

Bookhand: a term used for any lettering forms which lend themselves easily to text blocks.

Terms in general usage: roman, humanist, foundational.

The most common type is the letterform most children's books use and the basic stick and ball they learn to use to make their letters when learning to read and write. It is readable and very, very adaptable and recognizable.

Most often taught to letterers as a beginning alphabet:

Upright	circle	straight lines	monoline
"	"	"	sans serif
"	"	"	formal serifs

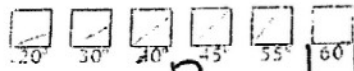
The mother is O and the father is I  
ascenders and descenders are shorter than X height  
Capital letters are any that appeal and fit, usually roman.

There are 2 constants: 1. must stay very readable  
2. all mother letters and father letters must be consistent without the piece or text.

There are dozens of versions and exemplars and serifs.  
Common bookhand may be varied by:  
height, weight, slant, thin, wide, back-slant, ext. asc./desc.  
shorten asc./desc., bounced, or as funky and weird as you please or as needed to express thoughts. Contrast can be achieved by color, size, placement, etc.etc.

Weight used as contrast is very effective and creates a kind of optical illusion when all letters are the same height. Play, practice and performance will reward you.

Faye Maxfield 2021



# Bookhand / Foundational

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

## Alternate Letterforms

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a k o r y y y

# FOUNDATIONAL HAND MINUSCULE

pen angle 30°-35°



a - ascender height 7 pen widths  
b - capital height 6 pen widths  
c - x-height 4 pen widths

O Based on a circular o.

ascenders  
a b c d e f g h i j k l

The bowl of the g stops short of the bottom line.

The Foundational Hand should be kept as upright as possible. NEVER allow your writing to slope backwards.

counters

m n p q r s t u v w x y z

The w is like two slightly narrower Vs joined together.

Note that the inner feet of the letters are kept smaller than the outer feet.

Note the construction of the serif. The round underside should reflect part of a circle.

a b c c c c e f g h i j k l m n

These letters are broken down into individual strokes; the numbers and arrows indicate the sequence and direction of those strokes.

These strokes are pushed up out of the vertical stroke. Allow ligatures between letters to happen naturally. Do not force them.

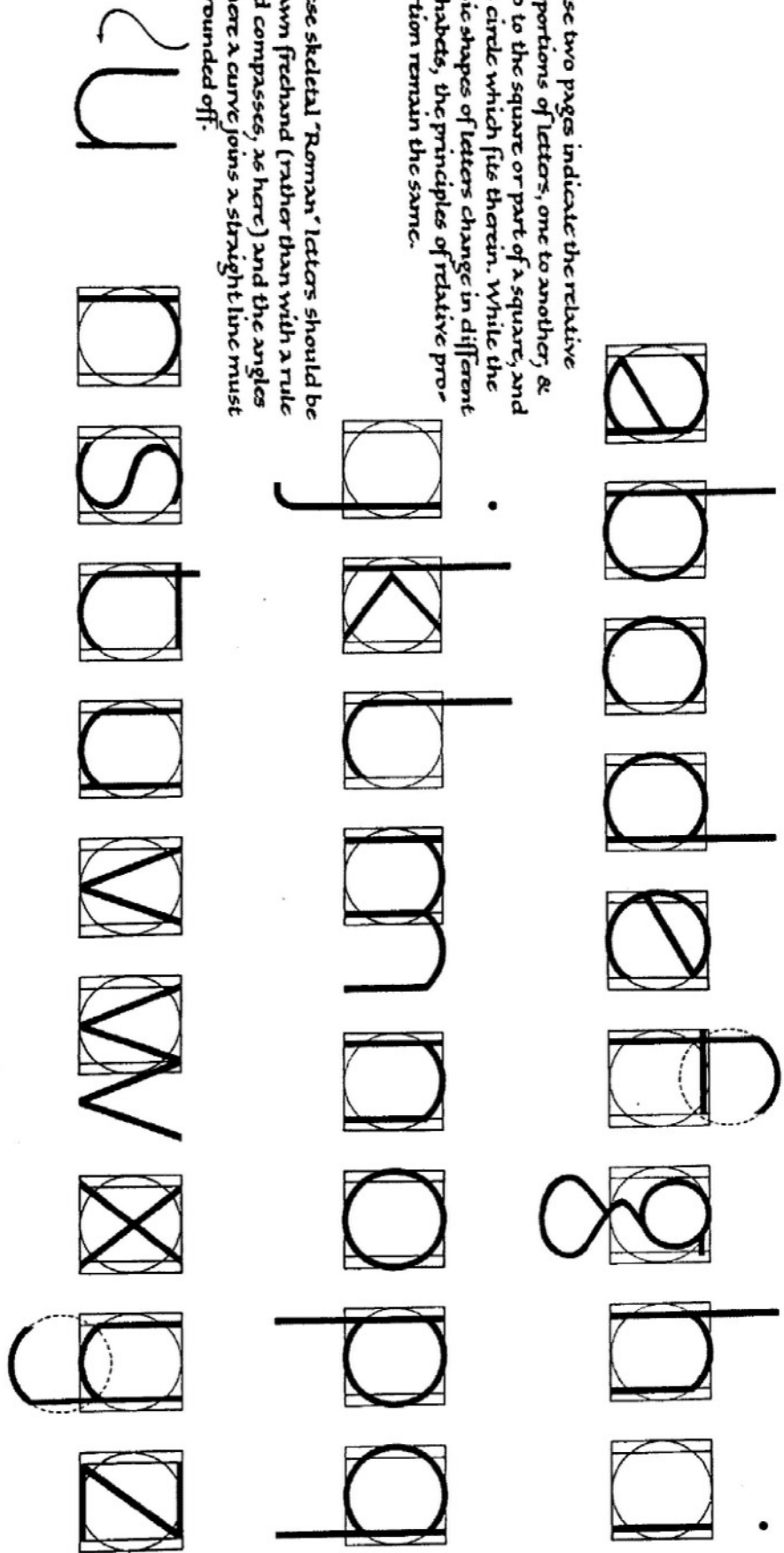
n p q r s t u v w x y z

CHARLES PEARCE

# RELATIVE LETTER PROPORTIONS

These two pages indicate the relative proportions of letters, one to another, & also to the square or part of a square, and the circle which fits therein. While the basic shapes of letters change in different alphabets, the principles of relative proportion remain the same.

These skeletal "Roman" letters should be drawn freehand (rather than with a rule and compasses, as here) and the angles where a curve joins a straight line must be rounded off.

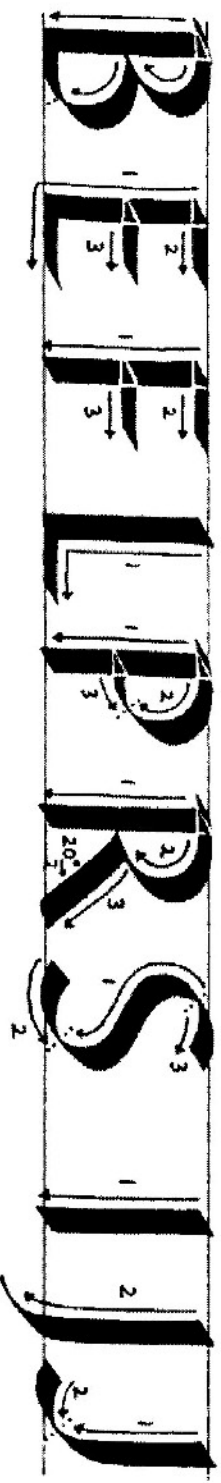
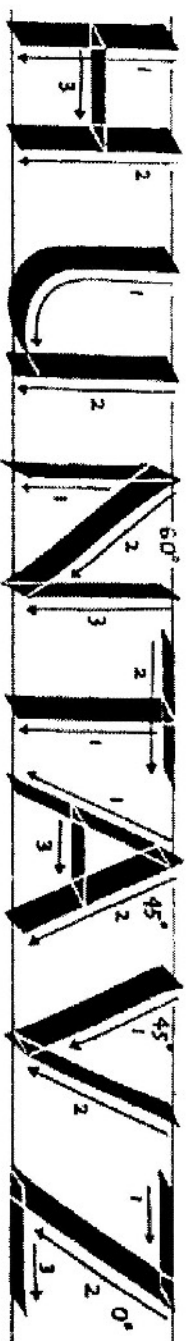
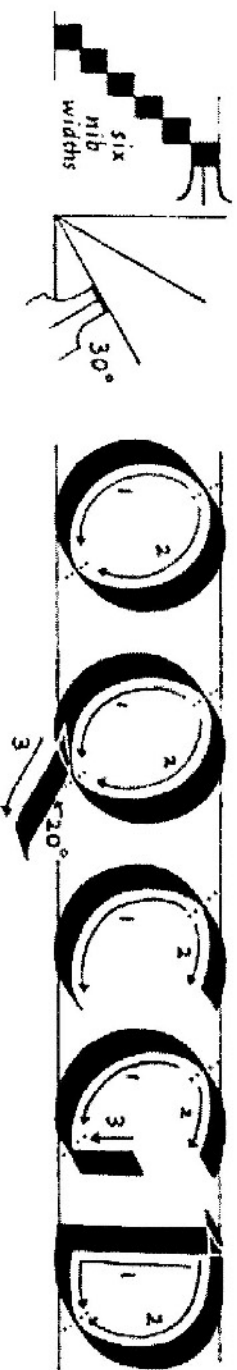


*The Anatomy of Letters*  
Charles Pearce

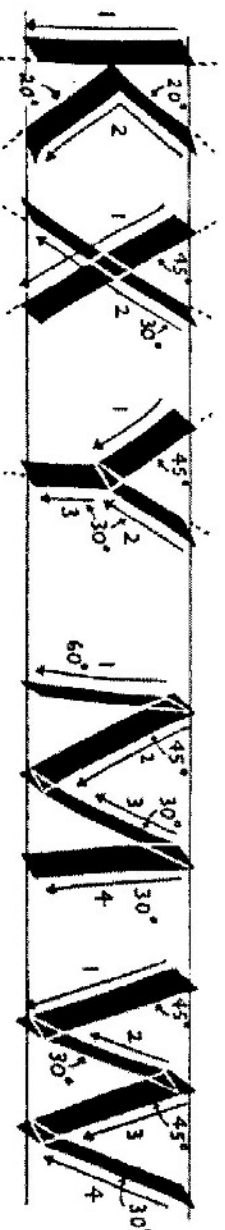
# BOOKHAND MAJUSCULES

Written by Sheila Waters (used by permission)

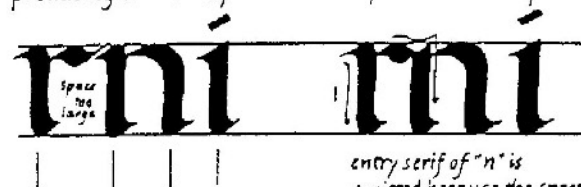
Diagram 3. Basic capitals without serifs "fleshed out" by the broad pen, showing ductus (number, order, and direction of strokes). Only changes from the predominant pen angle of 30° are shown.



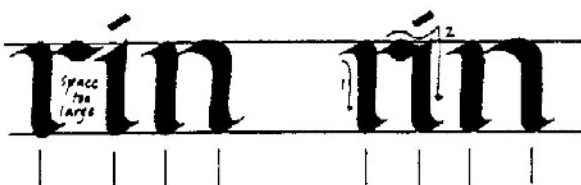
--- shows skeleton



Unmodified combinations  
producing uneven rhythm



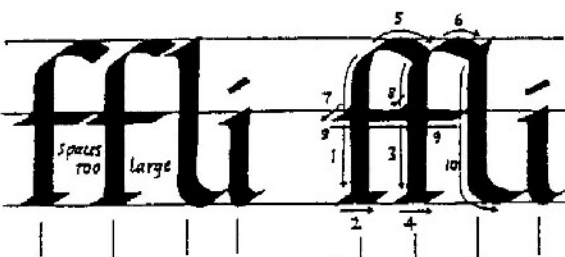
entry serif of "n" is  
omitted because the space  
is more important



bumpy waistline



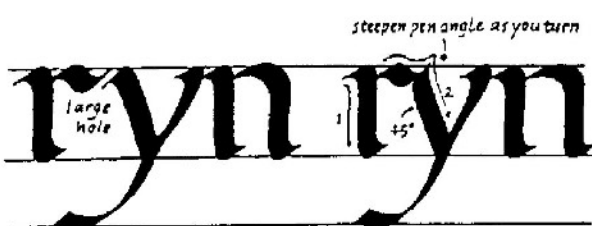
smooth waistline



bumpy waistline



waistline smoothed and spaces  
closed up



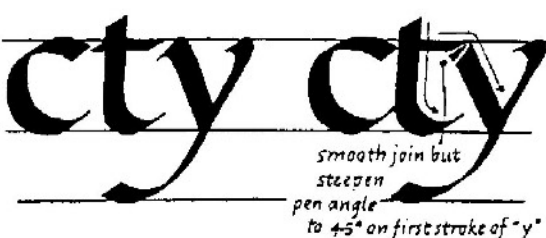
steepen pen angle as you turn

Unmodified combinations

Modified combinations



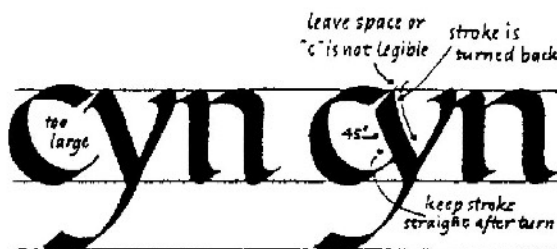
leg kept  
shorter  
extra stroke (+)  
helps to fill space:  
larger bowl



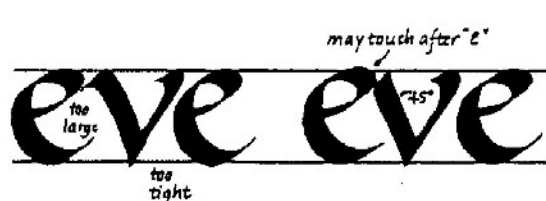
smooth join but  
steepen  
pen angle  
to 45° on first stroke of "y"



stroke made a  
bit shorter



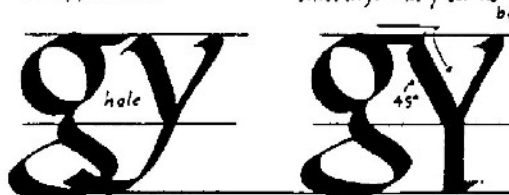
Leave space or  
"c" is not legible  
stroke is  
turned back  
too large  
45°  
keep stroke  
straight after turn



may touch after "e"

too  
tight

bumpy waistline



collision!

smooth join as "y" stroke turns  
back

make "y" tail vertical

Solving letter spacing problems  
by modifying letters and omitting  
obstructive serifs

SHEILA WATERS