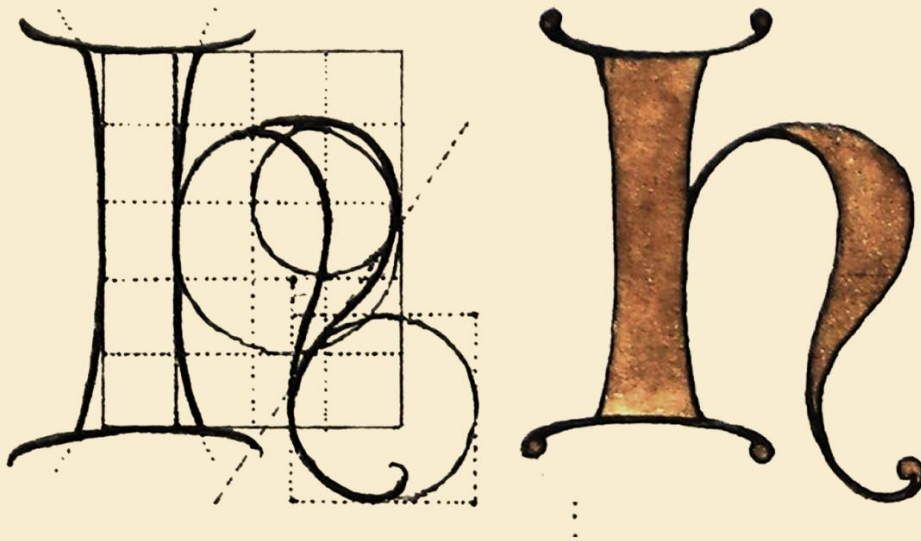


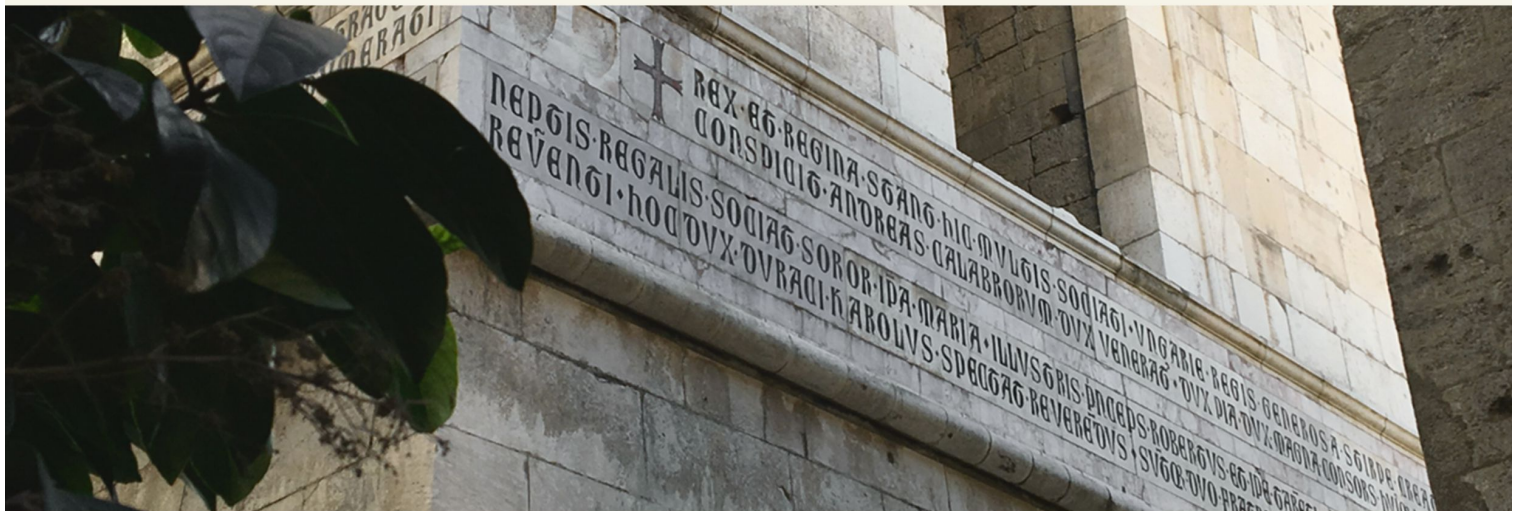
LOMBARDIC LETTERING

BASIC LETTER STRUCTURE



INTRODUCTION ABOUT LOMBARDIC CAPITALS

It will be challenging to find a specific standard for Lombardic Capitals since each period of time and each person has their way of expressing this typeface. The standard that we are discussing has sparked both interest and controversy in Calligraphy and Lettering. It's a common fact that any stat, proportion, structure or standard related to history will bring great value and play an important role in practice. However, not only Lombardic Capitals but any other typeface that has been developed, no matter how long or how many variations were made, still keep one element unchanged - *the letter spirit*.



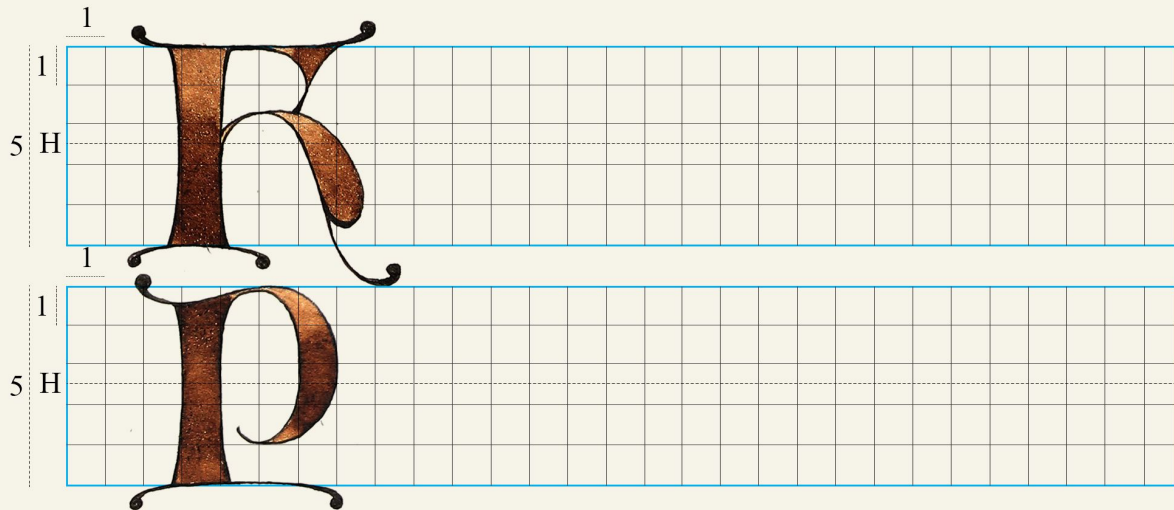
Lombardic Capitals on Belltower of Santa Chiara, Naples

That spirit is the “identity” that distinguishes Lombardic Capitals from countless other typefaces. Even if we change the cap height and width, or add a floral pattern to its tail, or simplify a part of its foot or make any adjustment, this identity remains the same. Lombardic Capitals - a typeface with a rounded form, curved and thick stem - to some individuals, is close to the Uncial script. Depending on each artist, this typeface can be suitably used to embellish letters or even a whole paragraph.

In this document, we will learn about the structure i.e. how this typeface is shaped based on the geometry method in classical lettering. As previously mentioned, all principles and ratios in this material are compiled, analyzed and recommended based on personal preference as well as inspiration from different reference sources. Those so-called standards should not follow any historical norm as they are simply the initial factors we can rely on to understand the letter identity. Although after practicing, each artist has their own way to express this typeface through many variations, it's good to have something as a starting point.

PART 1 | FUNDAMENTAL ELEMENTS AND IDENTITY OF LETTERS

In the first part, let's get to know the identity of Lombardic Capitals, followed by its basic strokes. To make the practice more effective, let's sketch the guidelines based on the following suggestions.

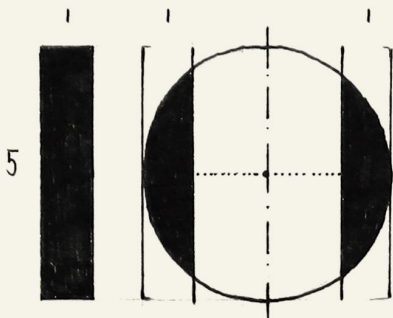


Provided that the stroke width is (1) unit, then it can be adjusted to 5mm, 7mm, or 10mm as long as the cap height is equal to (5) units. Accordingly, the distance among vertical guidelines is also (1) spacing unit. We can see that the main stroke is created within a vertical rectangle whose aspect ratio is (1):(5).

Then here comes our first principle: **X-height = (5) letter strokes.**

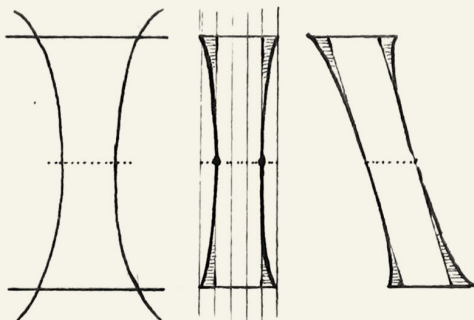
(Note: Determine more horizontal strokes within the cap height to make it easier when creating several letters.)

Basic shape



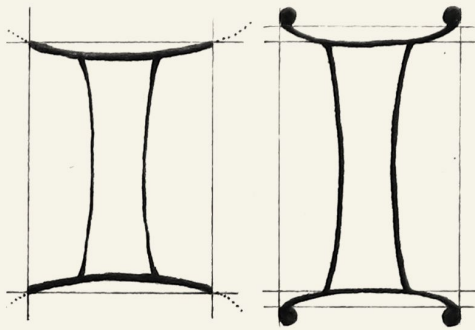
In general, Lombardic Capitals has two main noteworthy shapes: One is a vertical rectangle (as mentioned previously) and another is a rounded form. This form is shaped in a (5):(5) circle and consists of 2 thick strokes on both sides (the "O" shape).

Basic main stroke



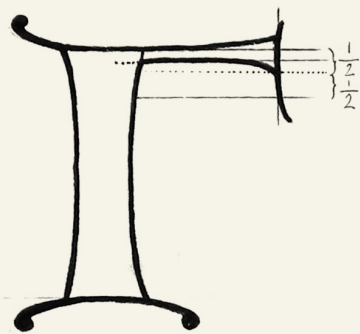
The identity of this typeface is its stroke. Based on the basic vertical rectangular shape discussed previously, the stroke will be shaped by two curves on both sides. In other words, this curve will thicken the head and foot serif to $\frac{2}{3}$ compared to the basic width. Meanwhile, the center stress remains (1) unit.

Serif



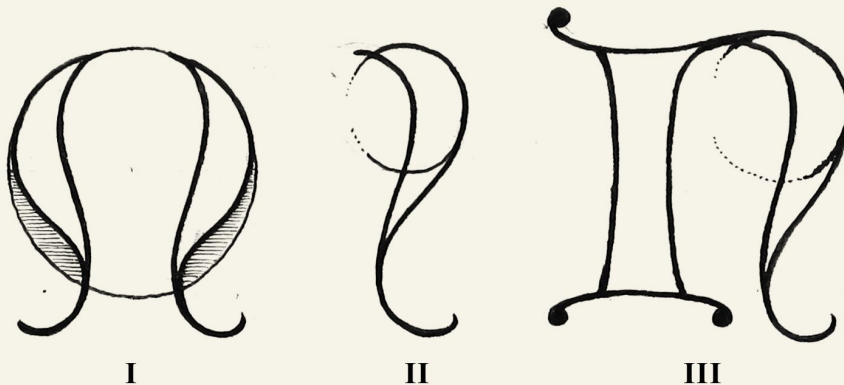
Similar to the main stroke, the serif is also shaped by curves. There are two common demonstrations - either the curve pointing inward or outward the letter height. Besides, the serif can be created with a simple hairline, or elaborated with a water-drop terminal at both ends. This is also the shape of the letter I.

Horizontal stroke



Horizontal strokes appear in some letters such as F, L, E, H, A, etc. They are characterized by one big head and one smaller end, harmoniously linked by a slight curve. Although the stroke width is customizable, it will preferably be in the range from **1/4 to 1/2 unit** to balance the ratio introduced previously. In particular, the small end should be around $\sim 1/4$ unit while the larger one is $\sim 1/2$ unit.

Curved stroke

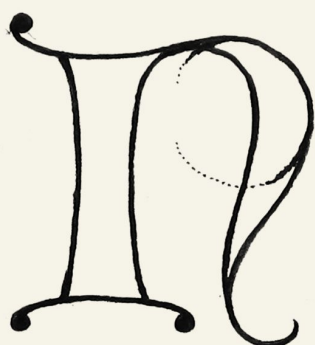


The curve is the highlight point of Lombardic Capitals, since its essence is mostly contained in the curve (*namely the rounded forms mentioned previously*). To create a harmonious curve, please kindly note the following factors:

1. The stress of the curve is equal to the stroke width i.e. (1) unit.
2. The curve is created from the "O" shape which can be a large "O" whose aspect ratio is (5):(5) (*as illustrated in Picture I*). There are two ways of creating that curve - either cropping a part of the "O" and creating an outstretched wavy stroke or creating a bowl from a smaller circle at the top (*Picture II, III*). In this document, we prefer the latter.

PART 2 | THE ALPHABET

With an overview of some distinctive Lombardic elements, let's go into detail on how to structure each letter. But first, we shall discuss a cognitive aspect before jumping into the practice.



As previously mentioned, although most typefaces share common spirits, basic strokes and identical shapes, they still keep their uniqueness.

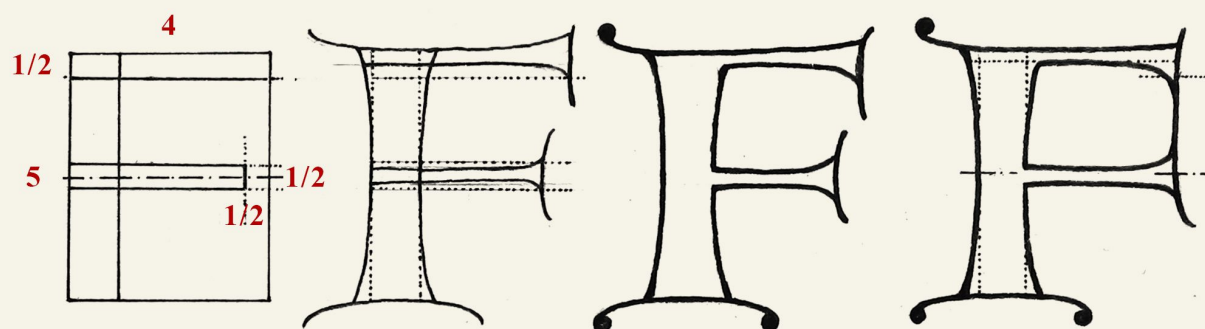
Accordingly, to some details, it would be better to follow your aesthetic preferences and feelings instead of detailed references. The fact that ratio or standard is considered the framework or first step when lettering does not mean every detail requires over-calculation.



Let's take the letter N as an example. Then, what is worth noting is the stroke and letter width which are (1) and (4) respectively. Meanwhile, the back curve can be formed by a circle whose diameter is customizable to each person's sensory perception. Also, the length of the descender is another element that does not rely too much on theoretical numbers or ratios.

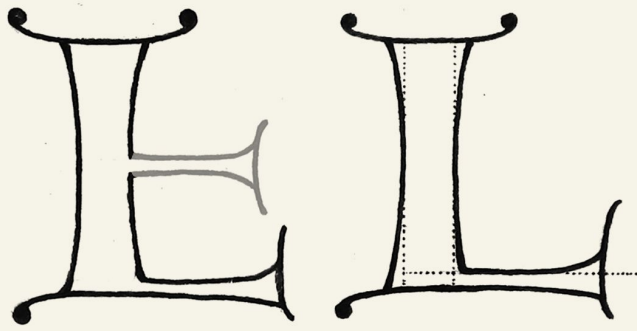
Group I: F & L

Although the distinctive characteristic of Lombardic Capitals is its rounded form, the letter F and L are, in terms of basic shape, created by straight lines.



The width of the letter F is equal to (4) units with a crossbar (*the horizontal stroke in the middle*) dividing its height in half. Although the width of its arm and crossbar can range from (1/4) to (1/2), the crossbar should be (1/2) thinner than the letter width from the right side.

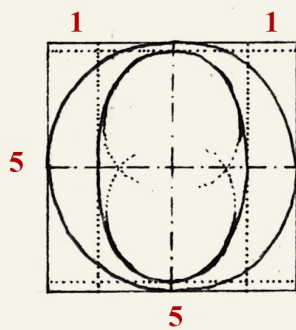
The letter F on the left is basically created based on the previous steps. In addition, we can create the letter F by linking two horizontal lines (*as illustrated on the right*). This time, the crossbar is as long as the whole letter.



The way we create the letter L is similar to the F. In fact, the letter L is an inverted version of the F without a crossbar in the middle.

Group II: O, Q, C, E, G, T & D

Those letters have one thing in common - they are all created from the "O" shape. As previously mentioned, that shape is created in a circle whose aspect ratio is (5):(5) and the width of its two side strokes is (1) unit. Based on this standard, we can create other letters in group II.

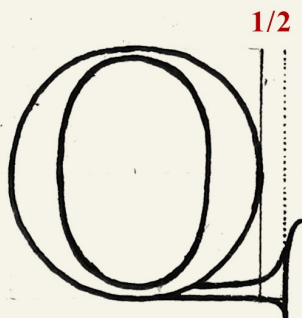


Based on the illustration on the left, let's create an "O" shape with the following technique: Make a circle whose aspect ratio is (5):(5). Then, determine the stroke width on both sides. The closed counter of the letter "O" is determined by two smaller, inner circles with the same diameter of (3) units - one at the top and another at the bottom. The counter is oval-shaped by the combination of these two circles.

Hairline - (1/4)



Kindly note that the thinnest stroke is on the top and bottom of the letter "O". Customizable as it is, to embrace a visual harmony with the standards discussed previously, our recommended ratio for that hairline ranges around (1/4).

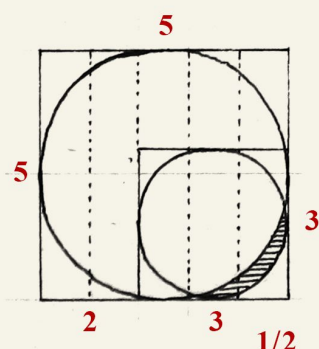


The letter Q is created in the same way as the "O" but with a tail that resembles the serif of the letter L. That tail emerges half a unit from the right edge of the "O".

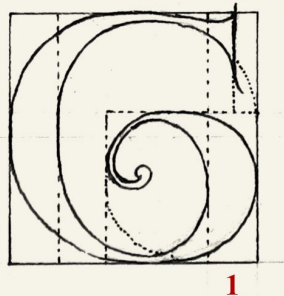


The shape of C & E is identical. Thus, the very first step is also creating an O, the width of which is equal to (4) units. As we can see, the head serifs of C & E are similar to the horizontal strokes in F & L. However, in detail, they are not straight, but curved inward at both ends. The result shows that C & E are the letter O with its right part removed.

Another variant of the letter C has two serifs ligatured by a slight curve (*as illustrated on the left*). This is a common typeface that shares a close connection with how we create the letter E (*as illustrated on the right*). Similar as they are, there is one distinguishing element i.e. the crossbar in the middle. That crossbar resembles the horizontal line of the letter F in the previous section.



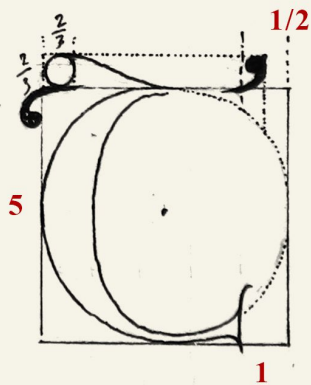
There are some noteworthy elements of the letter G. First, we will create an O shape with a (5):(5) aspect ratio, then in the lower right corner of that frame, draw a smaller circle whose diameter is (3) units. At this point, the intersection between these two circles will appear (*dotted lines*).



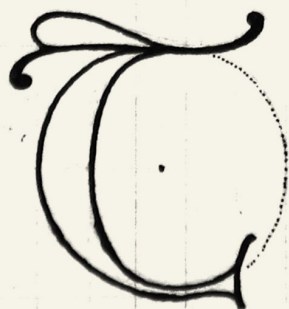
The outline of the letter G is a smooth transition from a large circle to a smaller one. When performing at their intersection, don't forget to maintain visual harmony. The head of the letter G is similar to C and E, and to balance the overall proportion, this part should be located within a (1/2) spacing unit to the right edge of the letter.



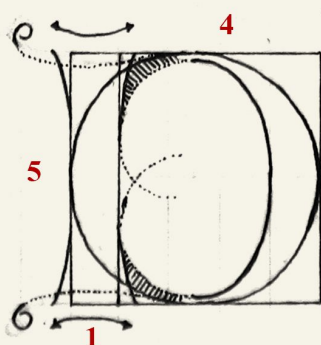
On the left is a completed G, with a tail rolling inward, forming a spiral. The width of the right stroke (*contained in the small circle*) is (1) unit.



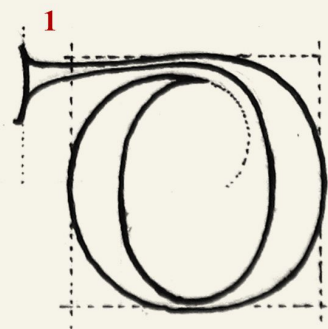
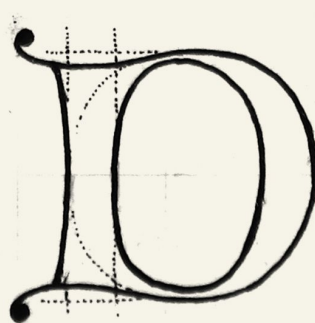
The letter T is also shaped from the O like other previous letters. While the lower part is similar to that of the C, the horizontal stroke on top is its unique feature. The two terminals of that horizontal stroke are similar to a water-drop. The distance between the right terminal to the edge is half a unit, same with the space from the left one to O shape. Besides, the curved part of this stroke is shaped by a circle whose diameter is $\frac{2}{3}$ unit (*as illustrated*) and harmoniously linked to a horizontal stroke by a curve.



In detail, its arm looks like a wavy stroke with a downward terminal on the left and another upward on the right - both have water-drop shapes. The excess part above is the combination of a small circle and an arc. That shape will also appear in some other letters or variants.



The letter D consists of a stem on the left and $\frac{4}{5}$ of the O on the right. Although the letter width is still (5) units, kindly note that its serif points inward instead of reaching out like other basic letterings. At the intersection of the stem and part of the circle, we will create a harmonious curve to ligature those parts.



This is another version of the letter D that shares a similar shape with the letter O. Also, its right stroke will combine with a horizontal line similar to the letter F.

Illa poltera die aduocatis patre & cōiuge
rem exposuit. Et se cultro quem ueste te/
xerat occidit. Illi in exiciū regū coniurārt.
Eorumq; exilio necē Lucretiæ uēdicarūt.

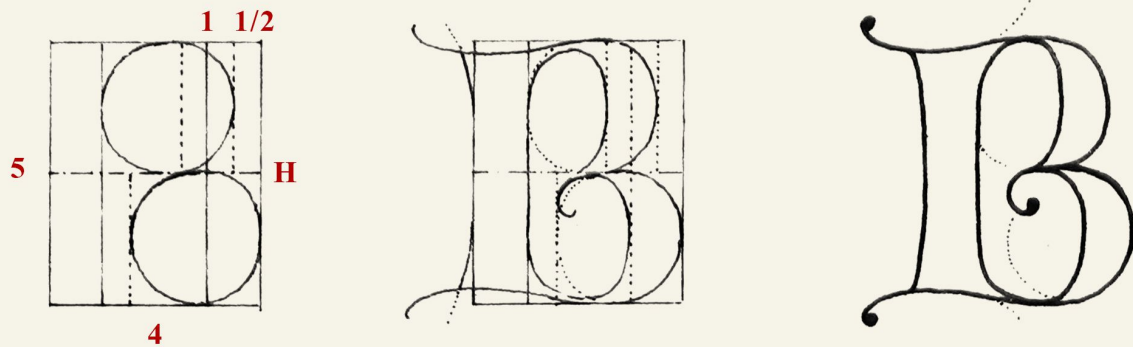
T Vnius Brutus sore Tarquini
Superbi genitus: cum eandem
fortnam timerent: quam frater
inciderat: qui ob diuitias & prudentiam
ab auunculo fuerat occisus: stultiā finxit.

datum: matronæ anno luxerunt. *d'oratio corfure.*

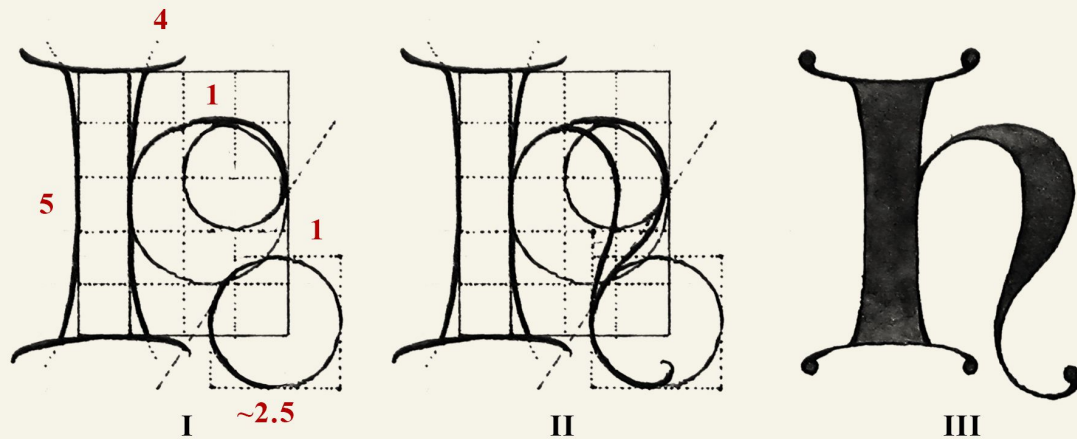
D Orfena rex etruscorum cū Tar/
qnos in urbē restituere tētare.
& primo impetu Ianiculum ce/
pisset. Oratius Cocles illo cognomīe q in
alio proelio oculū amiserat pro ponte sub/
licio stetit: & acie hostiū substinuit donec
pons atergo interrumpetur: cum quo in
Tiberim decidit: & armatus ad suos trā/

Group III: B, H, K, M, N, P, R, U, W & A

This is the group whose letters are the combination of a straight stroke and a curve (*similar to how we create the letter D*). However, we put the letter D in the first group because it is still shaped from the letter O. Meanwhile, other letters in this group do not share the same shape with the O, but curves with different proportions.



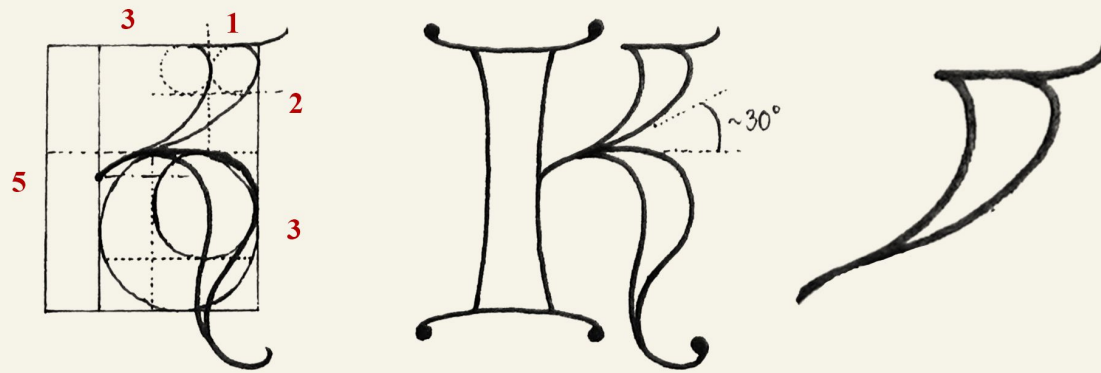
Let's start with the letter B with two bowls dividing the cap height into halves. The width of the lower bowl is (4) units - same with the letter width - while the upper one is (1/2) unit behind. However, both are shaped by circles with the same diameter of (2.5) units, i.e. half of the cap height. These bowls are created in the same way as the O but with a smaller size, while the left stem will resemble the letter D.



Picture I: The letter H is created with an aspect ratio of (4):(5). The right part is an iconic feature that was mentioned in the section of basic strokes (i.e. curves). However, this part will be (1) unit lower than the cap height.

Picture II: After sketching the circles and measuring the aspect ratio to create a frame, we can see the letter H consists of 2 parts - one left stem (*the letter I*) and one right curve. As previously mentioned, this part should be (1) unit lower than the cap height so that its tail will be (1) unit below the baseline.

Picture III: A completed letter H.

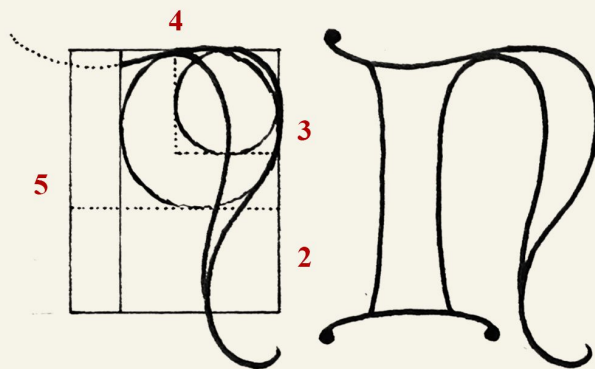


The letter that shares a similar shape with the letter H is K since both have the same aspect ratio i.e. (4):(5). However, what distinguishes the letter K is its upper diagonal stroke on the right. That stroke links to a curve below which is similar to the letter H.

Explanation:

1. The curved part of the K's tail is (2) units lower than the cap height. However, its terminal will not descend lower than (1) unit to the baseline. This time, the height of that curve can be reduced according to personal aesthetic preference.

2. The upper oblique stroke has a big “belly” on top - equal to (1) unit and gradually gets slimmer downwards (*linked with the tail*). This stroke will tilt about 30° to the horizontal line. That big part is located on the right edge of the letter, with a simple serif.

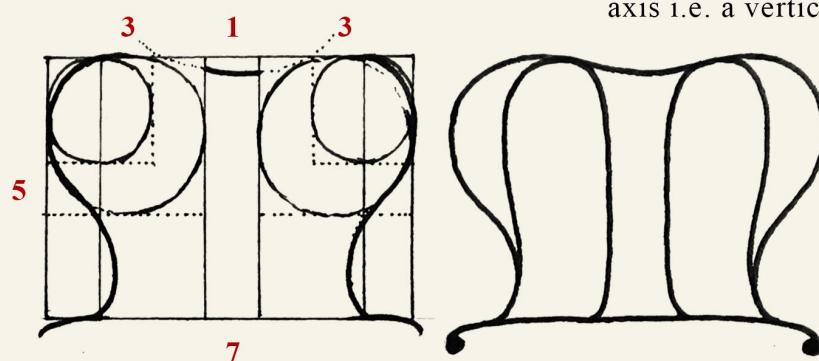


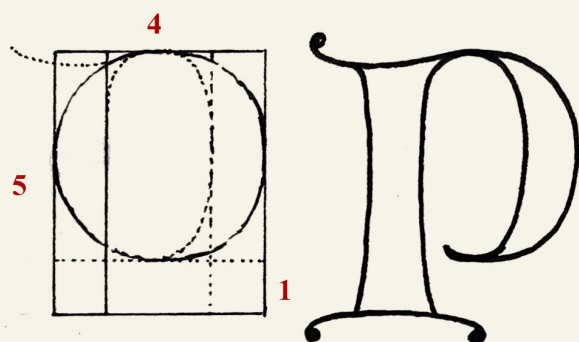
The letter N, mentioned in the session of basic strokes, consists of a left stem (*the letter I*) and a right basic curve. The overall size is created with an aspect ratio of (4):(5).

The letter M is a combination of two Ns reflecting each other through one central axis i.e. a vertical, overlapping stroke

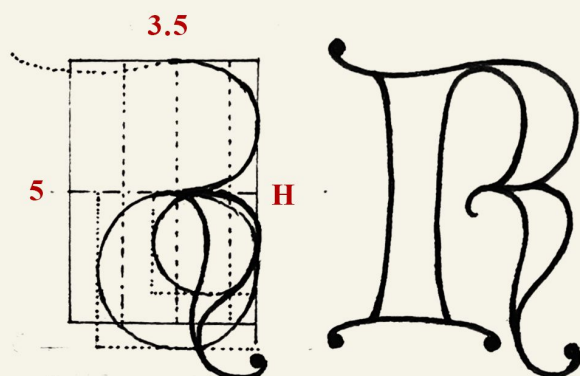
(*namely the letter I*).

One distinctive feature is that the tail of the curved stroke will not descend but stay at the same position as the baseline. Meanwhile, the serif will be made equal to the letter width.

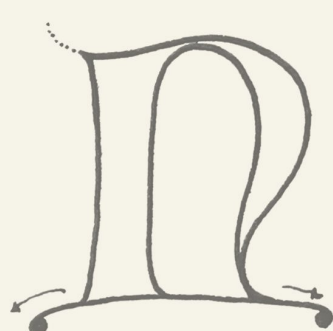




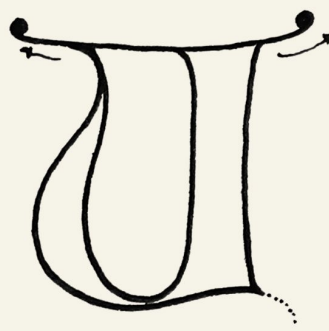
The structure of the letter P is not complicated - just a straight line (*the letter I*) on the left and half of the O on the right. That hemisphere should be drawn within a (4)-unit diameter, which means it will be (1) unit above the baseline.



We can say that the letter R is a result of the combination of B and K - an upper bowl of the letter B and a tail from the letter K. Although the letter width still remains (3.5), what distinguishes R is that the height of its tail will be reduced. From the middle of the letter height, that tail will still be lowered to (1) unit under the baseline.

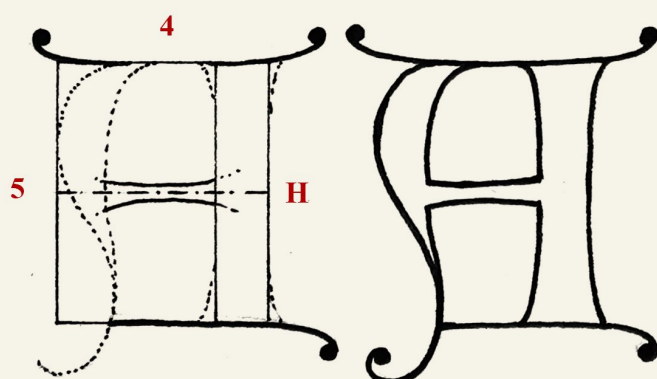


Chũ U



Chũ W

The letter U is an inverted version of N, except that its head is created with a serif stretching horizontally across the letter width (*similar to the M*) and the bottom right part gets its excess serif removed (*the upper serif of the N*). Likewise, W is a reversed version of the letter M.

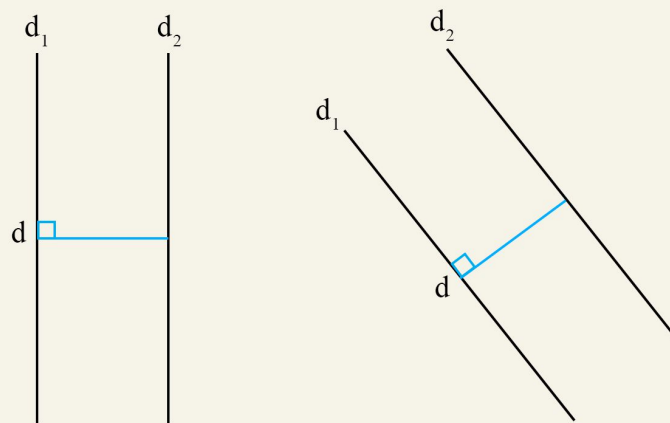


We can list a version of the letter A with an inverted N shape into this group, whereby its upper and lower parts are extended to the letter width. Another remarkable element is that it also contains a horizontal stroke in the center.

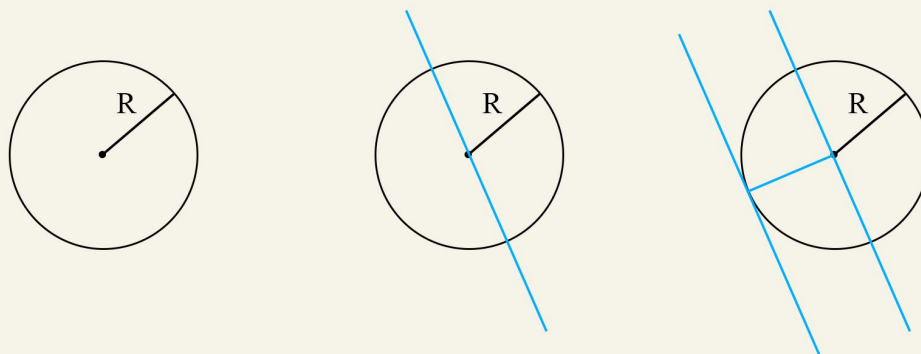
Group IV: A, V, X & Z

This group of letters contains straight strokes with a certain inclination (*not vertical or horizontal strokes*).

Before getting to know the structure of each letter, there is one noteworthy element that we need to mind when creating diagonals i.e. *the stroke width*. To be specific, the stroke width, whether straight or oblique, is equal to (1) unit as previously mentioned. That width is the distance between two lines (*referred to as d_1 and d_2*) determined by one perpendicular line (*temporarily called d*).



The two illustrations above showcase the width of a vertical and an diagonal stroke. With this detail, we want to show how to perform an diagonal stroke while still maintaining the accurate stroke width.

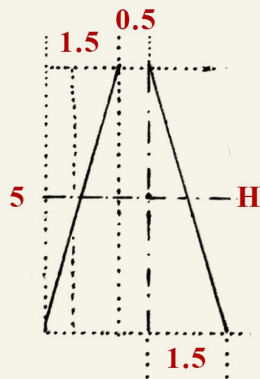


Create a circle with a radius equal to the stroke width, namely $R = (1)$.

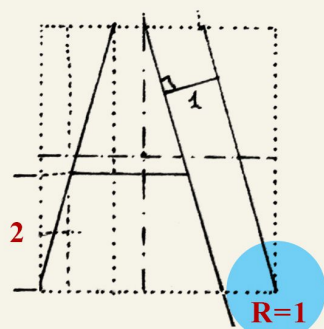
One of the two lines creating the stroke width will cross the center of the circle we have just drawn. At which point, the stroke inclination can be defined.

The other line will be drawn parallel to that one and tangent to the given circle (*the tangent*). At this point, the space between these two lines will be equal to the radius R that was previously determined.

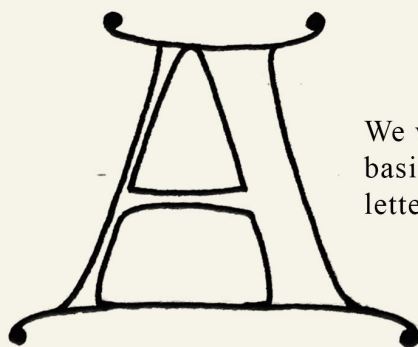
After discussing how to make a diagonal stroke with a given width, we will learn about the structure of each letter in this group.



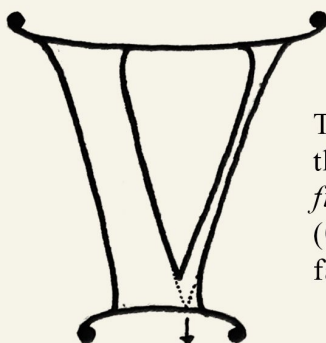
The letter A is formed based on the stroke inclination instead of the aspect ratio like other letters. We can start by creating a diagonal stroke on the left, within a rectangle whose aspect ratio is (1.5):(5). Then, keep a (0.5) spacing unit before creating another diagonal stroke on the right, within the same rectangle.



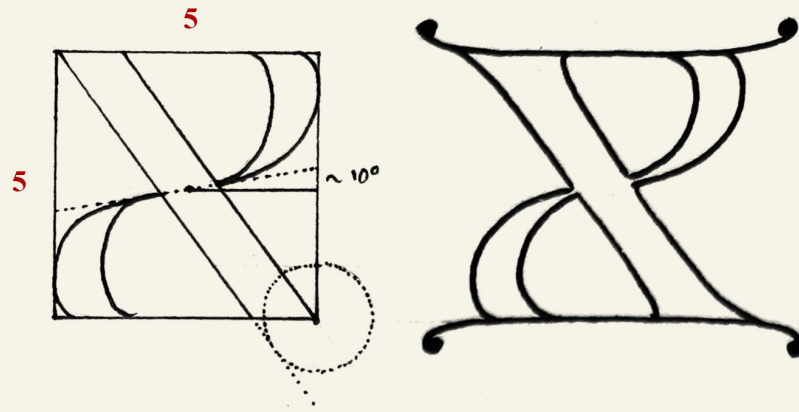
Based on the method of width calculation discussed in the last section, we will create the remaining line of the right stroke so that the stroke is maintained (1) unit. At this time, the width of the letter A will be determined automatically. The crossbar will be located in a distance equal to (2) units from the baseline. *(Note: The center of the circle that is used to determine the stroke width lies on the baseline.)*



We will finish drawing the letter A with the method used in basic letterings. The serif on top will be drawn equal to the letterhead while the foot serif is as long as the letter width.



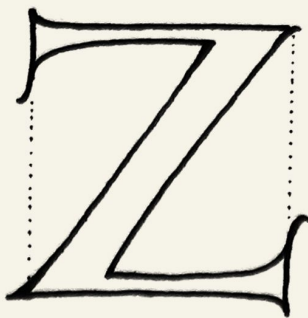
The letter V is an inverted version of the letter A. However, the difference is that the two initial diagonal strokes *(in the first step of creating the letter A)* **will not be separated** by a (0.5) spacing unit, but intersect at one point. Based on this factor, the letter V will have a smaller width than the letter A.



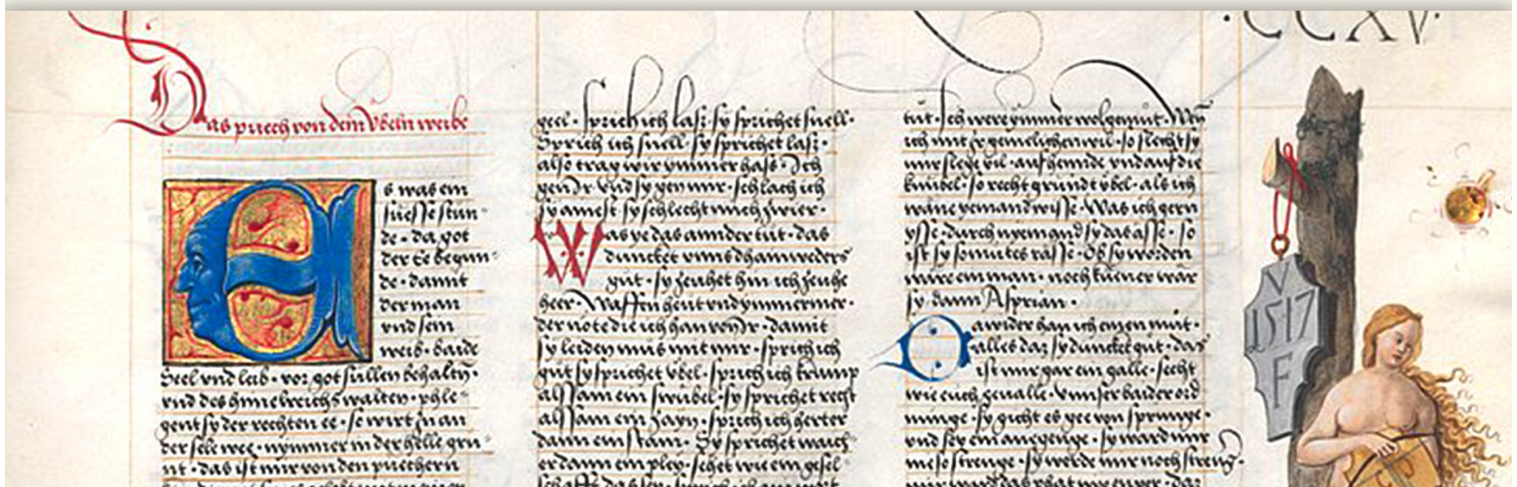
The letter X is contained in a (5):(5) square. Firstly, we will determine a circle whose $R=1$, the center of which is at the bottom right corner of that square. Then, from the top right corner, draw a tangent to that given circle so that we can determine the inclination of the diagonal stroke. Applying this method to the remaining line to create a diagonal with the width of (1) unit.

The remaining stroke of the letter X is made of two curved strokes - one in the upper right and another in the lower left (*similar to the arm of the letter K*). These strokes intersect at the center of the letter and reflect through a 10° inclined axis (*as illustrated*).

Its head and foot serif will be drawn equal to the letter width.



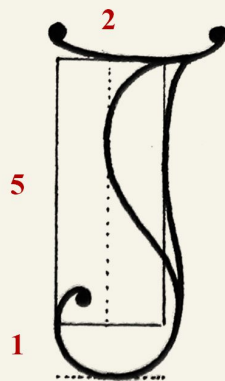
The letter Z is also shaped in a square with a diagonal stroke similar to the X - but in the reversed way. The upper and lower horizontal strokes share the same expression as the letter L or F, but the direction of the left stroke will be reversed (*towards the left*).



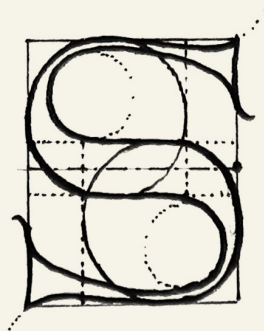
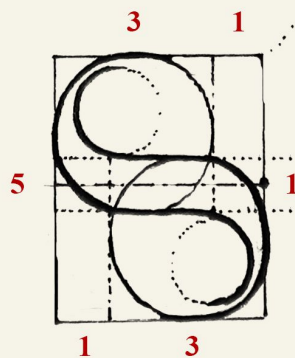
Reference image for inspiration | Ambraser Heldenbuch

Group V - Special Group: J, S & Y

We have run through all main groups of Lombardic Capitals. While most letters have their group sharing common principles, some others do not. In particular, unique letters like J, S and Y are listed in a special group that follows no specific principle.



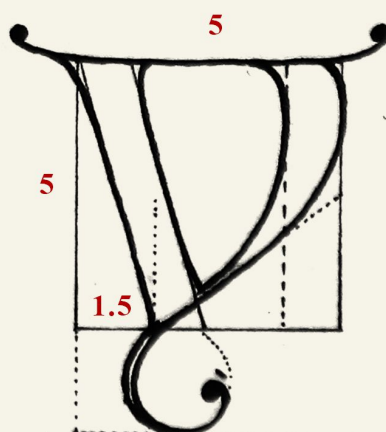
The letter J, at first glance, looks like a seahorse with a curved tail below the baseline. Basically, it is shaped by a curve appearing in the letter N and H. However, unlike those letters, its tail is a curve pointing upwards. Besides, the head serif will have the same width as the entire letter or the tail, namely (2) units.



The letter S has an aspect ratio i.e. (4):(5). To create the letter S, let's start with two circles with the same diameter of (3) units - one at the top left and one at bottom right. These circles will intersect in the middle of the letter and create a counter equal to (1) unit, which is also the width and position of the S spine.

Besides those two large circles, we will make two smaller ones above and below the horizontal stroke in the center of the letter S. They have the same diameter of (1.5) units and link together to form the S shape.

The two strokes above and below the letter S are created in the same way as the C.

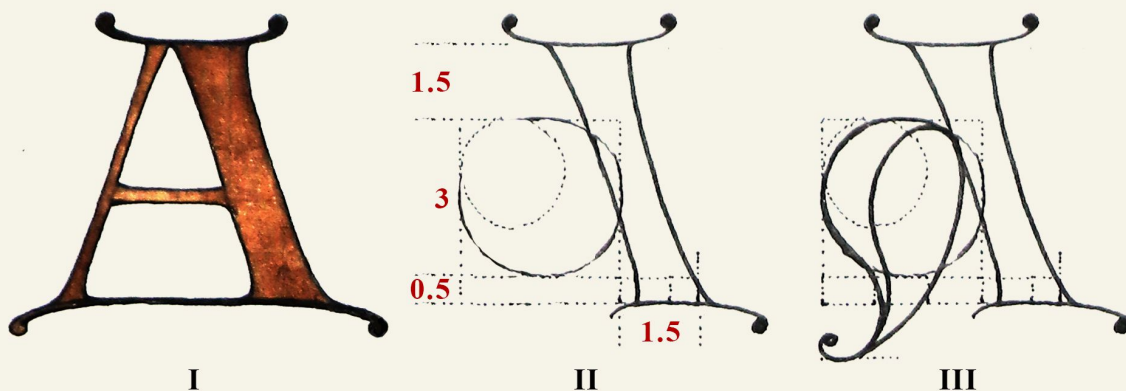


The letter Y consists of two parts - an upper part contained in a (5):(5) square and a tail below. Its diagonal stroke is similar to that of the letter A. On the right, there is a curve similar to an X or K but with the cap height. The tail of the letter Y resembles that of the J but it is reversed and located (2) units below the baseline. Meanwhile, the head serif is extended as long as the letter width.

PART 3 | VARIATIONS OF LETTER

We've just discussed how to create the Lombardic typeface with the most fundamental letters. Thereby, we can develop different variations or customize some details to show personal styles.

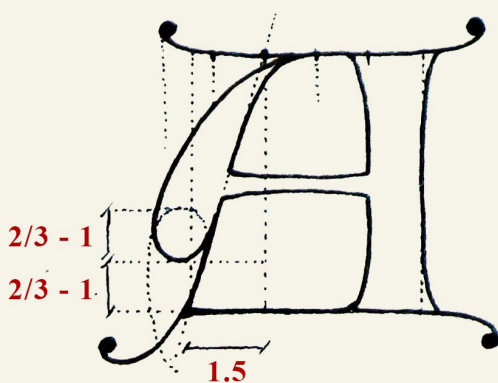
In this section, let's learn some common variations or expressions of certain letters in this alphabet, namely A, H, K, M, N, Q, R, U, V & Z.



Picture I: The basic version of the letter A in the previous section.

Picture II: In this version, the letter A has a diagonal stroke on the right, similar to its basic version. However, the left one is shaped by a circle whose diameter is (3) units. This circle has a (0.5) spacing unit to the baseline and (1.5) units to the right side.

Picture III: The curve of an A is created in the same way as the tail of H or N - its tail is lowered by (1) unit from the baseline. At the same time, we create a thin, curved stroke to link that tail to the touching point on the right. Thereby, we can see that this A-shape carries the spirit of the Uncial script.

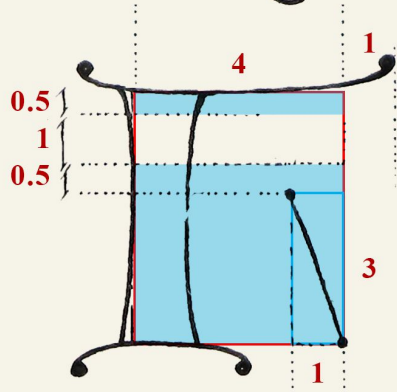


Another common variation of letter A is created in a (5):(5) square with a vertical right stroke (*the I shape*).

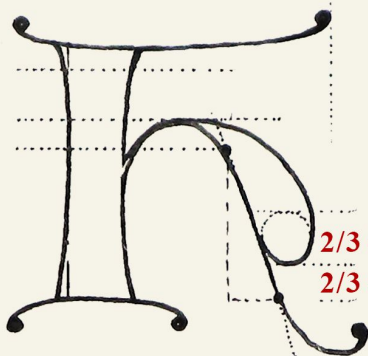
The left stroke is a diagonal from a rectangle with a (1.5):(5) aspect ratio. Next to that stroke is a curve with a water-drop shape, the lower part of which is created in a small circle of (2/3) - (1) in diameter combined with a curved stroke. This circle is (2/3) - (1) spacing unit from the baseline. Meanwhile, the right stroke is (1) unit lower than the baseline.



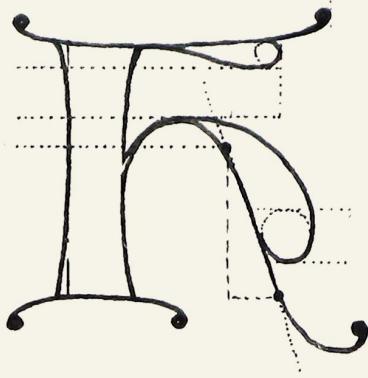
The next letter is H. On the left is its completed basic shape that we have learned in the previous section. In the following version, there will be another widely used shape with beauty and visual harmony.



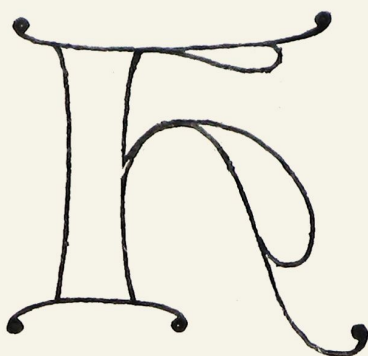
The letter H is shaped within a (4):(5) frame. Its left part is a vertical stem while the lower right corner shapes a diagonal in a (1):(3) frame. The lower blue box is the space for the curved part, which is (3.5) out of (5) the cap height. Besides, the upper blue box with (0.5) height is for another serif variation that will be discussed in the next step.



The right curve of the letter H is similar to the left of the letter A introduced previously. It includes a curved stroke and a small circle next to the diagonal stroke determined from the beginning. That small circle has a diameter of about $(2/3) \sim (1)$ unit, same with the distance to the baseline. Its tail will be (1) unit lower than the baseline. The head serif is drawn equal to the width of the entire letter.



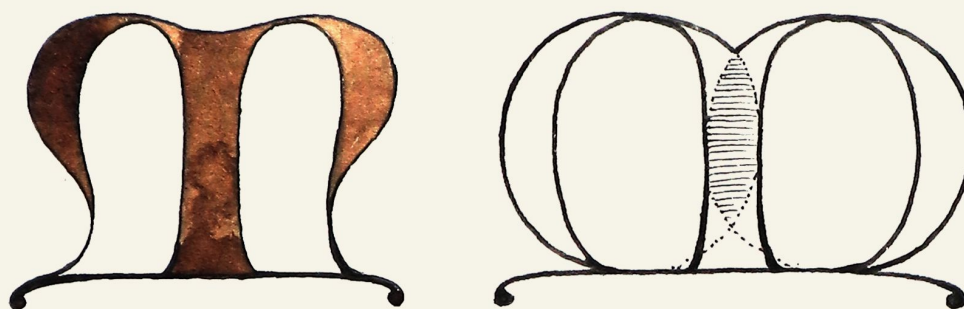
Pay attention to the head serif. As determined at the beginning in the blue box above, this serif will be thickened to balance and embellish the letter H, similar to how we create the curved tail. However, the diameter of the small circle is now only about (0.5) units, and the right finial is (4) units from the left edge.



On the left is the completed letter H version - one of the Lombardic letters that achieve nearly perfect visual harmony. This version is widely used in Ornamental Lettering and Illuminated Lettering.



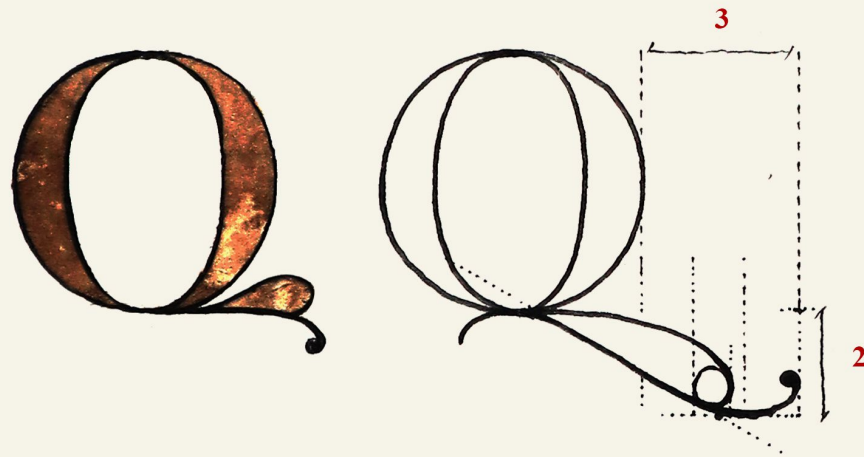
The picture on the left is a basic letter K, while the right is a variation similar to the letter H introduced in the previous section. One difference lies in the upper right stroke created from a triangular shape that links both “arm” and “leg” of the letter K. This triangle is shaped with curved strokes, the right terminal of which is (4) units away from the side edge, same with the foot of the letter H.



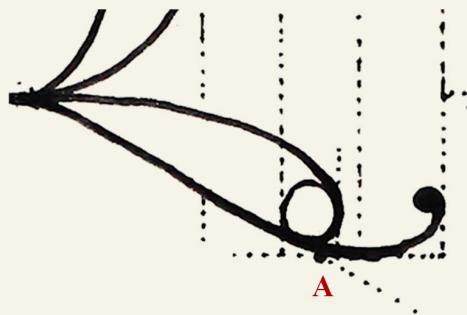
Another popular version of the letter M (*on the right*) is the combination of two Os. In particular, they intertwine to form a wide interference that equals (1) unit. The center stroke is shaped like an I, but with its head serif folded and foot serif stretched to the letter width.



Although the tail of this N variation is similar to that of the letter H or K, it will not form a diagonal stroke but a vertical one. Still the total width of the letter N is (4) units.

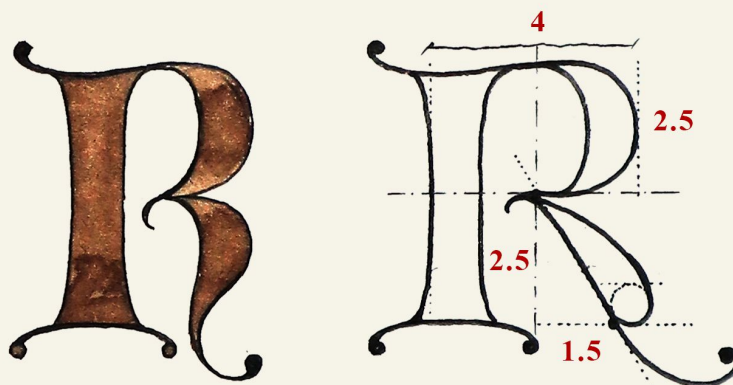


The tail of the letter Q is probably the inspiration of many people who love the beauty of letters. With this variation, the width of the tail will be extended, emerging (3) spacing units to the right edge, and (2) units under the baseline.

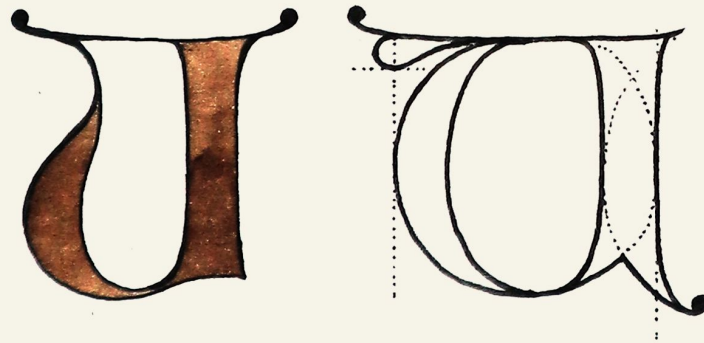


The inclination of the tail is determined as follows: The tail adds (3) units to the letter width and (2) units lower than the baseline, as previously discussed. That means there will be a rectangle with (3):(7) aspect ratio on the right of the O. Let's divide this rectangle into 3 parts horizontally. At the same time, determine the intersection (*referred to as A*) of the main axis and the bottom of that rectangle.

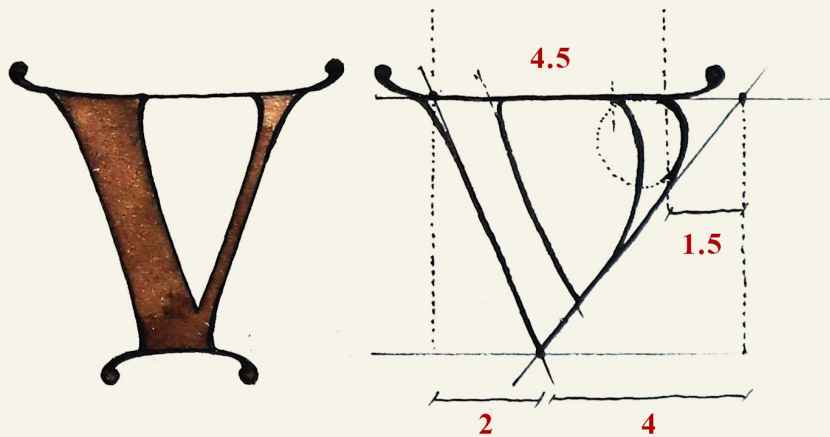
By linking A to the bottom of the letter O, we will have a diagonal stroke to shape the tail. Next, similar to the letter H, K or N, let's create a Q tail from a small circle whose diameter is $\frac{2}{3} \sim 1$ unit, lying at the $\frac{2}{3}$ of the divided rectangle.



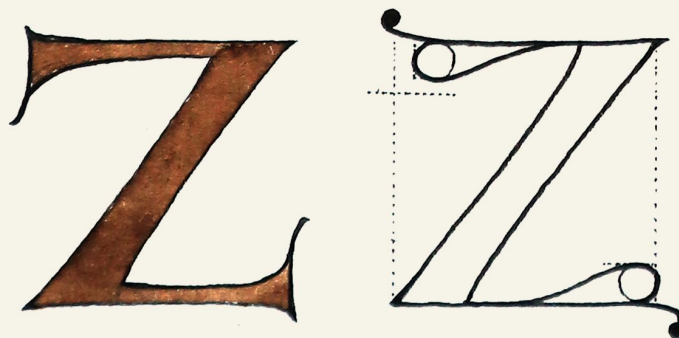
This variation of the letter R remains (4) units wide, including an upper half of the O and a tail of the H. The intersection point between the upper and lower stroke is located at the center of the letter. The inclination of the tail is diagonal from the newly determined center down toward the serif, forming a (1.5):(2.5) rectangle.



The letter U in this section is fully contained in the O shape of (5):(5) aspect ratio. In detail, we can see that it is a part of the M variation mentioned previously. One distinctive feature is that its foot will be slightly extended lower than the baseline (*but just a little bit to maintain visual harmony*). Also, the upper left part is thickened by adding a curved stroke - just like how we did to the H-head before.



Now, let's get to know the letter V whose shape is similar to the letter Y introduced in the section about basic letters. The first step is to determine the inclination of the 2 diagonal strokes. Then, create a shape with a (6):(5) aspect ratio and divide it horizontally into 2 parts - (2) units on the left and (4) units on the right. Then, we will create two diagonal strokes based on this shape. The left stroke is drawn with the same method of diagonal strokes. Meanwhile, *the part that touches the head serif* will be (4.5) spacing units from the left edge of the letter. Here it will be linked with a small circle to form a right curve of the letter V.



The letter Z in this section is similar to its basic shape, but its upper and lower legs will be modified in the same way as the upper leg of the letter H.



TRILE

Lombardic Capitals Alphabet

A B C D E
F G H I J K
L M N O P
R S T U V
W X Y Z