FOUNTAIN-PEN CALLIGRAPHY PRACTISE
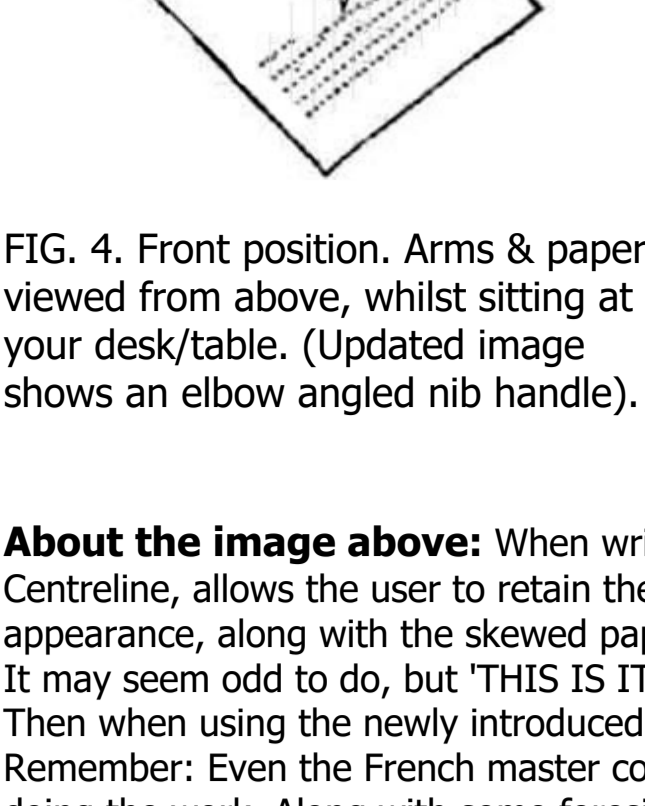## SETTING UP A CALLIGRAPHY WORK AREA.

To help you get set up & eliminate any pitfalls during practise or finished work. This next section will show you just how to master your own calligraphy.

(Extracted image from the Spencer family series of books).

FIG. 4. Front position. Arms & paper viewed from above, whilst sitting at your desk/table. (Updated image shows an elbow angled nib handle).

How To Tips: Summary for good results.
Expecting results without covering the groundwork, is like the saying 'go to work on an empty stomach'. So for safe & well finished work, 2x methods for guidelines are needed:
1. Always use a sheet of A4 5mm square graph tracing paper, as your stencil to create smooth writing.
2. Printout the angled guidelines page, & with 2x small paper clips, attach both sheets together. Turn the A4 sideways (to landscape), use this for all writing exercises.
Scan the finished piece (800dpi), & clean up the page. With 2x finished page-files create a professionally written A4 page.

About the image above: When writing Spencerian or Copperplate with the traditional Elbow Handle & a Dip-Nib, the concept of the Rodeo-Centreline, allows the user to retain the sense of uprightness when doing the required ITALIC stroke angle. This maintains the ITALIC angled appearance, along with the skewed paper sheet angle.
It may seem odd to do, but 'THIS IS IT'.
Then when using the newly introduced Omasonova angle holder with a Zebra G Fountain-Pen, the control of the pen is made with similar results.
Remember: Even the French master copperplate, Jean Larcher, drew up the work area in pencil, with both the horizontal & angle guidelines, before doing the work. Along with some foresight into what the finished artwork, with flourishes would look like.
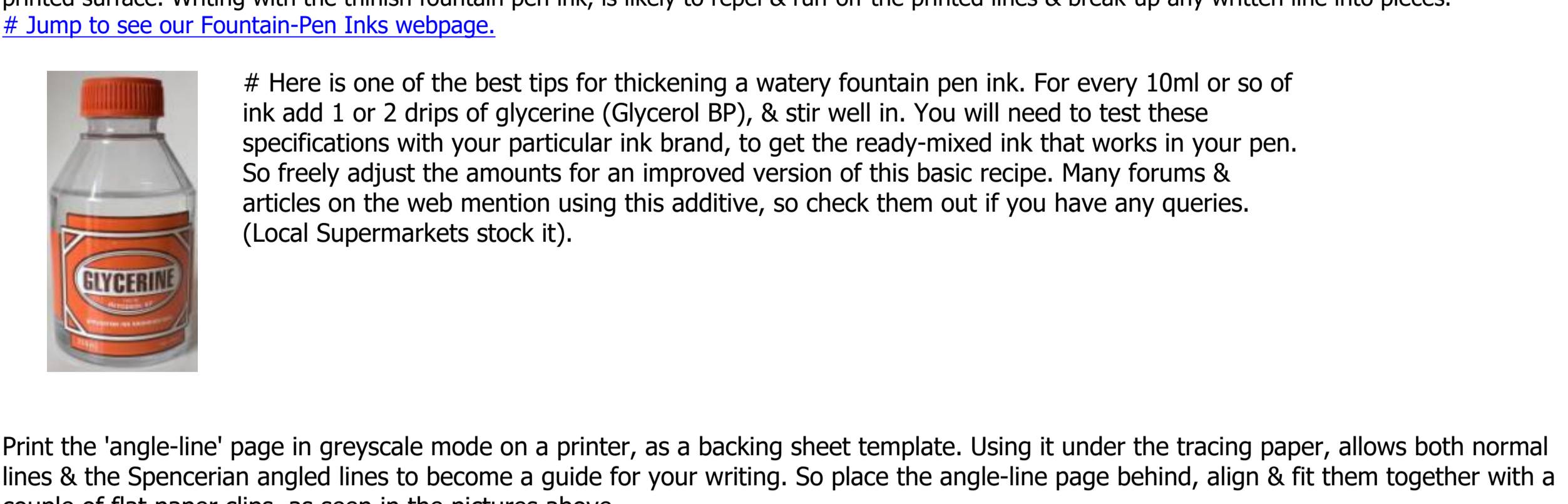

1. The 2 template pages. 2. Using 2 paper-clips. 3. The angled page viewed to upright, for practise.

SKEWING THE TEMPLATE-PAGES ON THE DESK/TABLE.
Using the angled lined lines as if upright, automatically corrects the writers ITALIC style lettering. It means that you do your calligraphy, on an angle, as shown in image 3 above. So that, although your eyes see letters as if upright, when it is viewed as a finished piece, all italic angles are perfectly the same, throughout the completed work. If using the A4 tracing page as recommended, be sure to write on the non-graph-printed back-side, not on the graph-printed surface. Writing with the finnish fountain-pen ink, is likely to repel & run-off the printed lines & break-up any written line into pieces.
Jump to see our Fountain-Pen Inks webpage.
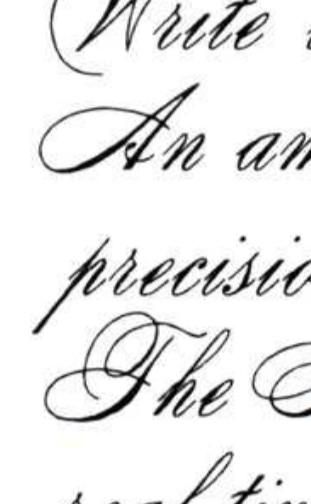
Here is one of the best tips for thickening a watery fountain pen ink. For every 10ml or so of ink add 1 or 2 drips of glycerine (Glycerol BP), & stir well in. You will need to test these specifications with your particular ink brand, to get the ready-mixed ink that works in your pen. So freely adjust the amounts for an improved version of this basic recipe. Many forums & articles on the web mention using this additive, so check them out if you have any queries. (Local Supermarkets stock it).

Print the 'angle-line' page in greyscale mode on a printer, as a backing sheet template. Using it under the tracing paper, allows both normal lines & the Spencerian angled lines to become a guide for your writing. To place the angle-line page behind, align & fit them together with a couple of flat paper clips, as seen in the pictures above.
(Spencerian angle-line page for printing found in:

CopperplateGuidelines-5mmLandscapeVertical5-InPortraitFormat.jpg

Download this file, saving it to your disk & print it out on an A4 size page. Keeping the original image size & ratio the same, so as not to distort the angles of the lines.)
Along with using the 'skewing' of the page for writing on, you should also use the A4 pages sideways for practise work - in 'landscape' mode, this allows a lot of words to be written across the page, without running out of width of available paper. Typically 8 to 10 words can be written per line. As this section is about 'Spencerian' calligraphy, as taught by P.R.Spencer & sons, in their more than adequate books. You will find all of the reasoning behind how & why this style is done as it is, down to the minutest detail. Even the reasons why? for the creation of the letters basic shapes.

A TEST PAGE TO COMPARE EARLIER & LATER VERSIONS OF YOUR WORK
This image uses the computer font Antique-Spencerian, freely downloadable from the web, for those who get by with a computing solution, & don't mind cheating their own creative abilities.
Use of this font to write up the following sample text, is what could be called perfect Spencerian letters. Even though the spacing/joinings are a little disjointed.

Here is a sample of my latest handwritten version, after learning & practising this style using the same basic wording. This was after 3-4 weeks of learning original Spencerian, with as many free hour functions as I could manage, incorporated into this result.

The following are extracted illustrations from a few of the original Spencerian series of books. The scanned images have been cleaned-up, as the originals are on very old paper with many stains, etc, also a few modern-updates have been added. To get the complete series, visit the IAMPETH website to download them for your own study:

The vertical hight of the small 't' is the unit, called a Space, for measuring both the hights & widths of letters. The hights & widths of the letters are shown on this chart by the spaces between the dotted lines upon which the letters are formed. Thus: the small 'i' is one space in hight & two spaces in width. The small figures about the letters indicate the proportions of elements of which they are formed. Thus: small 'u' is formed of principles 2, 1, 2, 1. The letters, capital as well as small, may also be measured by the number of spaces contained in their hights & widths. Thus: capital 'A' is seven spaces in hight... [text continues]

These Capitals are ¼ of an inch in hight for medium-hand writing.
They may be reduced to ⅛ in condensed writing, or, when made with whole-arm movement, be enlarged to ½ of an inch by horizontal writing.

OPTIONAL STYLES OF CAPITALS.

SUGGESTION. After the learner has been well trained in executing the "Standard" forms of the capitals, which are given on the basis of all the others; he may be allowed to exercise his own individual taste, by choosing from the "Optional" styles hereby that he prefers and desires to adopt for use; he will thus have opportunity to develop, in an orderly way, an individuality in his Chirography.

Variety of Spencerian Capitals.

Varied selection of Principal's

Variety of Spencerian Capitals.

The Spencer Family recommended books: Three books stand out from the number published by the Spencer Family, as follows.
1. "Spencerian Key to Practical Penmanship", by H.C.Spencer.
2. "New Spencerian Compendium of Penmanship", by the Spencer's sons.
3. "Theory of Spencerian Penmanship", by Spencerian Brothers.
A download of these books (freely available on the web), will complete an advanced study of this extraordinary development in traditional European Copperplate.

ADVANCED SECTION: Making it all a 'Working Model'

Many terms used here, are things a more advanced calligrapher & desk-top-publisher (DTP) would know, you may need some help with a few understood basics, to get up to speed, over unfamiliar word terminology.

There are added benefits from using the terms listed here, for your learning cycle. The same equipment & setup, can be used for professional finished work. Without the old dip-pen techniques of having to rub out pencil guidelines after the ink is dry, & many other old time foibles - like re-ink loading a dip pen.
All that is needed is a scanner attached to a computer, & some good image-processing software like 'Photoshop' or other similar software.
Beginning with a text file, representing the correctly spelt wording for the project is needed. So there is no confusion when writing a layout, i.e:
1. The width of written words per line, generally of 8 to 10 words, for comfortable reading.
2. The correct use of dots, commas & diacritics, etc.
3. The Capitals used & a general allowance for their space-eating, flourished nature.
4. With the whole piece (say, a letter) having it fully laid out, balanced with the written lettering.
5. When doing the lettering, make the angled line as the 'centreline' & as if upright on the desk/table.
So, here are some specific details to understand, if a sideways-turned A4 page is written-up & folded into the finished page...
At 5mm for the x-height of lower case letters, Spencerian uses 5x of these 5mm horizontal line spaces for all lettering in the alphabet, including capitals, ascenders & descenders. Whereas, on one just line. A 12 or 13 line finished A4 page, will be the result of correctly transcribing a prepared text file, into lettering on this A4 page. Just 2x of these finished pages will make up a fully formatted A4 portrait page. Making 24 to 26 lines of writing total. This can include any heading inserted at the top, if the said letter needs it.
Now the hand-written lettering original will be approximately 27cm wide & only after processing in the image software, can it be reduced, you should retain the ratio sizes, for a perfect reproduction. When reducing, as to not distort the overall image, to fit the WIDTH of an A4, which is up to 21cm wide maximum.
From the colour scanned image, at say 600dpi. The resulting (.bif) image file can use the image-processors 'magic-wand', & select all blue or green coloured lines, used in the printed graph squares, then delete them. With the same deletion of any left over light grey areas, between the now removed printed squares. This will leave the raw black lettering, for any corrections & deletions needed to make the page 'look good'.
Conversion from color to greyscale is recommended at this point, for a smaller saved filesize. Both original pages can then be joined to make a single A4 portrait page, which image can be adjusted & printed out. After adjustment the ratio of the original image, to fit well onto the A4 page. Then it can easily be used for printing, web use, or whatever use you may have for it.
The use of the guidelines when writing, that is both horizontal & angle guides, & the angle guidline page. Should make very presentable lettering, with the correct horizontal & italic slant, that show off nicely styled words. See the previous handwritten finished work.