

If you want a better quality paint, and at some point you will, you can always go to the option of designer's gouache. Gouache is like regular watercolor in that it is a pigment that is carried in a water-soluble medium and can be thinned and cleaned up with water after it dries.

In gouache, the pigment particles are larger. Therefore the paint tends to lie on the paper rather than penetrate it like regular watercolor; so the paint ends up being more opaque than regular watercolor. Not as much of the color of the paper shows through. Gouache usually comes in 14 ml tubes and the cost can vary from \$4.50 each to as much as \$15.00 each, depending on the color. Gouache is very close to the materials we would have used in period, except that the grind on some of the colors is a little finer than we probably could have gotten it and it comes pre-mixed with its medium.

I know of some folks who use very good quality pot paints such as Cotmans or Grumbacher. They have had success with them, but you should keep in mind that the texture of paint we are usually trying to emulate is pretty thick, almost like melted ice cream and most pot watercolors need to have water sit on them for a little while before they can be mixed to that thick a consistency. They also tend to have more binder as they are used primarily for washes. This may make them stay tacky for a VERY LONG TIME.

For a palette, I like to use the lid of a yogurt container. This way I can clean out my yogurt containers, both cup and lid, throw them in my art box, and when I need a palette and a water cup--TA DA, there they are. And then when I am finished, I dump my water, wipe out my cup, and put it over my "palette" and I've saved my colors for the next time I am working on that scroll so I don't have to try to "mix a match". It also has the added advantage of being free. If you prefer, plastic palettes sell for about \$1.00 each and so do water cups. You can also get metal ones for \$2.00-\$3.00, and china ones starting at \$6.00.

Another good idea for water is a plain bottle with an eye dropper for controlling the amount of water you are putting into your paint. You can get a plastic one from most art stores for about \$2.00 or just ask a friend or relative who has recently had a baby to save the Tylenol eye dropper bottles. Clean them out and they're as good as the ones you've paid for, except they're free.

Brushes also come in a variety of grades and you can spend upwards of \$30.00 for one professional artist's brush. If you are just starting out, don't do this! You can get a couple of perfectly adequate sable or nylon small round brushes for about \$2.50 - \$3.00 at places like Joann Fabrics and other craft stores. I prefer to stick with very fine (small). You can tell the size by the number listed on the brush. Size 1 and 2 can be useful for filling in spaces with fewer brush marks. Double zero and smaller (I use 10 X 0, and I've seen 20 X 0) are good for fine detail work. Some folks can use the fine points on the larger brushes for their detail work, but this takes practice and a good amount of eye/hand co-ordination. If I can only afford one brush, I'll buy the smaller one.

Take good care of your brushes. Rinse them immediately after you have finished a painting session, shake them out vigorously to get them back to their correct pointed shape, and NEVER let them stand brush down in water. In addition to bending the bristles out of shape, this can loosen the adhesive holding the bristles in the ferrule (metal tube holding the bristles), causing the bristles to shed. It can also warp and crack the wood of the handle. Most fine arts and crafts brushes come with little plastic sleeves

over the bristles. Save these and when you are storing your brush, gently slip the plastic tube back over the bristles to protect them, being careful not to bend the bristles in the process. Store your brushes either bristle up or flat in your case.

8.Scroll Cases or Portfolios for Transporting Your Work

It is imperative that you have something to protect your work while you are storing and transporting it. It need not be anything fancy. Two pieces of heavy corrugated cardboard, taped together, works fine. I have a number of these in addition to my commercial portfolios. This way, I can send the scrolls home with their new owners in a protected fashion. You can pick up appropriate cardboard from stores that sell large appliances for free. I use duct tape and then line it with another paper so as not to get duct tape glue on my work. Carry it around in a large garbage bag to prevent any weather-related problems.

Other types of portfolios are available. Most art stores and some office supply stores carry a selection of fake and real leather, nylon, and canvas zippered portfolios that start at about \$30.00 and go up. They range in size from 11" X 14" up to 20" X 40" and come with a variety of amenities, from inside pockets to mylar sheets for displaying work to shoulder straps to detachable drawing boards.

There are three qualities you need to look at in particular. While inside pockets and shoulder straps are all nice, if it isn't big enough to hold your work, waterproof enough to protect your work at a camping event, and stiff and sturdy enough to get packed under the armor without bending and breaking, then it isn't good enough for the SCA.

9.Case for Storing Equipment

Again, there are many different kinds of art bins available with all kinds of different amenities such as removable trays, built-in palettes, separate closing compartments, and wire bush holders. Some of these can be very nice, but I guarantee that if it is labeled as an ART bin, it will cost three to four times as much as the same exact item in the sporting goods department that is labeled as a fishing tackle box. Then when you add those special art amenities, the cost just soars.

If you must buy a commercial bin, go for the fishing tackle boxes. They are usually also sturdier (kind of like the difference between men's jeans and women's jeans).

Any of the special amenities that you decide you want can be added later at much lower cost than having them built in.

My first impulse, however, would be to use a box I already have. Look for something with a handle so it is easy to transport, that is sturdy yet light enough to carry, that won't be too hard to keep clean and that you can perhaps decorate with your arms so it will fit in at an event and be easily identifiable as yours, and, most important, that will hold all your stuff in a somewhat organized manner. I have a case that was sold as a three pack of bottled wine in a gift box made of wood, about 4" deep and about 12" wide by 14" long. In a pinch, I can even carry a scroll in it in a folder. It has good brass clasps that hold it shut and I have put in cardboard dividers to keep my stuff organized. This and other cases like it are always around to be found, often for free or a nominal amount in garage sales and such. Just keep your eyes open.

Don't Get Stuck in a Rut

How to Keep Growing as a Scribe

by Mistress Alicia Langland

Although most scribes in the SCA are not professional artists, we tend to be very professional in the work we do. For many, that includes a desire to develop our skills as well as to produce quality work.

But knowing you want to improve and knowing how to do it are two very different things. Sometimes, we scribes get stuck in an artistic rut, doing the same old thing over and over again. It can be very difficult to get moving in unfamiliar and exciting directions.

Here are some suggestions that may help.

Study period manuscripts. Learn from them. Although the artists who created them are no longer living, they still can teach us a great deal.

Look at the colors that were used, at the proportions, at how much space was used for text and how much for illumination....

Look at how much space there is between the lines of calligraphy, how much between the words, the size of the margins....

Many experienced scribes recommend that, when learning a new style, you copy the manuscript as closely as possible at first; later, as you become familiar with the style, you can be more creative and develop your own interpretation.

There are plenty of excellent books on Medieval manuscripts available. If you can, purchase some and start your own scribal library; some can be had for under \$20. If you can't afford to buy your own books, check out your local library.

Go to a museum, exhibit, or university library to see the REAL thing on display.

After you're past "WOW!"... look at details:

what style is it ...when and where is it from...

how did the artist use line, color, shading, etc.?

You'll be amazed at the amount of detail you can see that could never be reproduced in a book.

When you're working on a project, keep records of what materials you used and how you did what you did; six months afterward, will you still remember that you used a C-4 nib and a new brand of ink? Also, jot down notes on what you thought was successful about the piece and things that gave you trouble. What will you do differently the next time you do a similar scroll? What will you do again? This information can be incredibly helpful later, to yourself (how can you improve what you've done if you don't remember what you used or how you did it?) or to someone else who may be trying something similar.

Keep working. With each new scroll I do, I learn something new. Sometimes I learn something the "hard way," and sometimes it's an "AHA!" But everything I learn is used to help improve the next one.

Try something new: a new tool or technique you've never used before, or a new style you've never tried before. Sticking with the same-old can get pretty dull. By

experimenting, you'll gain a wider repertoire as well as more self-confidence in your skills. No matter how much you know, there's still much to be learned. Make photocopies or take photographs of your work and keep them in a scribal scrapbook. Use it to help you see how far you've progressed. Take it with you, along with works-in-progress, to events.

Show your work to other scribes. (Yes, I know it's hard to do this. I'm shy, too. But if you're willing to have your work displayed at court or on someone's wall for all to see, why should you be reluctant to show it to people who understand how much time and effort went into its creation?) Use their feedback to help you improve future pieces.

To get the most out of critiques, ask for comments about specific areas you are concerned about. Remember, though, that just because someone is artistically talented, it doesn't necessarily mean they can easily put their knowledge into words. Don't be afraid to ask for clarification or a demonstration.

Enter your work in Arts and Sciences displays and competitions. Often you will receive comments about your work. You can also compare what you have done to what others are doing.

Attend scribal classes at events whenever offered. In just an hour, you can get the inspiration or know-how to try a completely different style at home. You also get to meet and spend time with some of the most talented, creative, and generous people in the SCA.

If there are no SCAdian scribes in your local area who can help you improve your artistic skills, check out

classes offered at local universities, museums, community centers, or even art stores. While these classes may not cover your specific Medieval art interests, you can learn a great deal about materials and techniques that can be adapted to your scribal work. It may also help to put you in touch with local artists whose interests more closely match your own.

Teach a scribal class. Preparing for a class encourages you to think about how and why you do what you do. It gives you a reason to pore through your books, searching for the best examples you can find. Moreover, when you are teaching the class, you will undoubtedly learn something new from one of your students!

Foster a new scribe. Again, teaching someone else helps to reinforce what you know. Keep some of your pupil's practice papers; some time later, take them out and look at them together. Learn from your pupils as well as teaching them.

Set goals for yourself, but make sure they're realistic. Keep in mind your work habits, everyday life pressures, and interests; in other words, know your limits, then, work hard to try to reach your goals. Periodically evaluate your goals and revise as needed.

Balance the rewards of being a scribe with its drawbacks. Don't allow unrealistic expectations to tarnish the pleasure you get from working. If it stops being fun, then stop.

The scribal arts can be very demanding yet very rewarding. Enjoy!

Format

Calligraphy:

Choose whatever period lettering style you wish. It is nice to match the persona of the recipient or the Royalty, if you can. The calligraphy must match the illumination in period and style. If it is in a style which is hard to read, like insular minuscule, included a typed or printed "translation" for the herald!

Vertical, as well as horizontal, pencil guidelines will help keep your calligraphy straight and upright. Make sure you draw your pencil lines lightly, so that they can be erased completely. You can also create guidelines which don't need to be erased by running a thumbnail across your paper. A good practice is to calligraph with only a lower guideline, forcing your eye to make the tops of the letters even. See the bibliography at the back for a list of recommended calligraphic manuals.

Illumination:

Match the illumination's style and period to the calligraphy. See the bibliography for recommended source books. The best are manuscript facsimiles, i.e. photos of real period illumination.

The minimum amount of illumination acceptable consists of one large capital and other painted or rubricated letters. Borders, both complete (all four sides) and partial (down one, two or three sides) are acceptable. Miniatures, if you can do them, are wonderful. Higher levels of awards should be "fancier" or more complex than lower level awards, but they should all be your best work!

Names:

The name of the recipient and of the Order, if any, should be set off in some fashion: on a separate line from the rest of the text, in a different color of ink, or with small illuminated capitals. The names of the Royalty may also be treated this way.

Margins:

It is essential that there be an empty margin of paper at least 1" wide around all illumination. Smaller than 1" means the recipient may end up covering some of the illumination during matting and/or framing. It's also a good idea to leave some space between the illumination and the calligraphy, so the poor herald has an easier time reading it. This also helps keep fingerprints off the illumination.

Signature spaces:

Always leave room for both Royalty to sign the scroll. For a scroll bestowing an Award, Grant, or Patent of Arms, you must also leave room for the Kingdom or Principality Herald's signature, as he or she attests that the Arms are registered. DO NOT draw a pen line for their signatures; signing "on the dotted line" is not a period practice. You may either leave appropriate blank spaces, usually at the

bottom of the scroll, draw a light pencil line which may be erased later, or calligraph the words "King of Aethelmearc", "Queen of Aethelmearc", and (where appropriate) "Silver Buccle Herald" in a small hand so that they may sign over or next to their titles.

Note that the King's and Queen's signatures should be to the left of or above Silver Buccle's, as they outrank Silver Buccle, and they are the ones giving the award.

Sign your work:

Always put a maker's mark somewhere on the front of the scroll. This can be anything from your initials or name to a little drawing representing you (perhaps your heraldic badge) to a small banner saying "Hrothbert me fecit" ("Hrothbert made me"). Make it small enough so it doesn't intrude on the design of the illumination.

Put your full SCA name on the back, and it's nice to also list the scroll's sources, period, and style, for example: "Illumination based on 'The seduction of Snulbugga the Fairhaired' from The Wooten-Major Prayer Book, English, 12th Century. Calligraphy is Carolingian minuscule, of the same period." You may also wish to list your modern name and address on the back, so that the recipient can get hold of you to have his or her Arms added, or to send a thank-you. (It does happen!)

Transporting scrolls:

Transport all scrolls FLAT! Rolling scrolls can cause substantial damage. If you can't afford a commercially made portfolio, you can make one out of two pieces of sturdy cardboard taped together, with some acid-free paper as a liner to protect the scrolls from the cardboard. Use packing or masking tape, NOT duct tape, which has a gunky adhesive that can gunk up your scrolls!

Shipping Scrolls:

A special note for mailing scrolls--always be sure to enclose it between two pieces of cardboard, or better yet, pack it between two pieces of cardboard and then into a flat box with packing material around it. Scrolls put into a regular mailing envelope don't survive the trip very well.

FedEx, UPS, and the US Postal Service have all been used to ship scrolls successfully. They all have their good points and bad points. FedEx and UPS cost more (upwards of \$10, more if you use a third party shipper like Mailbox, Etc.) and usually require a signature, but overnight really does mean overnight. The Post Office has a two to three day service that isn't guaranteed on time, but is usually pretty good. On the other hand, it only costs \$4.00. It is up to the scribe to choose the method, but be sure that the recipient knows to expect the package—call ahead.

Your best bet is usually to mail to the Royalty or the Autocrat. Ask the Royalty or the Signet office which one is better for the scroll you are working on.

Getting Started in Calligraphy

by Mistress Alicia Langland

For many, calligraphy is the "ugly stepsister" of the scribal arts. Some scribes would much rather illuminate three scrolls than do the calligraphy on one!

While it's true that great calligraphy does not inspire the "oohs!" and "ahhs!" that most illumination does in Court, it's still a vital element of scrolls and deserves the same kind of care and devotion.

Here are some hints that may help you improve your calligraphy.

Drawing guidelines:

Use a fine-point (.02-.05) mechanical pencil, and don't press too hard; heavy lines are harder to erase.

For "no curse" straight lines every time, use an Ames Lettering Guide.

Working with "dip" pens:

Even though they're called "dip pens," do not dip them in your ink. It's messy, and you can never be sure how much ink is actually in the nib. Instead, use a dropper to put ink in the reservoir (the metal "clip" attached to the nib); then slide the dropper from the reservoir to the end of the nib.

Keep a piece of scratch paper nearby. After filling the reservoir, restart the ink flow by making a few strokes on the paper.

Make sure the reservoir isn't too full. If it is, ink may fall out and create blots. (BIG boo-boo!) Look at the strokes you've made on the scratch paper; if there's too much ink, it "puddles" on the strokes.

When practicing, pay attention to how many letters or words you can write before you need to refill. The larger the nib or letters, the more frequently you will need to refill.

Refill before you have to. Don't wait until the pen gets "skritchy." Your strokes will look much more even if you refill frequently with just a drop or two at a time than if you write until the nib is empty and then refill.

Practice good habits, NOT bad ones!

Wash your hands before touching your scroll paper! Oil and dirt from your hands can create "slick spots" where the ink won't absorb properly.

Practice does make perfect! Practice with the materials (ink, correct size nib, paper) you'll actually use for scrolls. Also, practice the layout/spacing/calligraphy style you'll be using.

Posture IS important - don't slouch! You'll be able to work more comfortably for longer periods this way. Remember to take a break from time to time, even if it is just to stretch.

If you work on a slanted surface, the ink flow will be more controlled, preventing accidental "bloops."

To keep your vertical lines much more even, try not to tilt the paper in front of you. This may not feel comfortable at first, but stick with it; you'll get used to working this way.

Reduce the number of distractions that might cause you to make mistakes: phone, pets, etc.

... Focus

.... Concentrate.

Whenever you take a break, wash your hands before getting back to work.

Your whole arm should move, not just your wrist. If only your wrist moves, you're going to get tired more quickly.

Maintain EVEN pressure (NOT hard!) all the way through the downstroke. If the edges of your strokes look "raggedy," your pressure isn't even.

Don't "strangle" your pen! This will fatigue your hand. (It also makes the pen unhappy!)

Practice!

Learning a new style:

Draw vertical as well as horizontal lines. This will help keep your letters regular and even.

Start with the letter "i" -- not "a." Most people automatically start with "a" because it's the first letter of the alphabet. Start with the easiest letters first, and as you get the hang of those, learn harder ones.

Learn letter "families": (i, l, j, h, k, f), (o, c, e, g, b, d, a, q, t). Learning similar letters in succession allows you to practice common elements more effectively.

Train your eye as well as your hand. Do this by studying scripts in period manuscripts and comparing them to what you have written. Ask yourself: What makes this hand different from other ones? What do I need to do to get my letters to look like my example? Pay attention to the appropriate nib width, letter heights, and the pen angle needed for that style. If these do not match your example, your letters won't look quite right.

Check the angle of your nib with each stroke. (It's very easy to roll the pen slightly in your fingers in between one letter and the next. If you do, the letters at the end of the line will look different from the ones at the beginning!) Eventually, your hand will "learn" how to hold the pen correctly for that letter style, and you won't have to check as often.

No matter what the style, most strokes start where the letter is thin and end where the letter is thin.

Also, most strokes are pulled toward you, down, and to the right.

Focus....

Concentrate....

Talk yourself through each stroke.

Go slowly!

Don't rush! Each letter, each stroke, is an act of devotion!

Practice!

Don't create problems:

To avoid accidents, keep your ink bottle tightly closed or away from your paper. Also, keep beverages, small children, and pets away from your work area.

Keep areas to be illuminated covered when you're doing the calligraphy.

Keep the calligraphed area covered while you're working on the illuminated areas.

To avoid mistakes when writing, keep a copy of the text you're writing next to your work area. Know which letter you're going to write next **BEFORE** your pen touches the paper.

As you write a word, spell it one letter at a time. Say the letter in your head as you're writing it. Don't let your head go faster than your hand! Double-check important or "funny" words before you write them.

Red ink tends to smudge more readily than black; try adding a tiny drop of gum arabic before using it.

Wait until the next day to erase lines. (I mean it!) When erasing, use a white plastic eraser, **NOT** a colored one.

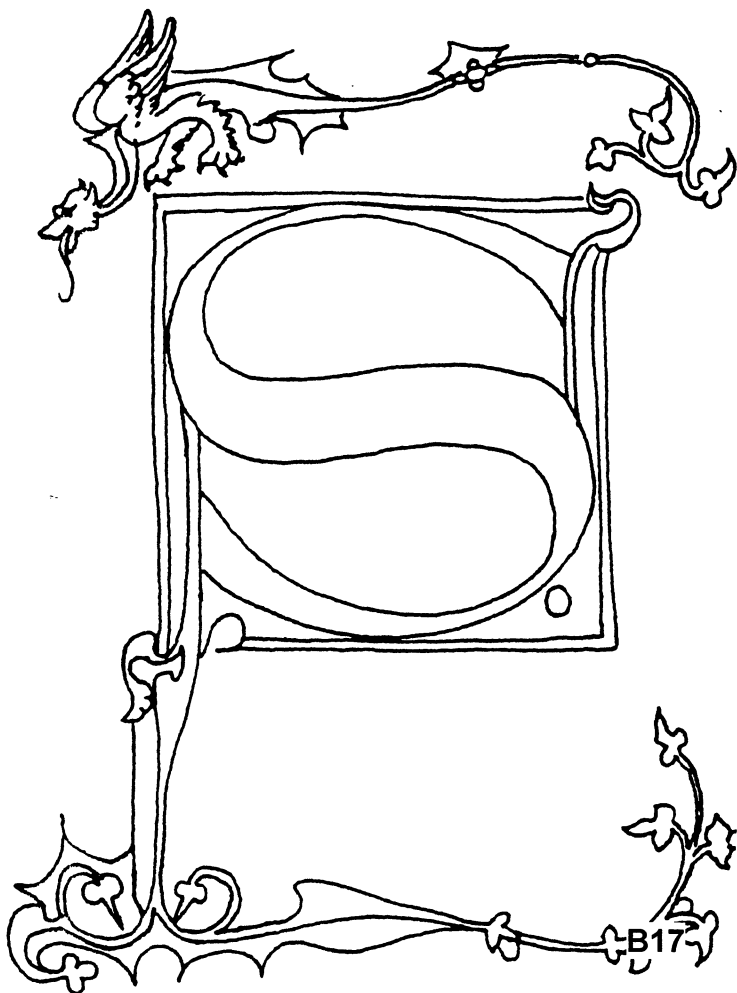
If you do make a mistake, don't use whiteout to try to cover it up. It looks awful!

Wash your hands!

Finally, don't mutter "I hate calligraphy!" as you write.

Calligraphy Instruction:

Hundreds of books on calligraphy have been published, but many of them contain modernized versions of Medieval scripts. Good sources are ones that contain reproductions of period manuscripts as well as instructions on how to write the letters. There are several good ones listed in the bibliography in section.



Based on page 113 of *Painted Prayers*,
Roger S Wieck.

Hours for Windesheim use.
The Netherlands, delft, c. 1440.

The design is made primarily of rubrication (i.e. the lines are drawn in red and/or blue and there is little if any actual painting). The solid black areas indicated either paint (again, red or blue) or gold leaf. The letter is painted.

Calligraphers can use the earlier Gothics or Italic.

Cori

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

BAETAXKDA
CAPITALE