

METHODS FOR SKETCHING & DRAWING LETTERS

The Noordzij Method

Developed by Gerrit Noordzij, this approach to sketching letters is an excellent way to think about, create and modify letterforms. Drawing the outline of a letterform often enforces an immediate commitment to shape and style too early in the process and can close off creative possibilities. The focus often turns to refining the outline rather than focusing on the style and shape of the letterform and the space around it.

By sketching the letterform first, you're taking a loose, open-minded approach to what the letterform could look like and can make quick and easy changes to it, adding to or removing from it as you go along, shaping and sculpting the letterform, thinking about it and exploring the possibilities of what it could be.



The Pencil Skeleton

The pencil skeleton is an excellent approach to composing a hand lettered piece –you can see how the letters in a word may interact with each other, experiment with swashes, letter styles and decorative elements and how all of the components of your composition fit together within the framework of a larger composition. It offers a step in between that of a thumbnail and a more tightly refined first draft.

The pencil skeleton may also establish a foundation or guide for which to layer more complex lettering over the top of, with a brush, pointed pen or other lettering tool. Lettering with a brush, for example, can be daunting as there is much to consider: letter styles, composition, the skill require to handle and manipulate the brush, and more. By starting with a pencil skeleton, you've already made the decisions about composition, letter style, etc. and can move on to lettering on top of the skeleton, focusing on that skill alone.

