



Gothic Lettering

'Gothic', also called 'Blackletter' or even 'Old English', developed through the Middle Ages as a pen script. It isn't one style, as such, but a recognisable form within which there are quite a few variations: curves, weight, spacing and so on, airing as scribes used and developed it. Blackletter went out of favour for more legible scripts but could still be seen in more recent times in German printed texts. The letterform was revived by the Victorians for things medieval or related to Christmas, which is how you often still see it today.

Originally Gothic was a pen and ink letter; what I'm giving you here is a version that I developed many years ago. It carves well and quite quickly, and uses only a few tools - all good signs of a letterform good for carving. I've simplified what can be an elaborate style but you can finesse what I've drawn further - for example, making the elements somewhat curved or 'waisted' rather than straight, or adding decorative elements. Do have a look online for further inspiration.

Tools:

You'll see that this letterform, as I've drawn it, is very chisel orientated: lots of straight lines and angled junctions. So chisels - that is, double-beveled carving chisels - of varying widths, are what you need. Small fishtail chisels and a skew chisel, will also help get into the bottom recesses of the junctions.

Curves: at the top of the L or bottom of the P for example. I used medium gouges for the outside of the curves and flatter gouges for the inside. There is no exact definition of what you need here; adapt your letter to the gouges you have.

The Project:

I've always loved the rhythm and richness of Gothic and I thought the discipline of it would make a nice contrast with the looseness of the chair.

I would add, though, that you want to use Gothic sparingly and take into account the context of where you are using it. It's heavy stuff and is often difficult to read.

The Gothic Alphabet:

On the following pages I've scanned in my Gothic alphabet - 'small' letters. Apologies right now for them lining up a bit squiffily...

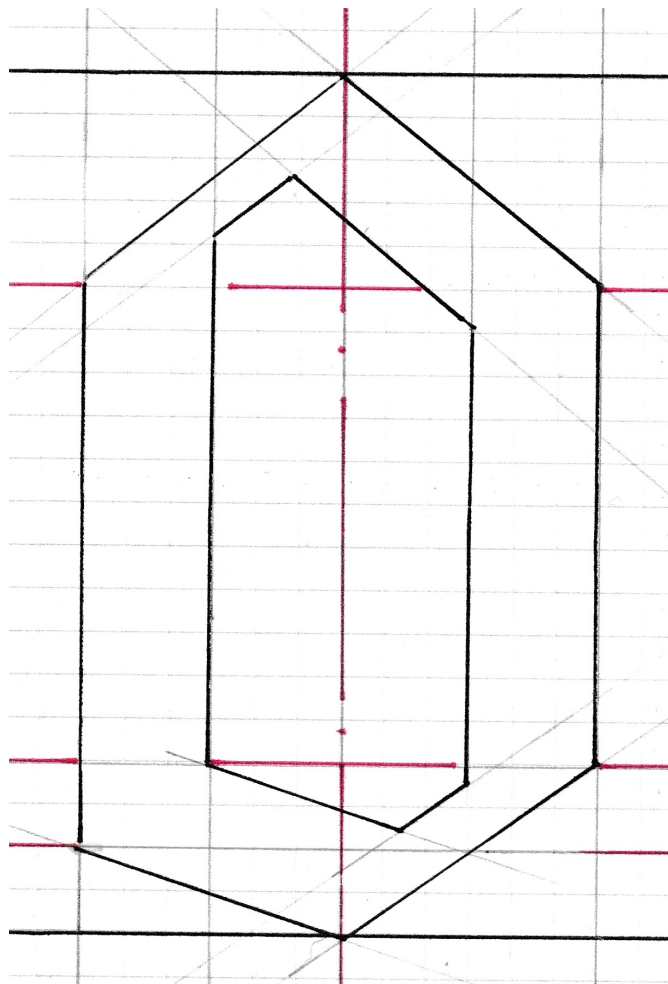
I have left a grid in the background. Whatever size you print, check the grid squares for same size.

Capitals? They are very elaborate and don't carve fluidly, and if you want to use them you'll need to look them up online. *Never make a word all capitals!* I always use a larger, bolded 'small' letter in place of these capitals - much more readable.

I'll start with the layout of the O, which forms the basis of the lettering.

I suggest you learn to draw this first, at any size, even free hand. Then play with it and develop other letters from it as I showed you in the video. Not all (R, S, Z for example) work well and you may come up with something better.

Let me know!



Here is my Gothic alphabet in 2 parts.

You are free to use the drawings for your private use but not to publish or use them for gain in any way.

