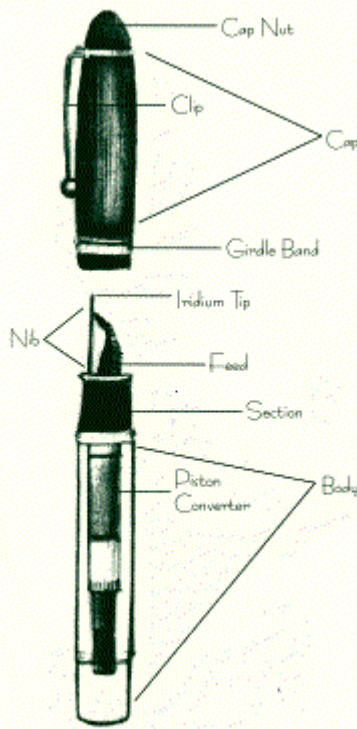


Pen Stuff: "Write" Thinking For Fountain Pens



Brief History of the Fountain Pen

The fountain pen was invented by Waterman in 1884. Inspired by the old tradition of the feather quill, Waterman came up with a way to use the concept without having to be seated at a desk to keep the pen inked. The fountain pen became a staple of society until the ballpoint pen was invented in 1947. This limited the sale of fountain pens in the U.S, but not in Europe. The fountain pen has recently made resurgence in popularity mainly due to technological advances. Many people are now longing for the nostalgia of the hand written note. Nothing makes you feel better than to receive the personal touch of a note that someone took the time to sit and write.

Why a Fountain Pen?

Many people wonder why they should use a fountain pen. Fountain pens offer an expression to a person's handwriting. Through a change in pressure of the pen to the paper, you can achieve a variety of lines, from thick to thin. The ballpoint and rollerball will not give you this variety of line.

Many people also believe that fountain pens improve their penmanship. The basic nature of a fountain pen forces the user to write a little more slowly, hence creating neater, more legible handwriting.

Unlike a ballpoint or rollerball pen, a fountain pen allows for more choices when it comes to ink colors and shades. With a ballpoint or rollerball, blue is blue and black is black. That is not the case with fountain pen ink.

Writing With a Fountain Pen

The proper manner to hold a fountain pen is in the triangle created by your first two fingers and your thumb. The nib of the pen should be up, so that you may see the engraving (if any) on the nib; the black portion of the nib (the feed) should be down. The fountain pen nib is a piece of metal, either steel, gold or titanium, that is split down the center. On the underside of the nib, on both pieces of the split, is a half

ball of iridium. If the fountain pen is held properly, both tines of the nib should hit the paper at the same time, allowing for a smooth feel and a consistent flow of ink.

There are two different ways to handle the cap of a fountain pen. Probably the most common manner is to post the cap on the back of the pen, aligning the clip with the nib. If the pen is held properly, the clip will be out of the way of your hand, and the cap will help with the balance of the pen in your hand. If the fountain pen feels uncomfortable in the hand, you may decide to use the cap in the "European" style, setting the cap on the desk as you write. Rather than setting the cap down, many people may decide to hold it in their non-writing hand.

Picking a Bottled Ink

Ink should always be chosen by color preference, not by brand. You should only use ink that is designed for fountain pens, and you should NEVER use India Ink. India ink contains a lacquer that will seize the mechanism in a fountain pen and cause permanent and irreversible damage. If you choose to use bright colored inks, such as pinks, purples, and reds, use them in a dedicated pen. In other words, pick a pen and use that color only. Bright colored inks have the tendency to stain the barrels and converters of fountain pens.

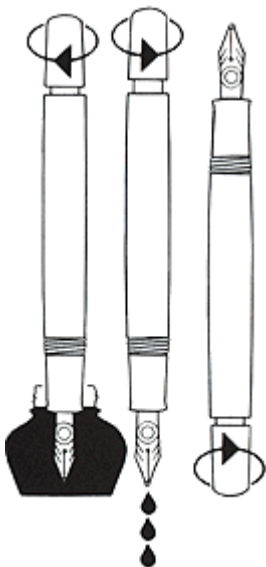
Some ink varieties we prefer would include:

Aurora - Black or Blue

Private Reserve - Lake Placid Blue, Midnight Blues, or Fiesta Red

Waterman - Purple or South Seas Blue

These ink choices are consistently less problematic and require low maintenance.



Filling A Fountain Pen

Cartridge

Cartridges for fountain pens come in a variety of shapes and sizes. Some brands, such as Parker, Waterman, Aurora and Lamy use full-sized cartridges, cartridges that fill the entire barrel of the pen. Most other fountain pen brands including Mont Blanc, Cross, Visconti and Delta, use mini cartridges. When using a full-sized pen that requires a mini cartridge, you should drop one cartridge, narrow side down, into the barrel, and plug the other cartridge into the nib. This piggy-back system serves two purposes: you have a spare cartridge when your pierced cartridge runs out, and it creates a snug fit for the cartridge you are using.

Converter or Piston

A pen that fills from a bottle requires a little more care than a cartridge pen; however, it is not as intimidating as most people would think. Most converters operate using a piston system. This requires a knob to be turned counter-clockwise to move the piston forward, immersing the entire nib into a bottle of ink, and then turning the knob clockwise to draw the ink. Once the converter or reservoir is filled, you should lift the nib out of the ink, turn the piston knob counter-clockwise to bleed out two or three drops, turn the pen nib up, and then turn the knob clockwise

again. Bleeding the pen will allow for the normal expansion of liquid that occurs with a fountain pen. When cleaning the nib after filling your fountain pen, you should always use a paper towel. You never want to use tissue or cotton clothes, as they will leave lint in your nib, and you may experience ink flow inconsistencies.

Clean Up

Your Fountain Pen

Absolute Best:

Remove the Nib from the feed and section. Place all parts including cap in an ultrasonic cleaner. Then take the filling system apart and lubricate all moving parts. Brush clean the feed and then reassemble the pen taking care to set the nib square on the feed.

Hint: By leaving the cap on the back of the pen and cleaning it last, you can use it as a guide to reposition the nib in its original Slot or key.

Note: Most modern converters and pistons can be disassembled with the right tools and "know how." This does not include a hammer.

Best:

In the store we use an ultrasonic machine (jewelry cleaner) with a mix of three parts water to one part sudsy ammonia. Do not let the water get hot. Do not clean any part of the pen that is celluloid in this solution. It is advisable to rinse before and after with cool tap water. Allow all parts that will come in contact with ink to complete dry.

Hint: In a pinch Windex with Ammonia works as a cleaning solution straight out of the bottle.

Note: I have seen jewelry cleaners in stores like K-Mart or Wal-Mart for as little as \$25.00 in the Jewelry Department

Second Best:

Cleaning your Fountain Pen

There is a regular monthly maintenance procedure that you should follow with your fountain pen. It is recommended that you flush your fountain pen with cool, clear water on a monthly basis. The easiest way to flush a pen that has a converter or piston is to draw clear water as you would ink, expel the water, and repeat this until the water coming out of your pen is clear. It is a repetitive process that may take a little while, but it is necessary. You should also do the flush whenever you change ink colors or brands. You can also remove the converter clean that part on its own by filling and emptying, then run cool water from the tap through the back of the pen blowing through it until the ink color is gone. Remember to blow dry or air dry the nib section and converter completely.

Hint: When you blow through the pen keep your head deep in the sink to avoid splatter.

If the water you expel from the fountain pen doesn't lose color after persistent flushing, and your pen and it is **NOT** made of celluloid, you may use a mix of 3:1 solution of water to sudsy ammonia. Fountain pen ink is ammonia soluble and this solution will break down any dried ink that cannot be loosened with plain water.

Be advised: Celluloid is also ammonia soluble, so **DO NOT** use this solution if your pen is celluloid. When in doubt, just use the water.

Hint: Clean out the cap of the pen too, If you don't and ink is present, it might flow down on the nib and make the pen appear to be leaking even if the ink appears to be dry on the inside of the cap. Moisture (evaporation) from the ink in the pen will hydrate the ink in the cap after filling and capping.

Best Of The Best

(I suggest you do this once a year or on extremely clogged pens)

Getting the pen back to square one option.

Let me clean, inspect, adjust the nib and lubricate the pen for \$15.00 plus \$6.95 shipping and insurance. I can usually get them shipped back to you via UPS in one or two days.

I am factory trained by Montblanc, Aurora, Visconti, Omas and Delta. I have a good working knowledge of Pelikan, Lamy, Stipula, Waterman, Parker and several other brands.

Hint: Send in several pens to amortize the shipping cost.

Note: If you break the pen it is your problem. If I break it, it is still your problem, but it costs you far less because I have to pay to fix it. After all, at that point I am the one who made the mistake, not you. I do not want to make it seem that stripping down a pen causes them to break, but stuff happens.

Your Hands

When it comes to getting ink on your hands, there are several options that you have to remove it. Amodex is a product available on the market that will remove fountain pen ink from skin and many fabrics. It has a lotion consistency that is gentle on your skin, and works like a dream! Soap and water is always an acceptable way to remove ink from hands. It may require some scrubbing, depending on the water resistance of the ink. In a pinch, when neither Amodex nor a sink are available, spritzing your hands with a little Windex will also help to remove the ink. As previously mentioned, fountain pen ink is ammonia soluble, and Windex has enough ammonia to remove the ink without having other solvents that would damage your hands.

Fountain Pen Storage

Filled fountain pens should always be stored nib up, as they would be in a shirt pocket. You should never store a fountain pen nib down...GRAVITY WORKS. Filled fountain pens should never be stored for an extended period of time. When you fill a pen, consider it a commitment to use it. Storing a pen that is filled with ink could cause the ink to dry in the pen, and create flow problems and possible piston damage.

If you plan on storing your fountain pen for an extended period of time, you should always empty the pen and flush it before putting it away. This will ensure that the barrel is clean and there is no ink inside that will lock the piston and create a problem that may need a professional repair.