

# Hand Lettering — Workbook

This workbook turns the course into daily reps. Each section pairs with a course module and gives you drills, fill-in worksheets, and checklists to run beside your paper and pen. Date every page so you can flip back and watch your hand improve over weeks.

## Tools, Grip, and the Mechanics of the Brush Stroke

Lock in the physical foundation: the right tools, a 45-degree pen angle, and the thin-up, thick-down pressure switch.

### Worksheet: My Starter Kit Audit

List the pens and paper you own, note the tip type and condition, and decide what to keep, buy, or retire. Use this to stop fighting bad tools.

Pen 1 name and model

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Pen 1 tip type (felt hard / felt flexible / bristle)

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Pen 1 tip condition (sharp / fraying / dead)

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Pen 2 name and model

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Pen 2 tip type

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Pen 2 tip condition

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Current practice paper and weight

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Does the paper bleed or fray the tip? (yes / no)

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One pen to buy next and why

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One paper to switch to

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### Exercise: Pressure-Control Drill Ladder

On guideline paper, complete each drill as a full row before moving to the next. Go slowly: aim for two to three seconds per downstroke. Repeat the full ladder daily for at least five minutes.

- Fill one row with the lightest possible thin upstrokes, all parallel and even.

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- Fill one row with firm, even thick downstrokes, watching for consistent width.
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- Draw a row of connected ovals, thin on the up side, thick on the down side, easing the pressure change through the curve.
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- Loop slanted figure-eights for a full minute, narrating up-thin, down-thick out loud.
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### Checklist: Setup and Grip Check Before Every Session

- Pen held loosely, further up the barrel than for writing
- Pen leaned back to roughly 45 degrees from the paper
- Non-writing hand anchored flat on the page
- Side of palm or pinky gliding, not hovering
- Scrap test sheet ready to warm up and de-blob a fresh pen
- Two-minute glide warm-up done before any letters

## Skeleton Letterforms and the Connected Alphabet

Build letters from the eight basic strokes, then connect and space them into clean words.

### Exercise: Eight Basic Strokes, One Row Each

On a guideline sheet with a 1 to 1.5 cm x-height and 55-degree slant guides, drill each basic stroke as a full row. Keep every downstroke aligned to the slant guides.

- Entrance stroke and exit stroke rows: thin, smooth, consistent.
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- Underturn and overturn rows: match the curve width across the row.
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- Compound curve and oval rows: keep the thick weight on the downstrokes only.
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- Ascender-loop and descender-loop rows: equalize loop heights against the guidelines.
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### Worksheet: Letter-Family Reference Builder

For each shape family, write the letters five times, circle your best version, and jot the trouble spot you noticed. This becomes your personal alphabet reference.

Oval family (a c d g o q): best letter and trouble spot

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Arch family (h m n r): best letter and trouble spot

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Underturn family (i u t w): best letter and trouble spot

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Ascender family (b f h k l): best letter and trouble spot

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Descender family (g j p q y): best letter and trouble spot

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Two hardest letters overall

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Plan to drill those two letters next session

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## Exercise: Connection and Spacing Lab

Pencil each word first, mark which pairs connect and which need a pen lift, then letter it in brush pen. Squint at the result to spot uneven spacing.

- Letter the word bloom, planning the o-o connection and any lifts.

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- Letter the word village, noting where v, w, and descenders break the connection.

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- Write il, lo, and oo side by side and compare the gap widths for equal visual area.

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- Squint at each finished word and circle the one gap that looks wrong.

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## Checklist: Word-Quality Check

- Every downstroke aligned to the same slant
- Thick weight only on downstrokes, never on connectors
- Connectors thin and entering the next letter cleanly
- Awkward pairs handled with a lift or a bounce, not forced
- Spacing judged by equal white area, not equal distance
- x-height consistent across the whole word

## Flourishing, Layout, and Composition

Add restrained flourishes and compose multi-line quotes with hierarchy, contrast, and thumbnails.

### Exercise: Flourish Warm-Up and Placement Drill

Warm up with enlarged figure-eights and ovals, then add single flourishes only at sanctioned points. Draw each flourish in one confident pass.

- Fill a row with large oval-based figure-eights to loosen the arm.

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- Flourish the exit stroke of one word's final letter, crossing any line at 90 degrees.

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- Extend a t crossbar and an ascender loop into balanced flourishes on one word.

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- Take a finished flourished word and remove one flourish to test whether restraint improves it.

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## Worksheet: Quote Composition Planner

Pick a short quote and plan it before lettering. Fill this out, then sketch the thumbnails on scrap before scaling up.

Quote text

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Emphasis words (largest, boldest)

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Small words (and, the, of, to, a)

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Style pairing (script for emphasis / which style for small words)

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Contrast plan (size / weight / style)

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Overall block shape (circle / diamond / hourglass / other)

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Chosen thumbnail number out of at least five

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Where one or two flourishes will balance the layout

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### Exercise: Color, Bounce, and Texture

Experiment on scrap first; the loaded tip lays down extra ink at first. Keep bounce subtle and readable.

- Blend two Tombow Dual Brush colors by loading the darker tip from the lighter, then letter a word.
  - Letter a word with subtle bounce, dropping round letters a few millimeters while keeping it readable.
  - Add a faux shadow: a thin parallel line on the lower-right of every thick downstroke, same offset throughout.
  - Add a white gel-pen highlight on the upper-left of thick strokes and compare to the shadowed version.
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## From Page to Digital

Capture cleanly, vectorize for infinite scaling, and export the correct file type and resolution for each destination.

### Checklist: Capture and Cleanup Checklist

- Lettered in solid black ink on clean white paper
- Pencil guidelines erased or kept very light
- Scanned at 300 dpi or higher, or photographed in even diffuse light parallel to the page
- Levels or Curves used to force pure white paper and deep black strokes
- Stray specks, smudges, and guideline marks erased
- Threshold preview confirms crisp, unbroken black-on-white artwork
- Original capture kept untouched; editing done on a copy

### Exercise: Vectorize One Finished Piece

Take one cleaned piece all the way to refined vector. Use Illustrator Image Trace or Inkscape Trace Bitmap, then tidy by hand.

- Run an auto-trace with a black-and-white preset and tune the threshold so strokes capture fully without bleeding.
  - Reduce noise or speckle, expand the trace, and delete leftover speck paths and the background shape.
  - Use the Smooth tool and node editing to relax jittery curves to the fewest anchor points that hold the shape.
  - Redraw any joint the tracer mangled with the Pen tool.
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### Worksheet: Delivery File Decision Sheet

For one real or imagined project, decide exactly which files to deliver and in what format, resolution, and color mode.

Destination (print shop / website / cutting machine / social post)

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File format chosen (SVG / AI / EPS / PDF / PNG / JPG)

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Vector or raster, and why

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Resolution (300 dpi print / 72 dpi screen)

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Color mode (CMYK print / RGB screen)

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Transparency needed? (yes PNG / no)

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Editable master file kept (yes / no)

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Final file name (e.g. project-name-final-cmyk.pdf)

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### Checklist: Pre-Delivery Quality Gate

- Vector paths clean with no stray nodes or leftover specks
- Hairlines preserved and not dropped during tracing
- Correct format for the destination (vector for print and scaling)
- Correct resolution and color mode for print versus screen
- Transparent PNG exported if the art sits over a background
- Both an editable master and flattened delivery files provided
- Files named clearly and organized before sending

### Your Action Plan

1. Assemble a minimal kit: a Tombow Fudenosuke hard tip, a Tombow Dual Brush, and smooth HP Premium 32 lb paper.
2. Run the five-minute pressure-control drill ladder at the start of every session for two weeks.
3. Drill the eight basic strokes one full row each until they are consistent before practicing whole letters.
4. Build a personal letter-family reference sheet and refine your best version of each letter weekly.
5. Practice connections and spacing on five short words, squinting to catch uneven white space.
6. Compose one quote per week: five thumbnails, a guideline grid, pencil, then ink.
7. Add exactly one or two flourishes per piece and practice removing a flourish to test restraint.
8. Letter one piece in solid black ink specifically to digitize, then capture it at 300 dpi.
9. Take that piece through a full vectorize-and-tidy pass in Illustrator or Inkscape.
10. Export it correctly for one print destination and one screen destination, logging the settings you used.









