

***Scribal
Isn't
Scary***

***A Handbook for New
and
Aspiring Scribes***

Thea de Nes

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There is a pervasive set of myths that the scribal arts are both horribly expensive and take an extraordinary level of artistic talent and drawing skill, as well as immense numbers of hours to do the work.

This is Just Not True.

If one does have a great deal of natural talent, skills, and training, it can certainly be put to good use. Likewise, if one has a large budget for tools and materials, it can be spent to good advantage. But neither is essential for a scribe to create excellent quality work, nor are hours of toil and years of your life.

With a fairly minimal investment in dollars (though somewhat more in one's time), and a bit of cleverness, most people can become accomplished Scribes.

There are two main areas of SCA scribing: Calligraphy and Illumination. One can do only calligraphy, or only illumination, or one can do both. Some like just the drawing and painting, others prefer to make the pen dance across the page. It's also common for one person to be responsible for creating the whole finished piece, sometimes in direct collaboration with one or more others. Just as there are many different styles of illumination and many different scripts to be written, there are many and varied ways to enjoy the scribal arts. "Do what you love," say the experienced Scribes, and they are quite correct.

But how to find out what one loves? Let's start with a look at supplies.

An enormous array of supplies and tools is available. Some of them are good, some of them are not worth the space they

occupy. One wants to avoid this latter group, obviously, but how does one tell what's good?

If there is a scribes' group or scriptorium in your area, let them help you explore the various materials. One scribe's favorite paint may be the scorn of another. A lot of this has to do with personal style or experience, so it's a smart thing to try out many different materials on the way to developing one's own personal style and preferences. At a gathering of scribes there will be the chance to experiment before going out and buying something that may prove unsatisfactory.

The internet is your friend, in researching tools and materials. There are reports on safety and lightfastness, as well as reviews by artists, for most of the major paints and inks available. Suppliers' catalogues provide detailed descriptions of products and are an excellent source for learning about the tools of the trade (if there is a print copy available, get it, so you can study and compare products more easily).

For illumination, at the minimum, one needs paper, paint and brushes, a pencil to draw with and an eraser to remove what wasn't drawn right, and something with which to draw straight lines. For calligraphy, one needs paper, pen and ink. It can – and rather quickly does – get more complicated than that, but this is all that one really needs to get started.

So let's look at the basics, and beyond.

Paper

A nice sturdy paper is required, at least 90 pound (yes, that means cardstock will not do the job, except perhaps for a batch

of notecards or something unusual). There are several that are mainly used:

Bristol – There is Bristol board and Bristol vellum. I personally do not care for Bristol board, finding it too smooth to hold paint well, although it's lovely for most calligraphy. It does dent fairly easily, so any drawing must be done with a light touch or else it will leave marks, and erasures tend to smear. Bristol vellum is a nice paper, though harder to find and rather light weight. Bristol is the standard paper in some Kingdoms. It's good for original drawings, but is opaque enough that tracing is not the easiest thing to do.

Watercolour paper – There are three main styles: cold-press, rough-press, and hot-press. The paper that scribes are generally interested in is hot-press, which has a smooth surface good for both painting and ease of calligraphy. Cold-press has more texture to it, which makes penwork tricky, although some nice effects can be had with brush lettering. Rough-press is, as the name implies, highly textured.

Watercolour papers can be quite pricey, so shop carefully.

Hot-press watercolour paper is the easiest to use of the papers, overall, though 140 pound is quite opaque.

Pergamenata – A vegetable parchment favored by many scribes, available in white or creamy natural, in several weights and sizes. Use the 230 gsm (heavy) with not-too-wet paint to avoid buckling of the paper. Lovely to do calligraphy on, and can be lightly scraped then burnished to remove mistakes (though not if waterproof ink has been used; there will still be a shadow usually). There can sometimes be an area where ink or paint

just will not stick; a gentle erasing or pouncing usually fixes this. "Perg" absorbs humidity from the air like crazy (store air-tight, and after a scroll is finished put it into a page protector or envelope to keep it flattened), and is sometimes fussy to work on, but the effect is beautiful enough that it is worth a little extra trouble.

Not paper per se but a surface on which to work is **vellum** or **parchment**. When you feel ready to try this, get someone who is experienced to guide you. It is expensive. It is tricky to work with, and it takes special preparation before work begins. It was the surface of choice for most of the medieval period.

Even though paper had been used in Asia at least since AD 100, and had reached Spain and Italy by the 12th century, in England and most of Europe some form of parchment was the most commonly used writing surface until quite late in the medieval period; only after the development of Gutenberg's printing press and the spread of printed works did paper finally become common and the use of parchment decline severely.

Copier papers – even heavy laser-printer paper – are not good for scrolls (though the high-rag-content laser paper is excellent for calligraphy practice and rough drafts, or for working – and playing – with youth).

Unless you have a good paper cutter or a steady hand at cutting, get sheets pre-cut to your working size; it really is worth the extra cost to save time and avoid frustration and paper wastage. Pads as well as large sheets are available. Paper that fits standard frames and mats – 8.5 x 11, 9 x 12, 11 x 14 – are preferred.

Paints

Paints vary widely in quality and price, and there are strong feelings held about what is best. Most of what we use are some form of watercolour, which are available in tubes as a paste to thin out with water, as pans of hardened colour, or as finely ground pigments that must be mixed by the artist before use. All paints consist of a colourant or pigment and some sort of binder (most commonly Gum Arabic) to make the paint stick to the paper.

There are colours that are typical of the medieval artist's palette, and we want to come as close to them as possible, to have the right finished look to the work.

Acrylics and oil paints are not generally used on paper or vellum for scribing, though they often are used for other bases, like wood.

Watercolour – A transparent paint available in tubes or pans. These are less used in SCA scribal work than gouache. Though they do have their uses, and are preferred for some styles or effects, you can easily ignore them. If you have some already, by all means experiment, but they are not a necessary part of your kit.

Gouache – Opaque watercolour, made by using more dense pigmentation and often adding an ingredient like chalk to reduce transparency. These matte finish paints look the most like period pigments for those who do not want to mix their own paints. There is much variation in qualities, price, and preferences of

various scribes, and even less agreement about what is “best” than there is in the discussion on paper. When in doubt, or merely curious, find a scribe who has the paint you are interested in and ask if you can try it for yourself. Be sure to try it on various papers, as the colours and working properties of the different paints do change with the paper used.

High quality paints can be very expensive, though they do not need to be.

The Koh-i-Nor Color Wheel has 24 colours of pan gouache in a good approximation of medieval colours that layer well and can also be used as a transparent wash; it usually costs less than \$10, with high safety and lightfastness ratings.

Pelikan gouache is nice quality and lightfastness but the colours are mostly too modern-looking.

Some scribes swear by *Reeves* gouache, but it has a low pigments level, and generally gets bad reviews, especially for lightfastness. *Windsor-Newton* is one of the most widely available tube paints, but there are many other brands to choose from that may be better for your style. Remember, tube paints that have become dried on the palette work essentially the same as pan paints, so you can create a custom set of colours for your work.

If the tube paint is old and dried out, you can sometimes successfully cut the tube away and get at the paint, and use the lump like you would pan paint.

When opening a new tube, squeeze out the clear liquid (glycerin) that is there merely to keep the paint from drying out while the paint is waiting for you.

Whenever looking at new paints it is good to do some research; it will save time and money both.

Period pigments – Colorants derived from insects (cochineal), plants (madder), minerals (iron, lead), semi-precious gemstones (malachite, lapis), and various earths (ochres), carbons (bone) and various other materials, many of them toxic, were mixed with binders to create the glowing colours on medieval manuscript pages.

While many scribes enjoy the pigment-making process, it is not necessary to do this in order to use period pigments; there are a number of suppliers of pre-made pigments. And while yes, indeed, they are generally more expensive than modern paints, they are not quite the bank-breakers that one is often led to believe.

Gold – Gilding is a whole topic and set of skills all on its own, and is not essential unless one is working at or toward a certain level of accomplishment in the scribal or other arts.

There are beautiful metallics that are easy to use, readily available, and quite inexpensive. *Fine-Tek* golds are the most commonly used, and a single pan of their Arabic gold will provide golden glitter to quite a few scrolls. The Fine-Tek kit of various pan golds plus silver is nice to have if one ends up doing a lot of scribal work and wants different golds for different effects.

Yasutomo has a pan paint kit with two golds that look and work up much like shell gold; it also includes a silver, black, red and white.

There are various other pan and tube gouaches and gold paints available from the major paint manufacturers; add them as you need them, as they tend to be pricey.

If you are doing a lot of gold, you might want to explore the *Pearl-Ex* pigments, which can be used as paint or as ink, and the pigments can be mixed to get different shades of gold or other metallics.

Brushes

This is one thing on which you do not want to compromise on quality. A good brush will not be inexpensive, but it will make the difference between you being a good, happy painter and one who throws their work across the room in frustration and despair.

It is actually possible to paint for quite a long time with just one brush, if that brush is a good one, a nice full “round” that narrows down to a fine point; a size 1 will work for most everything except miniatures or very large work. Using a too-small brush makes the work harder, and the brush wears out faster.

While one can spend the week’s grocery money on a single brush, there is no reason to do so.

Winsor-Newton Sceptre Gold brushes with their combination of sable and synthetic, and those by *Raphael Kaerell* will both hold up to a lot of use and are only moderately expensive (usually \$5-\$10).

There are inexpensive brushes to be had, and some of them are indeed quite good. Look for ones that are specified as pointed round watercolour brushes. Sometimes a kit of three or four can be found for very little money, and as long as they don't lose bristles in use, and they work well and give the effect you want, go ahead and use them for as long as they last (inexpensive brushes tend to wear out faster even with good care).

Make sure to clean your brushes well with cool (never hot) water, and maybe a teensy bit of soap to remove strong colours (be sure to rinse well), dry them thoroughly after use, and don't let them rest in the water container with the bristles down unless you want a brush with a tip like a ski slope. When you are painting, change your water frequently; dirty brushes and dirty water will muddle your paint colours.

Pens

Scribes use several different kinds of pens, for calligraphy and for drawing.

Drawing pens include felt-tip pens like *Micron*, *Pigma*, *Zig*, and *Sakura* in varying sizes and colours. Pigment ink pens will be more opaque, and you want waterproof and fade resistant ink. The good brands all tend to be archival quality; the best ones are acid-free.

Technical pens such as *Rapidograph* and *Staedtler*, unless you already own one and are familiar with their use, are more trouble and expense than they are worth.

Crow Quill pens are slim steel pointed dip pens, used for drawing fine lines. While traditional, they are not as easy or convenient to use as the felt-tip pens.

Regular felt-tip pens are good for doodling or if working with youth, but the colours will run if they get wet and they fade quite quickly. Do not use them for scrolls or anything you want to be permanent.

Sharpies™ are not good for regular scrolls or the usual archival project, but even some Laurels have been known to use them on projects that need something easy to use, readily available, tough, and waterproof.

Calligraphy pens come in many forms. What you use depends on what works best for you, for the hand you are writing, and the paper you are writing on. Most calligraphers use a variety of pens and inks.

Cartridge Pens are the easiest to use and the most portable. There are many brands and price points, all of them, amazingly, different enough from one another that if you are doing calligraphy for a while you will probably gather quite a collection. *Manuscript* and *Shaffer* are good inexpensive pens, and can be had either individually or in kits with multiple barrels and nibs. The Manuscript pen also has a converter that allows use of bottled fountain pen ink. More expensive pens include *Rotring*, *Brause*, and *Lamy*. Sadly, *Osmiroid* pens are no longer in production, though they can be had through various sources. The *Pilot Parallel Pen* is a new nib design concept in fountain pen form. Especially in the larger sizes where there tends to be skipping, is very useful. Their ink though is dye-based and quite

runny; re-fill empty cartridges with better ink using an eye dropper or pipette.

Dip Pens consist of a holder (and there is a dizzying array of styles, materials and price points, from \$2 plastic to \$30 hand-turned wood) with a removable and interchangeable set of nibs (again, a wide array of brands and sizes). They are used for both broad pen work and for the later style pointed pen work. Even though most of the individual nibs are not expensive, one can spend a considerable amount of money getting all the different types and sizes. If or when you decide to use dip pens, this is a good time to consult with your local scribes to try before you buy; suppliers' catalogues are also a good source of information about the different nibs and holders. There is a lot of variation in the stiffness and the style of the cut of the metal used in the pens. Depending on how you write, and on what surface (Paper or other), one or another will prove better to work with. The wrong pen for you or the job will make your life miserable.

Speedball is the most commonly available brand, being stocked even by office supply stores. American-made, there are several different styles for various lettering needs. They are the most difficult to clean, having a non-removable ink reservoir, and the nibs are among the most expensive, but they are a good durable nib with a hundred-year history.

Brause nibs come from Germany, and are the most stiff of the nibs. Good for someone who is used to writing with a ball-point pen and uses a lot of pressure when they write, or on certain papers, though they can get "caught" on the paper if writing pressure is heavy.

Tape nibs are less stiff than Brause, and a good general nib for someone used to using ballpoint pens.

Mitchell nibs from England are my favorite, and good ones for those doing a lot of calligraphy because the flexibility of the nib does not allow for a "heavy hand", thus helping to avoid stressing hand and wrist from writing with a lot of pressure. They also hold a lot of ink, even without the reservoir in place.

Manuscript/Rond nibs are made by the same English company that makes the cartridge pens, and are similar to Mitchell nibs; in stiffness they are between Mitchell and Tape.

If you end up using dip pens a lot, you might want to get a separate holder for each of your most commonly used sizes so that you can switch from one to another more easily and quickly.

There is a coating on new nibs to keep them from rusting that must be removed before first use. There are various ways to do this, either wiping with alcohol or heating the nib with hot water seem to work the best without risk of damage to the nib itself.

Take care of your nibs – some inks cause corrosion. Remove from the holder and wash with warm water (and maybe a bit of soap, depending on the ink used) and dry thoroughly after use.

Quills and Reeds The first pens, they are still preferred by some scribes. Using them is a learned skill. As with many of the scribal arts skills, finding a good teacher if you decide to do this is the best way to do it.

Pigmented ink calligraphy markers are made by *Zig* and *Sakura Pigma*. It may be considered heresy to say so, but these pens

are acid-free, waterproof, and lightfast, and they could just be the right pen to use.

Ink

This is another area where there is a lot of choice; personal preference will depend a lot on what other tools and supplies are used for the project. Some of the newer inks surpass the old standard brands and kinds. Be very careful what inks you put into your fountain pen; when in doubt, consult a knowledgeable source, and use only inks that are stated specifically as being for fountain pen use.

Oak gall (sometimes called iron gall) ink is what was used in period. Some scribes make their own, and it is also available commercially from a number of producers. Never use it in a fountain pen, and be sure to clean your nibs well, as it is highly corrosive.

Acrylic inks like *Calli*, *Speedball* and *Ziller* are not suitable for fountain pens (*Calli* says it is, but needs ammonia for cleaning, and still can clog) though for dip pens, as long as cleaning the nib takes place promptly, they are fine to use. They are the most modern of the inks.

Pigment inks like *Winsor-Newton* have good strong colour and are made for fountain pen as well brush and dip pen use. Some colours seem to clog a bit, and they are not waterproof, but colours are mixable.

Higgins inks have for many years been the scribes' mainstay. *Higgins Eternal*, the choice of many scribes, uses ammonia for a

preservative, and is intended as an ink for reproduction rather than permanence.

The company has an array of different inks; if you like this brand, shop the line until you find your favorite.

Noodlers is a designated fountain pen ink that comes in large 3 ounce bottles, and the black is lightfast and waterproof. If you use your broad pens for everyday writing as well as for scribing, you might like the wide variety of colours which, like *Winsor-Newton* inks, are mixable for custom colours.

Stick inks must be ground before use, and water added to the needed consistency. **Sumi** inks are dense black liquid inks. Both are carbon inks, can only be used with dip pens or brush, and tools should be very well cleaned after use, and sometimes while the project is being worked on. They tend to be slow-drying. *Moon Palace* is a very good brand, but there are many available.

Other tools and supplies

You may already have a number of these..

Pencils – Basic .5 or .7 click pencils are fine. Draw lightly or you may have trouble erasing.

Erasers – White plastic erasers (not the pink, they can leave marks) in stick or block form (or both), grey kneaded erasers (they're gentle on even fragile paper; more than one can be mushed together to make a big eraser; keep in plastic bag or storage bottle to keep from drying out), ink erasers like the *Perfection* stick from Germany (use carefully to not tear paper,

and burnish after with the back of a spoon to flatten and smooth the paper).

Rulers, guides, and t-squares – A cork-backed metal ruler will not slip, and being slightly raised will be less likely to smear your ink when you use it to draw a line. Plastic t-squares are inexpensive and indispensable - you need to have lines that are straight and parallel to each other and to the edge of the paper, and this is the easiest way to do it; it's also the tool of choice for creating ruling lines for calligraphy, whether by itself or together with the *Ames Lettering Guide*, a clever little, inexpensive tool that has been used for decades.

Paint palette – If you are using tube paints you will need something to squeeze them out onto, either small quantities, or for mixing colours, or for deliberately turning a larger quantity of tube paint into pan paint. You can either use the palettes sold in the art department or get creative and use what you have around the house (empty eye-shadow cases work well, just clean them thoroughly first).

Cups for water – It seems silly to have to say this, but there will be a time when you forget, and if you are away from home you will be annoyed. Save a few cups from single-serve fruit and stack up in your scribes box. Use one cup for your gold, and let the excess paint settle to the bottom, then use like pan gouache. Also fill a dropper bottle with water and use that as a water source; it's especially useful when using pan colours for a drop or two to moisten the paint (be sure to label the bottle).

Templates and compass – A circle template will make your life so much easier, especially when drawing in awards badge artwork. A compass may be useful, depending on your style. A

dressmakers curve or those funny little curvy rulers make drawing curved lines a whole lot easier. Look around for other templates that suit the work you are doing, and use them to make your work faster and more smooth and even.

Scroll carrier – If you are making Court scrolls, you'll need a way to carry them to the event, something cardboard-stiff so the piece doesn't get crumpled.

Workable Fixative – Not everyone uses this, but it reduces the chance of damage from any dampness or dirt. Blair or Krylon are the best, but make sure it is workable fixative, so additions can be made.

The **Ames Guide** will prove indispensable, as will pre-printed guidelines sheets, for ease in even line-spacing. There are instructions available on-line for using the Ames guide, or ask your favorite experienced scribe.

This list will no doubt be added to over time, but this should get you through the first five or so years. Figure out what works for you, and use any and all ideas you can gather from other scribes and artisans.

Okay, now you have your supplies. Now what?

Calligraphy

Well, if you are doing calligraphy, you start to write. Some people take to the pen immediately, doing a good job on every

hand they try. Others have to practice a lot, and for a long time. Find a script (also called a “hand”) that appeals to you, or one that is similar to your own handwriting. Practice that until it feels comfortable. Then find another hand that you would like to work in, and practice that.

Keep in mind that paleographers (those who study letters) are erratic in the naming of different hands. You may find the same basic script with multiple names, or different scripts bearing the same name. Each calligrapher draws a script in a unique manner, so this adds to the differences of the various hands. And yes, it can be very confusing; ignore it, and just write pretty letters.

Different size nibs make different size and thickness letters. Use them for a wide variety of different effects.

Use a “marble” notebook (they generally have higher quality paper than regular notebooks) or sheets of laser-printer paper (higher rag-content) for your practice, and date and save them so you can mark your progress, or to go back and find some especially nice stuff you did.

Though more is obviously better, as little as ten minutes a day of practice will make a difference in the quality of your writing in just a few weeks (seriously...that’s why you are keeping your practice sheets - so you can see that progress).

Practice strokes and individual letters are good as a warm-up exercise, but begin right away to write words and sentences. It is what you will be writing on actual scrolls and documents, and it

helps in getting used to good letter and line spacing. And write larger rather than smaller; it’s easier to see what you are doing.

Write without guidelines, if you dare. While it takes a while to happen, it will train your eye and your hand to write straight across the page. There are times that this is very useful, and it is impressive.

Use a broad pen for your everyday writing, and discover how good your regular handwriting really is; this will also help you to become more relaxed in using the pen for scribal work.

Illumination

It is more likely the beautiful artwork on scrolls that has attracted people to the scribal arts, rather than the equally artful calligraphy. Both are important to the overall presentation, but the illumination is often the major flash and dazzle of a piece. How to do this, if one can’t even draw decent stick figures?

You.....Just.....Trace.....

Tracing frees you to focus on the paintwork, on the brushstrokes of beautiful colour.

It gets the job done.

And it saves your nerves.

It was done in period (in fact, it was done quite a lot). It is an authentic period practice, and if you look at some of the major manuscripts (Book of Kells, especially the canonical tables, and

the Duc du Berry's commissioned works by the Limbourg brothers) you can really see it.

Manuscripts are not the only source of illumination designs. Architectural details, wood and stone carvings, jewelry and other metalwork, textiles, and period paintings are all valid sources of inspiration. Most of the major libraries and museums have at this point digitized at least part of their collections; hundreds of thousands of illuminations and manuscript pages are available on-line.

Once the tracing is done, you can alter the details to make the design your own, or you can work to come as close to the original as possible. You can use part of a design, or flip it in a different direction, enlarge it or shrink it to fill or fit a space. Whatever you do, try to get a good copy of the original source document, especially if you are wanting to do an accurate interpretation.

Of course, if you are adept at drawing, and want to do that, by all means do. Or combine tracing and freehand drawing, creating original works.

Painting can be a tedious affair, especially if the design is complex or in miniature. But don't make it more difficult than it needs to be. If you look carefully at medieval pieces, you will notice that there is a lot of shading in the colours; this is actually easily accomplished by starting out at the edges of the section and working your way in to the paler areas of colour.

Let the paint dry thoroughly before adding details or additional layers of paint, and don't have the brush too wet when you do that. If it's being troublesome, walk away from it for a while.

There are as many ways to paint well as there are people painting. Let people show you painting techniques, either in person or in videos, books and other sources. Much is available on-line.

Do try to keep a good match of your illumination and calligraphy, avoiding, for example, a heavy Gothic hand with Celtic knotwork or Italian Humanist white vine work or delicate border designs.

The object of all this tracing (and you can trace for calligraphy too, although it is much more efficient to learn to draw the letters freehand) and painting and drawing is to make a beautiful piece that commemorates the accomplishments of one of your fellow gentles, and to enjoy the work as you do it.

Wordsmithing

At some point in the making of a scroll, there must (usually) be text added. There are sample wordings in the various Kingdom Scribal Handbooks from which to draw inspiration, modifying them as is reasonable for the situation or individual, and creating original text is encouraged. Scribes often collaborate on text.

A sample simple full-service scribal arts kit

Koh-i-Nor Color Wheel

Kneaded eraser

Strathmore Paint Pad (kid's art section of JoAnns)

Clear 12" T-square

Broad (1.35) Manuscript or Shaffer pen (or, better, the Beginner's set with three nibs)

Extra ink (either bottled or cartridges)

#1 Septre Series (Winsor-Newton) brush

Fine-Tek Arabic Gold

01 Micron pen, black

At full list price all this can be gotten for under \$50; with various discounts it can easily cost as little as \$35. Add a copy of MEDIEVAL CALLIGRAPHY by Marc Drogin for calligraphy reference (Dover Publications, \$20 list, new, but sometimes available for as little as \$8).

You will have enough to keep you busy for quite a while.

The pad has 20 sheets; you'll run out of paper before you run out of paint (my first colour wheel still has a good bit of paint after 100 scrolls, but that may not be typical).

Obviously if you have no interest in painting you can eliminate some of the items. Get the Drogin, no matter what you do; it has lots of period examples, a good bit of interesting history, and some excellent tips.

If you are seriously interested in calligraphy, add THE ART OF CALLIGRAPHY by David Harris to your bookshelf. It is hard to find and expensive when you do, but there is a downloadable PDF available.

Keep copies of the scrolls you send out. Share them if you would like to do that; there is always something to learn from the art of other Scribes, and we all love to see what people are doing. Join up with local scribes, or form your own bande of scribes. Look to sources both inside and outside the SCA for information and inspiration. While it is fairly important and serious work that Scribes do, please do not take it, or yourself, too seriously. Just go and make nice things – and be sure to get enough sleep.

Suppliers

John Neal Booksellers

Paper and Ink Arts

Dick Blick

A.C. Moore

Jerry's Artarama

Cheap Joes Art Supplies

Hyatt Art Supply

Office supply stores

Big box stores

The first two are my go-to suppliers. John Neal has made a specialty of serving SCA Scribes, even having a SCA member on staff, and they have begun a special newsletter with an SCA focus – oh, and don't forget to ask for your SCA discount when you order. Paper & Ink Arts leans more to modern calligraphy, but carries a lot of the same products plus some other unique items. They are both small, owner-operated businesses with exceptional customer service, and if their prices are not the absolute lowest available, it is worth it to support them, for they are huge supporters of the scribal arts and artisans.

Resources

World Digital Library - <https://www.wdl.org>

British Library <http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/welcome.htm>

Getty Museum

Morgan Library

Bodleian Library

Walters Art Museum

Vatican Library

Metropolitan Museum of Art

Gutenberg School of Scribes

Tips and tricks

When tracing with ink, overlap strokes a bit to get a smoother line.

For straight lines that look freehand drawn, pencil in the line with a ruler, then ink in freehand.

DO NOT trace when you are tired or distracted. Use your best part of the day if possible for both tracing and calligraphy. Take your time, relax, and remember to breathe. Make sure you stretch regularly.

Paper has a right side and a wrong side; it is not always easy to tell, but one side will usually feel smoother.

Use a fatter outlining pen (03 or 05) for your tracing. If your brush slips a bit when you are painting you will still have a good

line that is easily touched up with a fine (005 or 01) pen, and you can avoid having to outline twice.

Wash your hands before you start work, and use a guard sheet (a sheet of plain paper that covers the part of the paper that is not being worked on) to help keep the page clean and free of oils from your hands.

Pergamanata can be fussy on a damp day, and it can buckle and warp if your paint is very thick or very wet. Most of the smoothness should return once things are dry, but it may be necessary to leave the page under a weight (like a heavy book) for a day to flatten it out.

Layers of paint are fine, and often desirable for shading.