



Practice the skills of this classical art form
and start lettering with fun and flair

Calligraphy

FOR
DUMMIES®

- Practice using a variety of alphabets and styles
- Hone your calligraphic skills
- Combine letter art with other forms of artistic expression
- Get answers on where to go to get ink and paper



Jim Bennett

Founder and manager, Calligraphy Webring

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by Jim Bennett



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About the Author

Jim Bennett has been teaching calligraphy for about 30 years. He has taught at every level from kindergarten through college and has introduced thousands of people to calligraphy. Although he lost count some time ago, he suspects that he must hold a record for the number of students he has taught in the classroom, by correspondence, and through the Internet.

Jim has a B.F.A. degree from Virginia Commonwealth University and an M.F.A. degree from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Among the awards he has earned are the Virginia Artists Certificate of Distinction and the Ohio Art Education Association's Distinguished Educator Award in 2003.

In 1982, Jim self-published a popular instruction manual titled "You Can Do Calligraphy." He also developed a complete Italic handwriting curriculum for grades K through 5 for Wakefield School in Virginia, created a calligraphy correspondence course for Lord Fairfax Community College, and pioneered calligraphy lessons on the Internet. His calligraphy website (www.studioarts.net/calligraphy) has had almost one million visitors. He is the founder and manager of the original Calligraphy Webring which is comprised of about a hundred of the finest calligraphy websites internationally.

In addition to calligraphy, Jim worked for several years as a portrait artist under the name Bennecelli. He has also painted murals. Recently, he has been developing art-related projects based on adventure themes that math teachers can use to enhance math instruction.

Jim is married to his college sweetheart and lives in Cincinnati, Ohio. He has four grown children, six grandchildren, and two cats.

Dedication

This book is dedicated to my wife, Karen, whose encouragement and patience are truly super-human and to our wonderful children, Mark, Michael, Sharon, and Carrie who make me proud to be a father.

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Introduction

Welcome to *Calligraphy For Dummies*. In this book, I explain how to get started doing calligraphy. I focus on the basics for people who would like to learn how to do calligraphy but have little or no prior experience. Even so, there are plenty of things here to challenge anyone who is ready to go beyond the basics. Regardless of your age or ability, whether you're an elementary student or a retiree, there's something in this book for you.

For many people calligraphy is something they admire from afar, wish they could do, but really don't see themselves ever becoming good at. They may even secretly wish they could do calligraphy, but something has held them back. Perhaps they feel a twinge of self-doubt. After all, doesn't it take talent or artistic ability to do calligraphy? That's exactly what many people think.

I look at it differently. I believe that anyone with the desire to learn calligraphy can do so. I have seen this proved time and time again among my students. Students with little or no apparent talent, but a lot of desire have done well. I have had students with severe disabilities and even with manual impairment excel in calligraphy.

One young man sticks out in my memory. He had such a severe nervous disorder that his hands shook uncontrollably. In order to do calligraphy, he would have

to use both hands to steady his pen. What he lacked in manual skill, he made up for with desire and persistence. His calligraphy was good enough within a year that he was doing all the overhead transparencies of worship songs for his church which happened to be one of the larger churches in his city.

I have learned through teaching that to do well in calligraphy is not primarily a matter of talent. Calligraphy is a skill that anyone who can write can learn to do.

Can you do calligraphy? Yes, I firmly believe you can, and, not only that, I believe you will discover that calligraphy can become for you whatever you want to make out of it — from an enjoyable and relaxing hobby to a serious avocation to the source of a good income. That is the major premise of this book.

About This Book

I organize *Calligraphy For Dummies* in exactly the same way that I teach calligraphy in the classroom. This book is essentially two courses in one — an introduction to calligraphy, which covers the basic alphabets, and intermediate calligraphy, which expands upon the basic alphabets and presents a number of projects.

You won't be able to do calligraphy simply by reading this book. Calligraphy is a hands-on activity, and this

book gives you plenty to put your hands on! To do calligraphy means that you have to practice, but I promise that the practice is enjoyable, because you get to see your progress each step of the way. Lots of examples and practice exercises guide you step-by-step so you can see exactly what you're supposed to do and how to do it. It won't take you long to see that you're actually doing calligraphy.

One of the nicest things about this book is you can go at your own speed. In a classroom, everyone moves along at just about the same rate. Here you can go slower or faster as you see fit. You decide what the best pace is for you. You're not working for a grade; you're working for yourself.

The practice activities involve your tracing over letters that I have made for you and then copying them in spaces that are provided. The trace and copy practice is almost like I am right there beside you helping and guiding you each step of the way.

In a number of places throughout the book, I tell you to photocopy the practice pages so that you can have multiple chances to practice the same exercises. You may want to keep the practice pages in the book free of writing so you can use them as masters. That way you can do the particular practice exercise over and over as many times as you want. And be sure to take full advantage of all the practice in the appendix. You can find many expanded exercises there to use. If you prefer,

you can also download the exercises from www.dummies.com/go/calligraphy.

Conventions Used in This Book

To make it easy for you to navigate from chapter to chapter I've used some conventions throughout this book to make your practice as easy as possible and to make sure you're not left wondering if you've missed something along the way. This makes everything consistent and simple to understand.

- ✓ **Getting a read on the letters:** Whenever I refer to a letter, I put it in Italics and I always refer to it in the lowercase form (for example, the letter *e*). Because treating capitals this way can get tricky (some of them begin to look alike when they're italicized), I still refer to capital letters in the lowercase form (for example, capital *e*).
- ✓ **Finding the practice:** The chapters contain some short practice exercises to get you started, but for more practice, you have full page practice exercises in the appendix in the back of this book. This way you have the instructions all contained in as few pages as possible and not spread out through the practice pages. The short chapters make it easy for you to find something in the instructions if you need to go back and reread. Having the full-page practice exercises altogether in the back of the book also

makes it easy to photocopy the pages from the appendix.

✓ **Following the guide lines:** The guide lines that I've drawn for the practice exercises have black lines, gray lines, and rectangles. One set also has dashed lines. The black lines divide each section of writing. The rectangles indicate where the body of the letters is to be drawn. The dashed lines indicate slant. The guide lines show you exactly where to make the letters and what size they should be. There are tons of examples in case you forget.

✓ **Doing the practice exercises:** The practice in this book is a combination of trace and copy exercises. Letters printed in black are the examples. If letters are printed in gray that means you're supposed to trace over them. Blank spaces are provided for copying. Tracing and copying is a powerful way to practice. The tracing part especially is almost like having me right there guiding your pen and showing you how it's done.

✓ **Understanding text in monofont:** From time to time I suggest you seek out sources on the Web. Whenever you see a Web site, it will be in monofont so it's easy to recognize.

Foolish Assumptions

I have tried to avoid technical jargon. Whenever there's a choice between a specialized calligraphy term that only calligraphers would use and a word that everyone understands, I've opted to use the more commonplace

word. For example, I use the terms capital letters and lowercase letters throughout this book instead of calling the letters majuscules and minuscules. I assume that if you pursue calligraphy in greater depth, you'll pick up all the specialized terminology.

When writing this book, I'm assuming that you fall into one of these categories:

- ✓ You haven't a clue what calligraphy is all about but you are intrigued by this book and are curious to find out more.
- ✓ You know what calligraphy is, you've admired it and would love to learn how to do it, but have little or no experience.
- ✓ You've already done some calligraphy, and you're looking to improve your skills.
- ✓ You fit everything in the previous category, plus you are interested in selling your calligraphy.

How This Book Is Organized

Like all the other books in the *For Dummies* series, this book is divided into parts. The parts enable you to pinpoint exactly where you want to start or where you want to revisit. Each part covers a general topic and builds on the material covered in the previous parts. The book begins with the easy stuff and builds toward some of the challenging ways you can use calligraphy. The important calligraphy topics divide up nicely into the following five parts.

Part I: Yes, You Can Do Calligraphy!

The title to this part really says it all. If you're feeling the least bit intimidated by the idea of trying to do calligraphy, this part will help you get over those negative feelings. There are a lot of positives that accompany doing calligraphy.

What does it take to do calligraphy and what are some of the benefits to be gained are two questions that are answered in Part I. This part of the book gives you a "big picture" overview of what calligraphy is all about and some of the rewards you can experience.

This first part is all about how you get started. It describes the different kinds of pens, ink, and paper you can use and where you can find them. It also walks you through some of the basic steps for using and taking care of your materials — especially the calligraphy fountain pen which is the perfect writing instrument for beginning calligraphy. In this part I explain the "in's and out's" of dip pens and the special techniques for using them. You also find out why I refer to the calligraphy pen as the calligrapher's "magic wand."

Part II: The Amazing, Incredible Italic Alphabet

The first alphabet covered in this book is Italic, and it's important enough that all of this part is devoted to the one alphabet.

Italic is your beginning because it is by far the most popular and useful style of calligraphy. Part II gives you a style of calligraphy that is beautiful, functional, and can be lettered rapidly. With this one alphabet you have a style that can be used for anything you'd ever want to do in calligraphy.

Doing calligraphy means that you know two things — how the letters are formed and how a calligraphy pen is used. To make mastering both of these as easy as possible, the two are covered separately. At first you practice the shapes of the letters using a regular marker pen. Once you have the letters down pat, you get to make those same letters using the calligraphy pen. At that point, you're doing real calligraphy!

Once you have the basics of the Italic alphabet, I give you ways you can continue to improve, create variations, add embellishments, and even use Italic as your everyday handwriting style.