



**Decorated Letters**  
**G220622**  
Dr. Mark Van Stone  
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Dear Participant,

Here are some examples of the kind of decorated letters whose techniques we shall be learning in my class in June.

None of these styles involved the kind of figure-drawing techniques that form the core of a modern "art" education. These are all improvised "decorative" styles guided by simple, easy-to-master rules. In fact, it should give the student courage that these styles are actually easier to master than calligraphy. Looking back on my career, I can see that I was able to draw competent initials like this much sooner than I was able to write decent Italic or Uncial or Gothic script, and *years* before my Roman Capitals were up to snuff. These styles are tremendously flexible: The density, complexity, and extent of these decorative motifs were improvised, rather than planned, and limited only by the artist's time and imagination.

**To specify the styles:**

P: 11th century "English penwork" decoration;

U: 14<sup>th</sup> - 15<sup>th</sup> century Pan-European "Filigree" (Found in manuscripts from Scotland to Italy);

V: Renaissance "White-Vine" illumination;

R: 12th - 13th century Northern European (mostly English) figural initials, often found in early Books of Hours;

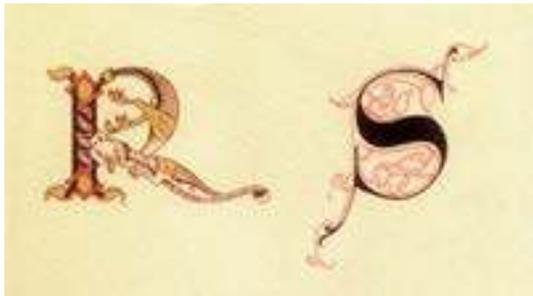
S: 13th century Pan-European penwork initials. This style evolved into the Filigree seen on the U;

Celtic Knots: This style began in Late-Antique Roman art (often seen in mosaic floors), and was considerably expanded by Irish and British artists in the 7<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries. It is easily mastered and spread all over Europe.

Celtic Spirals and Beasts: These designs are often quite intricate, and have their own peculiar rules of construction that rarely were seen outside of the Celtic areas of Ireland and Britain (spirals especially), while Animal Interlace is found in Viking art as well.

All of these, as you see, were developed with the pen, rather than the brush.

Best, Mark



**Why Knot?**

When you have finished a knot, you will find it very interesting to see how it is made. It is a very simple thing to do, and you can make many different kinds of knots. The following diagrams show you how to make some of the most common knots.

1. Draw a square on a piece of paper.
2. Draw the four corners of the square.
3. Draw a line from the top-left corner to the bottom-right corner.
4. Draw a line from the top-right corner to the bottom-left corner.
5. Draw a line from the top-left corner to the bottom-right corner, crossing over the line from step 4.
6. Draw a line from the top-right corner to the bottom-left corner, crossing over the line from step 5.
7. Draw a line from the top-left corner to the bottom-right corner, crossing over the line from step 6.
8. Draw a line from the top-right corner to the bottom-left corner, crossing over the line from step 7.
9. Draw a line from the top-left corner to the bottom-right corner, crossing over the line from step 8.
10. Draw a line from the top-right corner to the bottom-left corner, crossing over the line from step 9.
11. Draw a line from the top-left corner to the bottom-right corner, crossing over the line from step 10.
12. Draw a line from the top-right corner to the bottom-left corner, crossing over the line from step 11.
13. Draw a line from the top-left corner to the bottom-right corner, crossing over the line from step 12.
14. Draw a line from the top-right corner to the bottom-left corner, crossing over the line from step 13.
15. Draw a line from the top-left corner to the bottom-right corner, crossing over the line from step 14.

