and developments in letterforms and written text throughout the continent. By the end of the 8th century such a diversity of scripts was being used that Charlemagne, the first king of the Franks and Holy Roman Emperor from 768 to 814, decided that a standardized form of minuscule (lower-case) script should be devised to replace all the variations currently in use throughout his empire, which included substantial areas of western and northern Europe.



Address book

A notebook can be converted into a personalized address book through the addition of a specially designed cover or front piece. This is a relatively quick project as the front piece can be drawn in ink on paper and pasted onto the front of the book. The words were drawn almost touching each other, sacrificing some legibility but producing a striking overall design.

In addition, Charlemagne was concerned by the ever-increasing number of textual errors that had crept into manuscripts over the centuries. Monks and copyists made mistakes that were then repeated by later copyists, who would also introduce their own errors, until in some cases the meaning of whole passages of text was inadvertently altered. Charlemagne's solution was to commission new copies of the Gospels and other religious texts, to be produced from the earliest or best-authenticated sources, and to be undertaken with the greatest care and attention. Responsibility for developing a standard hand and supervising the task of making the new copies fell to the English monk, Alcuin of York, who in 789 was appointed to supervise the school at the monastery of St Martin at Tours, France.

Alcuin referred back to both the square and Rustic capitals of Roman alphabets, as well as to Uncial and Half-Uncial letterforms in creating the first true minuscule script. Named Carolingian Minuscule (also called Caroline Manuscript), this letterform became the standard book hand adopted by monks and copyists throughout Charlemagne's empire. Such was the impact of Charlemagne's reform that Carolingian Minuscule continued to be used in many parts of Europe, and by the 10th century it had reached England, where it was employed extensively.

Irish scribes of the 9th century were also beginning to use true minuscule hands in producing manuscripts. Examples of these letterforms can be found in copies of the Lindisfarne Gospels dating from this period, in which scribes wrote translations in Carolingian Minuscule between lines of text which were written in Uncial lettering.



Wine book

A book in which to note down wines that you have tasted, their origin, the grapes and vintage, and the date tasted, or even just to keep the labels in, can provide an interesting and useful source of reference. This cover was made by stretching a sheet of paper (see page 13) and then laying down a background wash of red wine, which will usually change the colour of the paper quickly. The names of favourite wines have been added in ink with a metal pen.

In the process of rewriting various manuscripts in the new script, Alcuin and his successors also began to consider the hierarchy of different parts of a book, such as headings and titles, and their relationship to the text. It is probably fair to say that not since the creation of the Roman alphabet had such an important development occurred in the history of writing as that represented by the birth of Carolingian Minuscule. These letterforms can be classed as the first genuine lower-case alphabet, with longer ascenders and descenders than had previously been seen. Roman square capitals were often used with Carolingian Minuscule as there were no upper-case letterforms. The Carolingian Minuscule and Roman forms share a sense of proportion and a sensitive movement between thick and thin strokes, and sit well alongside each other. Although often written close together, these letters are quite open in themselves and create an interesting rhythm.

Matching alphabet to object

When deciding on a lettering style for a particular project, first choose a theme and then look for an alphabet that seems sympathetic to that theme. All the alphabets in this book, excluding the contemporary ones, are reminiscent of different periods in history. Carolingian Minuscule seems to convey a very strong medieval feel, and works well for projects with a historical theme, such as a family tree.

One quality that all good designs have in common is appropriateness in some form, either through shape, style, colours or materials, to the subject matter. Calligraphy provides a particularly good outlet for playing around with these different



elements because use can be made of different sizes and scales of lettering, and one style can be juxtaposed with another to produce unusual and effective designs. In addition, modern calligraphers can take liberties with historic letterforms as they have the advantage of more styles, methods and materials to choose from than were available to the scribes of centuries past. Whereas the scribes were usually concentrating primarily on legibility and clarity, today letters can be used in endless ways, the only limitation being the boundaries of your imagination. You can use letterforms for their beautiful individual shapes, or for the accumulative abstract patterns created when, for example, you overlap letters of various sizes. You can take sections of letters, cropping closely into them, and highlight the shapes and forms found within the letters or the spaces in between them. Try to make use of these negative shapes in and around letterforms as they will help you to understand the construction of letters and make them easier to draw.

Alternatives to ink

In addition to the mediums commonly used for calligraphy, there are many unusual ones that are fun and rewarding to experiment with, often with surprising results. For example, tea or coffee solutions can create the look of old, antiquated lettering, as on a manuscript weathered by time.

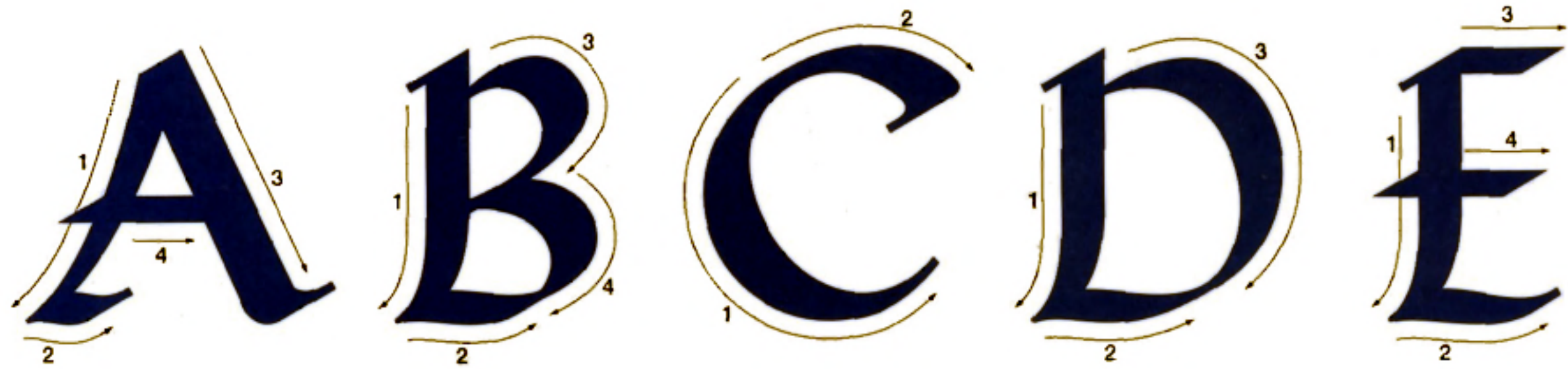
Scrapbook sleeve

The design for this scrapbook sleeve makes use of the names of famous people, drawn in ink with an automatic pen on a sheet of patterned paper. The edges of the paper have been burnt and singed to create an antique look. To make the cover, which can be slipped on and off, fold the paper around the outside of the scrapbook and join the ends with double-sided tape.

***Caroline Manuscript
Upper case***

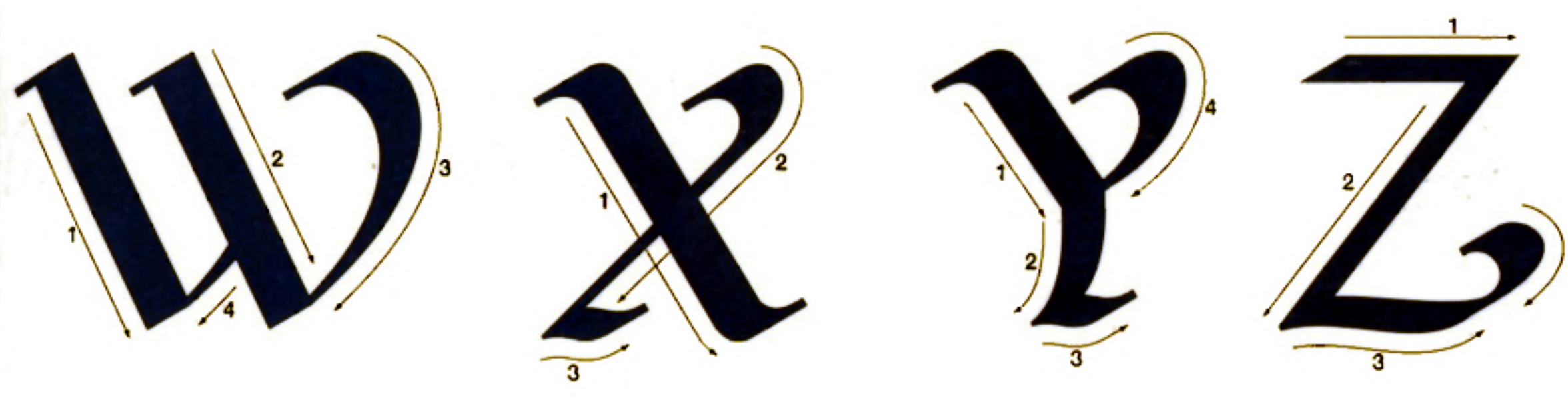
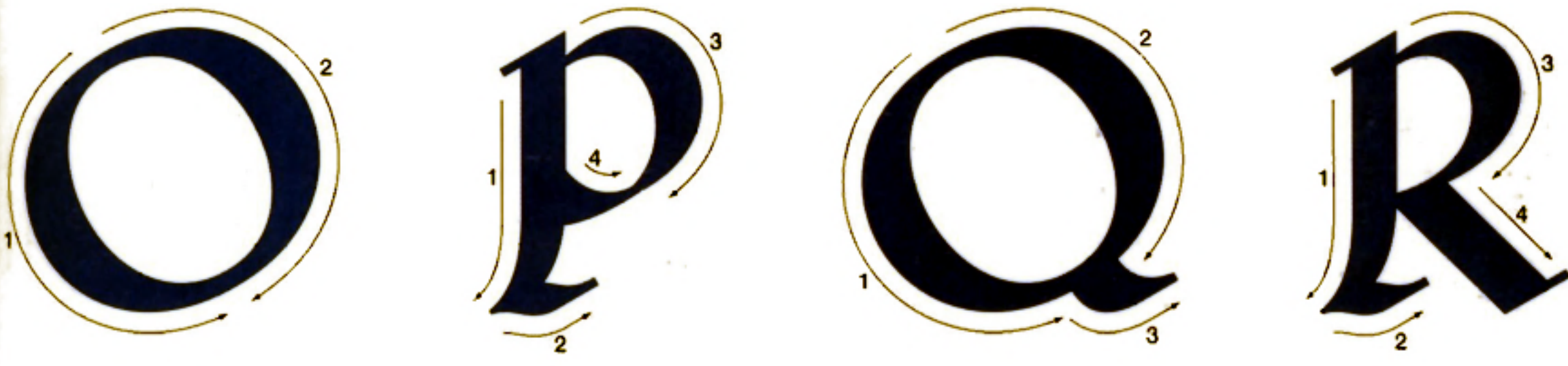
Cap height: 5 nib widths

Pen angle: 30°



While retaining some of the Uncial characteristics, these letterforms have a stronger sense of order and proportion, with more vertical strokes.

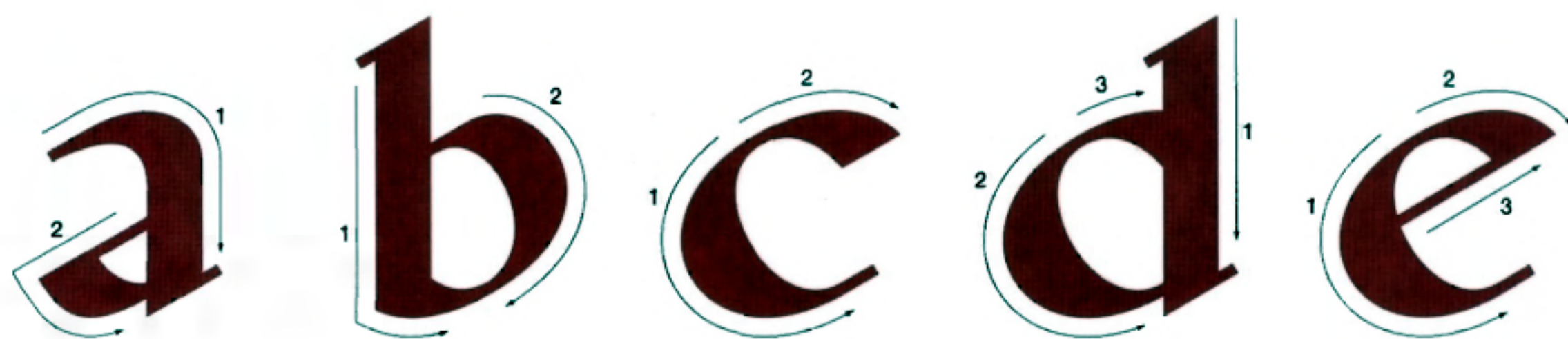




***Caroline Manuscript
Lower case***

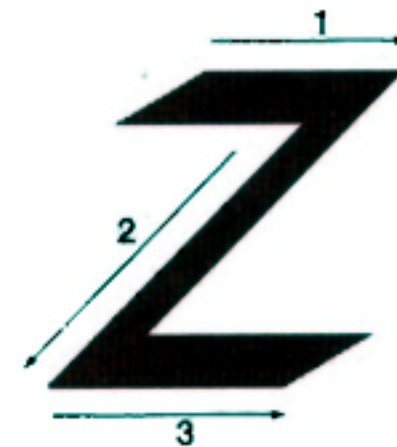
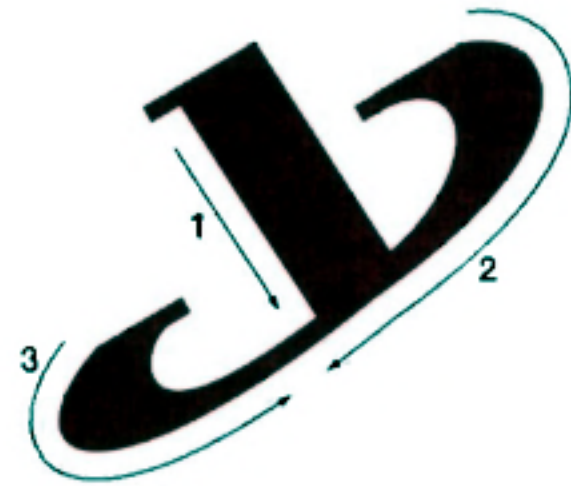
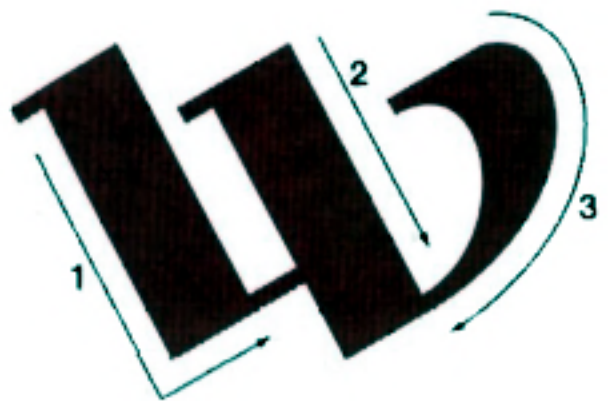
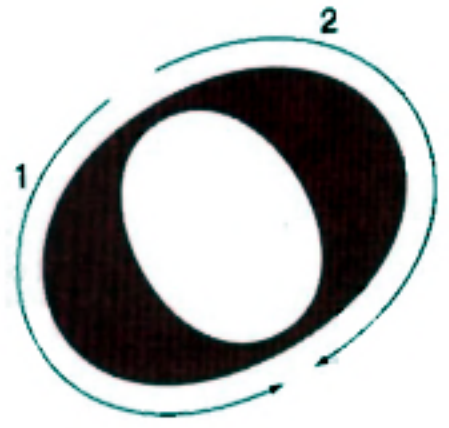
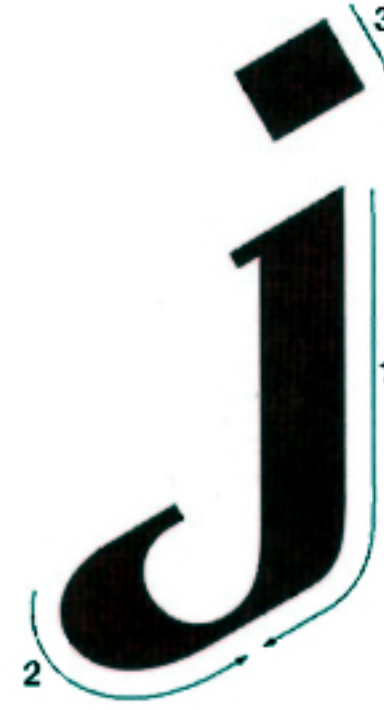
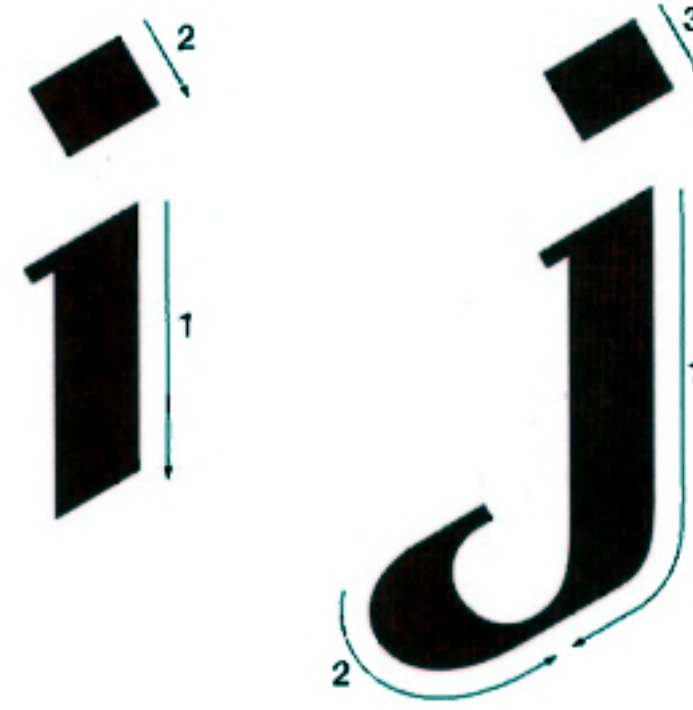
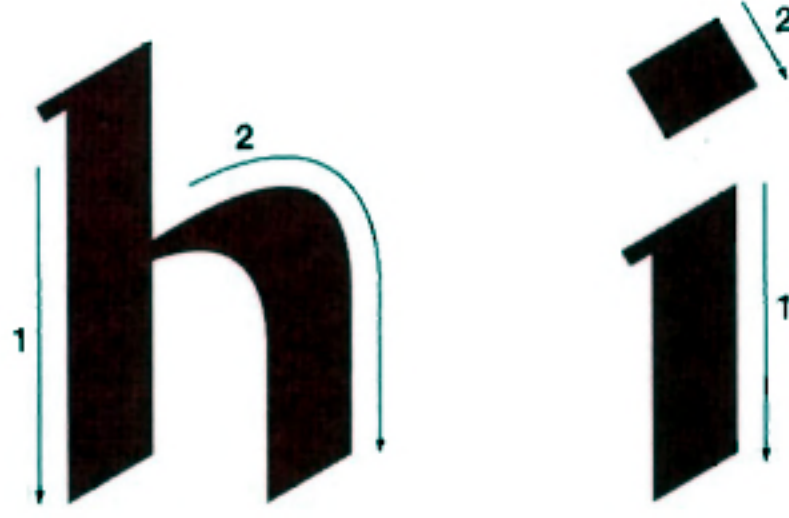
x height: 5 nib widths

Pen angle: 30°



The simple structure and shapes of these letters are quick to draw and provide a steady rhythm when used for a piece of text. This consistency is not broken up by thin hairlines or flourishes.





Notebook

A notebook has been given more interest with the addition of a Versal alphabet. The letters have been drawn in black ink on blue paper, which is then pasted onto the cover.



Producing Versals

Versals are constructed in a different way to most other calligraphic styles in that they are built up from a series of strokes. However, as when producing any calligraphy, the hand and whole arm, not just the fingers and wrist, should move, much as they do when you draw at an easel. Versals can be described as drawn, rather than written, forms because a number of strokes are used to complete the main outline of a letter, and then the area within the outline is filled in. However, the character of the letters, and particularly of the serifs and flourishes, is still very much dependent upon the pen or brush stroke. Through practising Versals you will discover that better letterforms tend to result from swift, spontaneous drawing.

Versals are perfect for large-scale work because they have great presence while still allowing for much detail, especially within the strokes of the letters themselves. You may want to try expanding or condensing these letterforms, depending upon the particular project you have in mind. Why not try to exaggerate the outer curves of these letters and, in contrast, add thin hairline flourishes as finishing strokes?

Versals are wonderful, versatile letterforms that can be given plenty of character, and they also have the advantage that they can easily be personalised to give an individual appearance to each letter. You can have a great deal of fun adapting and designing your own Versal letterforms on a wide variety of different projects.

Gift tag

Relatively small and quick to produce, gift tags are ideal for trying out new inks and paints. This example uses Versals drawn in red gouache, with the letters filled in using the same colour. The spaces in and around the letters have been filled in with blue gouache using a brush. Note that the blue does not touch the letters; there is a thin space where the colour of the card shows through.

**Trunk**

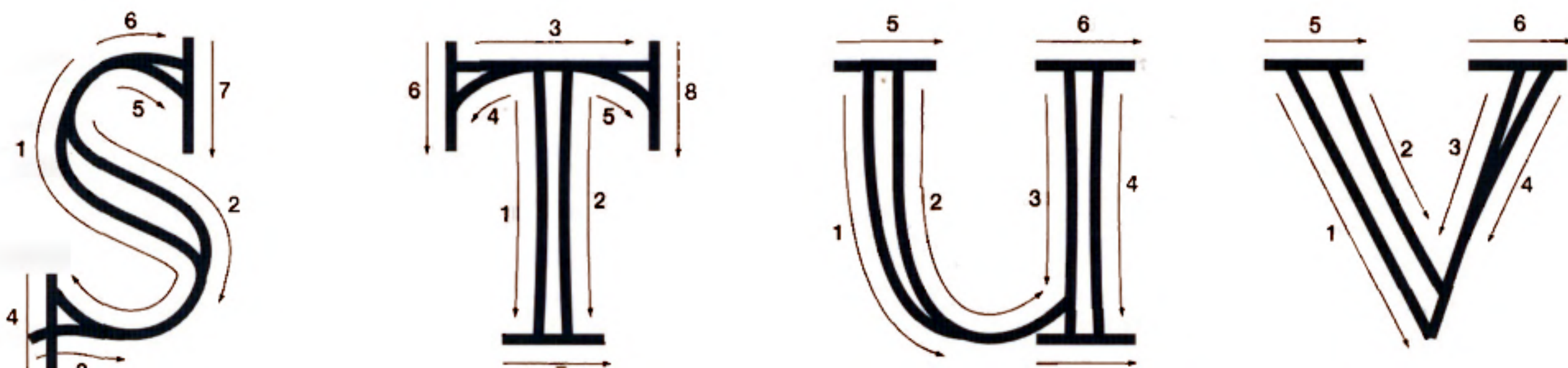
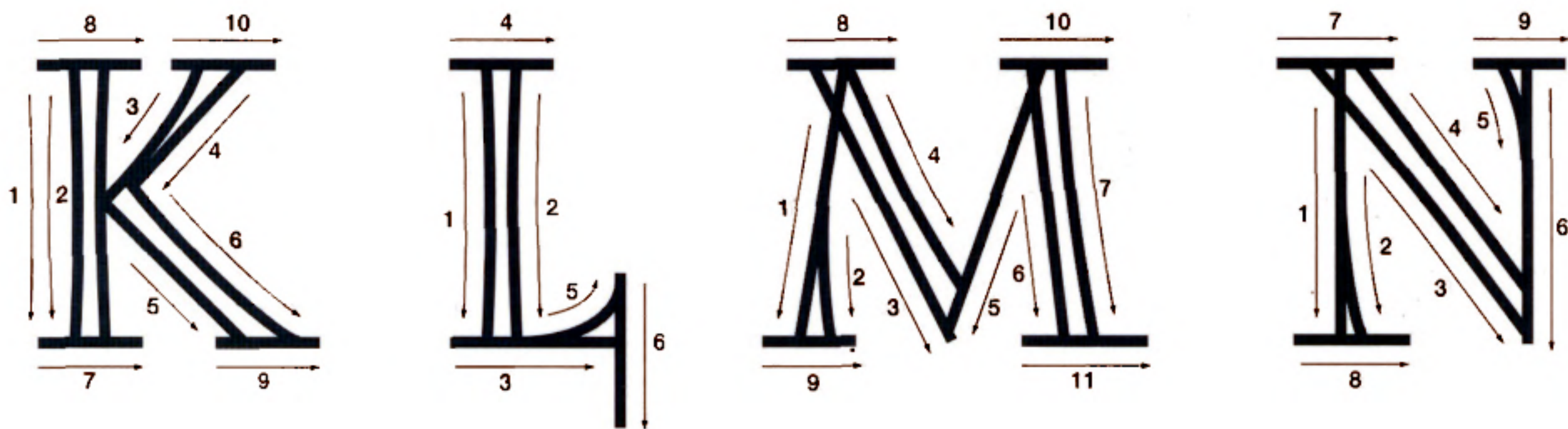
Enamel paints were used on this metal trunk because they are quite durable. The dark blue background is applied first, after marking the area with masking tape. A sharp scalpel run around the edge of the masking tape when the background is dry will give a straight edge. The letter outlines were drawn on paper and transferred onto the trunk by pricking through the paper with a compass (see page 17). The letters were then painted following the pin-pricked outlines. Decorative motifs, such as the stars, can be applied in the same way or with a stencil or template.

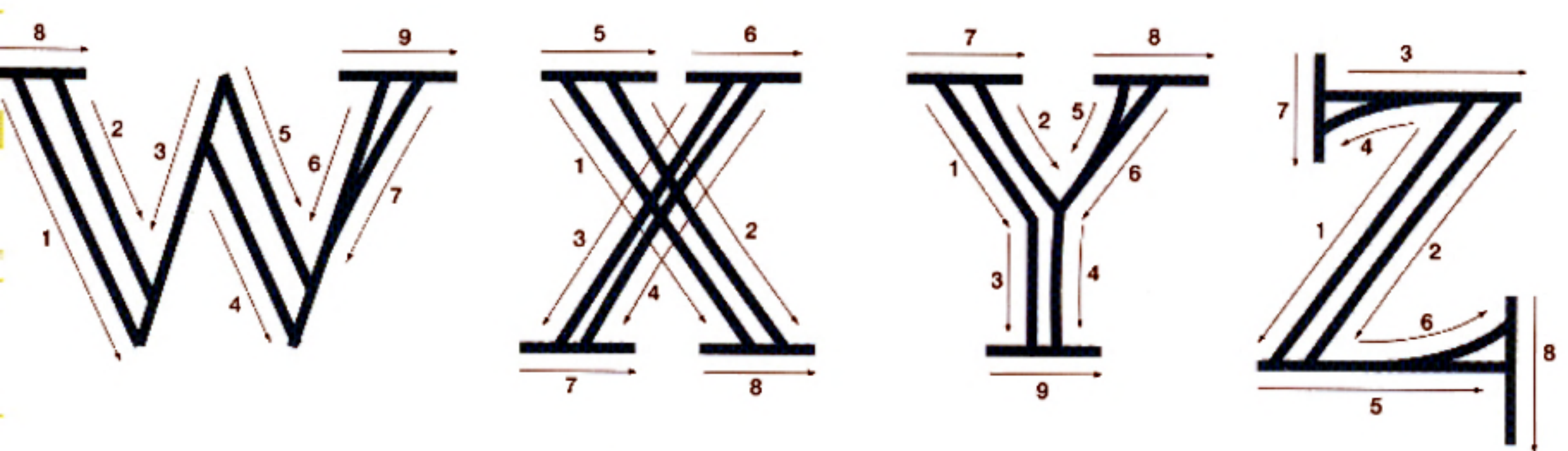
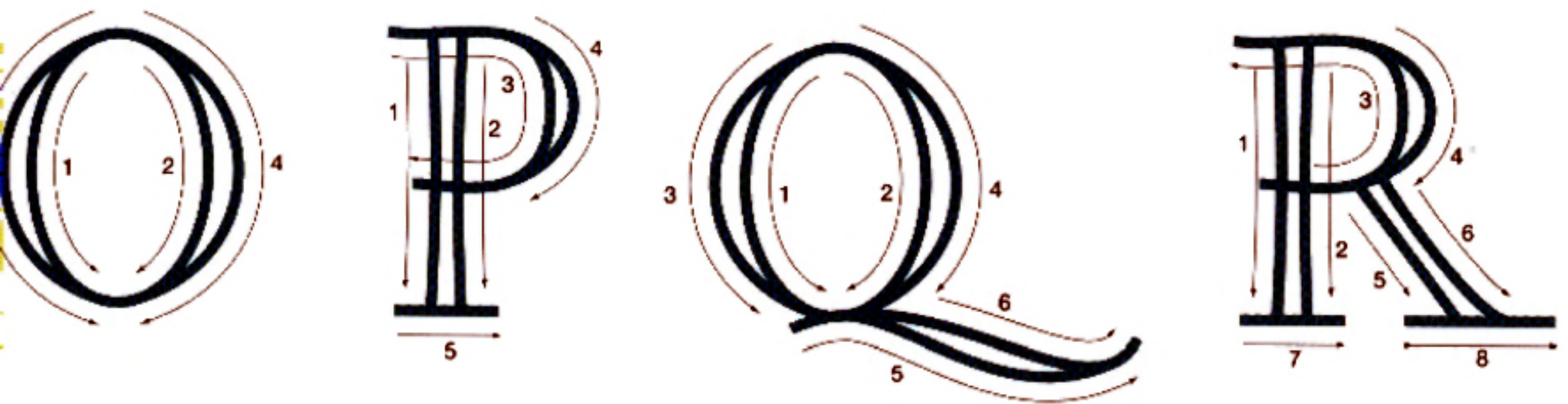
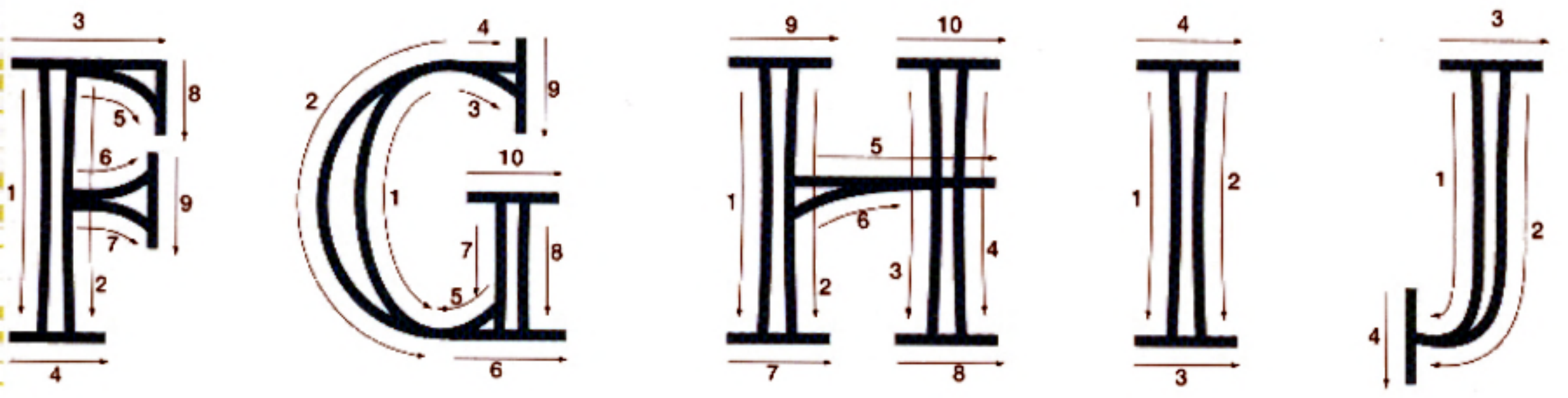
Cap height: 18 nib widths

Pen angle: 30°



Due to the nature of construction, Versals have very thin 'thins' in relation to the cap height. This is because the letters are created by drawing both sides of the verticals separately, with a narrow-nibbed pen. The centre of each letter can be filled in – see pages 62–63.





Tea box

On this tea box rows of Black Letter forms are contrasted with expressively drawn Uncial characters. Red, black and gold give the box a stylish image.

To create a similar box, you can adopt one of two methods. Either dismantle a box and use it as a template to make a box out of board of your choice and draw the lettering in position before cutting out the shape of the box, or measure the four sides of the box and transfer the measurements onto a piece of paper. Draw the lettering in position, then cut out the paper and wrap it around the box, securing it with double-sided tape.

This box was made from ivory board and red paper. The design incorporates four lines of lettering, each in a different language, and the block of lettering is repeated twice on each side. Each of the four lines appears at the top of one side of the box and the language of the top line is the same as the large word on that side. The lettering was applied with ink, and then the large word running vertically was made using diluted bleach. All the lettering was created with metal pens of different sizes.



Variations on Black Letter

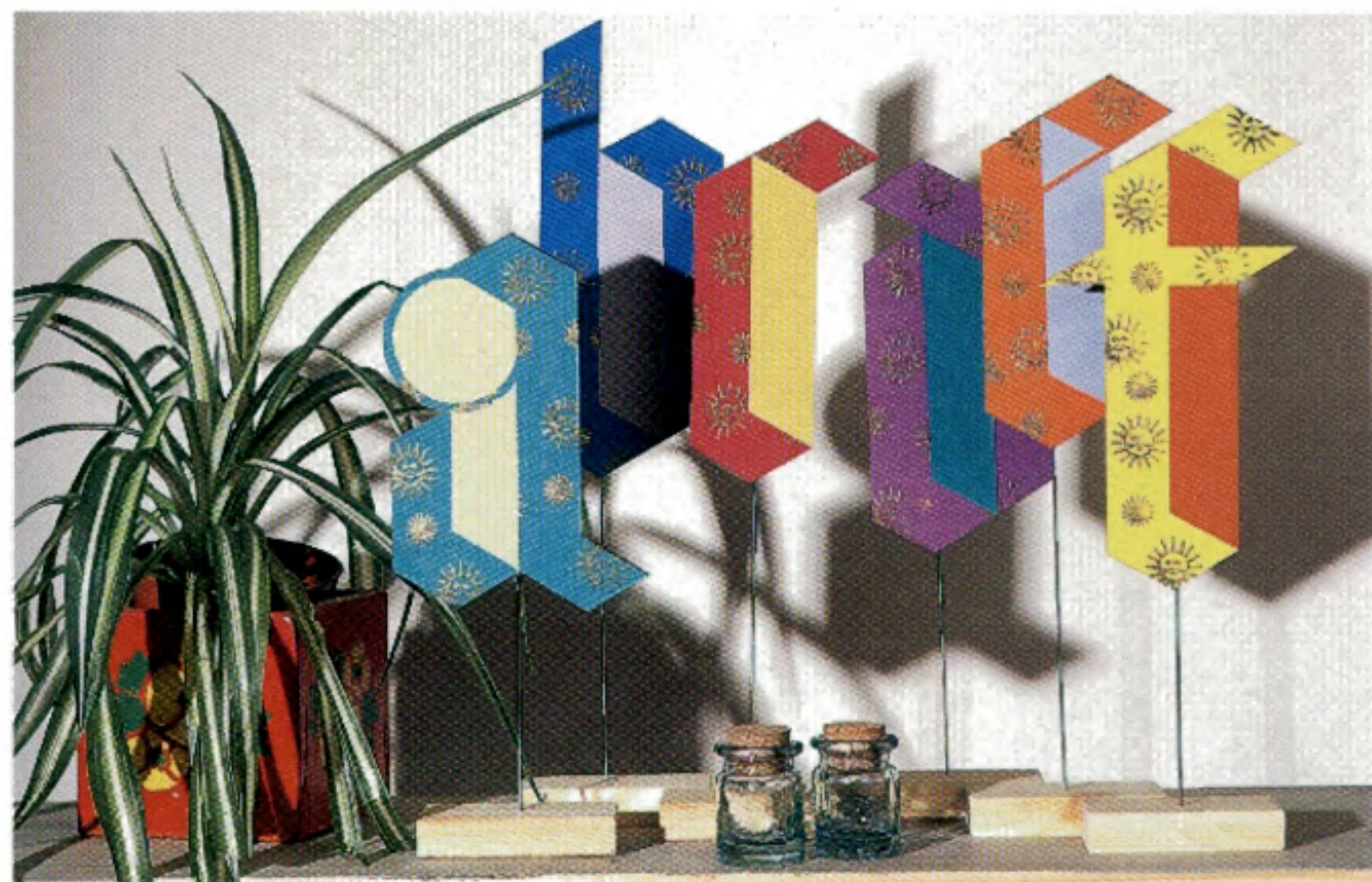
Gothic letterforms have been used for so long in so many countries that inevitably numerous variations now exist, and they have been adapted for use with a whole range of modern materials and techniques. You will often see examples of similar styles of Gothic lettering on shop signs, restaurant menus, beer cans and Christmas cards.

Multi-coloured letters

To produce multi-coloured letters, reload your pen with a second colour as the first is beginning to run out, before completing the letter. Alternatively, draw a letter in one shade of watercolour or ink, and then apply dabs of a second colour while the first is still wet. The two colours will merge into one another, creating stunning results.

Framed alphabet

Alphabets themselves can look interesting and attractive, whether complex or simple, if framed sympathetically. This alphabet has been split into three lines and is tightly framed. An automatic pen and gouache were used to draw the letters.



The heavy, dense characters can be used individually to create very dramatic designs. At the same time, Black Letter also mixes well with other types of letterform, particularly large capitals or free and expressive calligraphy. When you analyze these letterforms before embarking on a project, have a look at three aspects in particular. Study the effects and patterns that are created by the letterforms when a large passage of text is written in Black Letter. Consider the shapes of the individual letters and the way in which the thick strokes cover a relatively large area, allowing for experimentation within the shape of the letter itself. Then think about the counters, or spaces between the strokes. These are a similar width to the strokes themselves and therefore become just as important in the construction of the letter. This space provides another area to consider when creating your designs. Creative options are plenty. Variations on Gothic lettering, such as Fraktur and Textura, that have been used over the centuries illustrate the flourishes or split serifs added by scribes in order to liven up or decorate the letters.

Ornamental letters

Brightly coloured, cut-out letters are easy to produce and really emphasize the dramatic shapes of Black Letter. To provide depth and balance, the counters can be highlighted. Draw the outline of the letter onto coloured or patterned paper and cut it out. If you want the cut-out letter to be decorated with smaller letters, draw the smaller letters onto the paper before you position the main letter.

Make a stencil of the letter to be cut out and move it around on the paper until you find the best position. Draw round the stencil and then cut out the letter. Mount the letter on mounting card or board using double-sided tape, and cut out the letter. Place this on a second piece of card and cut out a second letter.

In the centre of the bottom edge of the second card letter, cut a small vertical groove to take a length of thin metal rod or wire, which will provide support for the letter. Stick the two pieces of card together using double-sided tape, making sure that they match up exactly. Then attach the piece of wire so that it protrudes from the base of the letter. The wire can be bent back to make a simple stand, or it can be inserted into a wooden base, which can be painted a colour that complements the letter.

CD covers

An interesting project is the redesign of CD and audio-cassette covers to personalize a music collection. This set of three CDs uses the same lettering but different coloured backgrounds. The backgrounds consist of vertical lines drawn in ink with a large metal pen, leaving very small spaces between the strokes in some places in order to recreate the effect of light catching the folds of a curtain.

The large lettering was drawn with a bleach solution using a smaller pen than for the background. Direct-transfer lettering was used for the artist and track details to contrast with the calligraphy, but you may prefer to write these in ink with a small metal nib, perhaps in an italic letterform.



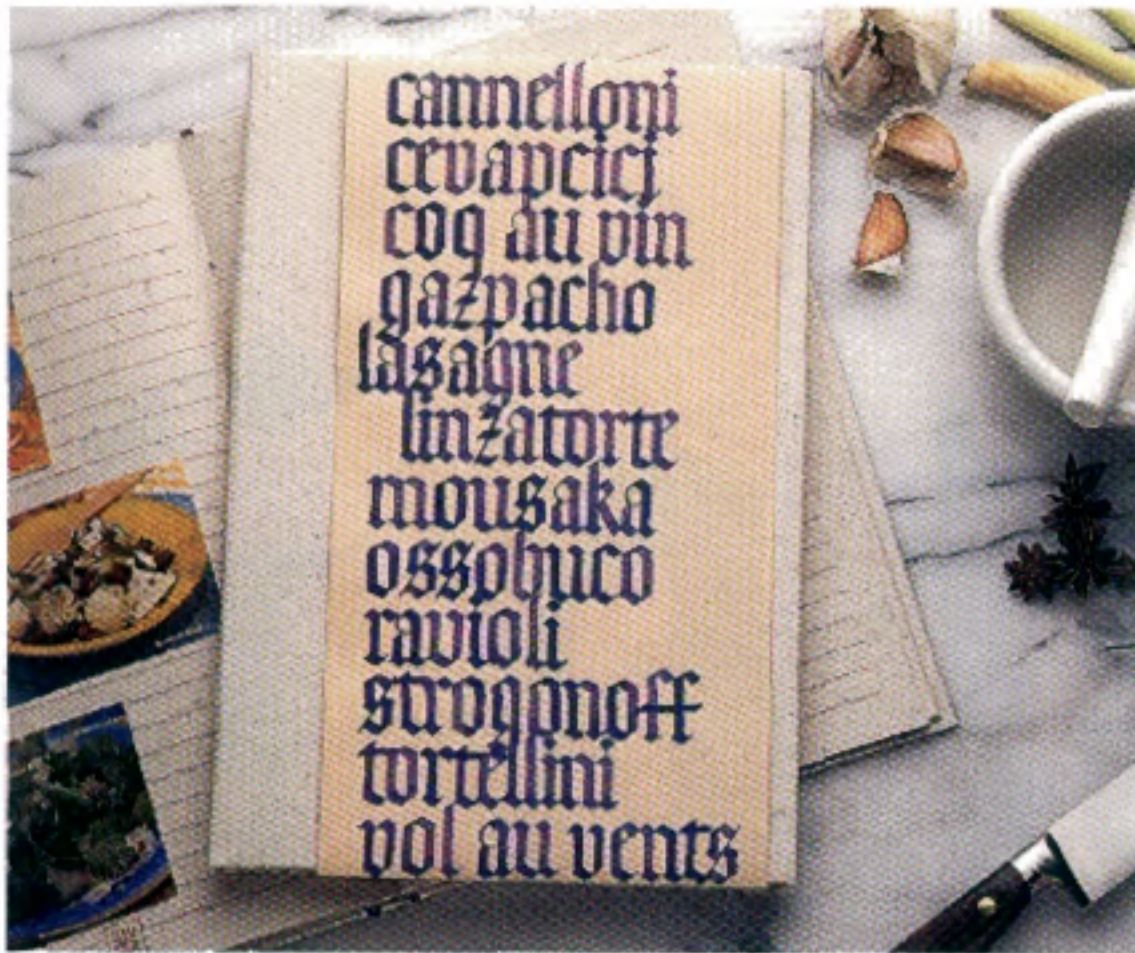
Using Black Letter

Why not begin by producing a birthday or Christmas card. As you become accustomed to using Black Letter forms, apply as much colour as possible. Calligraphy immediately becomes more attractive and often communicates more effectively with the application of colour. Colour can complement the words you write. For a Christmas card, choose colours such as red, gold, green and silver that have a festive feel. Inspiration for colour is all around, and when you spot colours and combinations that you like, whether in a piece of food packaging, a shop window or the garden, note them down. At a later date, you can apply them to projects as appropriate.



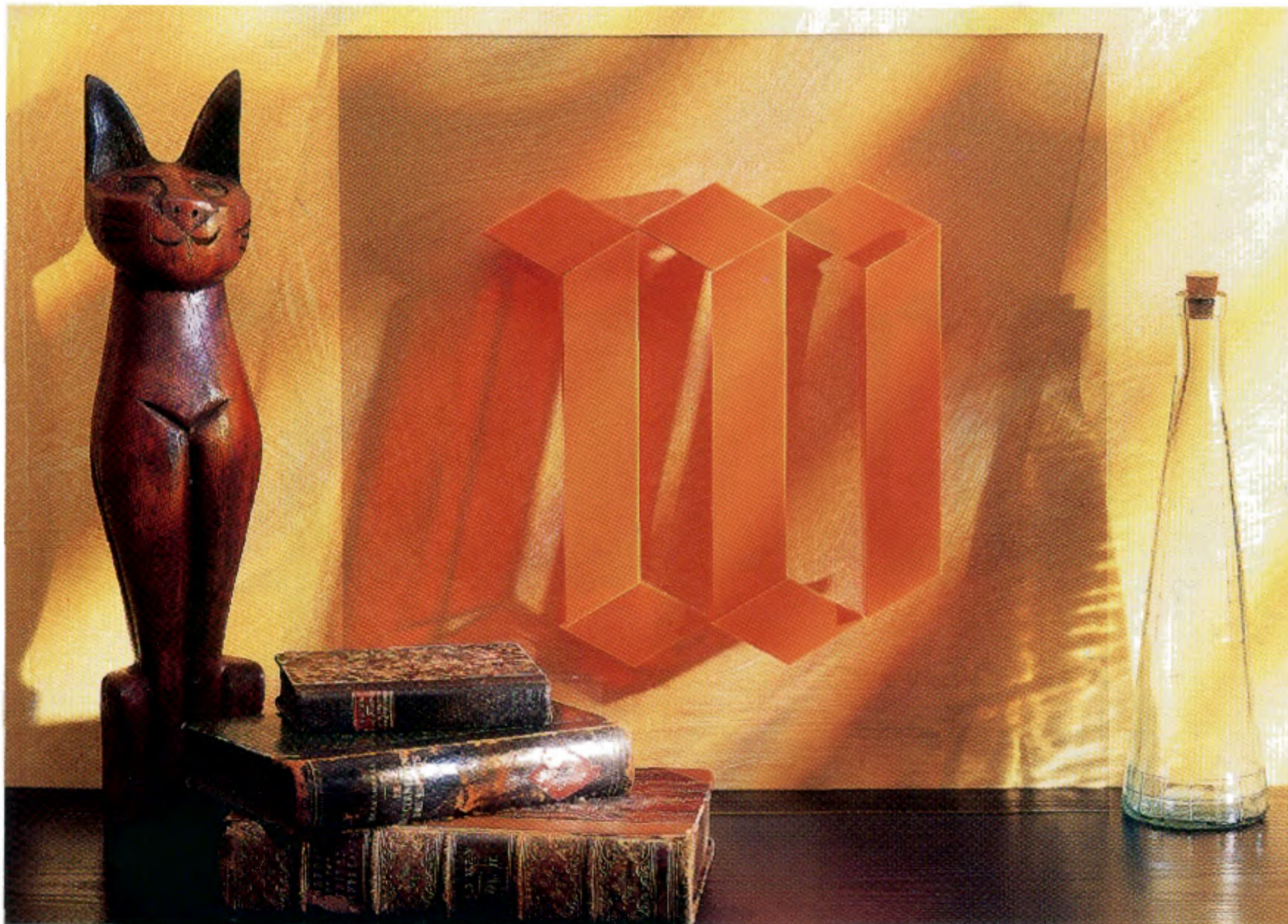
Poster

This poster was produced in exactly the same way as the CD covers, using the same lettering. The only difference is that larger pen nibs were used.



Recipe book

The lettering on this recipe-book cover was first worked out on a layout pad to make sure that the lines, including ascenders and descenders, fitted the area available. The lettering was then drawn onto a speckled and slightly textured paper in ink with an automatic pen. The paper was then wrapped around the front of the book and secured with double-sided tape. This technique can be used to liven up or personalize any book.



Orange 'W'

The shape of Black Letter can be explored in a three-dimensional form to create a Perspex wall decoration. The effect is made even more interesting if some faces or sides of the letter are left out as this exploits the effect of light hitting the edges of the Perspex.

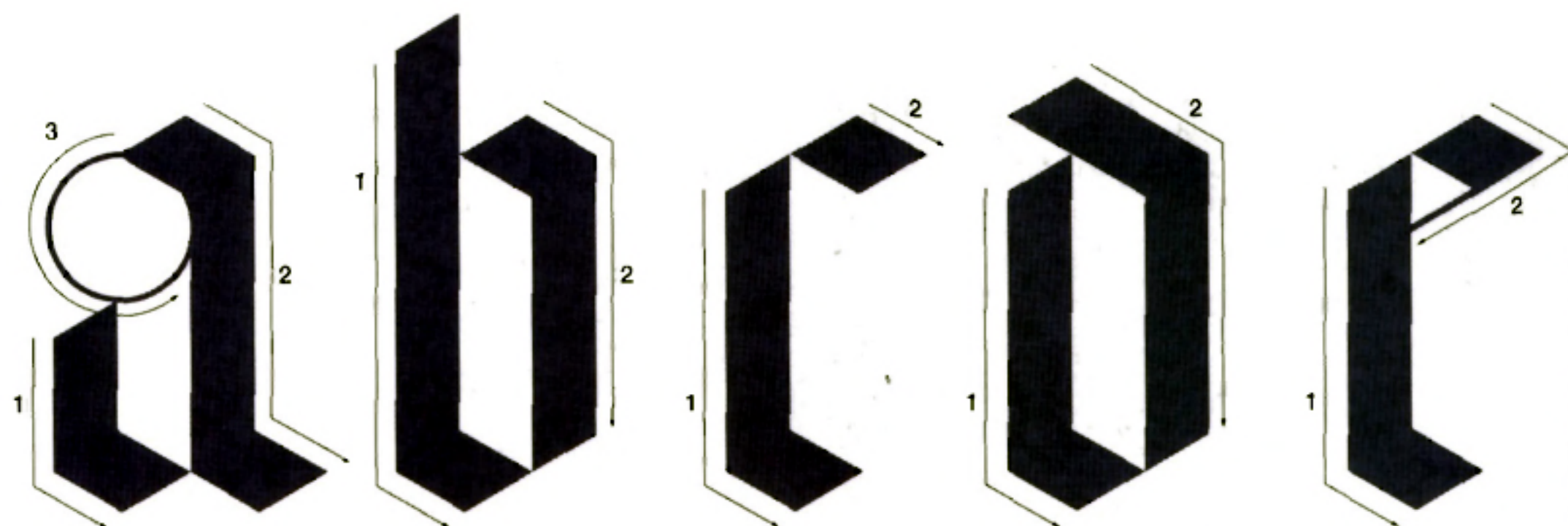
If you do not have equipment for cutting Perspex, this sort of letter can easily be produced with thick card or foamboard and painted. Try painting each face of the letter a different colour to enhance the three-dimensional quality. The card or board should be fairly thick and secured with a strong glue.

As with all calligraphy, the important point is to experiment with both the letterforms and the materials and techniques that you try. Do not become too precious about your initial attempts, or be scared of making mistakes. Brilliant results often arise from initial mistakes or unintentional errors, and you will discover all sorts of interesting effects and finishes when practising on different types of paper and card and other surfaces with various media. When using Black Letter, remember that the basis of these letterforms is rigid geometry and simplicity – and this simplicity provides a good basic structure on which to elaborate with colour, materials and decorative symbols and motifs.

**Stylized Black Letter
Lower case**

x height: 1½ nib widths

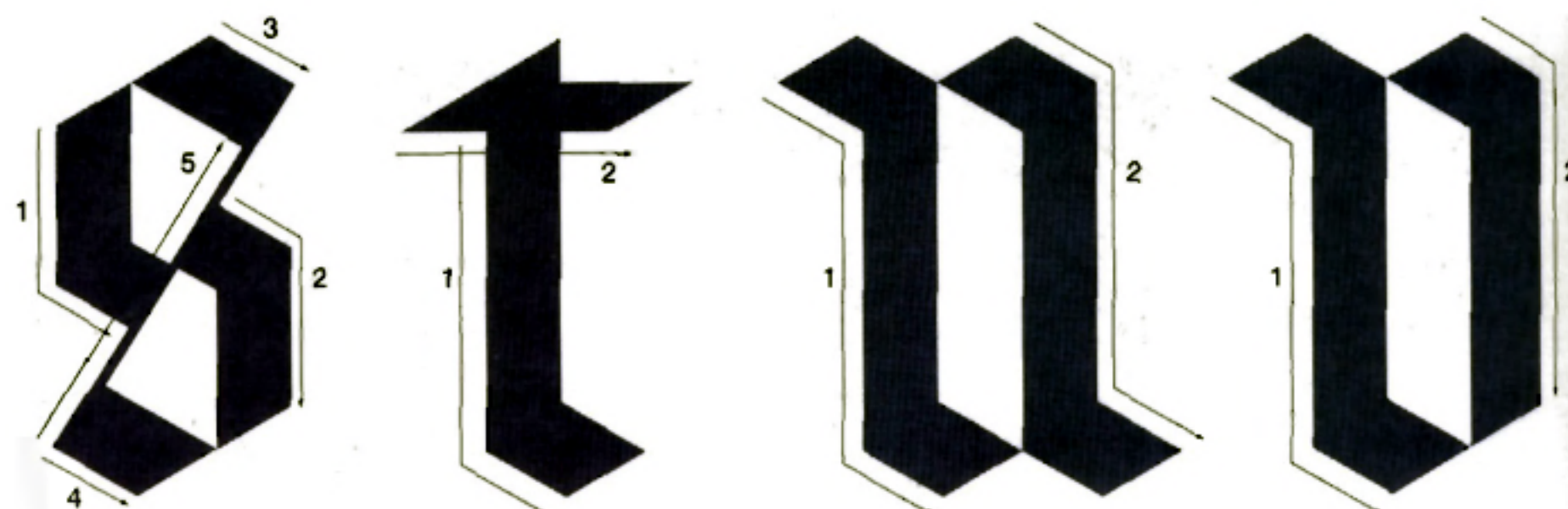
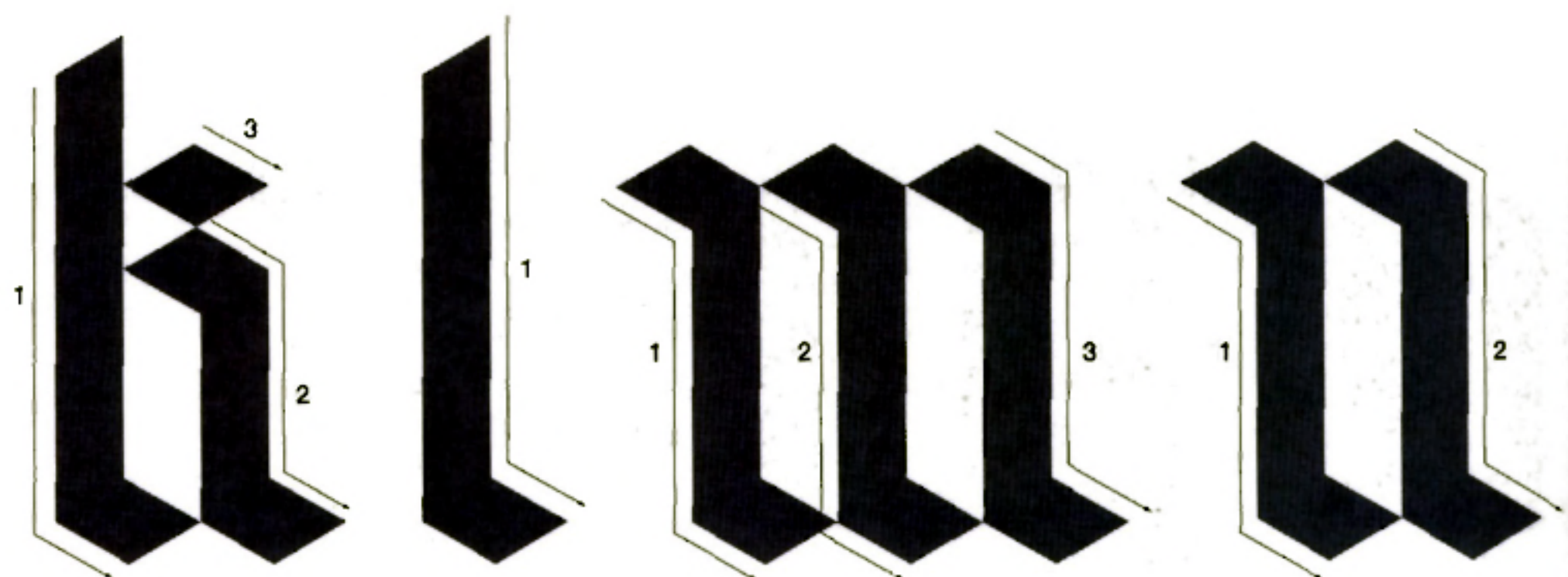
Pen angle: 30°

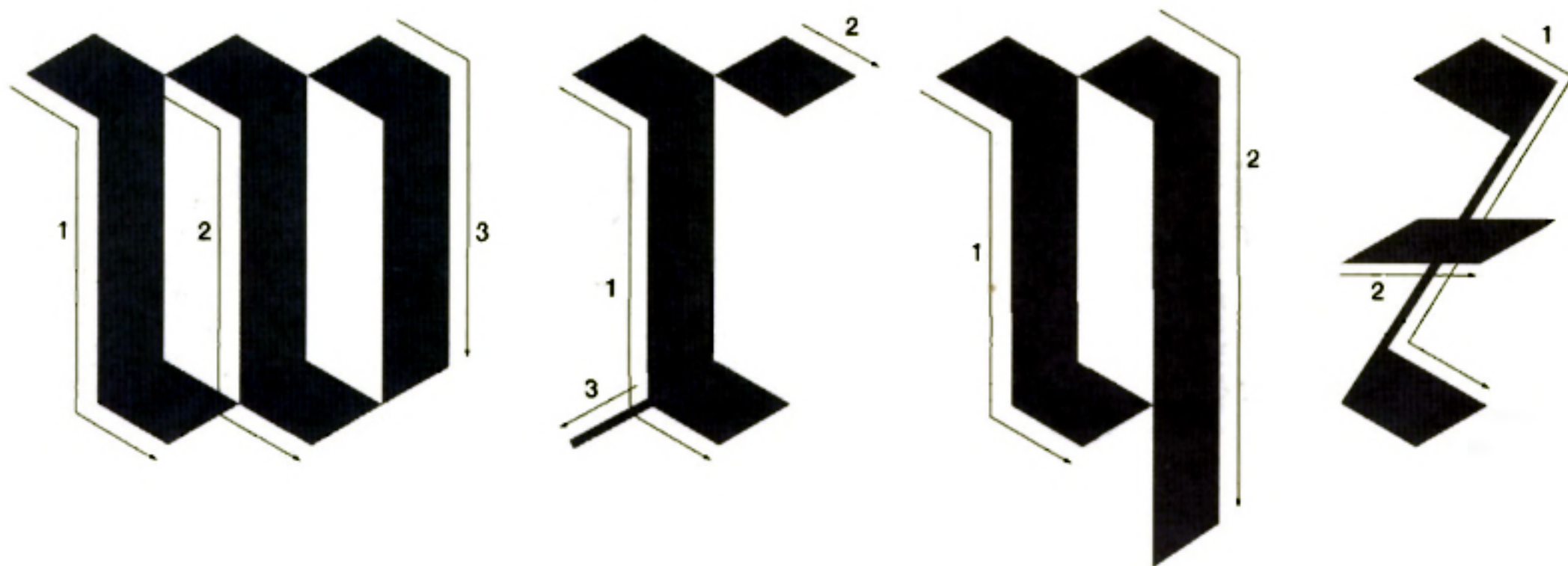
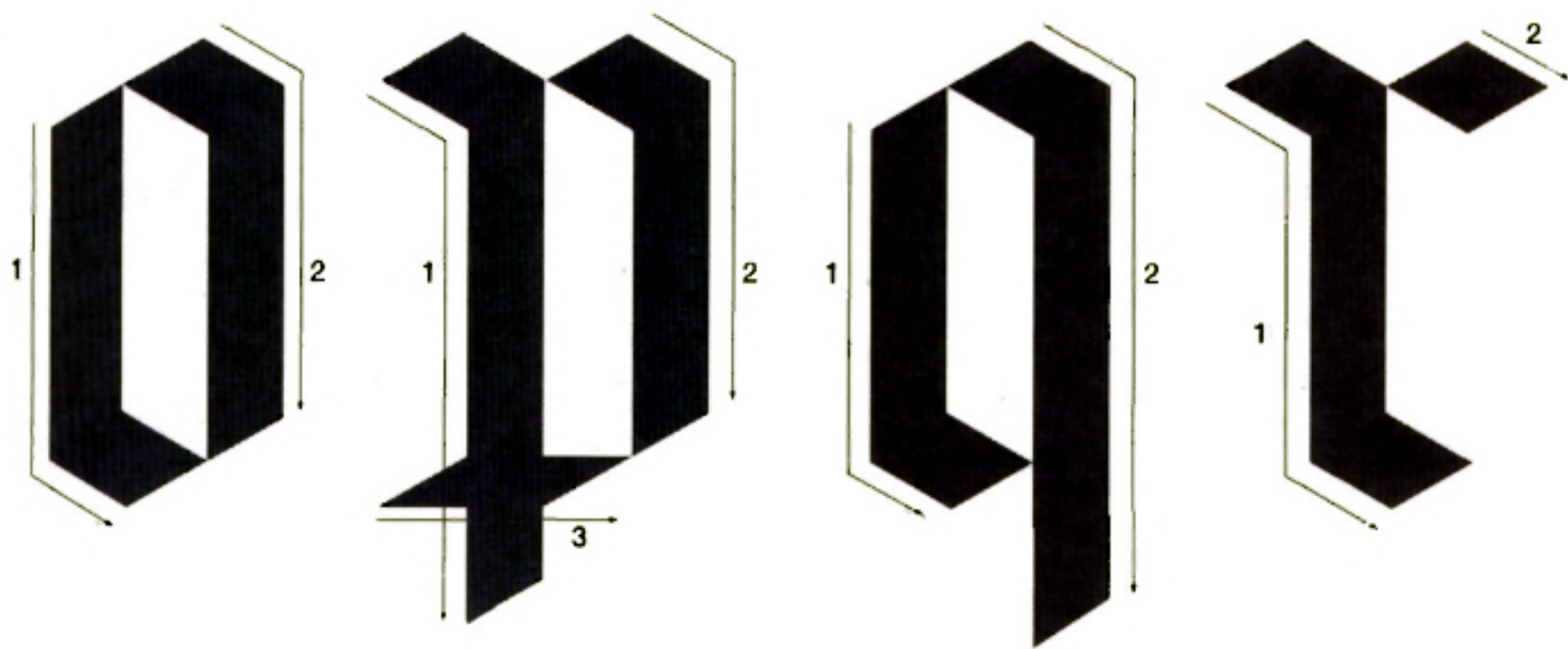
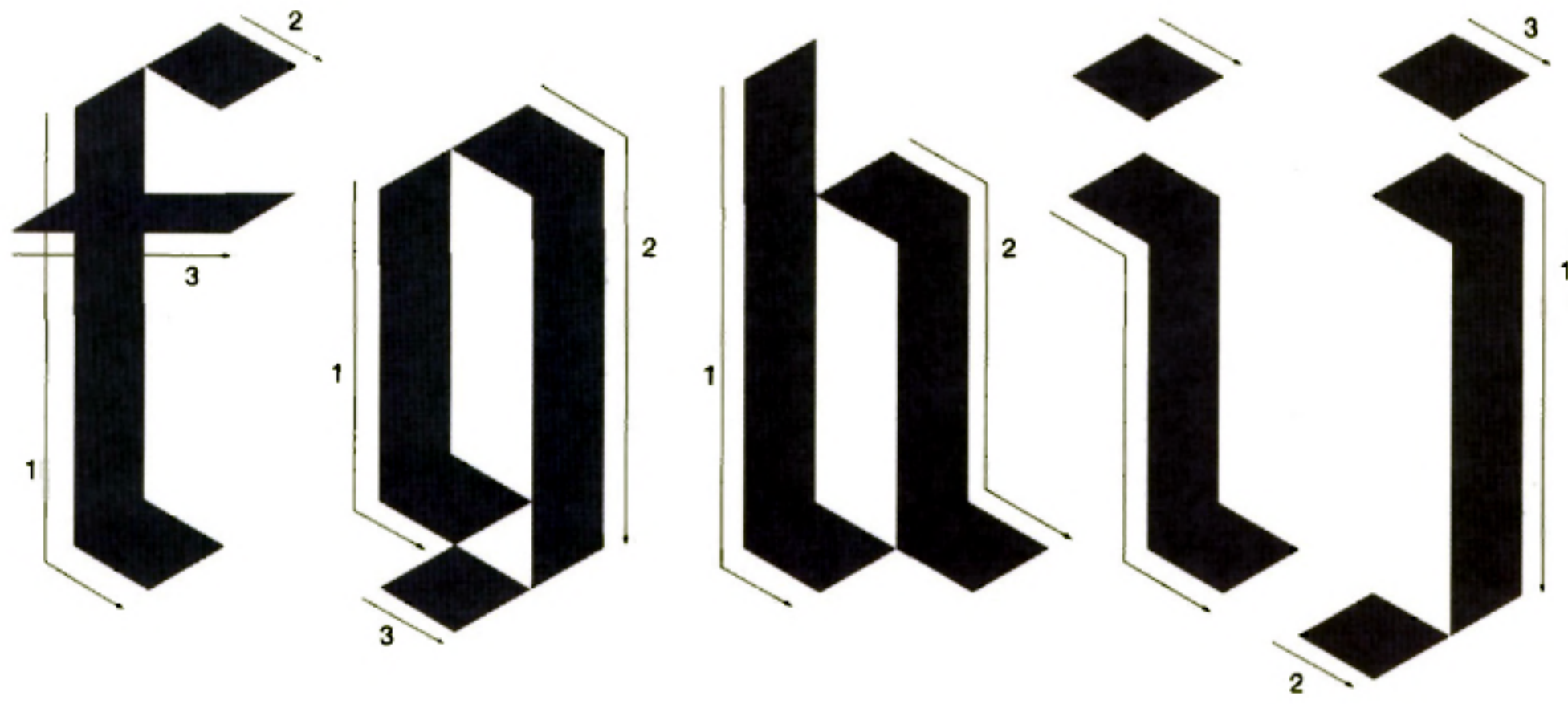


The regular geometric shapes of these letterforms, produced from repeated elements and angles, give them a semi-mechanical appearance.

The simple shapes and consistent width of strokes make these letterforms ideal for cut-out letters, and even for stencilling onto surfaces.

The counters are fractionally wider than the strokes. However, the overall effect of a block of text of equal spaces and strokes creates a regular pattern.

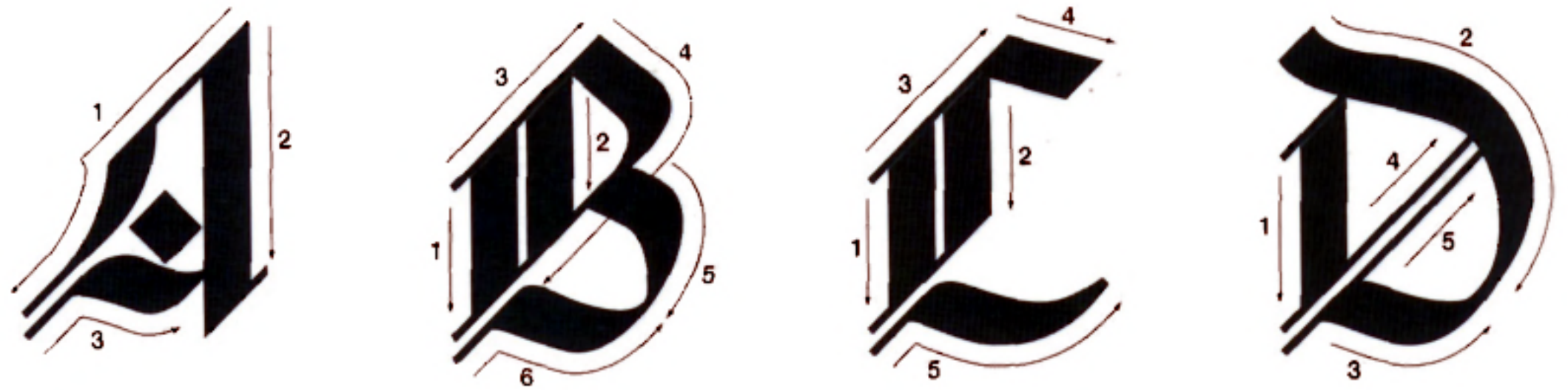




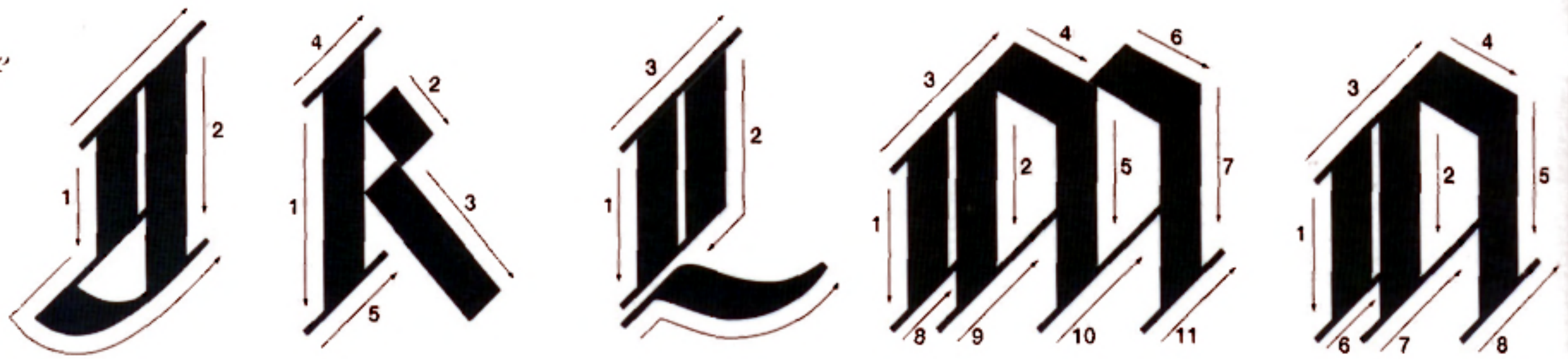
**Black Letter
Upper case**

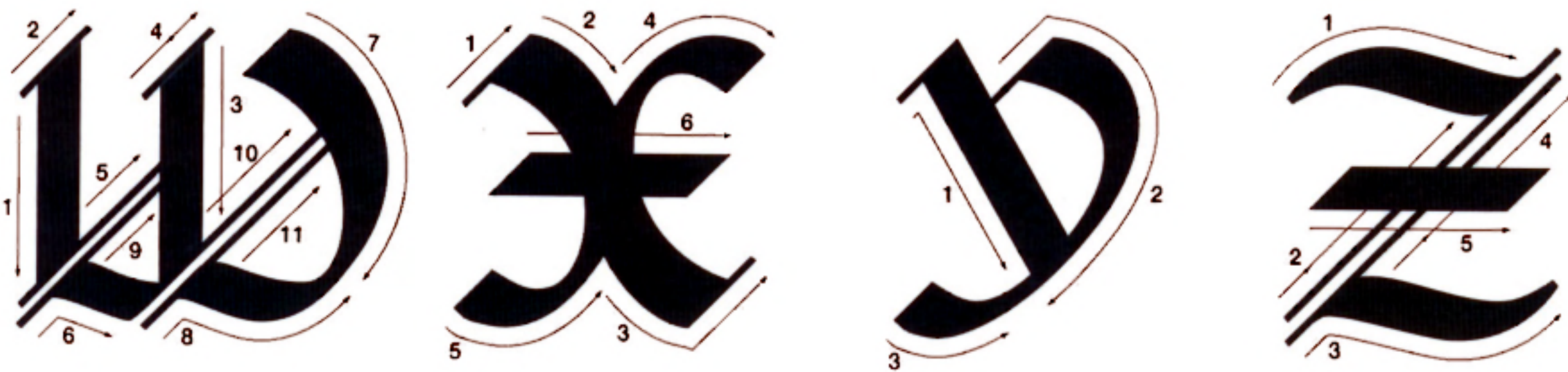
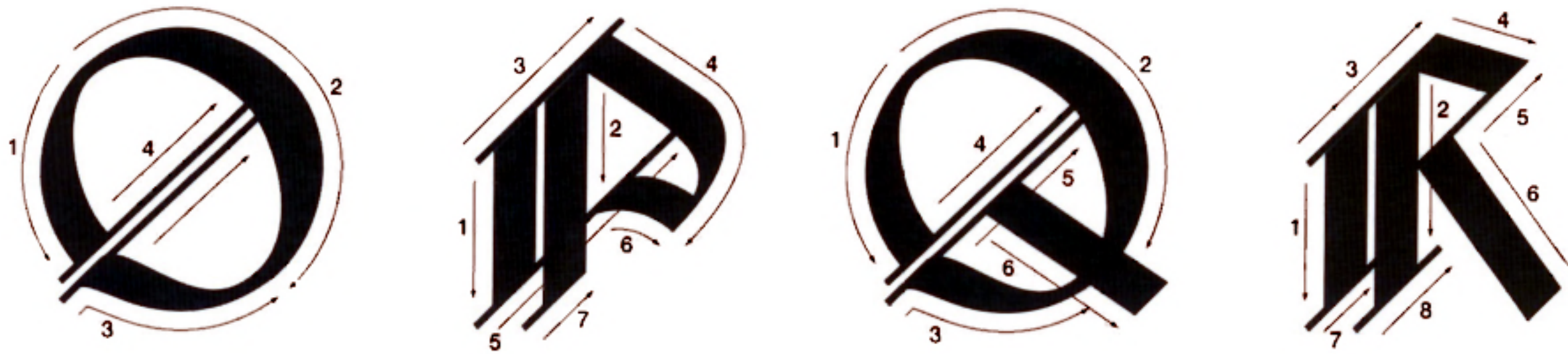
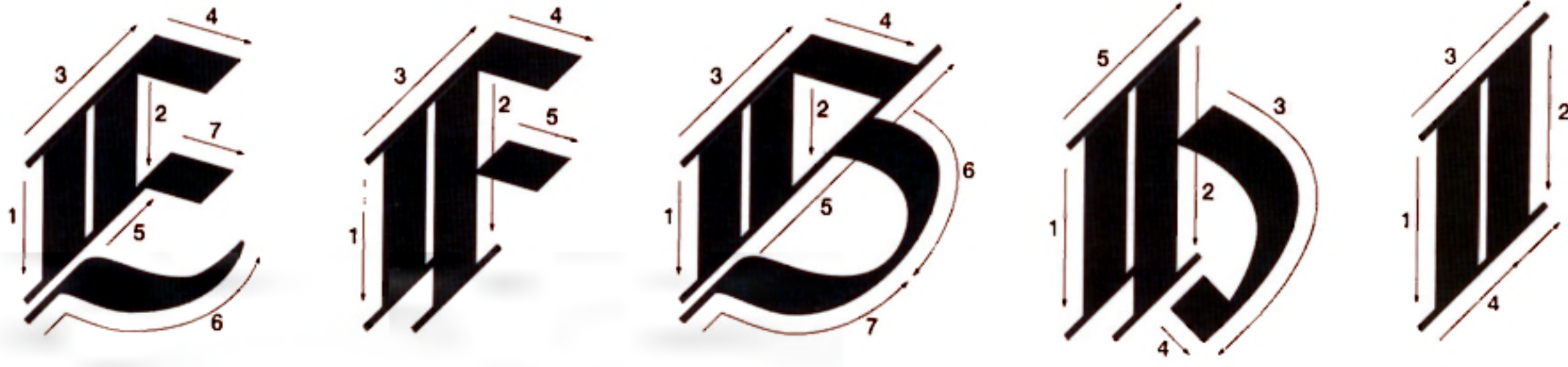
Cap height: 5 nib widths

Pen angle: 45°



These letters are drawn with a larger pen angle than usual for Black Letter alphabets. This, combined with the distinctive double stroke on some verticals, helps to create quite a dense, black alphabet.



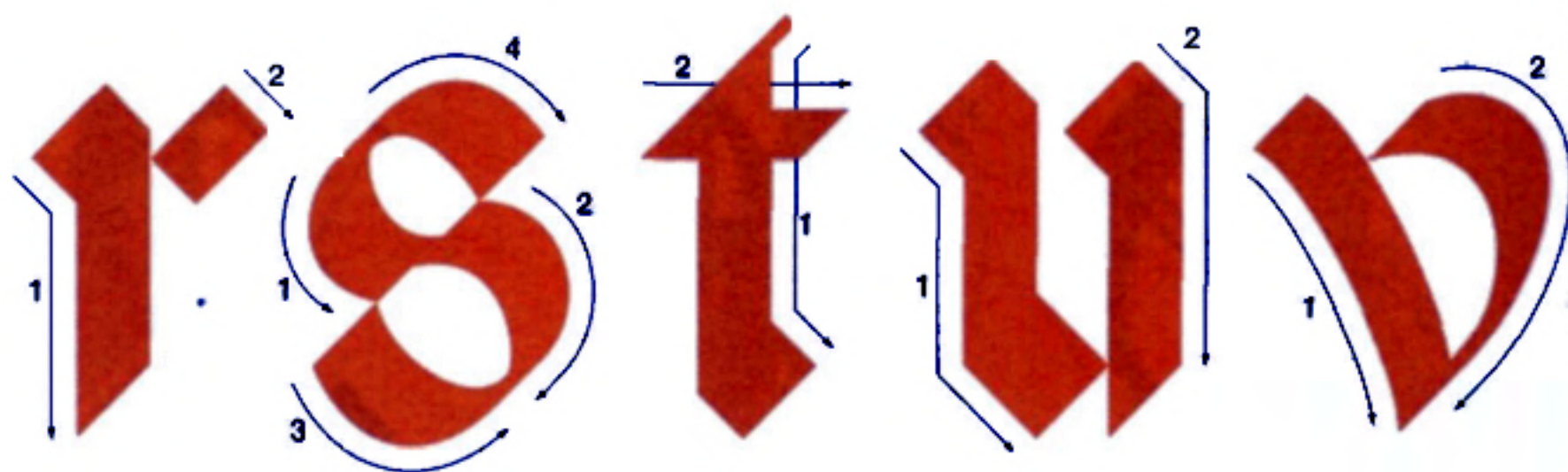
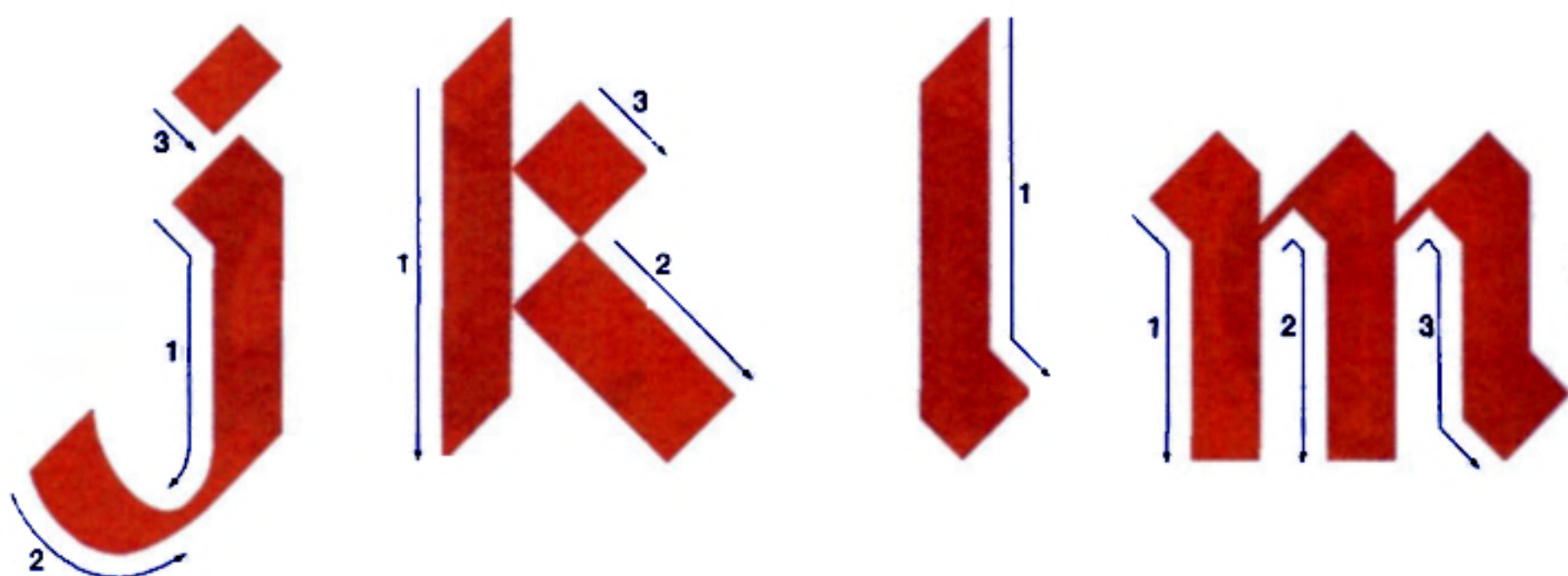
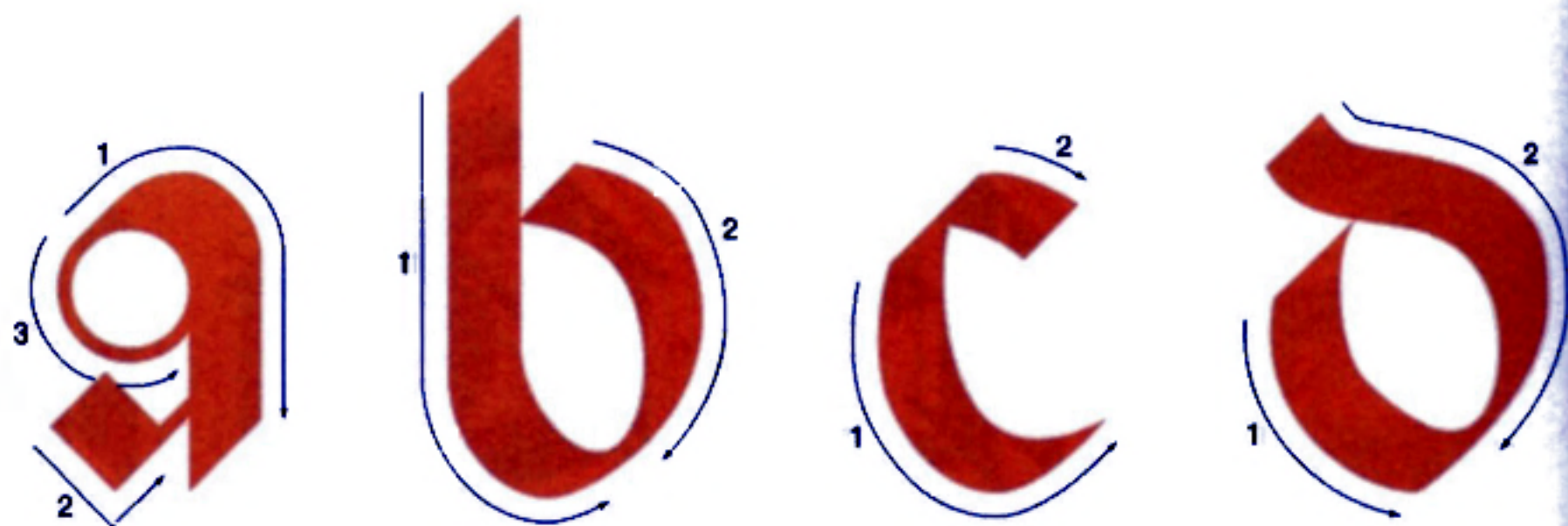


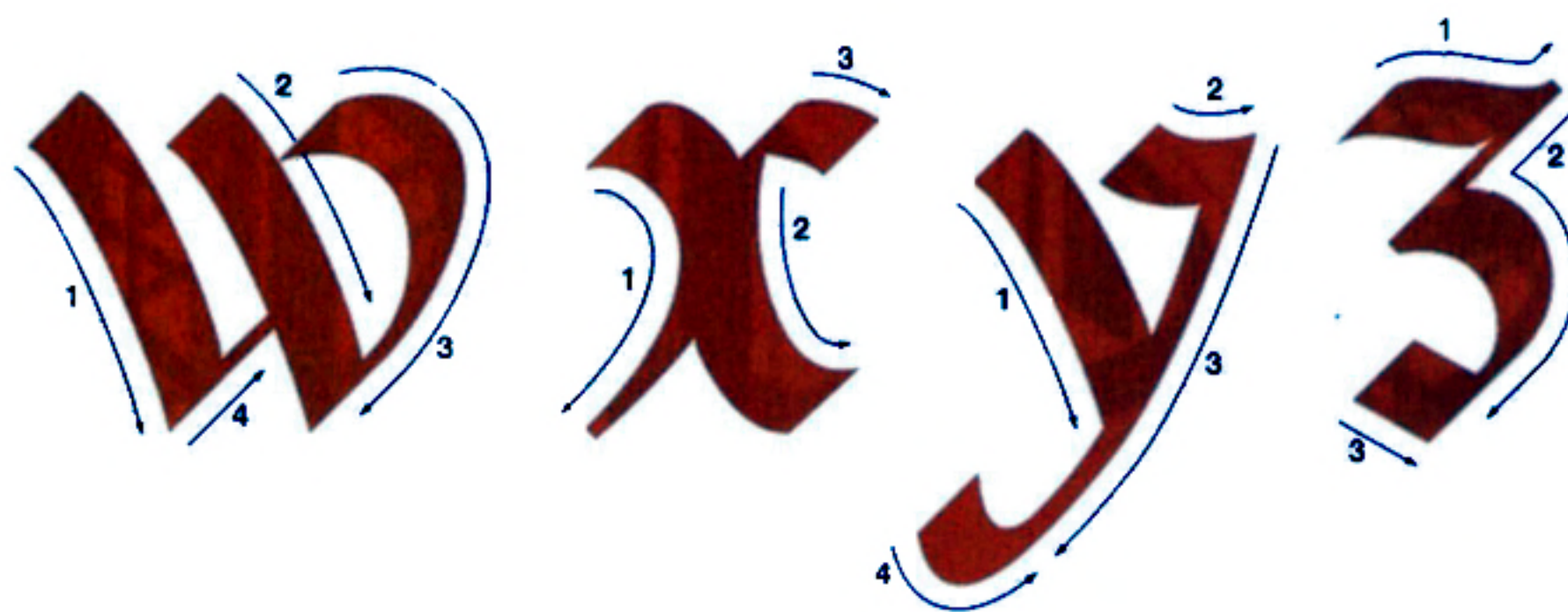
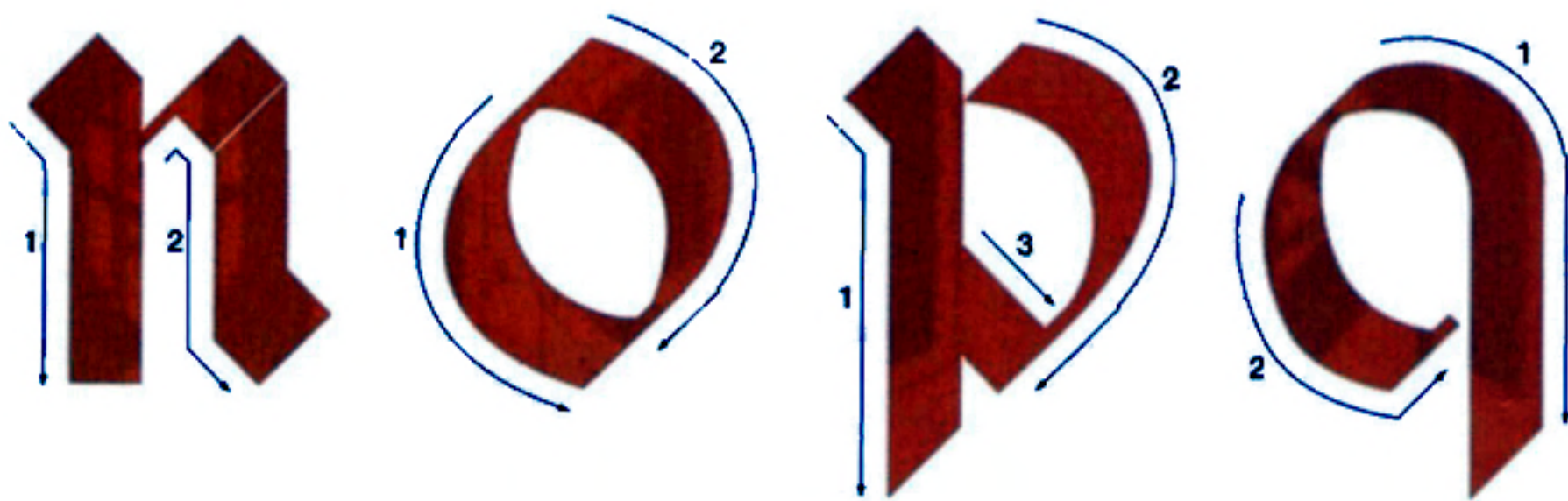
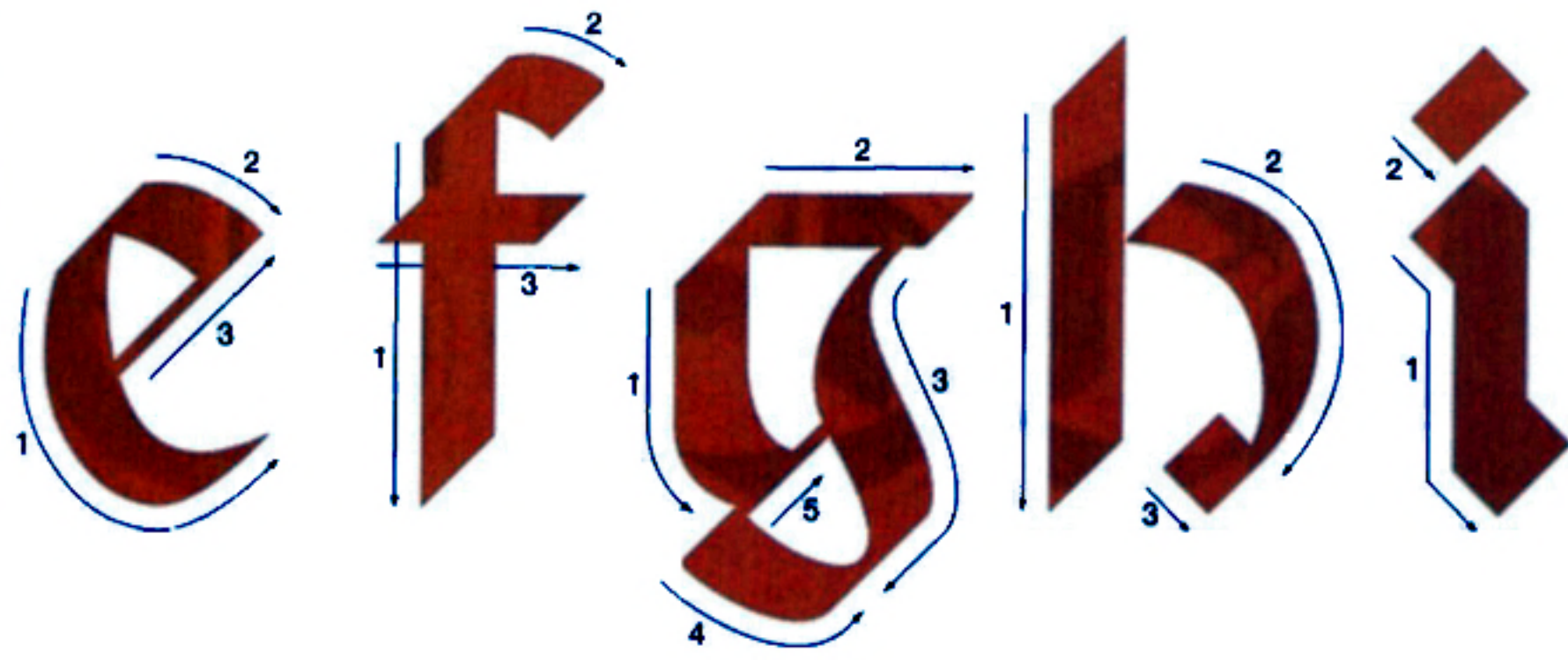
Black Letter Lower case

x height: 5 nib widths

Pen angle: 45°

Using a pen angle of 45° produces a heavy lower-case alphabet, even though curves have been introduced to many of the letters.





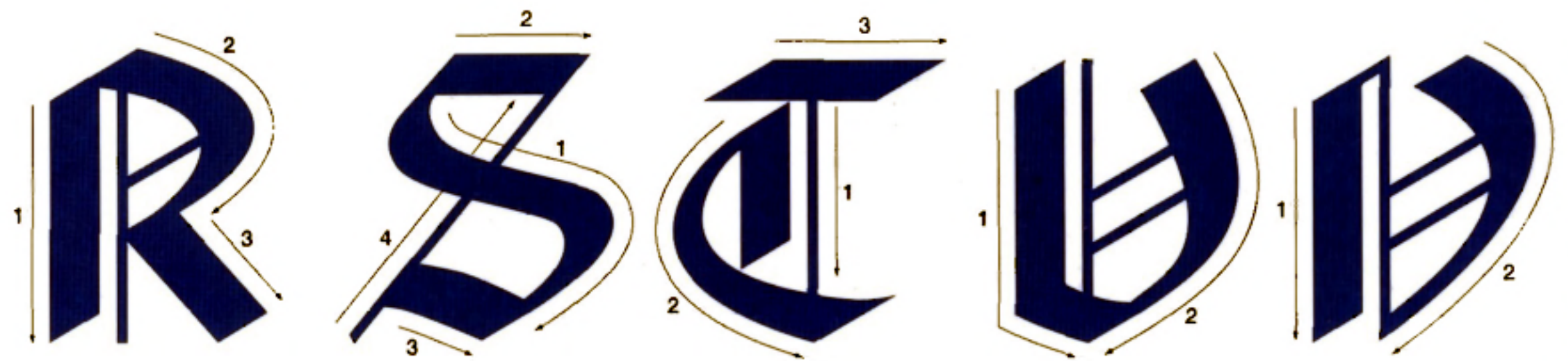
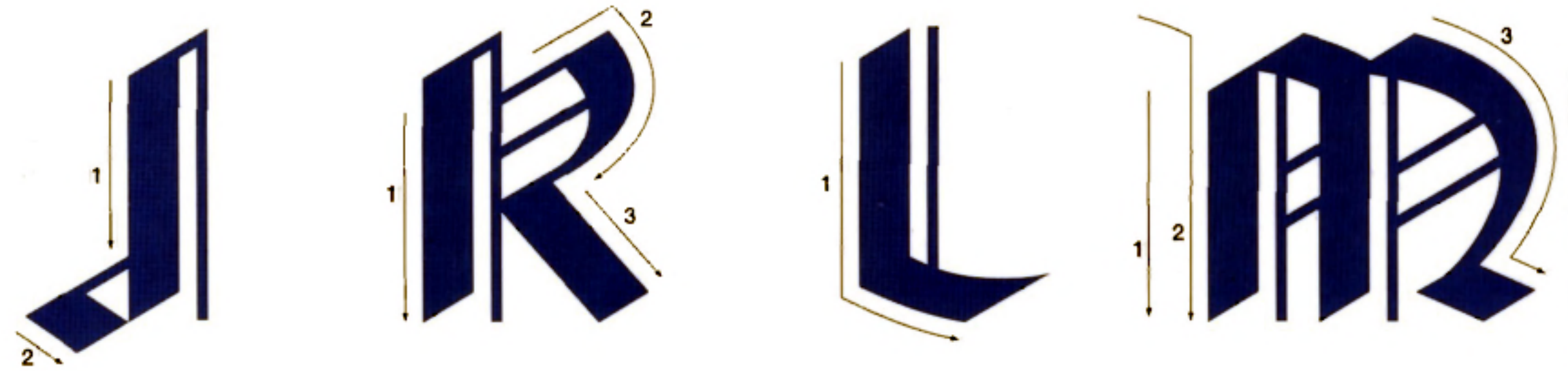
Decorative Black Letter
Upper case

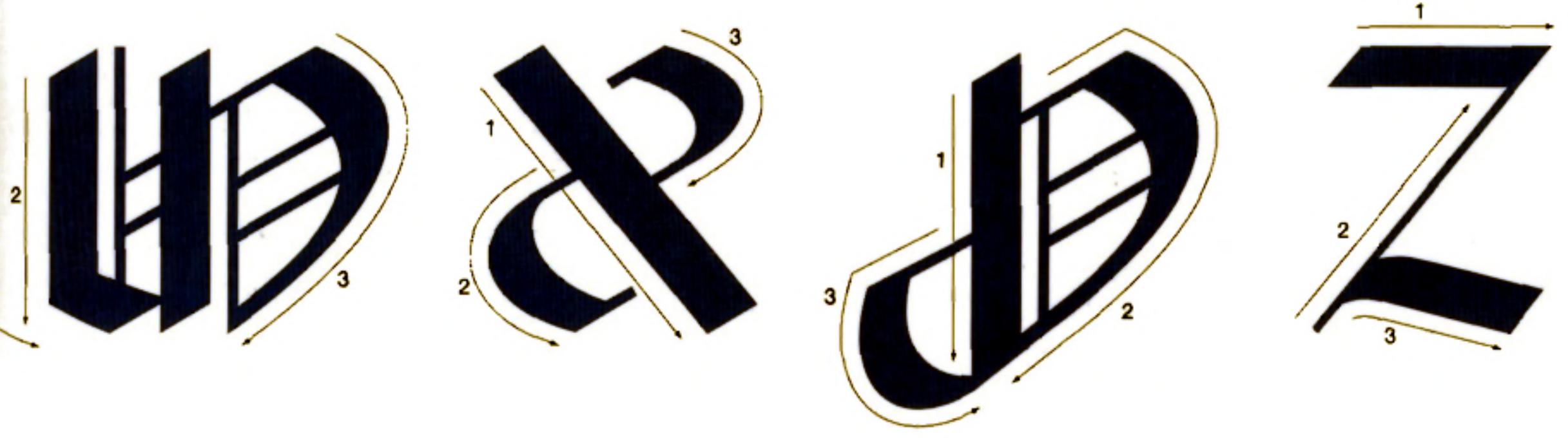
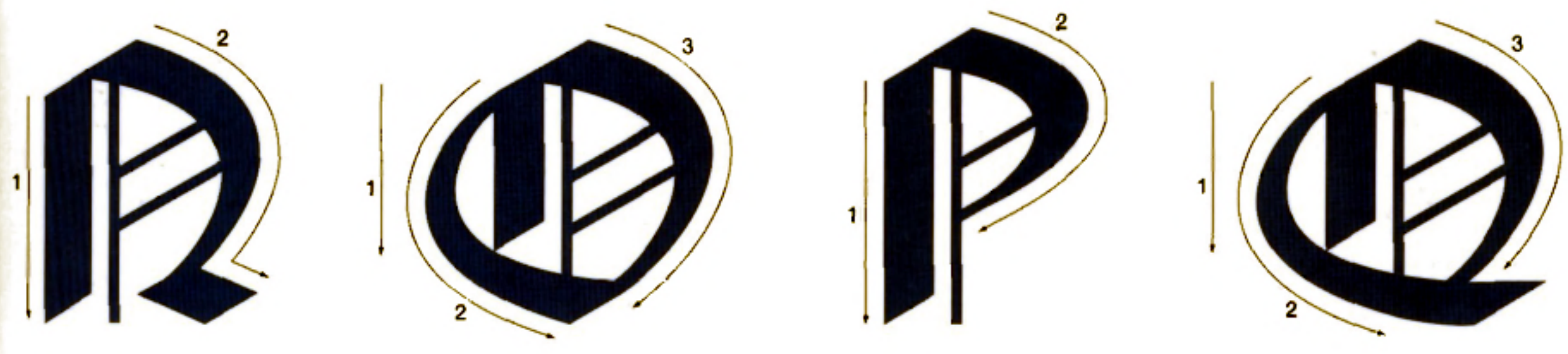
Cap height: 5 nib widths

Pen angle: 30°



The distinctive characteristic of this alphabet is the use of thin strokes, which are drawn vertically, horizontally and with the pen at an angle of 30°. The space is made for these strokes with the further addition of curves to most letters.





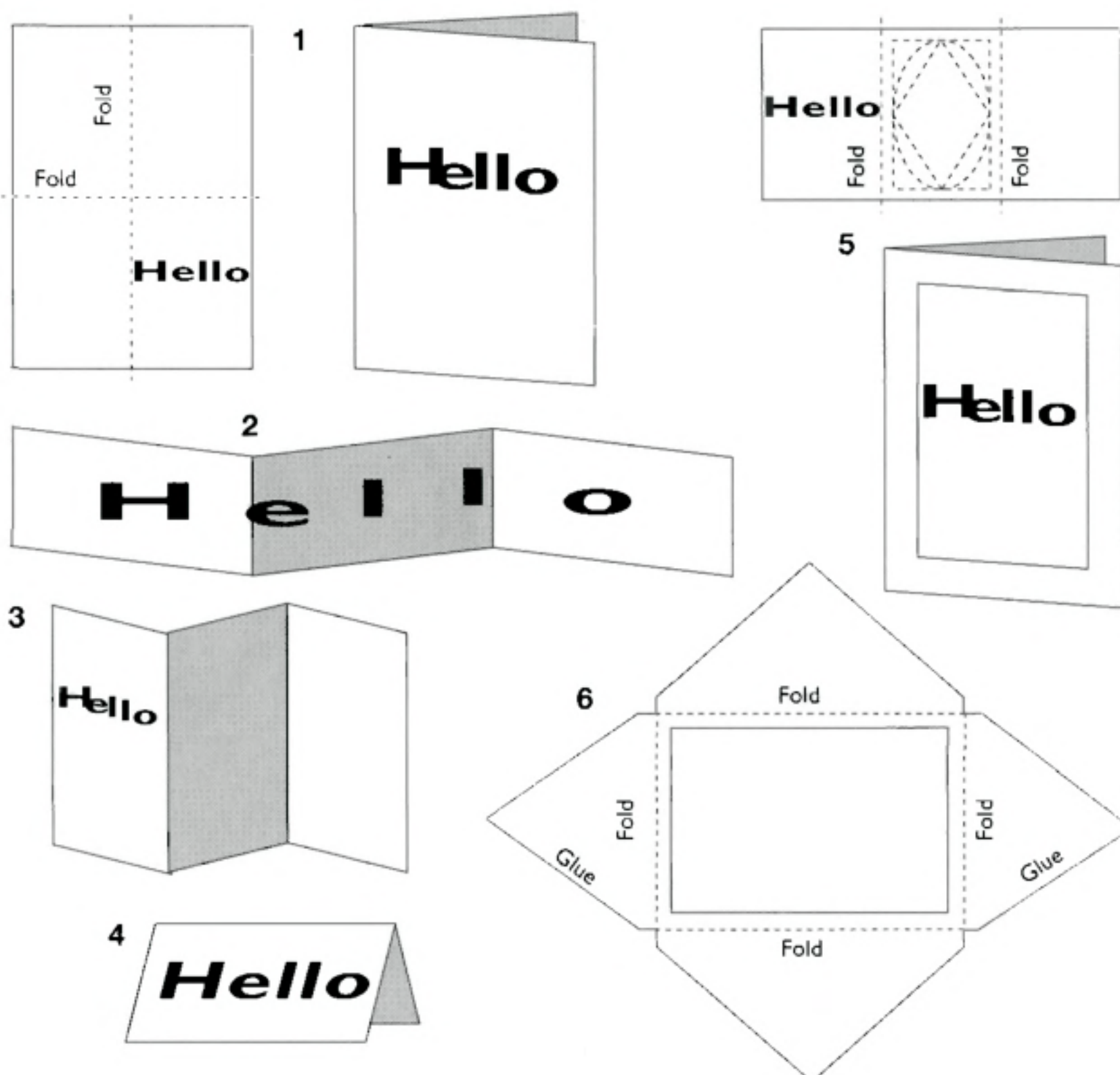
Christmas wall decorations

These simple wall decorations were made by applying the lettering in silver paint with a wide, flat paintbrush onto coloured card. The composition is made more interesting by running the words vertically and joining up or overlapping the letters. You can experiment with more elaborate designs, shapes and colour combinations for the festive holiday period.



Designs for cards

You can make many different kinds of cards. In addition to simply folding a piece of thin card in half, you could consider some of the following ideas. Whichever format or method you decide upon, check that your finished card will fit easily into a standard size envelope. You could also make a matching envelope, in which case the basic template will help you.



1. Folded into quarters. Useful if you do not have any thick card.

Card dimensions: 297 x 210mm (8 ½ x 11 ins) folding to 148 x 105mm (4 ¼ x 5 ½ ins).

2. Landscape concertina-folded card.

Card dimensions: 630 x 99mm (24 x 4 ins) folding to 210 x 99mm (8 x 4 ins).

3. Portrait concertina-folded card.

Card dimensions: 297 x 210mm (8 ½ x 11 ins) folding to 99 x 210mm (8 ½ x 3 ⅝ ins).

4. Landscape card.

Card dimensions: 210 x 198mm (8 ½ x 7 ½ ins) folding to 210 x 99mm (8 ½ x 3 ⅝ ins).

5. Framed card.

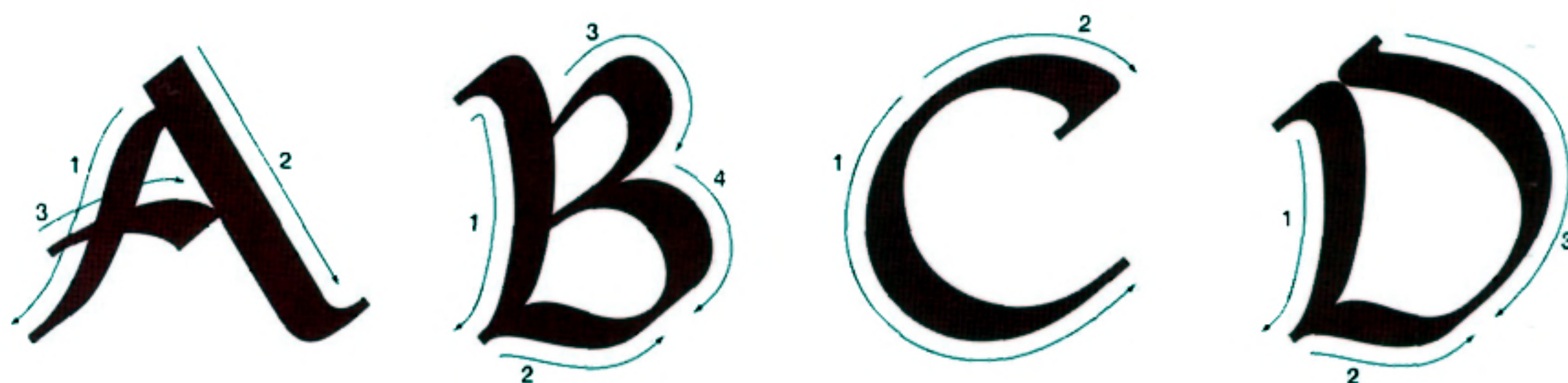
Card dimensions: 450 x 210mm (17 x 8 ½ ins) folding to 150 x 210mm (5 ⅝ x 8 ½ ins).

6. Basic envelope template.

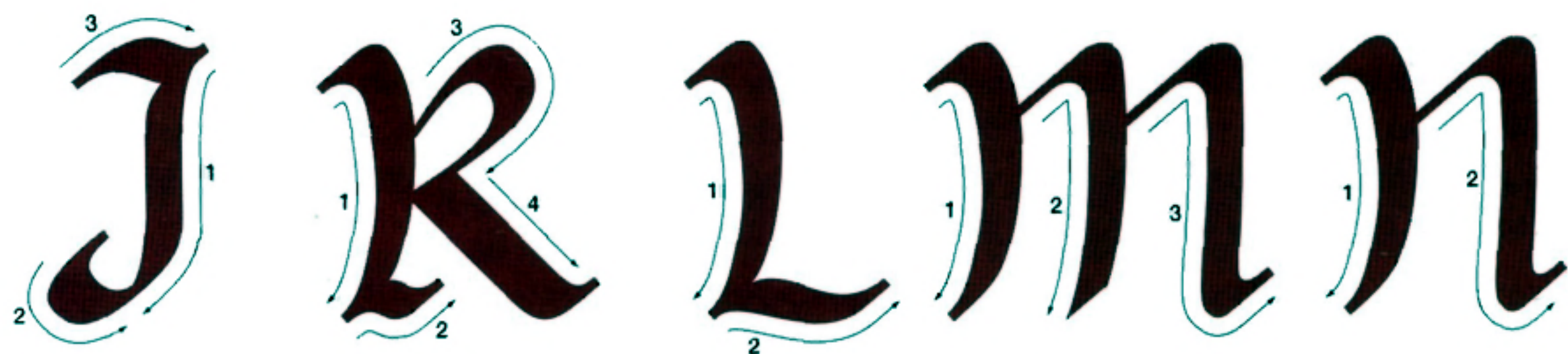
Gothic Cursive Upper case

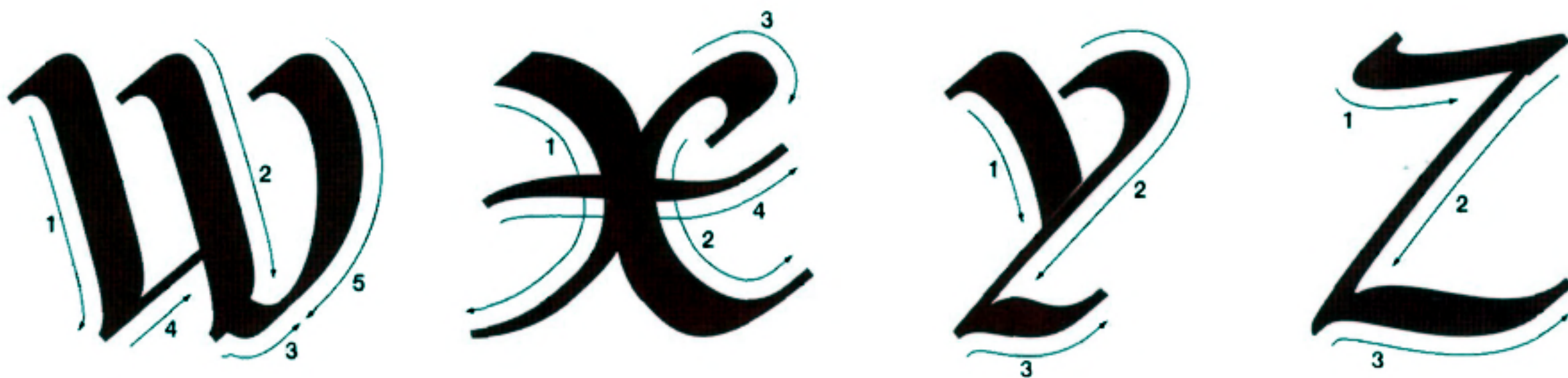
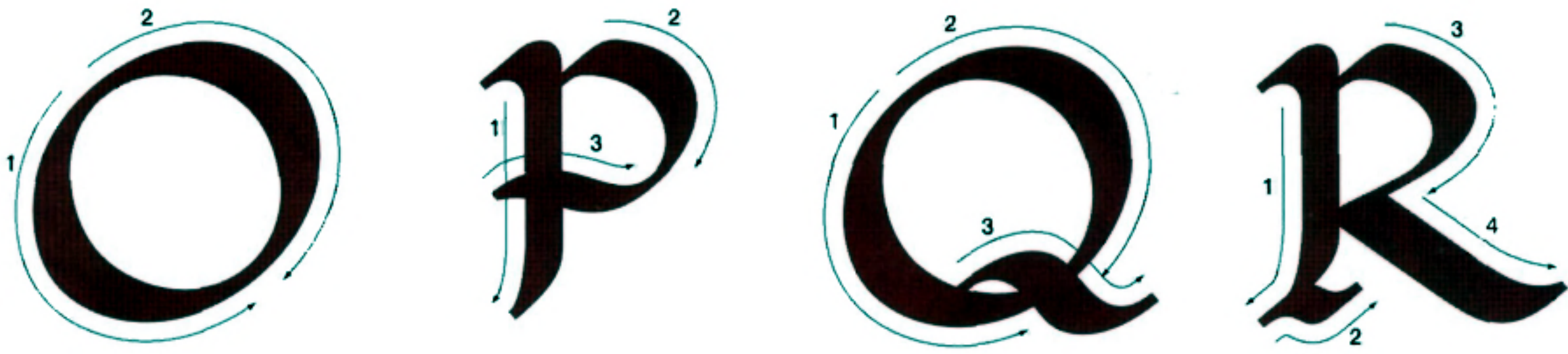
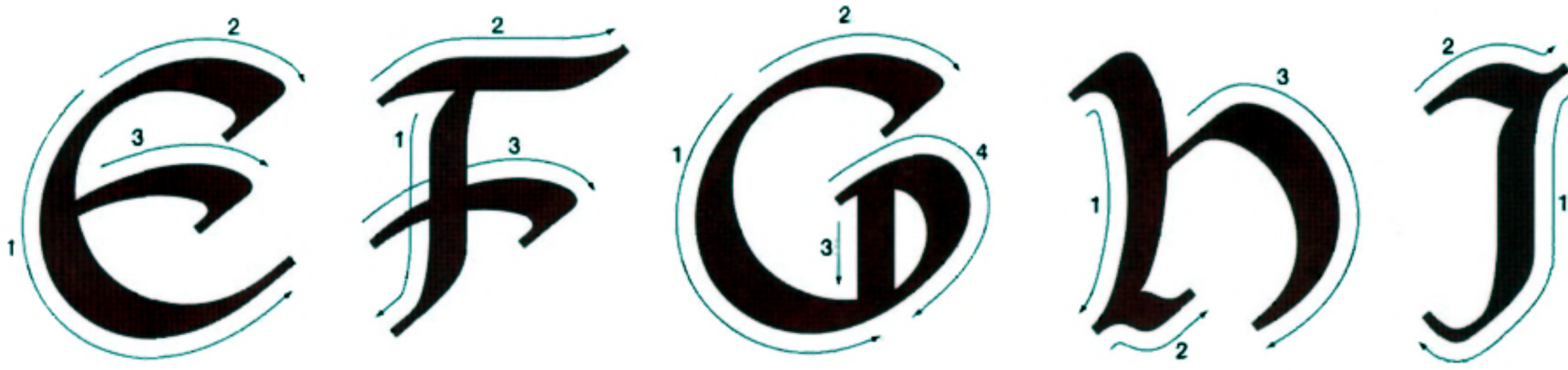
Cap height: 6 nib widths

Pen angle: 45°



*An upright, yet flowing
alphabet that can
be written quickly.
The strokes of Gothic
Cursive are often
finished off with light
flourishes, curls or
hairlines.*

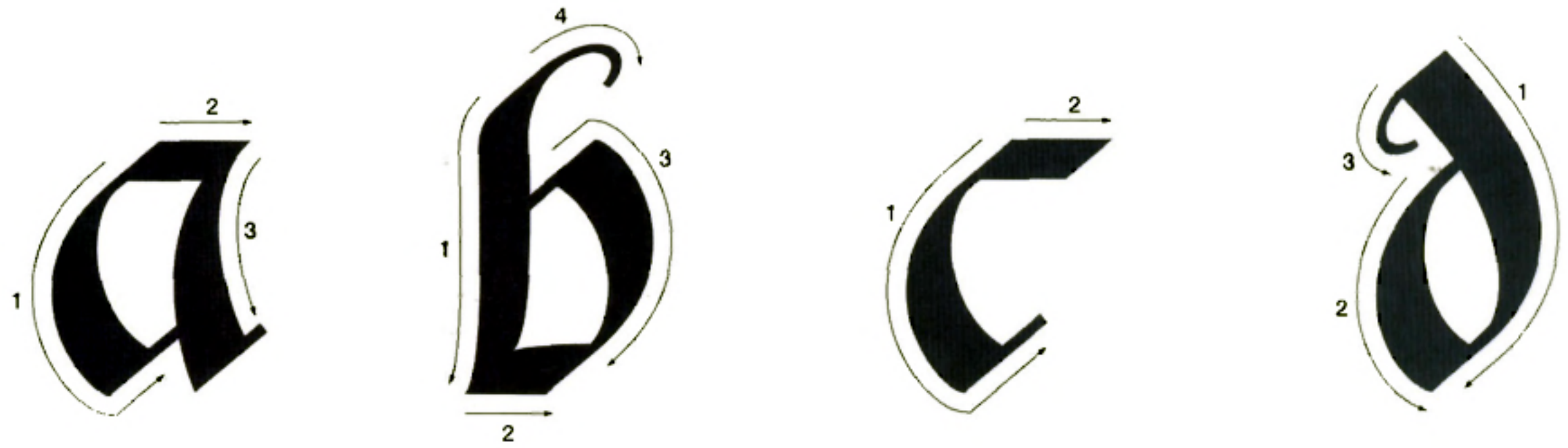




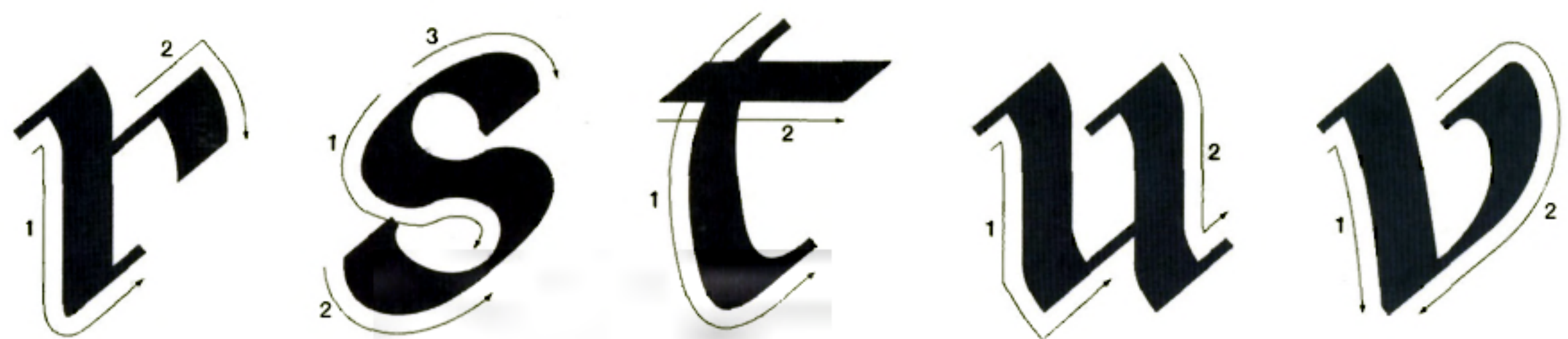
Gothic Cursive
Lower case

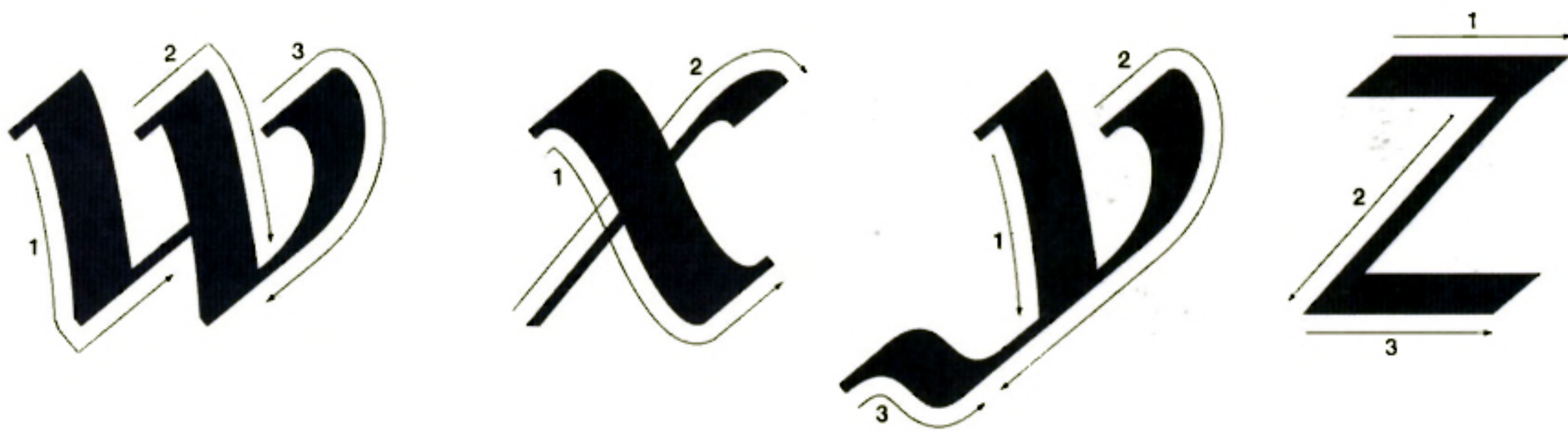
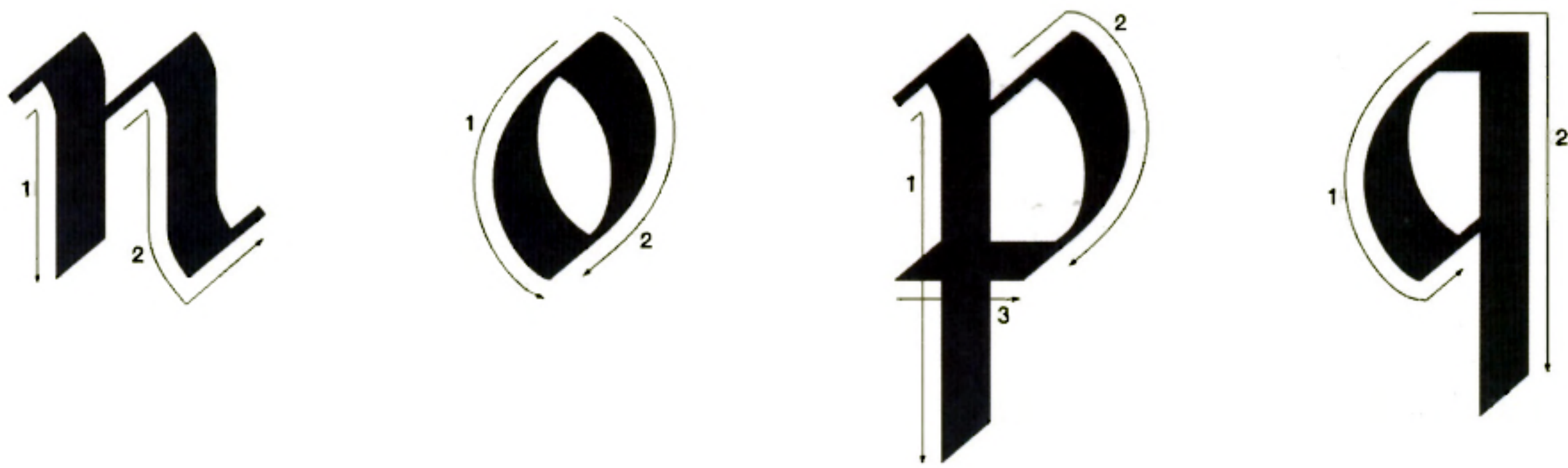
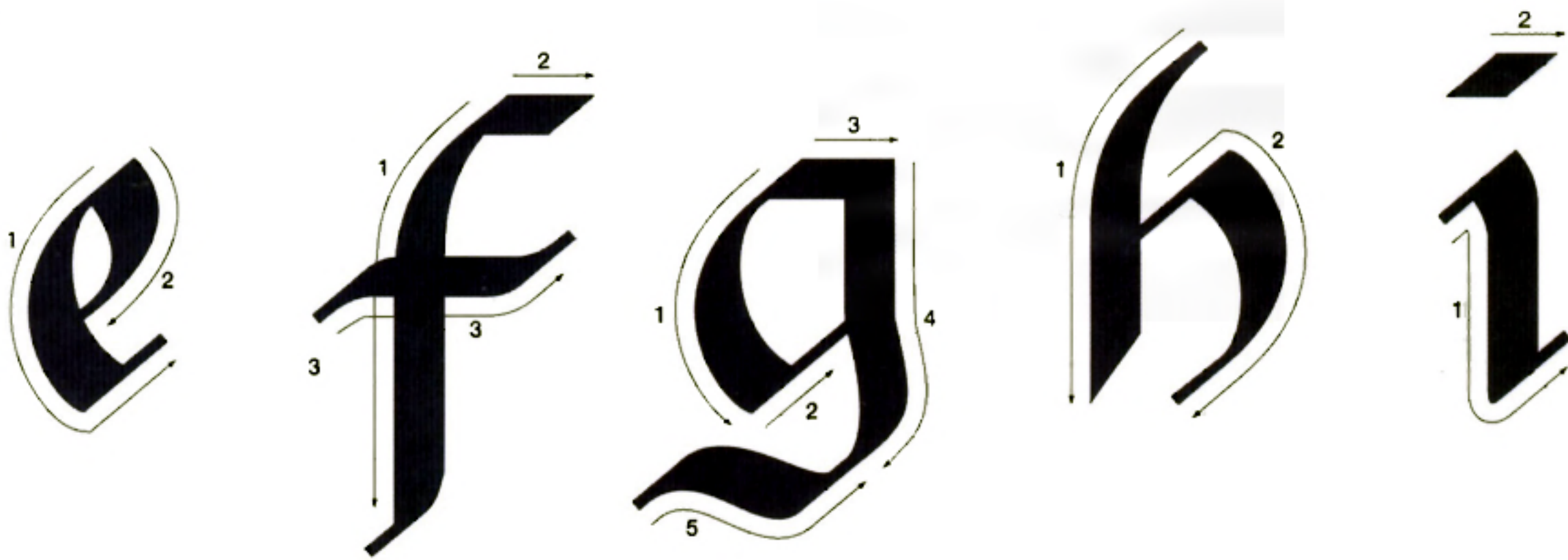
x height: 4 nib widths

Pen angle: 45°



This alphabet is based on the letter O, which has an almond-shaped counter, giving a consistent similarity to many of the letters. While the flourishes and hairlines here are not as extravagant as those of the upper case, the last stroke of most letters ends by twisting and dragging on the corner of your pen.

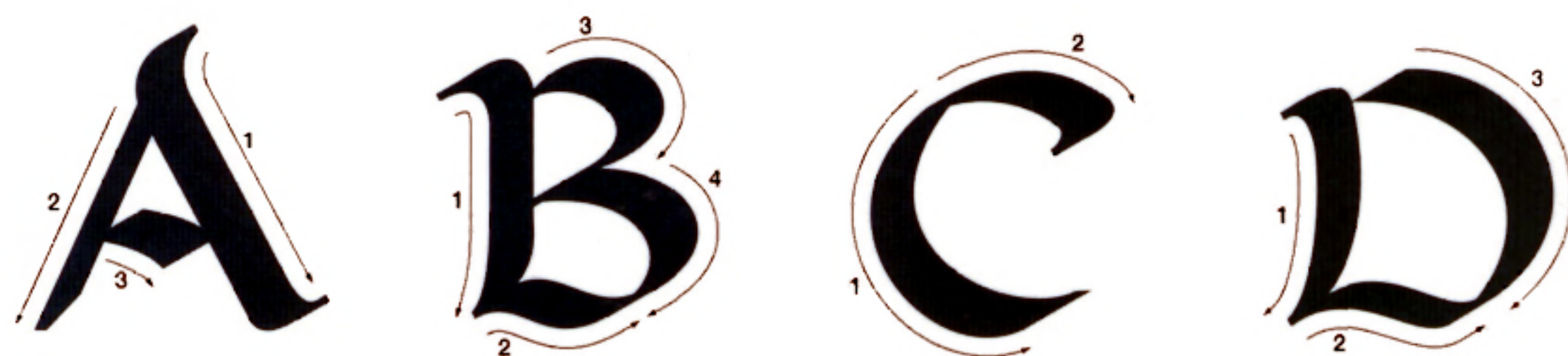




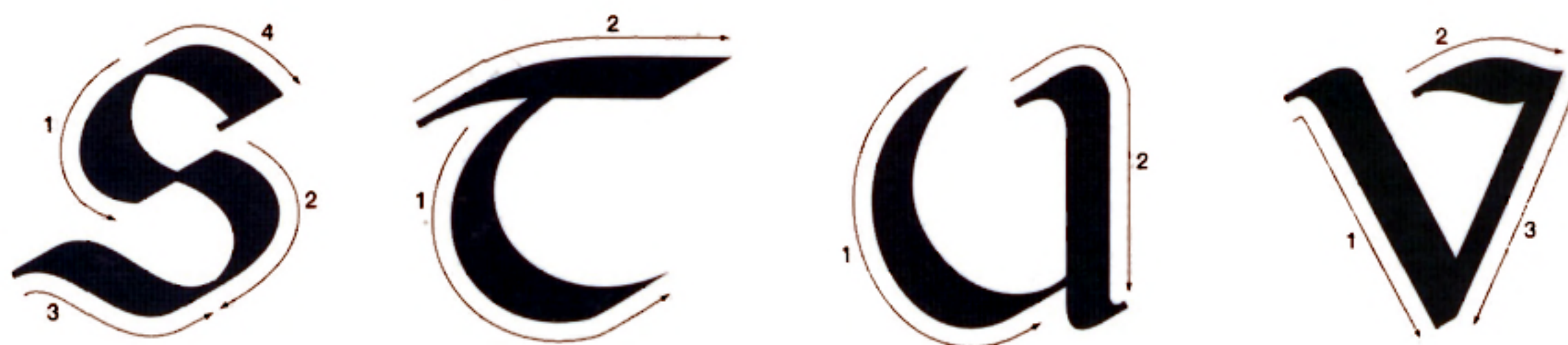
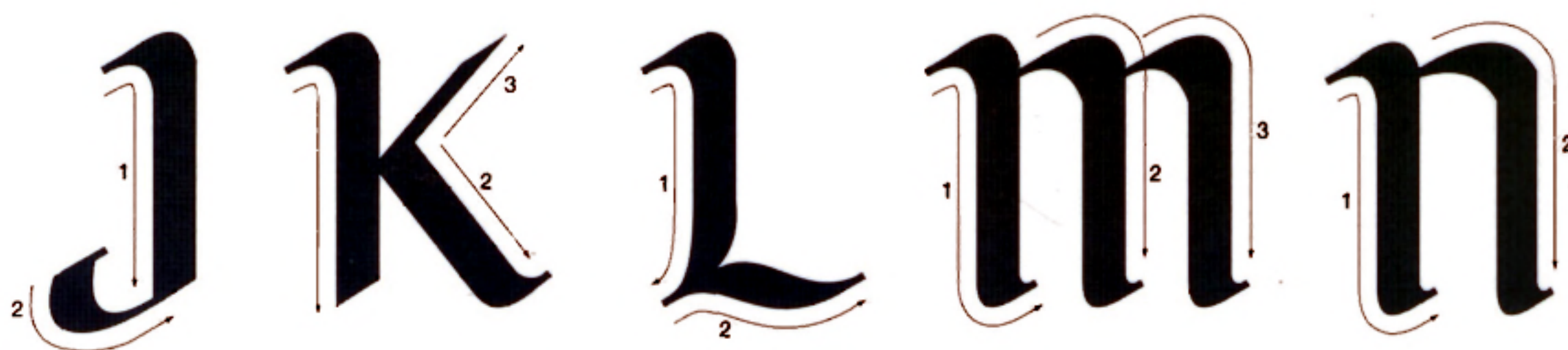
Rotunda
Upper case

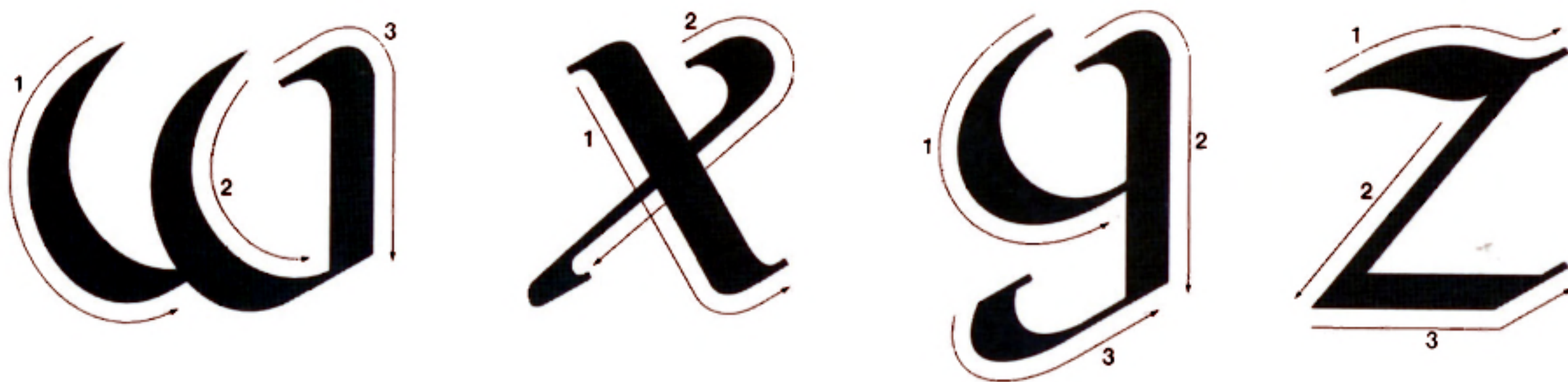
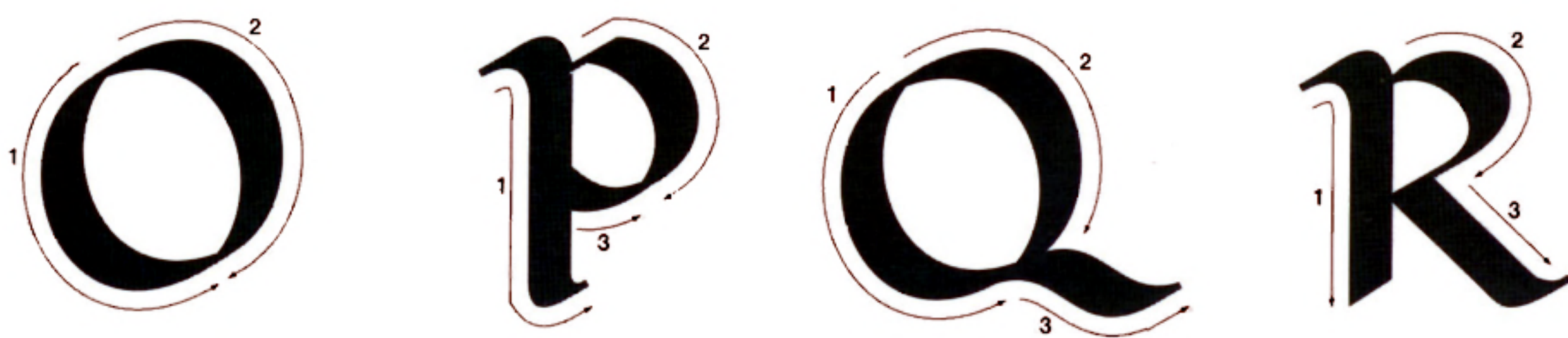
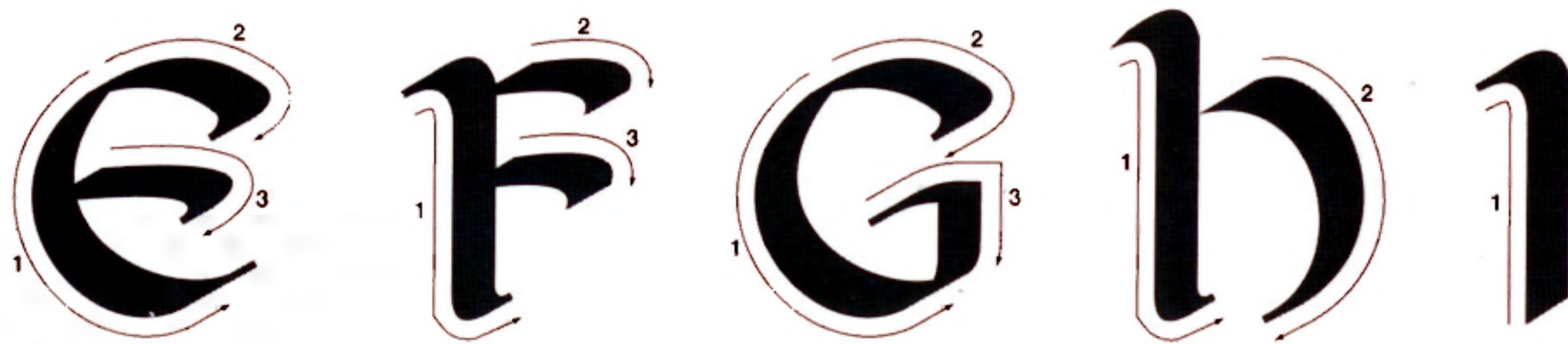
Cap height: 5 nib widths

Pen angle: 45°



These upper case letterforms are very open, almost expanded, with plenty of space within the counters and bowls of the letters.

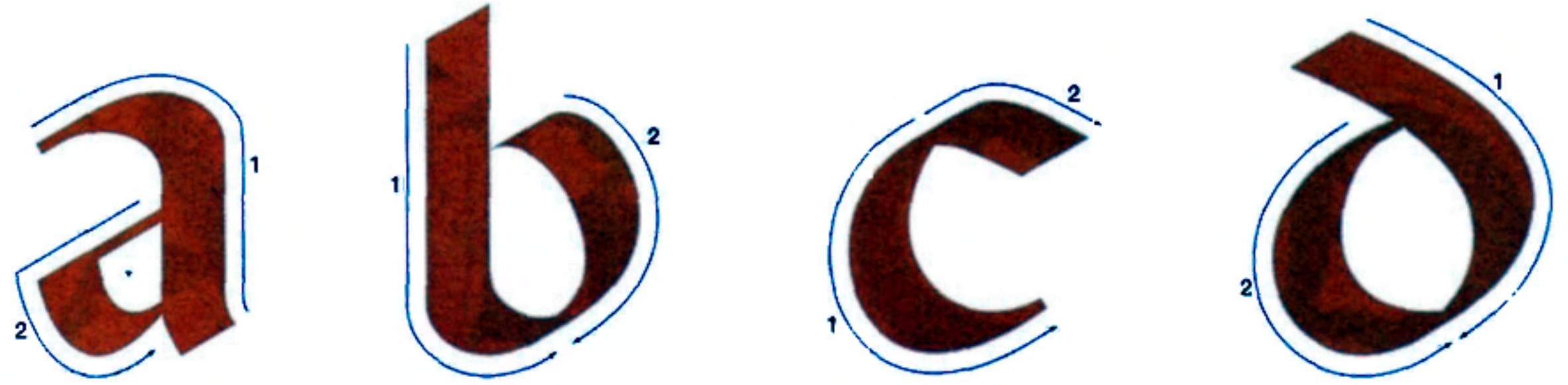




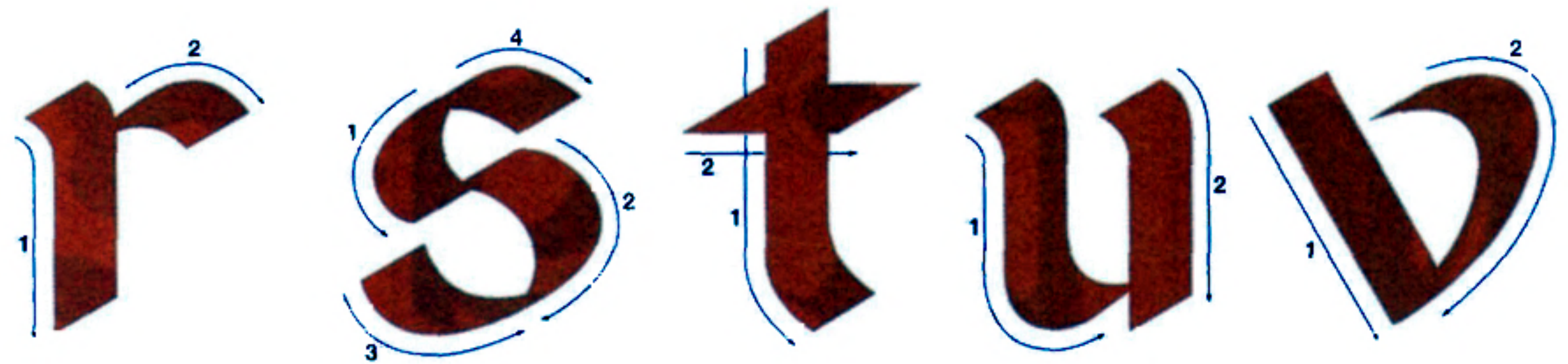
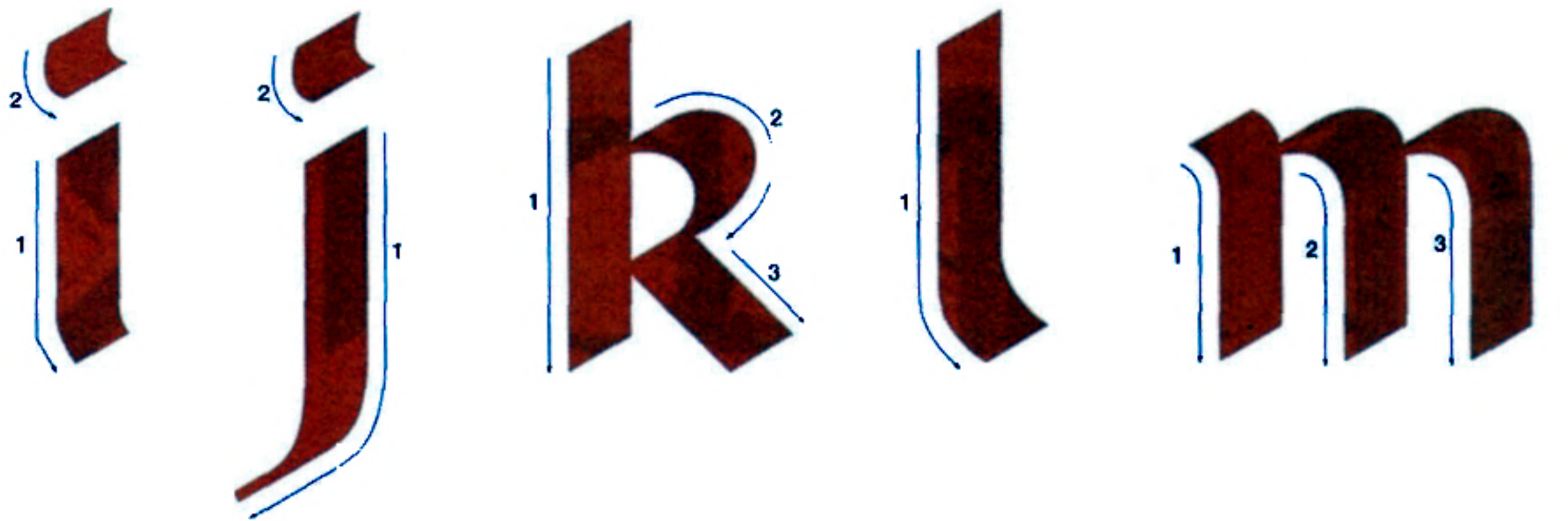
Rotunda
Lower case

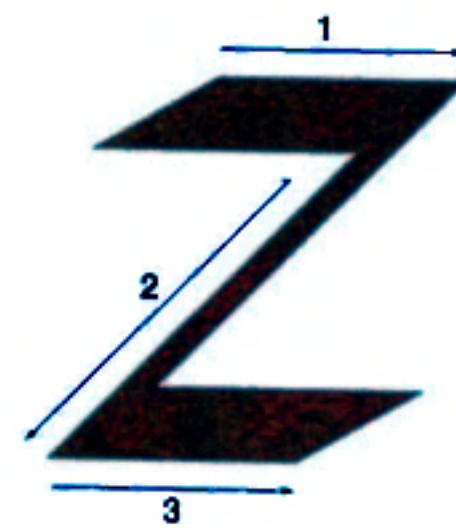
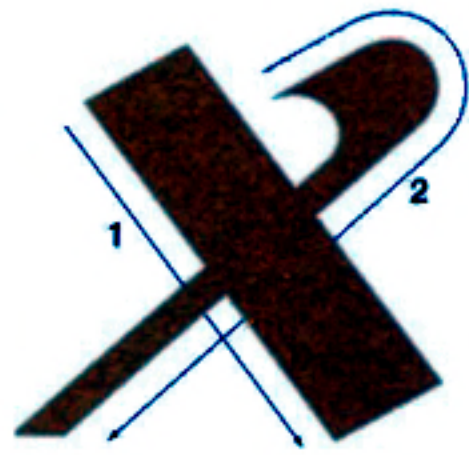
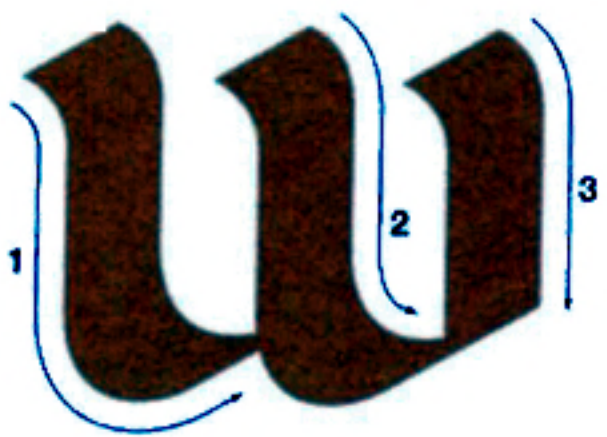
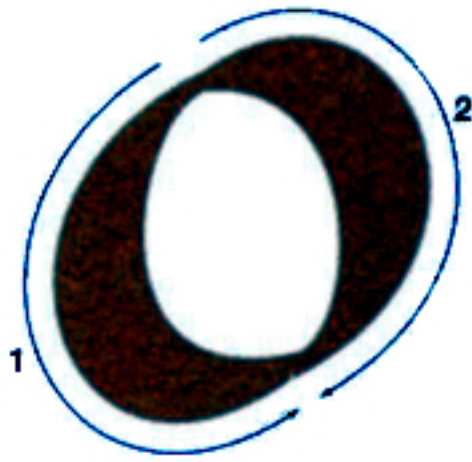
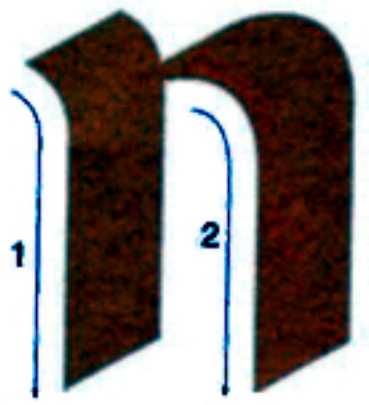
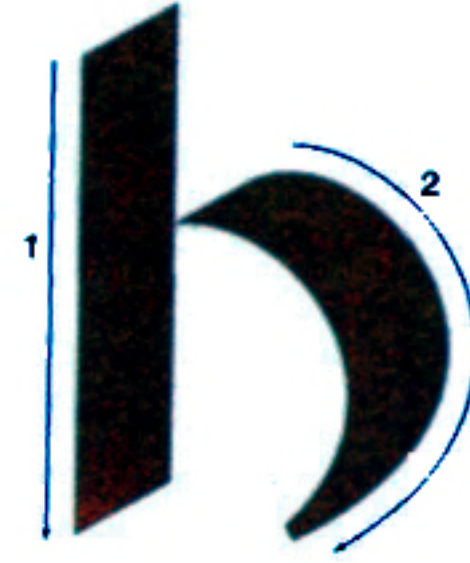
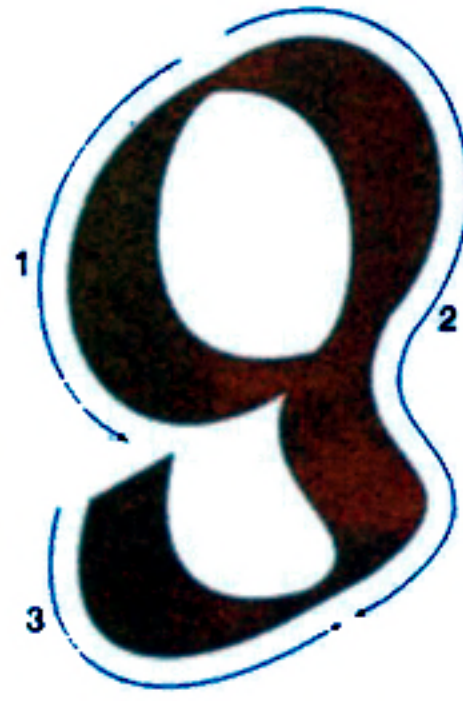
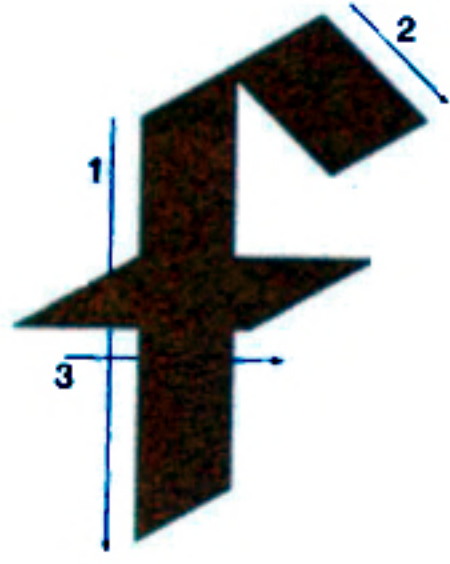
x height: 4 nib widths

Pen angle: 30°



The high legibility of the lower case Rotunda alphabet is partly due to the large counters and bowls, and is also contributed to by the lack of flourishes. Each letter has neat, clean ends to all strokes.







Menu

On this menu the lettering is centred, and the use of a capital M would normally weight the design heavily on the left-hand side.

However, the introduction of two large, flourished strokes helps the lettering to sit more easily within the area and improves the balance of the design.

Plant cards

Those who have house-plants might like to make cards recording the plant's name together with instructions for looking after it. Simple italic letterforms were drawn in dark blue ink with a fountain pen onto thick card. The cards were then cut to shape and covered with transparent self-adhesive plastic to protect them from the damp soil.



However, through the production and distribution of printed books more people became literate, with the result that more people wanted to be able to write, and handwriting became more common in everyday life. Some professional scribes therefore turned their hands to teaching people to write, using the italic script, and were therefore able to remain in employment.

Expanded italics
Upper case

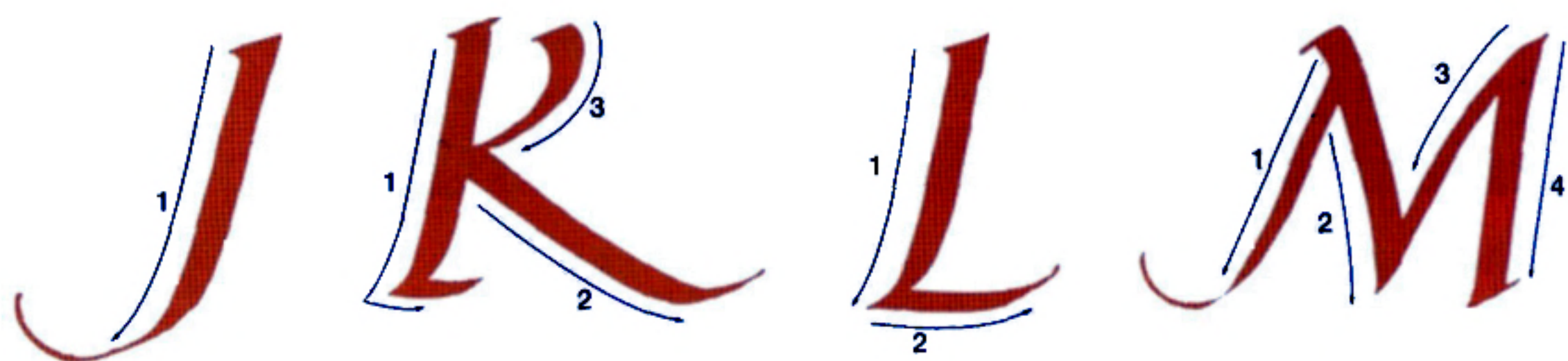
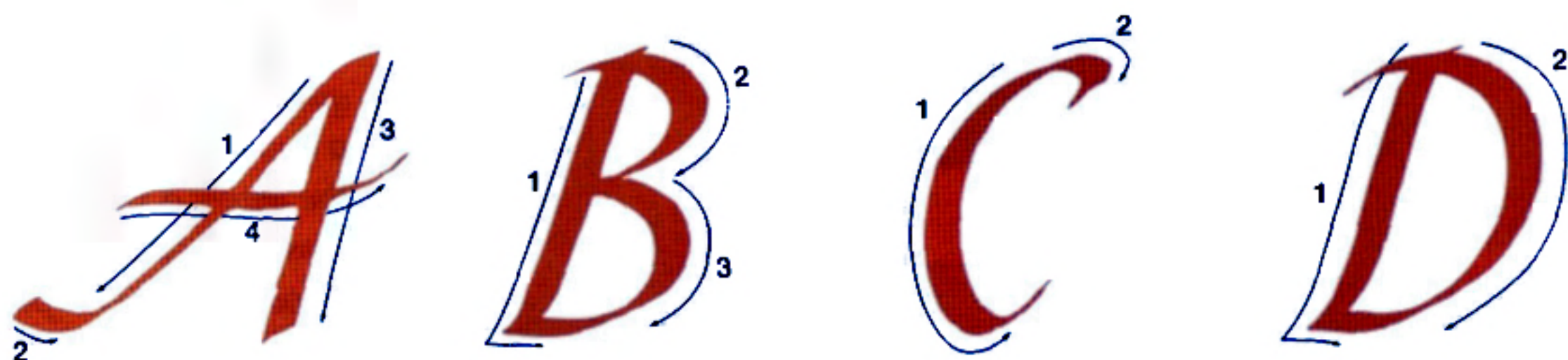
Cap height: 10 nib widths

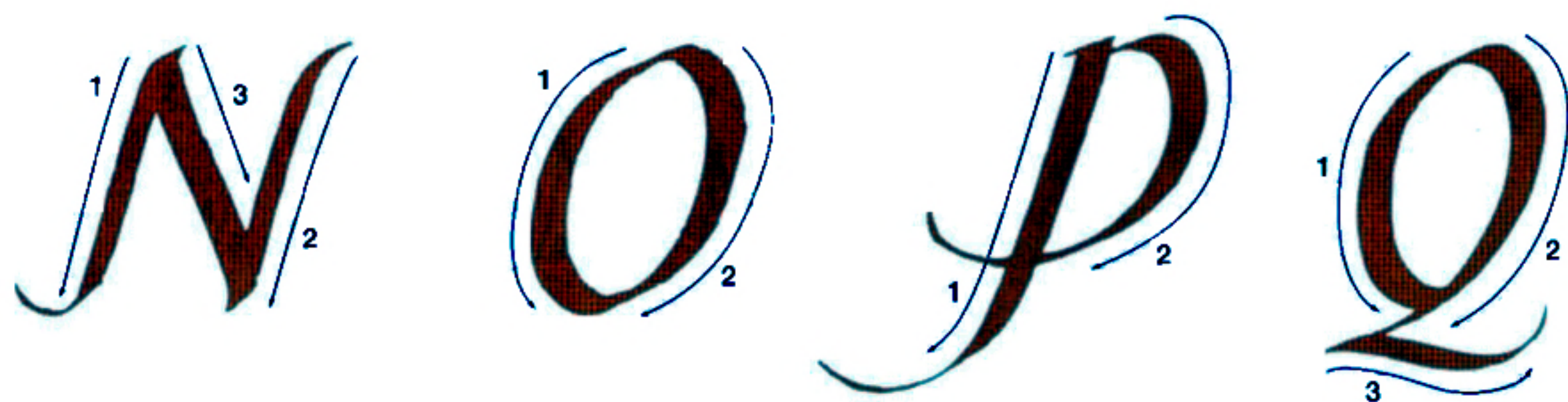
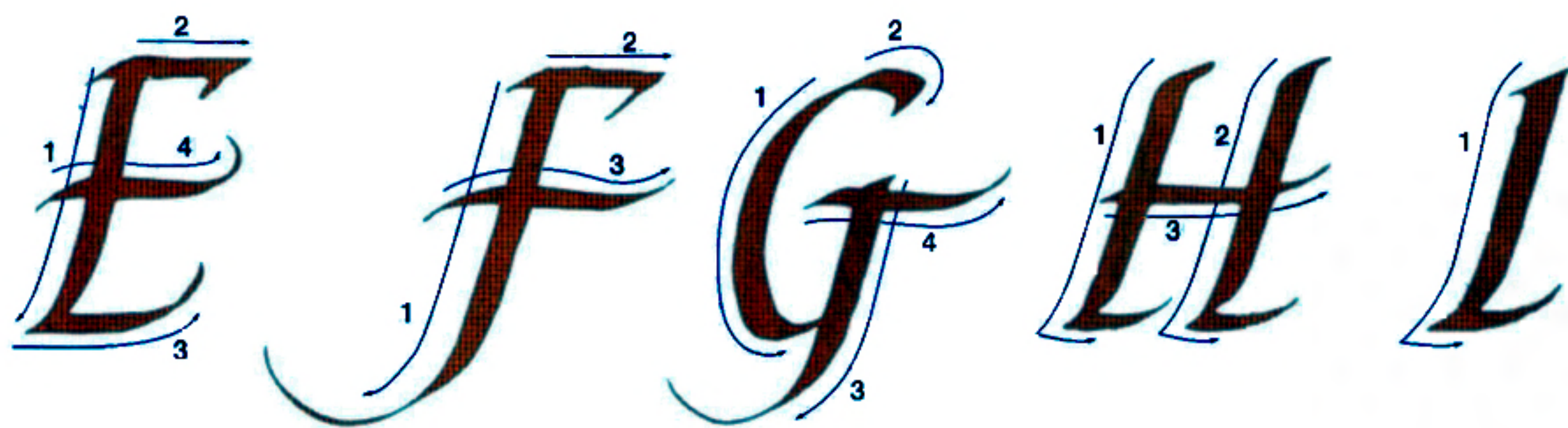
Pen angle: 45°

Letter slant: 10°

The elegant contrast between thicks and thins is produced by holding the pen at an angle of 45°.

Serifs can be drawn as part of the main stroke, or as a second, separate stroke.



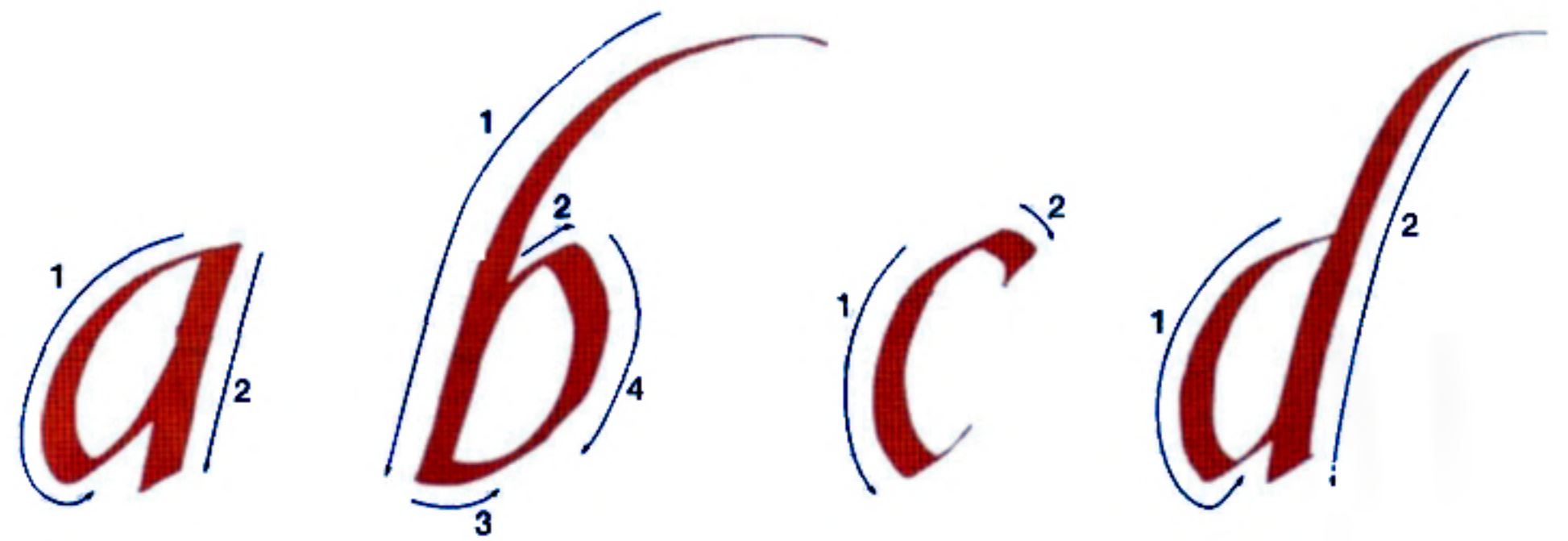


Expanded italics
Lower case

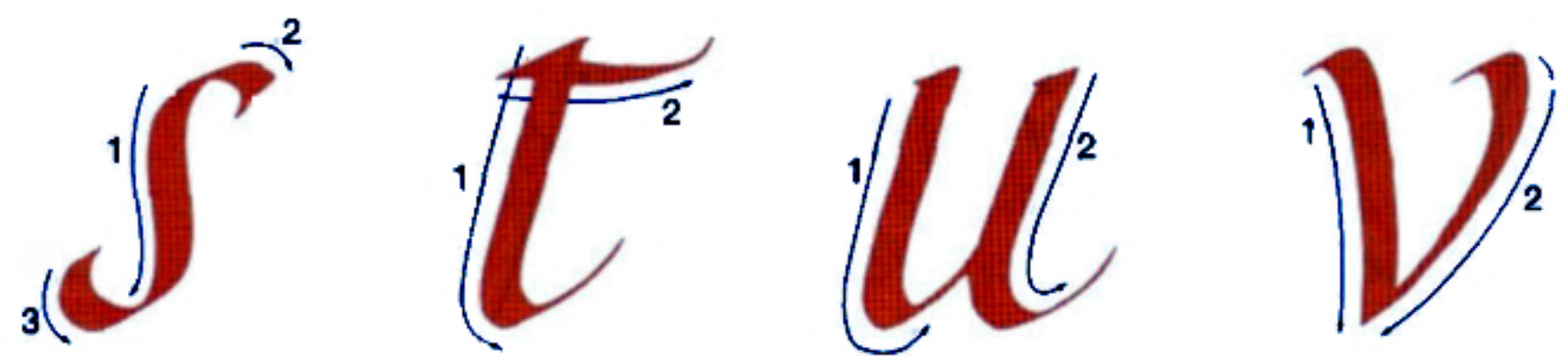
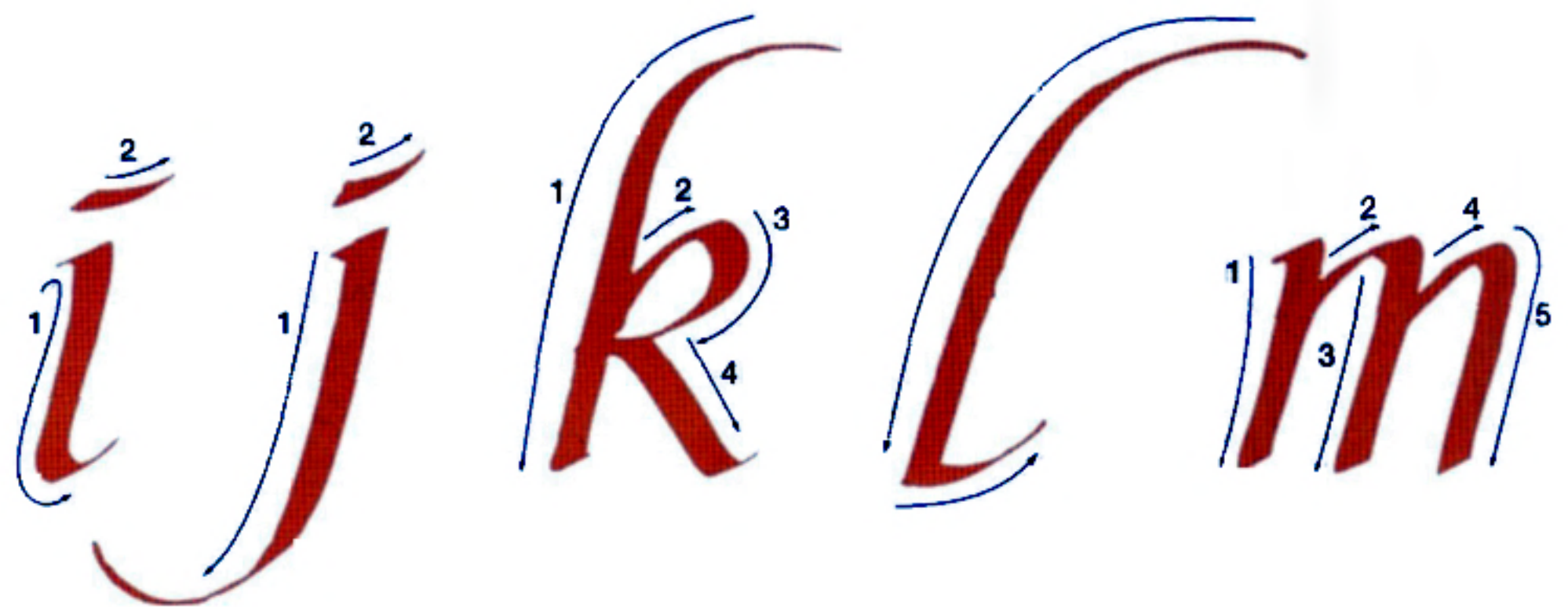
x height: 6 nib widths

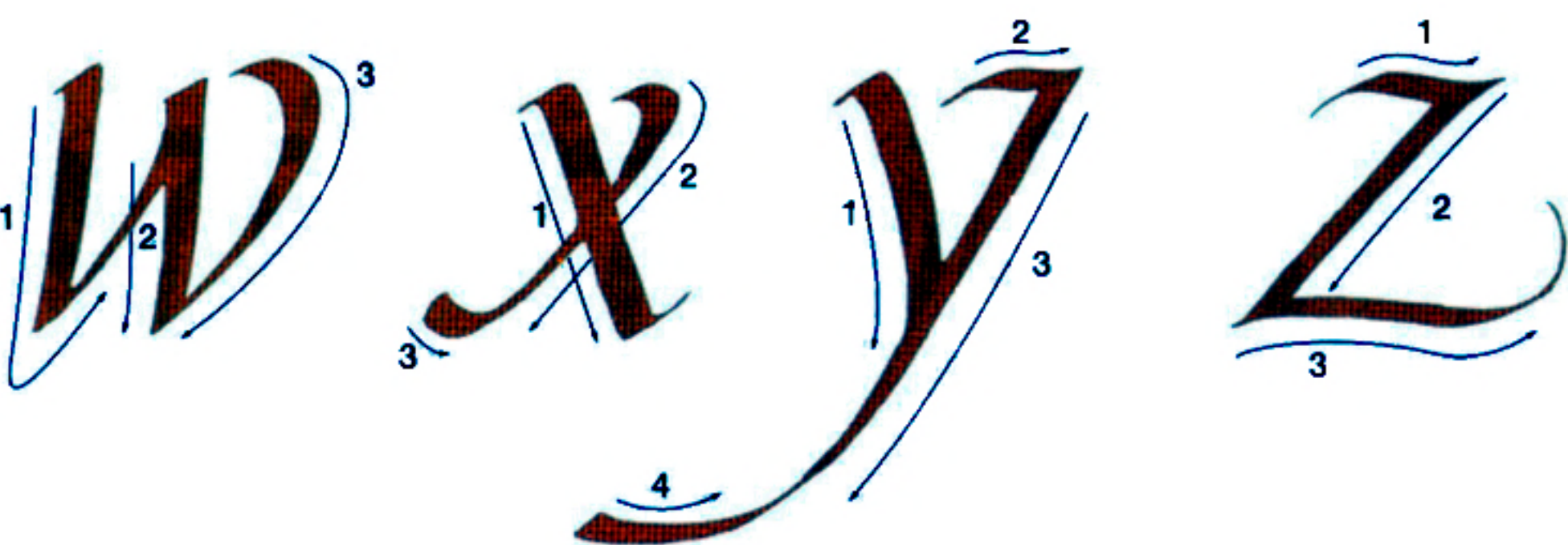
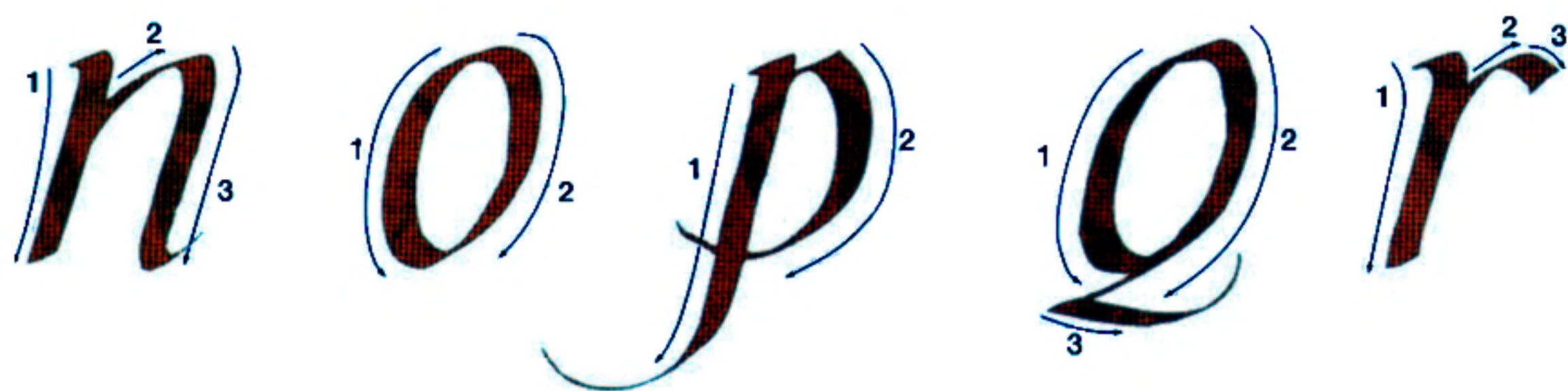
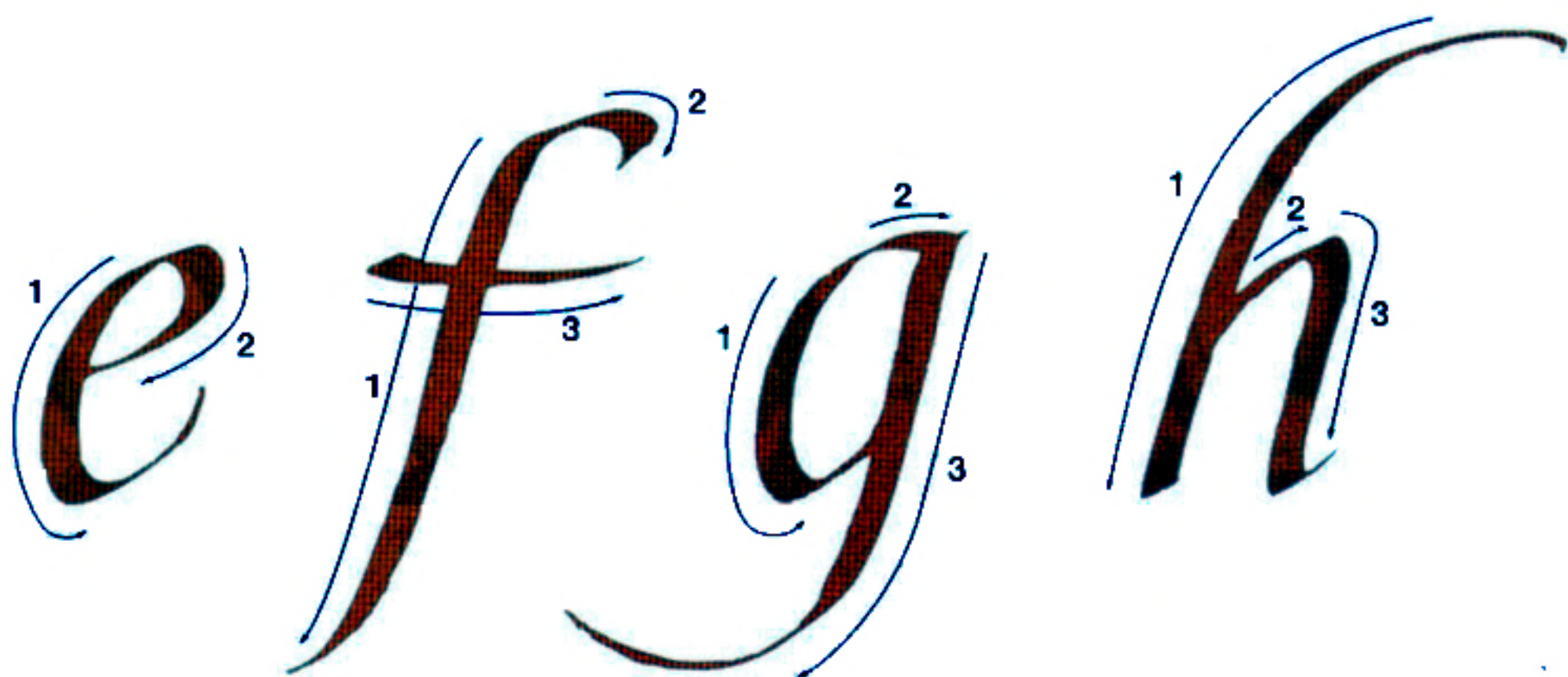
Pen angle: 45°

Letter slant: 10°



Italic alphabets provide a good starting point for learning calligraphy. They can be written quickly, and the ascenders and descenders are ideal for elaboration with flourishes and stroke extensions.



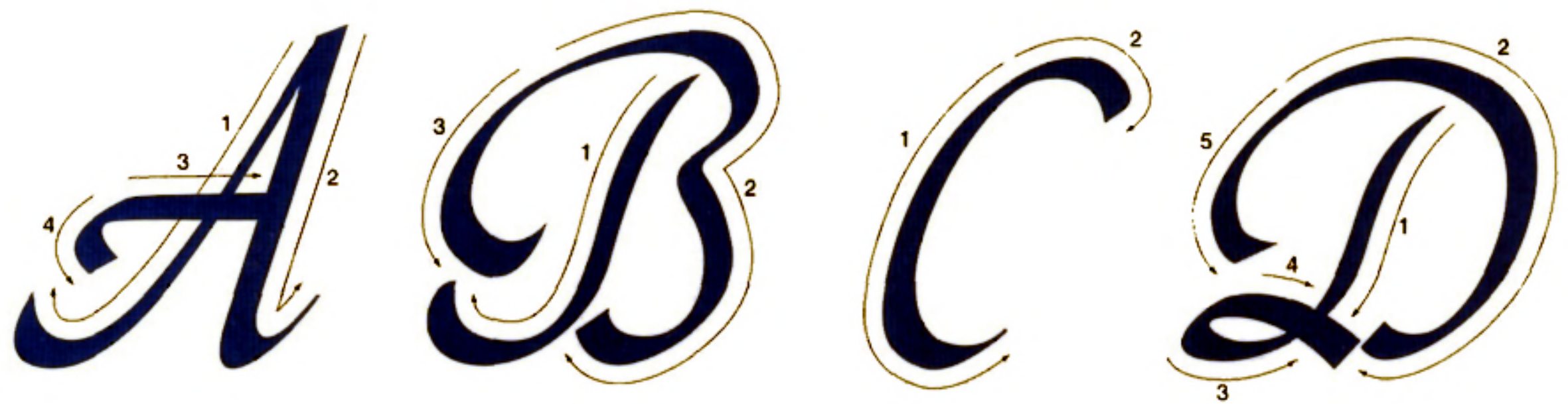


Italics
Upper case

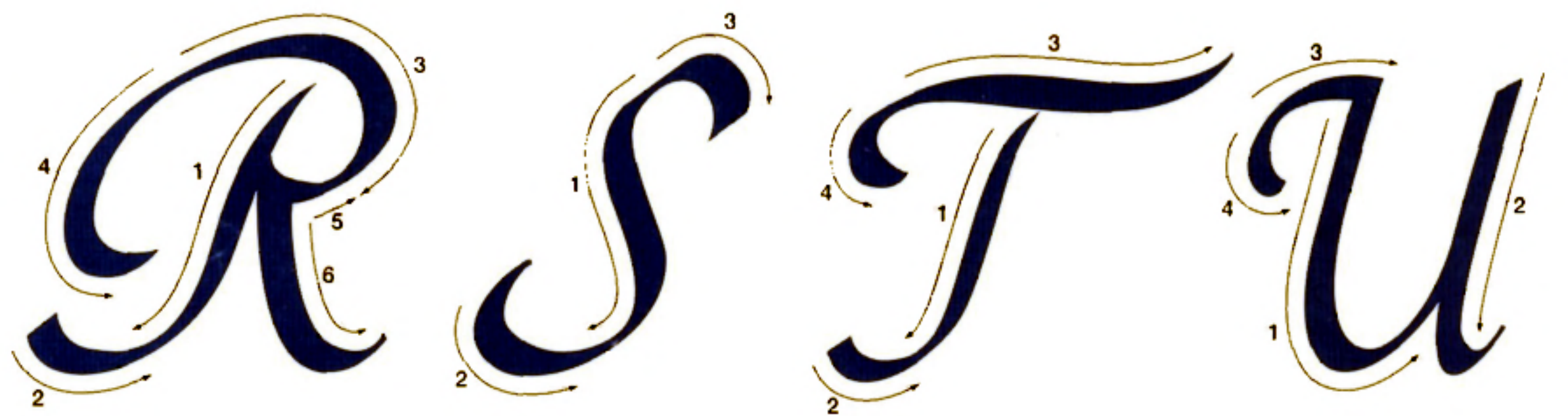
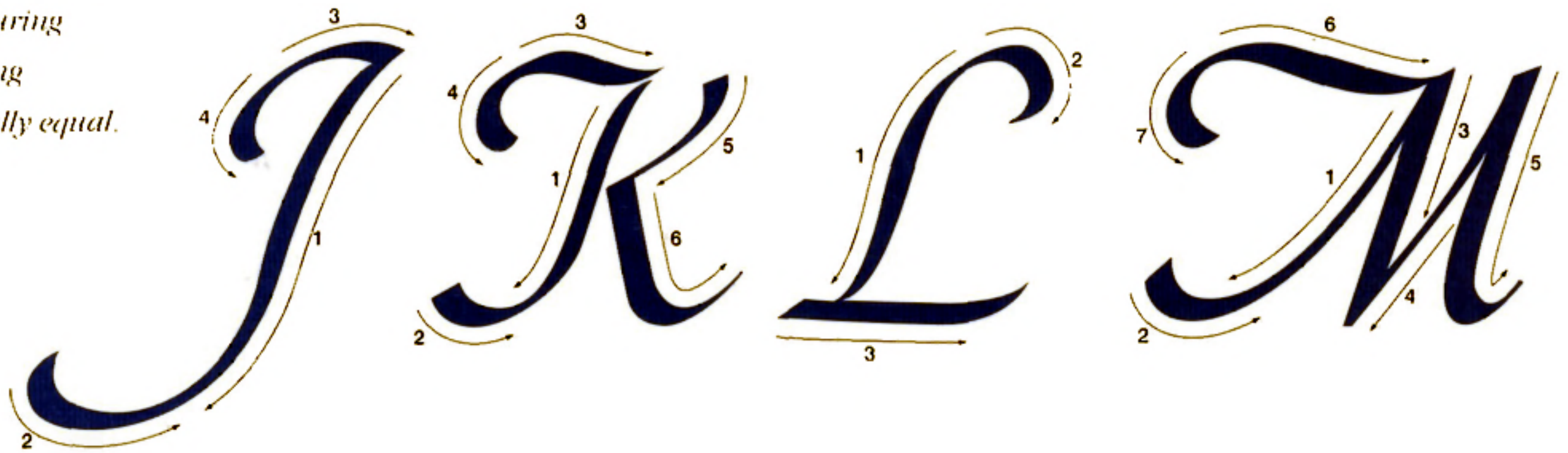
Cap height: 12 nib widths

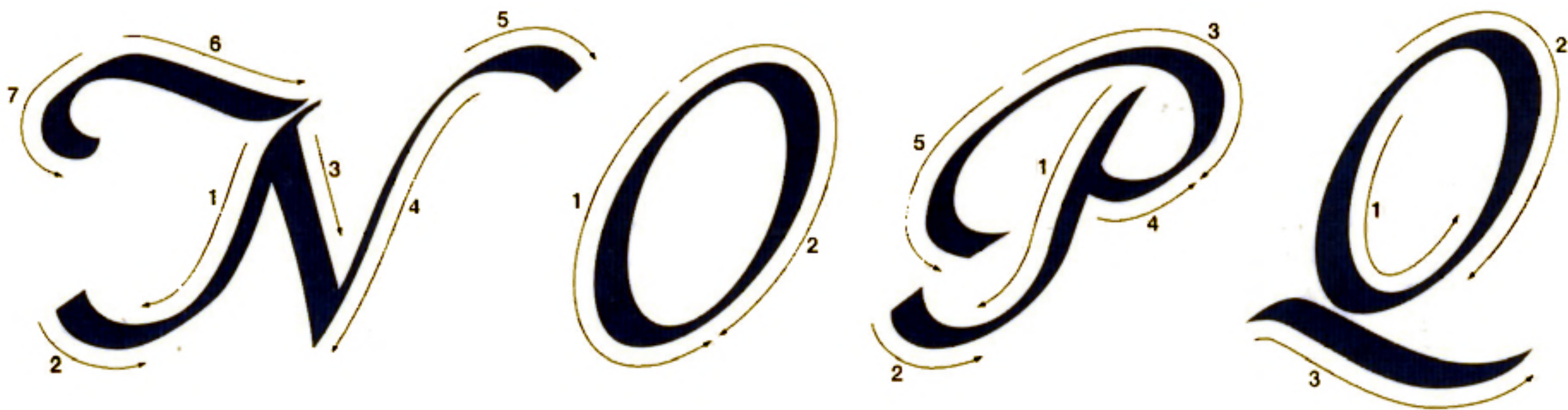
Pen angle: 45°

Letter slant: 10°



Italic letterforms are based on an elliptical O. When drawing these letters watch the spaces in between the letters carefully, ensuring that the spacing remains visually equal.





Italics
Lower case

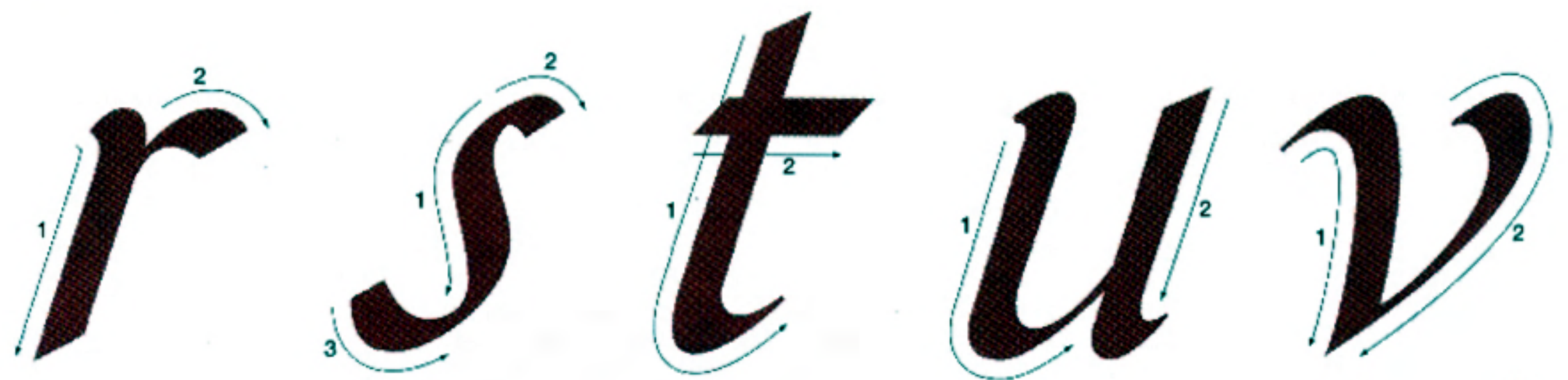
x height: 8 nib widths

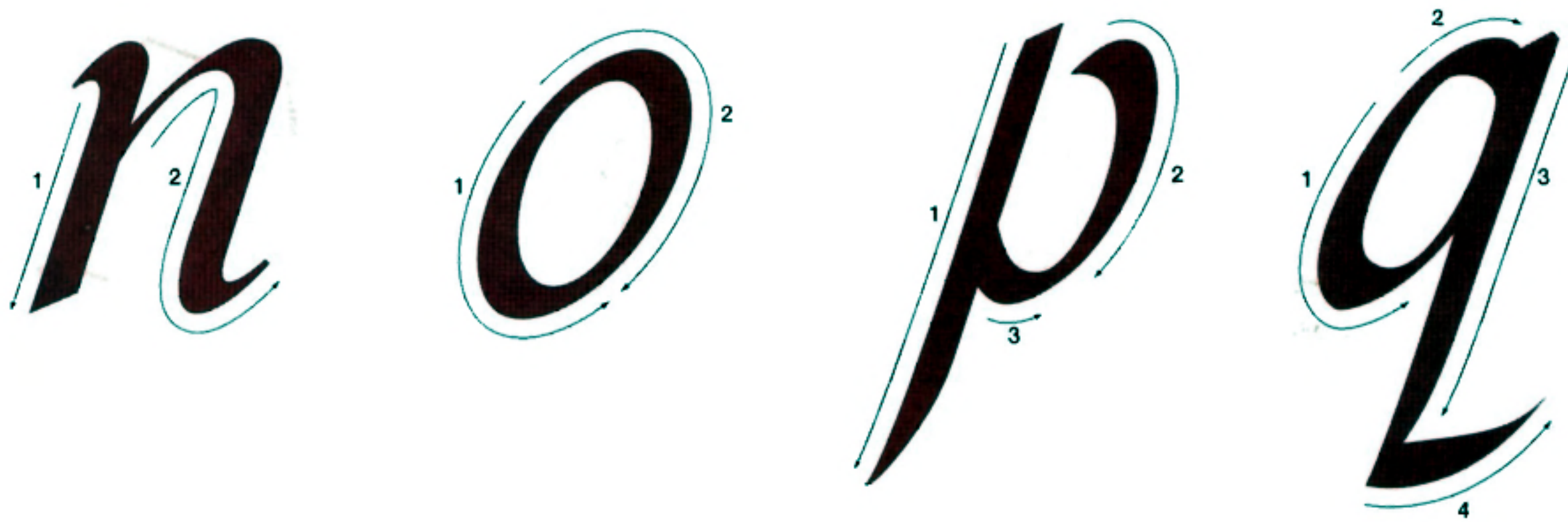
Pen angle: 45°

Letter slant: 10°



Italic letterforms, when spaced correctly, provide a regular rhythm, allowing the flowing ascenders and descenders to embellish the lettering.

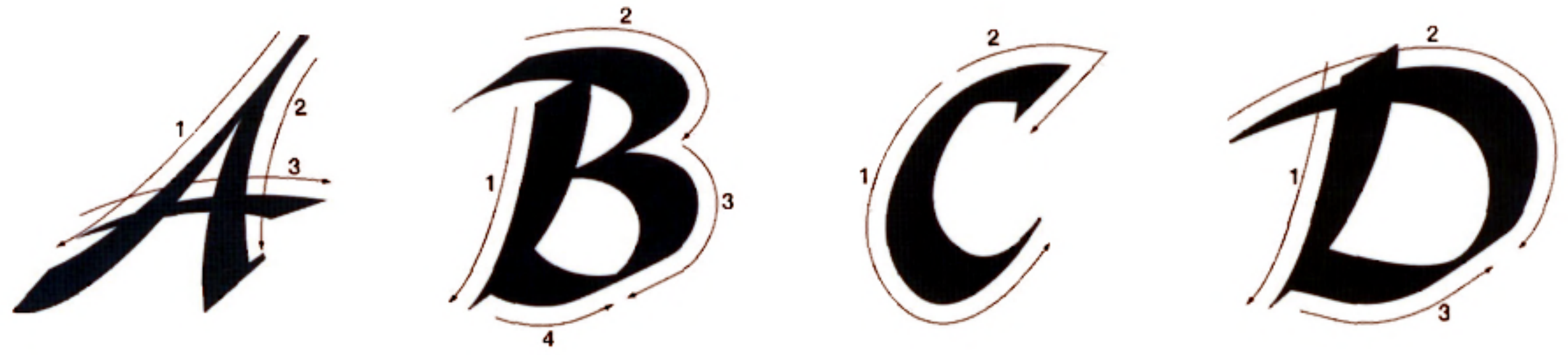




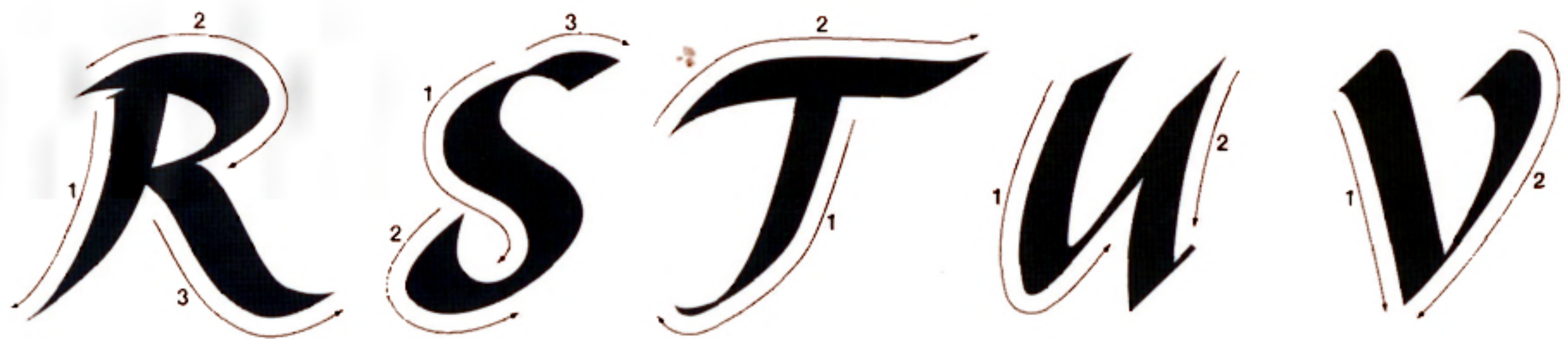
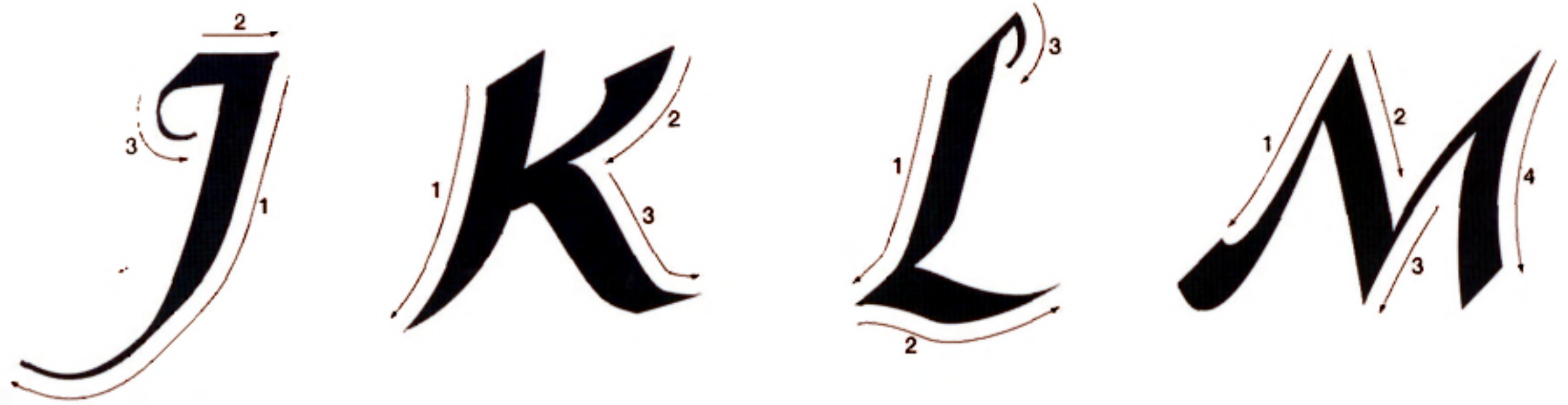
Contemporary letters
Upper case

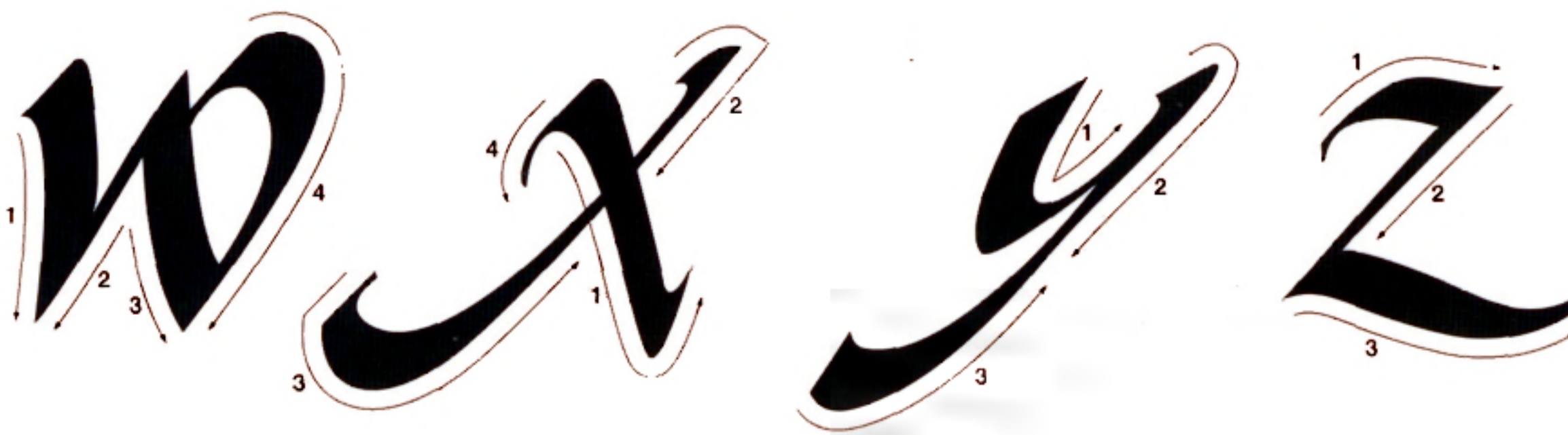
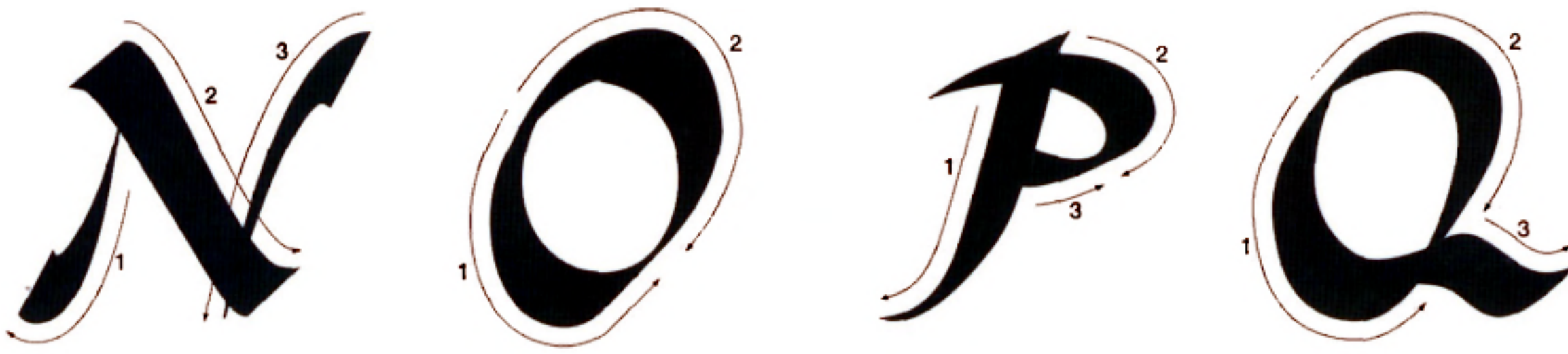
Cap height: 12 nib widths

Pen angle: 45°



These flowing and free-looking letterforms are ideal for headings and display lettering. Most of the thick, solid strokes are usually finished with a small hairline, created by a slight turn of the pen as it is lifted from the writing surface.

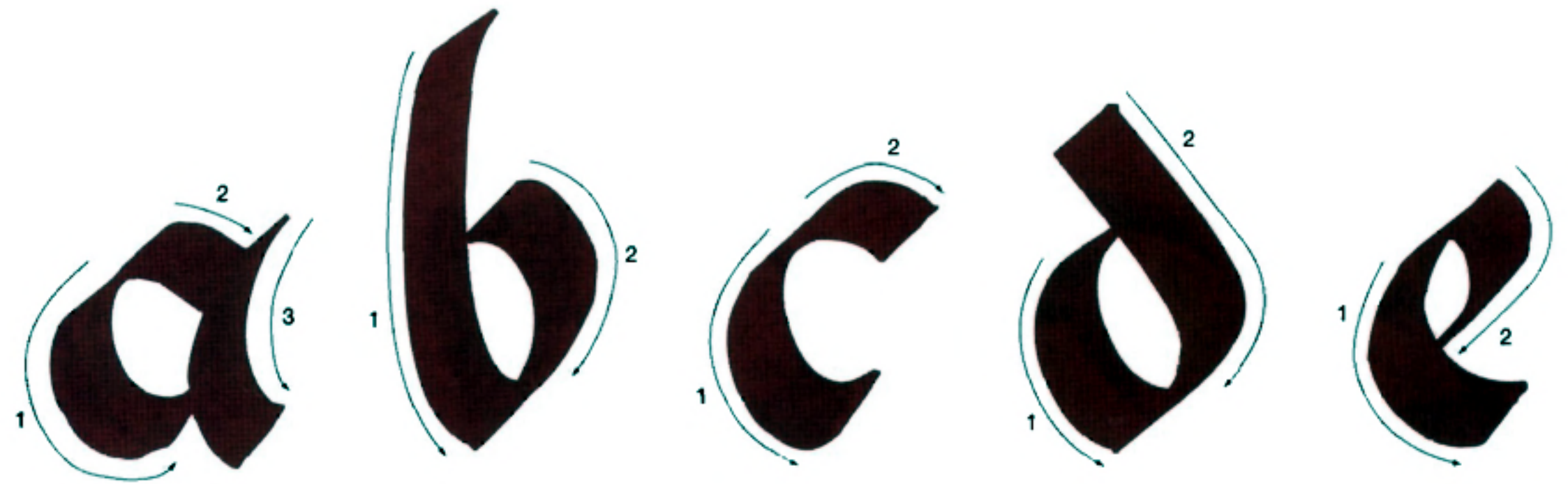




Contemporary letters
Lower case

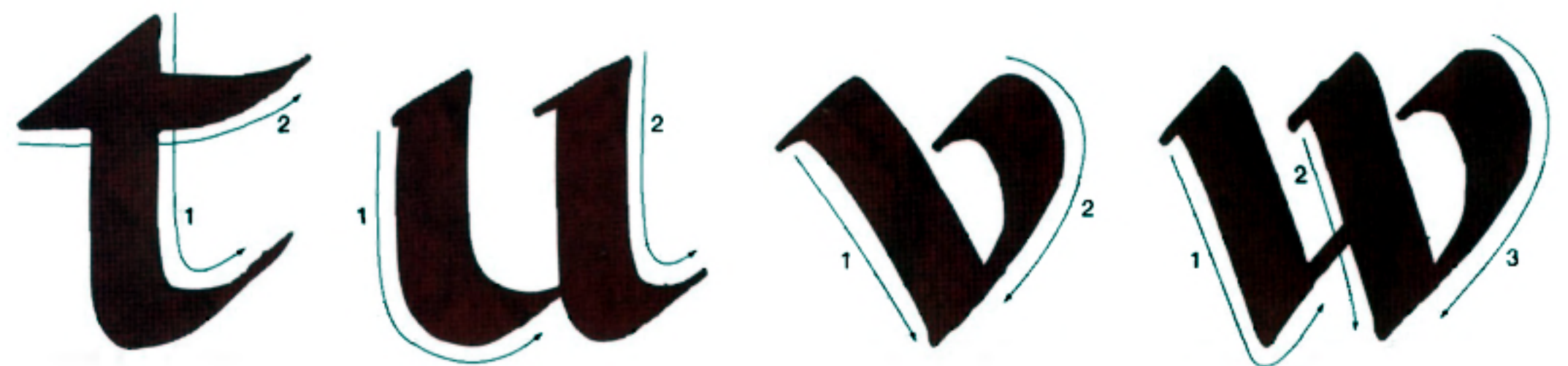
x height: $3\frac{1}{2}$ nib widths

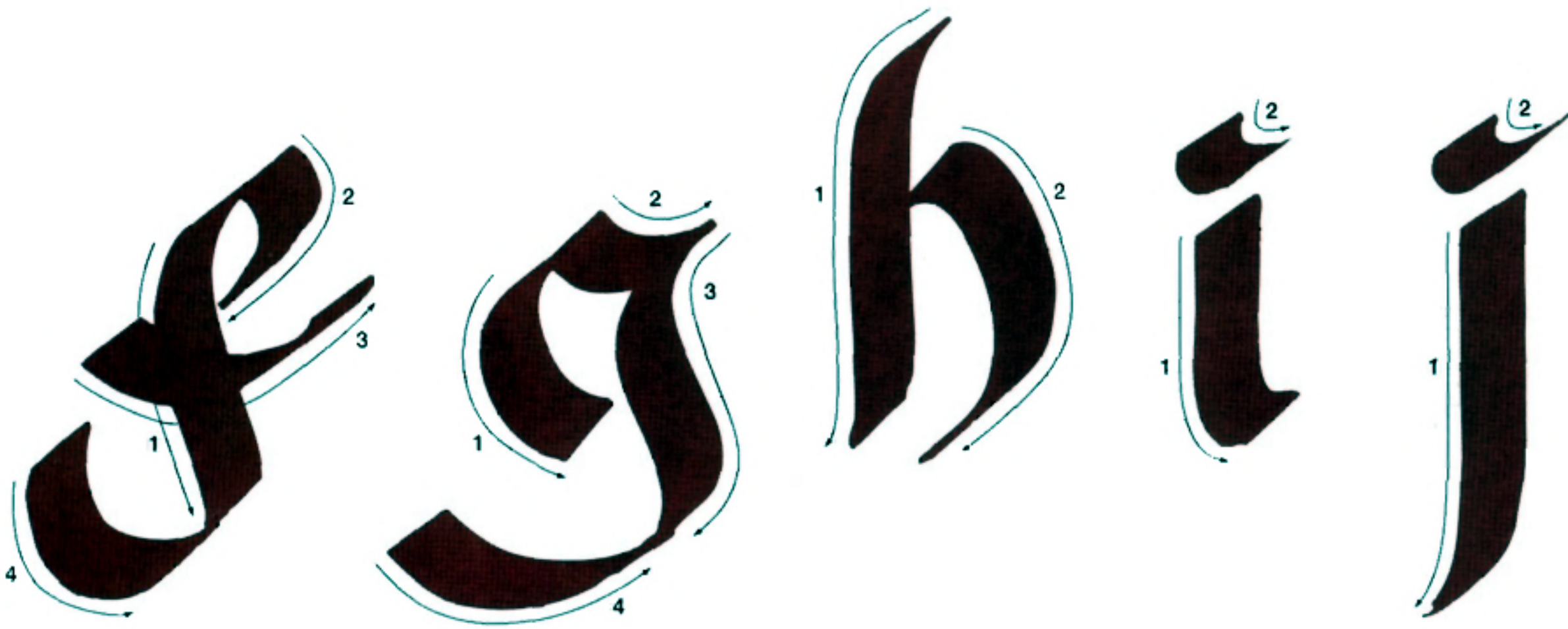
Pen angle: 45°



This alphabet is based on lower-case book-band letterforms.

The relatively heavy proportions are produced by combining a wide nib with a short letter height. There are no hairlines or extravagant thin flourishes, but there are controlled small serifs on some letters, such as m, n, r, u, v, w and x. Large metal or automatic pens are ideal for constructing these letters.





Contemporary letters
Lower case

x height: 3 nib widths

Pen angle: 45°



This alphabet displays heavily contrasting thicks and thins. All the thins are created by twisting the metal pen onto its corner and drawing relatively long, almost flourished strokes.





Contemporary letters
Lower case

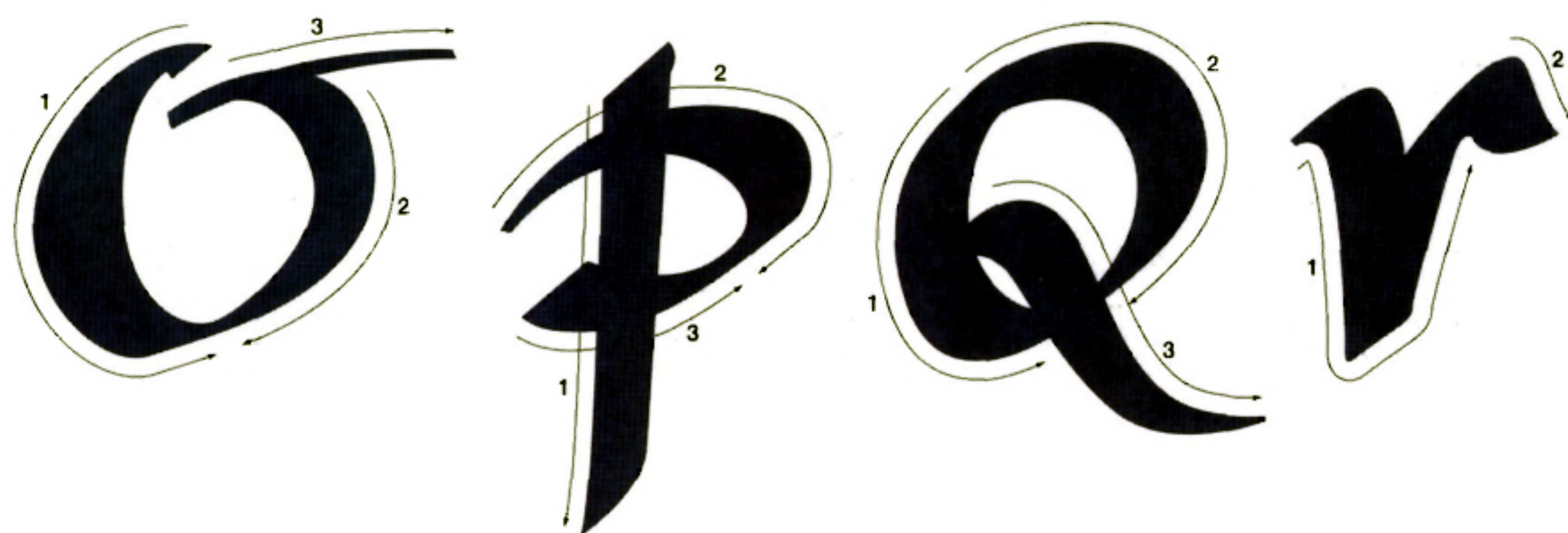
x height: 4 nib widths

Pen angle: 45°



These modern letterforms were written quickly with a brush. You may like to try drawing these letters with a two-pronged metal pen, leaving a gap in each stroke that can be filled in with another colour, or left empty for the writing surface to show through.





Old Style Numerals

Height: 4–6 nib widths

Pen angle: 45°

Numerals are often neglected, as people concentrate on alphabets. They provide new shapes, however, with which interesting compositions can be created for such items as birthday cards, calendars and posters.



Gothic Numerals

Height: 5½ nib widths

Pen angle: 45°

Be more generous when spacing numerals than you would be with letters, in order to retain their elegance and character.



Modern Numerals

Height: $3\frac{1}{2}$ nib widths

Pen angle: 45°



These numerals are basic in construction yet make good use of contrasts between thicks and thins.



**Roman
Numerals****Height:** 9 nib widths**Pen angle:** 45°

These numerals are constructed in the same way as those on page 138.

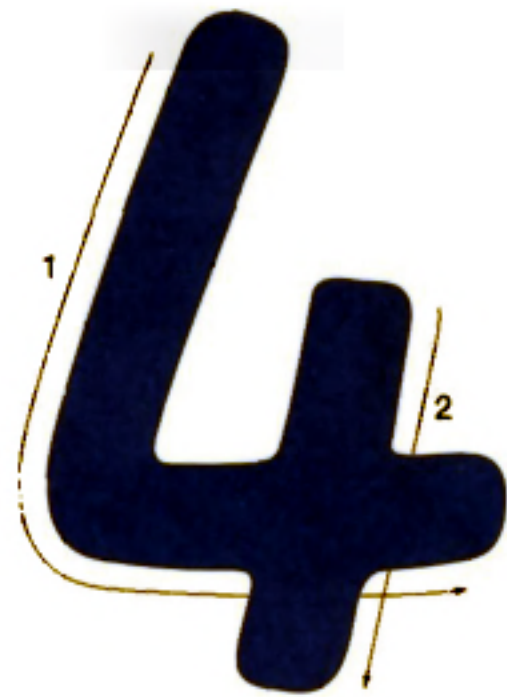
Take care, when constructing numerals, that they do not appear to be falling over.

Numerals

Height: 8 nib widths

Pen angle: Variable

These numerals were drawn with a brush. The constant thickness of the strokes in the 3, 4, 5, 6 and 9 is gained by holding the brush almost vertically to the page and slightly twisting the brush as the strokes are drawn.

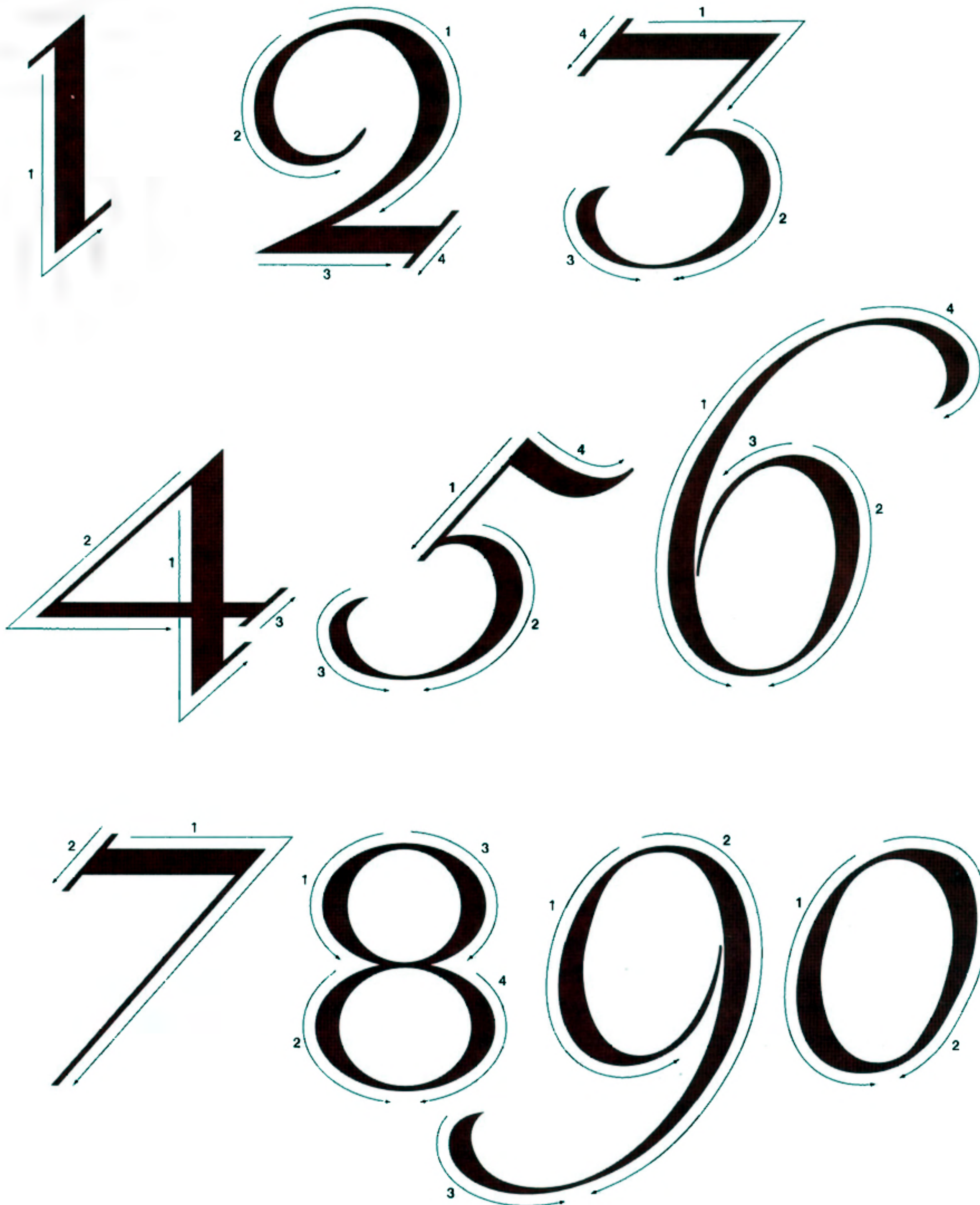


Stylish Numerals

Height: 6 – 9 nib widths

Pen angle: 45°

The structure and balance of these elegant numerals is enhanced by the contrast between thicks and thins, as well as the straight lines and extravagant curves.



Glossary

Acrylic: Water-based paint that can be used in various consistencies from very thin and transparent to thick and opaque. It dries waterproof.

Arch: Part of a lower-case letter formed by a curve springing from the stem of the letter.

Ascender: The rising stroke of a lower-case letter.

Base line: The line on which the letter sits.

Bleach: Household bleach diluted and used as 'ink' on a coloured background to produce a lighter-coloured, bleached letter.

Bowl: Curved letter stroke that encloses a counter.

Broad-edged pen: Fountain pens with broad-edged nibs are easy to use but they do not offer the fine control of a 'dip' pen. An edged pen can be used to form hairlines.

Capital: Also referred to as majuscule or upper case.

Cross stroke: A horizontal stroke essential to the skeleton form of a letter, such as in A, E, F, T.

Descender: The tail of a lower-case letter that drops below the baseline.

Flourishes: Embellishments of letters or words.

The continuance of a terminal stroke, to infill a space (see *swash*).

Gouache: An opaque water-soluble paint, usually available in tubes, which is applied in a similar way to watercolour.

Hairline: Very fine line created by pulling the wet ink from the main stroke of the letter with the corner of the nib.

Justification: Text that aligns on both left and right-hand side. If text is aligned on the left this can be referred to as 'ranged left', with the right 'unjustified' or 'ragged right'. The reverse applies to text ranged on the right-hand side. Alternatives are centred and asymmetrical text.

Lower-case: A small letter, not a capital letter; also called minuscule. The name derives from the time when printers kept the capital letters (majuscule) in the top (upper) typecase and the small minuscule in the lower typecase.

Masking fluid: A rubber-based liquid that can be used with brush, pen, nib or ruling pen. After the required letter shape has been drawn and allowed to dry, colour can be applied over it. When the colour is completely dry, the film can be removed by gentle rubbing, revealing the original surface underneath.

Nib width: A method of assessing the correct proportion of a letter. The body of the letter will be equivalent to a given number of pen widths; the *ascender*, *descender* and the *capitals* having another given number of pen-widths. By this method, all letters written in the same hand retain the same proportions, regardless of their individual size.

Non-waterproof ink: Generally preferred by calligraphers, non-waterproof ink ranges from specially formulated ink for calligraphy to ordinary fountain pen ink. This allows for greater versatility when it is used with water, and some interesting effects can be obtained. It is advisable to check the lightfastness of fountain-pen ink.

Ruling pen: A precision drawing instrument suitable for fine artwork. It is made for ruling straight lines in conjunction with ruler, set square or French curves, and is useful to draw outlines for large, built-up letters. Interesting effects can also be obtained by using the edge of the pen.

Serif: The fine strokes that terminate the main strokes of a letterform: for instance, pen-written letters can have hooked, wedged, *hairline*, club or slab serifs, or no serifs; drawn letters and types have even more variety.

Stem: Vertical stroke of a letter.

Swash: An extension to a single letter for the purpose of ornamentation – as opposed to a flourish, which can be applied to a word or groups of words to fill a vacant space. Works best on letters containing a stroke that can be extended: for example: an A or an R.

Waterproof ink: Most waterproof inks contain shellac which causes a permanent coating on the nib. Brushes and pens should be thoroughly washed after and possibly during use. It may be helpful to dilute this ink with water during use.

X height: Typographic term to describe the height of the main part (or body) of a letter, excluding the *ascenders* and *descenders*.

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