



THE ULTIMATE BRUSH PEN GUIDE

5 types of pens every hand
lettering beginner should know
(and where to find them)

Ensign insights





hello!



Hello, I'm Sarah! I'm a hand lettering artist and creator of EnsignInsights.com where I teach hand lettering. Through creative hand lettering, my goal is to share my love of life to inspire creativity as a source of happiness. I'm passionate about helping you create hand lettering that feels like your best self.

♡ sarah ensign



sarah@ensigninsights.com



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1) SMALL BRUSH PENS

one

Why small? They're easier to control than large brush pens. You get a feel for how to work with the flexible tip and how to give it heavy or light pressure. There are so many small brush pens and honestly, I haven't found a small brush pen that I don't like.

Here are the small brush pens you may want to know about:

Monami Plus Pen 3000: You might like these if you like a really firm tip. I love these! They're really cheap and they have lots of colors. They are actually a fine tip that's a little flexible.

Tombow Fudenosuke: These have a hard tip and soft tip which can be great to explore which you like best. It's a personal preference. The hard tip comes in several colors. Or you can get the two pack with hard and soft. These are also waterproof so you could do watercolor on top of them.

Pentel Touch brush pens: If you like a softer tip, these are for you. If you have no idea where to start, get these small brush pens! I recommend starting with these first. I've heard from a lot of beginners who love these. There are 24 colors and they're waterbased so you can use them like watercolor.

Marvy Le Pen Flex: These ones have a really nice, flexible brush tip and I recommend them to anyone who is ready to try a new small brush pen. The colors are deeper tones so that might be good if you don't love the bright colors.

Zebra Funwari: These ones kinda feel like they're in between the hard and soft tip. But they feel pretty similar to Pentel or Tombow. I haven't found these ones to be as easy to find but they do have some unique colors.

A few others I like: Sakura Pigma Professional brush pen, Kuretake Bimoji, Kuretake Zig Cocoiro, Pilot Fude Makase, Kuretake Fudegokochi

Shop them here!

monami

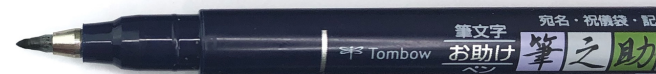
monami

tombow

pentel

le pen flex

funwari



2) MEDIUM BRUSH PENS

two

Why medium? They're easier to control than large brush pens and they have a different kind of bounce than small brush pens. You can start to do some larger lettering but ease into it. These are all great to start with, just get what's easiest where you live.

Here are the medium brush pens you may want to know about:

Kuretake Fudebiyori: These have a really nice bounce and it's easy to find on Amazon for a good price (see page 3 for details). These are great to start with!

Stabilo Pen 68 Brush Pens: These were a more recent find for me but the tip is amazing. It's easy to control and has good flexibility. Definitely great to start!

Faber Castell Pitt Artist brush pens: The tip has a really unique, firm bounce and they're really good quality. They're also water-resistant so they're a little more expensive, but if that's what you're looking for, they're worth the cost.

Edding Brush Pens: These are so nice! The bounce definitely helps you to get good transitions between thick and thin strokes.

Caran d'Ache Fibrato Brush Pens: These are so smooth and the brush tip is so nice. It just feels so good to letter with like the rest of these medium brush pens.

Sakura Koi Coloring Brush Pen: I'm mentioning these in case you like a softer tip. These feel similar to the Kuretake Fudebiyori but they're a little softer. So keep that in mind when you're deciding.

Shop them here!

fudebiyori



stabilo



faber-castell



edding



fibrato



sakura



koi

3) LARGE BRUSH PENS

three

If you love large lettering, you may want more of these. They can be a little harder to control, but they definitely give a different look to your lettering that small brush pens can't get.

Here are the large brush pens you may want to know about:

Karin Markers: Of all the large brush pens, these are one of the easiest to control because they have a firm tip. They are more expensive though so I understand that's not going to work for everyone. In my opinion, these are worth the cost if you're ready to spend a little more. The tip is great quality so it won't fray as soon as others. I also use them as watercolor so that's another way to justify the cost.

Marvy ColorIn Brush Pens: If you love a really chunky look with really thick downstrokes and thin upstrokes, these are probably the easiest to get that look. The way the nib is so flexible in just the right place, makes them great for this style.

Zebra Mildliner Brush Pens: These ones are great! The tip looks like it's a similar size to Tombow dual brush pens, but they feel bouncier to me. They also have a fine tip which is great. The colors are a little milder and really pretty.

Ecoline Brush Pens: These ones are really soft. They're actual watercolor so they're really juicy. If you love soft brush pens, these are the best large brush pens for you. They're a little more expensive but they are good quality.

Winsor & Newton Watercolour Markers: Not the brush markers. Those ones are different and don't work well for lettering. These ones are really smooth and bouncy. They also have a fine tip which is nice. They are a lot more expensive but their ink and brush tip quality is really good. But because of the cost, I maybe wouldn't say these should be the first brush pens you get.

Continued on next page...

karin
marvy
mildliner
ecoline
w&n



3) LARGE BRUSH PENS CONTINUED...

three

Tombow Dual Brush Pens: These are some of the most popular which also means they're easy to find so that's definitely a bonus about these. They have the bullet tip so it's nice to have two pens in one. The brush tip is a little soft and not really bouncy so they take a little more control. They have so many colors and they blend really well. If you try these to start and you notice that you're struggling with them, try another kind of brush pen just to see the difference in how bouncy they are.

Sharpie Stained Fabric Markers: These have the best bounce. They're not advertised as brush pens but they're really good. They're the kind of brush pen that actually helps you get thin upstrokes because they bounce back so well. They are water resistant because they're fabric markers. They only have black and neon colors if that fits with your preference.

Kuretake Zig Brushables: These also have a really nice bounce and they help you get good lettering. They're also water-resistant. I think they may be easier to find in some places but they've been really hard to find for me in the US lately. They have them on Amazon sometimes in smaller sets.

Camlin Brush Pens: These are from India and I found them on Amazon in the US for way more expensive than they are in India. I wouldn't say someone in the US needs to get these, but if you live in India, these are great. They're better than a lot of other cheap brush pens I've tried. They're really soft though and not everyone likes soft brush pens. They are probably most similar to Ecoline brush pens of all the other large brush pens to compare them to. This just goes to show that the brush pens you get depends on where you live.

Shop them here!

Tombow
Sharpie
brushable
camlin



4) BULLET TIP PENS

four

Everyone needs a bullet tip or fine tip pen. A bullet tip is easier to letter with for faux calligraphy. It's just a little bigger which means it's a little more forgiving for faux calligraphy and you don't have to spend as long coloring in the downstrokes. A bullet tip is a good size for monoline lettering that goes really nicely with your brush pen lettering. If you really like smaller lettering maybe you'd prefer a fine tip. Just find what size works for you.

Here are the bullet tip pens you may want to know about:

Tombow Twintone: These have really vibrant colors. They have a bullet tip and a fine tip which is nice to have both when you need.

Stabilo Point 68: These look similar to the Stabilo brush pens but they have a bullet tip. There is also Stabilo Point 88 which is a fine tip. They come in lots of colors.

Monami Live Color: These are similar to Tombow Twintone in that they have a bullet tip and a fine tip. These ones are a recent find for me and I use them a lot.

Other bullet tip pens I like: Papermate Flair, Sakura Gelly Roll gel pens

White gel pens: You may want to have a white gel pen in your collection for adding details. My favorite white gel pens are from Uniball Signo. Sakura Gelly Roll gel pens are good too but Uniball Signo is a little more opaque.

Gold gel pen: My favorite gold gel pens are also from Uniball Signo!

Gold bullet tip pen: My favorite large gold pen is Marvy Deco Color (linked below). It's waterproof so I can use watercolor on top and it's just the right shade of gold.

Shop them here!

Tombow
Stabilo
Monami



5) PENS THAT WON'T FRAY

five

I think it's pretty obvious why you might want these. There's no worry that you are going to ruin them. You won't. You can practice heavy and light pressure without worrying about figuring out how to get a really thin upstroke. They are more firm so they're easier to control. There are other brush pens that won't fray as soon as others but these ones actually won't fray. They're also cheap and you can use them on any paper. That's why these are great for beginners to start with.

Here are pens that don't fray that you may want to know about:

Crayola Broadline: This is what I started with because as a teacher, I had a bucket of these in my classroom. You don't have to worry about ruining them because they're cheap. They're also firm enough to help you with upstrokes.

Crayola Supertips: These are just smaller than Crayola Broadline. It's a personal preference which one you'll like better. I recommend trying both.

Mala Markers: These are from Ikea and they're a similar size to Crayola Supertips. If you can't find Crayola markers where you live, just look for a kid marker with a squishy tip. There's Maped Color Peps or Faber Castell DuoTip and many others.

Staedtler Triplus Highlighters: These are also called textsurfers. These were very surprising because they're highlighters but they have a flexible tip! They come in pretty pastel colors. Currently, I cannot get enough of these markers.

Shop them here!

crayola



supertips



mala



staedtler



♡ BONUS PEN TIPS ♡

bonus

How do you know what a good brush pen feels like?

Brush pens should bounce back into place which helps you get better upstrokes because it's working with you instead of flopping around like a fish. Your brush pen can actually do most of the work. If your pen is staying bent instead of bouncing back, it might be making it harder for you.

I've heard from so many people who told me that they thought they couldn't letter because they struggled to get thin upstrokes but when they tried a better pen, it solved it for them. All of the pens I have recommended will help you feel good about your lettering instead of making it harder.

The last type of pen you should know about are **watercolor brush pens**.

I wouldn't say everyone needs them. Mostly if you want to get into watercolor lettering or if you like lettering with a real brush with real bristles like a paintbrush. They can be harder to control because the individual bristles will not want to be controlled and will do their own thing. I really like the brushy look it gives which you don't really get with brush pens.

There are several different brands and a lot of off-brands that make these. It can be confusing when you think you're ordering a felt tip brush pen and receive bristle brush pens. I used to have a few brands but now I just have my ColorIt watercolor brush pens and my Kuretake Zig Clean Color Real Brush pens.

Once again, I wouldn't say beginners need to have them, but I get a lot of questions about these so I think they're important to know. Since they have individual bristles, they won't fray so if you don't mind them, they're great for lettering on watercolor paper.

real
brush
watercolor
brush pen



WHERE TO SHOP FOR PENS

shops

It can be really overwhelming to see all these pens that someone has when you have no idea where to even buy any of them. To help you, let me share with you my 5 favorite places to buy pens online. I know it depends on where you live, these are from my experience in the US.

My 5 favorite places to buy pens online:

Amazon: There are lots of pens that really are the best price from Amazon and it's really convenient so I always check there first. I have an organized Amazon list that I've created for you to help you find the pens I recommend. [Shop here!](#)

Jetpens: They have all kinds of pens and stationery and I really like that they have an option to get pens individually. This is how I got certain individual colors of Kuretake Fudebiyori. Another thing they do that I love is they have different sampler packs so you can try a few different pens. [Shop here!](#)

Blick: Blick has all kinds of art supplies from watercolor to oil painting to brush pens. I like to get individual brush pens. I have gotten some individual Ecoline brush markers as well as Winsor & Newton watercolor markers. [Shop here!](#)

Michaels/ Hobby Lobby/ Joann: These are the craft stores that I always check. They don't always have specialty pens but they have a lot of brush pens and other art supplies. You can normally find a sale or coupon to use. I like going in-store too, but I normally check online before if I'm searching for a certain pen.

Tokyo Pen Shop: This is another one that just has really fancy specialty pens and stationery, not necessarily other art supplies. It's really good. This is where I bought the Zebra Mild Liner brush pens in the new colors. I couldn't find them anywhere else at the time. [Shop here!](#)

Honorable mention: Etsy. It's not my first place to search but I do search there when I get really desperate. There are lots of shops that sell specialty pens that you can't find in other places. That's how I found the Pentel Touch brush pens in brand new colors before they were available anywhere else. [Shop here!](#)

There are many other options but I hope this helped! I also want to remind you that the way you create right now is exactly where you need to be. Even if you only have one type of pen. You're doing a really good job. I'm so glad you're here!

♥ sarah