

# Calligraphy: From Basics to Fude and Style Scripts

Learn to use traditional tools like Fude and Sumi, and master Kaisho, Gyosho, and Sosho scripts with step-by-step guidance for beginners and artists.

**Design** Instructor: Daniel Mercer • 5 sections • 51 lessons • 18.00h total

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## About this course

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Many people start calligraphy but struggle with the right techniques, tool handling, or script consistency. This course breaks down the confusion around traditional Japanese calligraphy, from choosing your first brush to writing expressive characters. You'll gain practical skills through video lessons, real examples, and structured practice.

We cover everything from setting up your workspace with Hanshi and Shitajiki to progressing through Kaisho, Gyosho, and Sosho styles. Includes cases from historical and contemporary calligraphy, with clear demonstrations and problem-solving sessions to help you build confidence and create your own compositions.

# Course curriculum

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## Foundations and Preparation

- **Introduction to Calligraphy and Its Tools (12m)**  
Overview of calligraphy's role and the essential tools: Fude, Sumi, Hanshi, Shitajiki, and Bunchin. Get ready to start your practice.
- **Setting Up Your Workspace for Comfort and Control (18m)**  
Step-by-step guide to arranging your desk, using Shitajiki and Bunchin, and maintaining proper posture for steady strokes.
- **Understanding and Preparing Sumi Ink (15m)**  
How to grind ink stick, achieve consistent ink flow with water, and avoid common mistakes with Sumi ink preparation.
- **Handling Your Fude Brush: Grip and Basic Movements (20m)**  
Practice holding the brush correctly and making fundamental movements like vertical and horizontal lines.
- **First Strokes on Hanshi Paper (25m)**  
Apply basic strokes on Hanshi paper to understand texture and absorbency, with tips for clean results.
- **Simple Character Forms and Balance (18m)**  
Learn to write basic kanji components, focusing on spacing and proportion for balanced characters.
- **Common Errors in Beginner Calligraphy and Fixes (12m)**  
Identify and correct issues like ink blotting, shaky lines, or uneven pressure during practice.
- **Practice Session: Building Foundational Confidence (32m)**  
Guided practice to reinforce foundational skills, including repeating strokes and simple characters with feedback.

## Core Concepts and Tool Mastery

- **Deep Dive into Fude Brushes: Types and Selection (18m)**  
Explore different brush hairs and sizes, and how to choose based on your script style and paper type.
- **Sumi Ink Variations and Advanced Preparation (15m)**  
Adjust ink thickness for different effects, and learn techniques for storing and reusing ink.
- **Hanshi Paper Types and Their Uses (12m)**  
Compare handmade and machine-made Hanshi, and understand how paper grain affects stroke quality.
- **Using Shitajiki and Bunchin for Optimal Support (20m)**  
Position your felt mat and paperweight correctly to prevent slipping and ensure smooth writing.
- **Introduction to Kaisho: Block Script Basics (25m)**  
Break down Kaisho's structure with clear stroke order, starting with simple kanji like numbers and elements.
- **Kaisho Stroke Order and Rhythm Practice (18m)**  
Develop a consistent rhythm through repetitive drills, focusing on speed and precision.

- **Writing Common Kanji in Kaisho (22m)**  
Practice frequently used characters like 'mountain' and 'water', with attention to detail and form.
- **Kaisho for Hiragana and Katakana (15m)**  
Apply Kaisho principles to Japanese phonetic scripts, ensuring clarity and uniformity.
- **Kaisho Composition: Simple Layouts and Spacing (20m)**  
Create short phrases or quotes in Kaisho, learning how to arrange characters on the page.
- **Tool Care and Maintenance Essentials (12m)**  
Clean and store your Fude, Sumi, and Hanshi properly to extend their life and performance.

## Deep Dive into Styles and Techniques

- **Transitioning from Kaisho to Gyosho (18m)**  
Understand the key differences in stroke flow and how to start simplifying Kaisho forms.
- **Gyosho Fundamentals: Semi-Cursive Basics (22m)**  
Learn the connecting strokes and relaxed posture that define Gyosho, with examples from historical texts.
- **Gyosho Stroke Flow and Connectivity (25m)**  
Practice linking strokes smoothly to create fluid characters, avoiding common breaks in flow.
- **Writing Common Characters in Gyosho (20m)**  
Apply Gyosho to everyday kanji, focusing on how speed and angle affect the final look.
- **Introduction to Sosho: Cursive Script Essentials (18m)**  
Explore Sosho's highly simplified forms and the artistic freedom it offers for expressive writing.
- **Sosho: Simplified Forms and Speed Drills (22m)**  
Break down complex characters into quick, flowing strokes, with timed practice sessions.
- **Sosho for Expressive and Artistic Writing (25m)**  
Use Sosho to convey emotion and movement, with tips on varying pressure and line weight.
- **Comparing Kaisho, Gyosho, and Sosho (15m)**  
Analyze the same character in all three styles to see progression and choose the right one for your project.
- **Practice Session: Mixed Style Writing Challenges (32m)**  
Tackle exercises that combine styles, building versatility and confidence in switching between scripts.

## Advanced Application and Composition

- **Designing Layouts with Multiple Scripts (25m)**  
Plan compositions that use Kaisho, Gyosho, and Sosho together, balancing visual hierarchy and flow.
- **Incorporating Seal and Signature Elements (18m)**  
Add personal touches with traditional seals (inkan) and learn placement for professional finishes.
- **Creating Themed Compositions: Poetry and Quotes (22m)**  
Select and arrange text from classical poems or sayings, with case studies from calligraphy masters.
- **Advanced Ink Techniques: Gradient and Texture (20m)**  
Experiment with ink dilution and brush loading to create depth and texture in your work.
- **Using Different Brush Sizes for Impact (15m)**  
Switch between fine and broad brushes to emphasize certain characters or add contrast.

- **Case Study: Analyzing Classical Calligraphy Works (30m)**  
Examine historical pieces to understand how masters applied tools and styles in real contexts.
- **Modern Applications: Digital and Print Integration (18m)**  
Adapt your calligraphy for scanning, digital editing, or print projects, with tips on resolution and color.
- **Problem-Solving: Adjusting Tools for Desired Effects (25m)**  
Troubleshoot issues like ink spread or paper tearing, and learn adjustments for different outcomes.
- **Developing Your Personal Calligraphy Style (22m)**  
Identify your preferences in stroke style and composition to start forming a unique voice.
- **Project: Complete Calligraphy Piece from Start to Finish (45m)**  
Plan, draft, and execute a full composition using all learned techniques, with guided feedback.
- **Reviewing and Refining Your Advanced Work (20m)**  
Self-assess your projects using checklists for precision, flow, and overall impact.
- **Practice Session: Advanced Composition Drills (35m)**  
Focused exercises on complex layouts and style mixing, reinforcing application skills.

## Implementation and Next Steps

- **Building a Daily Practice Routine for Improvement (15m)**  
Set up a sustainable schedule with targeted exercises to keep your skills growing over time.
- **Creating a Portfolio of Your Calligraphy Work (20m)**  
Select and present your best pieces for personal records or sharing, with photography tips.
- **Sharing Calligraphy: Online Platforms and Community (18m)**  
Explore social media, forums, and local groups to connect with other calligraphy enthusiasts.
- **Exploring Related Arts: Shodo and Beyond (22m)**  
Brief look at calligraphy's role in broader art forms, and how to integrate other mediums.
- **Advanced Tool Care and Long-Term Maintenance (12m)**  
Deep cleaning techniques for brushes and ink stones, and storage advice for longevity.
- **Historical Context and Regional Variations (25m)**  
Understand how calligraphy evolved in different regions, with examples from Edo period to today.
- **Guest Artist Insights: Real-World Techniques (30m)**  
Case studies and demonstrations from practicing calligraphers, showing their unique approaches.
- **Final Project: Personal Calligraphy Style Guide (40m)**  
Compile your preferred tools, scripts, and layouts into a guide that defines your artistic direction.
- **Adapting Calligraphy for Different Surfaces (18m)**  
Experiment with writing on fabrics, wood, or ceramics, adjusting techniques for each material.
- **Combining Calligraphy with Other Art Forms (22m)**  
Integrate calligraphy with painting, drawing, or digital art for mixed-media projects.
- **Next Steps: Further Learning and Resources (15m)**  
Identify books, workshops, and online courses to continue your calligraphy journey beyond this course.
- **Course Wrap-Up: Consolidating Your Skills (20m)**  
Review key takeaways and set personal goals for ongoing practice and application.

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