

Lettering Basics

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Technique of Lettering

Any normal person can learn to letter if a persistent and intelligent effort is made. Although it is true that "practice makes perfect," it must be understood that practice alone is not enough; it must be accompanied by *continuous effort to improve.*

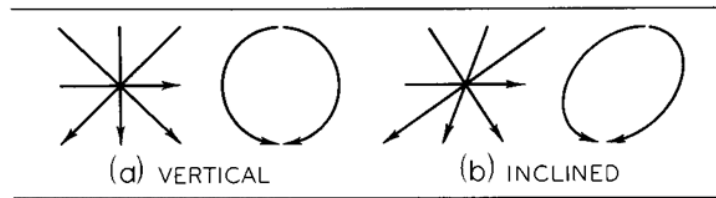


Fig. 4.15 Basic Lettering Strokes.

Lettering is freehand drawing and not writing. Therefore, the six fundamental strokes and their direction for freehand drawing are basic to lettering, **Fig. 4.15**. The horizontal strokes are drawn to the right, and all vertical, inclined, and curved strokes are drawn downward. Good lettering is always accomplished by conscious effort and is never done well otherwise, though good muscular coordination is of great assistance. Ability to letter has little relationship to writing ability; excellent letterers are often poor writers.

There are three necessary aspects of learning to letter.

1. Knowledge of the proportions and forms of the letters and the order of the strokes. No one can make a good letter who does not have a clear mental image of the correct form of the letter.
2. Knowledge of composition—the spacing of letters and words. Rules governing composition should be thoroughly mastered.
3. Persistent practice, with *continuous effort to improve.*

First, sharpen the pencil to a needle point; then dull the point *very slightly* by marking on paper while holding the pencil vertically and rotating the pencil to round off the point. Pencil lettering should be executed with a fairly soft pencil, such as an F or H for ordinary paper; the strokes should be *dark* and *sharp*, not gray and blurred. In order to wear the lead down uniformly and thereby keep the lettering sharp, turn the pencil frequently to a new position.

In general, draw vertical strokes downward or toward you with a finger movement, and draw horizontal strokes from left to right with a wrist movement without turning the paper. Since practically all pencil lettering will be reproduced, the letters should be dense black. Avoid hard pencils that, even with considerable pressure, produce gray lines.

Left-handers

All evidence indicates that the left-handed drafter is just as skillful as the right-hander, and this includes skill in lettering. The most important step in learning to letter is learning the correct shapes and proportions of letters, and these can be learned as well by the left-hander as by anyone else. The left-hander does have a problem of developing a system of strokes that seems personally most suitable. The lefthander should experiment with each letter to find out which strokes are best. The habits of left-handers vary so much that it is futile to suggest a standard system of strokes for all lefthanders.

THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD LETTERING CANNOT BE OVER-EMPHASIZED. THE LETTERING CAN MAKE OR BREAK AN OTHERWISE GOOD DRAWING!

PENCIL LETTERING SHOULD BE DONE WITH A FAIRLY SOFT SHARP PENCIL AND SHOULD BE CLEAN-CUT AND DARK. ACCENT THE ENDS OF THE STROKES.

Fig. 4.17 Pencil Lettering (Full Size).

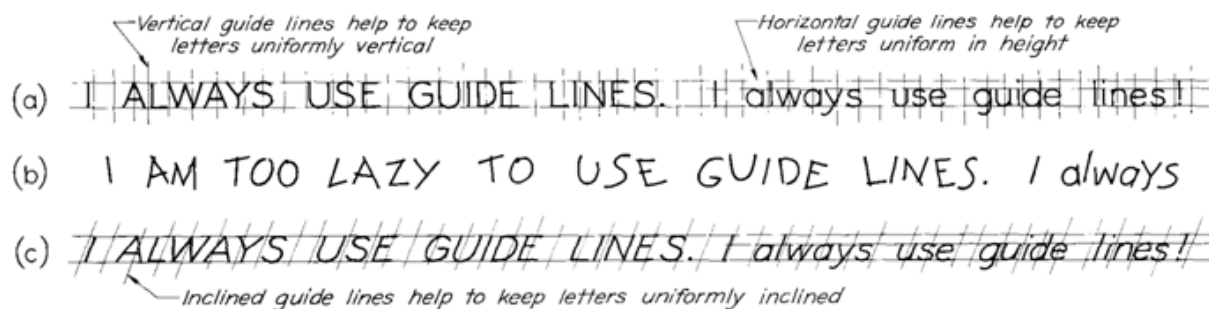


Fig. 4.18 Guide Lines.

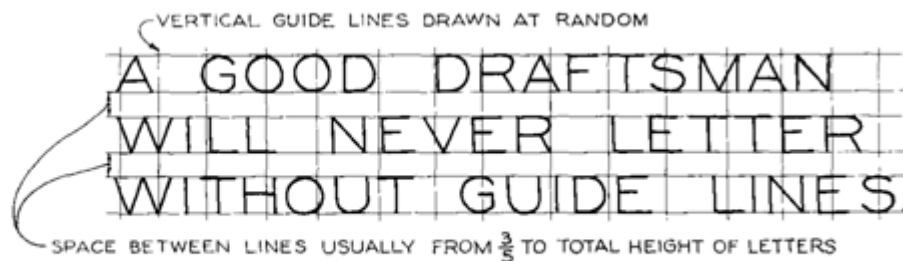


Fig. 4.19 Guide Lines for Vertical Capital Letters.

Guide Lines

Fig. 4.18 Extremely light horizontal guidelines are necessary to regulate the height of letters. In addition, light vertical or inclined guide lines are needed to keep the letters uniformly vertical or inclined. Guide lines are absolutely essential for good lettering and should be regarded as a welcome aid, not as an unnecessary requirement.

Guide Lines for Capital Letters

Guide lines for vertical capital letters are shown in **Fig. 4.19**. On working drawings, capital letters are commonly made 1/8" high. The vertical guidelines are not used to space the letters-this should always be done by eye while lettering-but only to keep the letters uniformly vertical. Accordingly, they should be drawn at random. Where several lines of letters are to be made, these vertical guide lines should be continuous from top to bottom of the lettered area, as shown.

LAYOUT OF THE SHEET — LETTERING

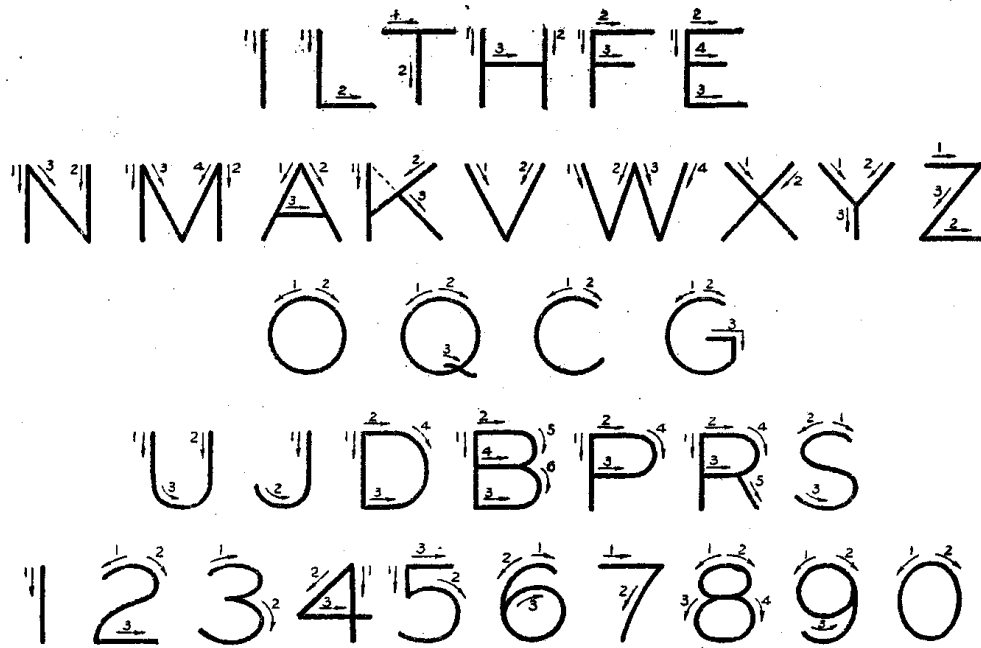


Fig. 8. Single-stroke vertical capital letters and figures



Fig. 9. Single-stroke inclined capital letters and figures