

Materials and Implements
From Gaskell's Compendium of Forms (c1882)

Paper.

Ruled foolscap is the best paper for use in practicing, and for teachers to recommend to their scholars in writing-schools and business colleges. It should be firm, and sufficiently thick to prevent shades from showing through the page. In letter writing, of course either note or letter size would be in better taste.

Pens.

Still more important than the paper is the little implement which is to make all these lines, guided by your hand and brain. It must have a fine, true, well-tempered point; it must be elastic, and, besides these qualities, it should be durable. A pen that wears out at one sitting is a poor one to buy, even if excellent in other respects. Few things are more annoying than to be compelled to stop writing on account of a poor pen and replace it with a better one. To the penman it is particularly vexatious.

No fine-pointed steel pen 'will bear more than a day or two of constant service. Change whenever the pen seems to be worn at the points.

Inks.

The chief qualities we expect in an ink are, that it be of good color that does not fade, and that it flow freely from the pen. The ink must flow readily or the writing will lack freedom and correctness.

Fluid inks, like Maynard & Noyes', Arnolds', David's, and others, are favorites with bookkeepers and others who desire a lasting color. These do not rot the paper like violet and some other fancy inks, and will last as long as the sheet itself, remaining for an age as distinct and deep in color as when first written with. Maynard & Noyes', or Davids' four parts mixed with one part of Arnold's, make a much better ink than either alone. A small piece of gum arabic put into the bottle will give it more body and lustre.

But, whatever ink you get, see that it is not of that uncertain sort that gives one shade on one part and quite a different one on another. Writing done with such ink is likely to have more variety in color than is desirable or necessary.

Preparing India Inks.

For lettering in German Text, Old English, Church Text; in engrossing resolutions, memorials, filling up diplomas, and for pen drawings of all kinds, India ink is used. It comes both in bottles as a fluid already prepared, and in sticks, with which the penman may make his own. The latter is by -far the better ink. It is made ready for use from the stick as follows :

Procure a sloping tray of porcelain or slate. At the end of the slope there should be a well, to contain and give depth to the ink. Put into the tray rain-water sufficient to make the desired quantity of ink, and then grind the stick of ink into the water upon the sloping bottom, until it becomes of the desired degree of blackness, when it is ready for use. Thus carefully prepared it, makes a very black and handsome line.

The fine shading in off-hand flourishing is frequently done with India ink.

Pen Wipers

Of paper or chamois skin should always be at hand, and the pen carefully wiped before and after writing. Either of these makes a good pen-wiper, because they leave no lint either on or between the pen points.