

# How to Make a Quill Pen

## Feathers

The feather must be a strong flight feather from the wing of a bird. These feathers 4 inches or 12 inches and have a ¼ tube. You can purchase turkey or goose feathers from a craft store, found in the woods or a farm. Look for a section of transparent tubing beneath the plumage.

## Preparing the Feather

Soak in water overnight.

Things you will need:

- Clean, dry, small loaf pan or empty can
- Sand or dirt for the container
- Oven set to 350 degrees (to heat sand)
- Craft knife
- Fine grit sandpaper

Fill the soup can with sand. Place it in the oven at 350 degrees Fahrenheit for 20 minutes.

Remove the can from the oven. Place the tube of the feather into the sand as far as it will go.

Leave the feather in the sand until the sand cools completely. You will notice that the transparent tube shrinks slightly and gets harder, and the color becomes opaque.

Using the craft knife, scrape some of the plume off the tip of the feather. Only remove enough to make room for the writer to hold the pen comfortably.

Gently sand where you scraped until it is smooth.

## Cutting the Nib

Things you will need:

- Felt-tip marker
- Craft knife
- Cuticle scissors
- Thin piece of wire
- Tweezers
- Tempera paint or ink

Hold the feather in your hand and decide where the top of the pen should be. This will depend on the angle and curve of the feather and how it fits most comfortably in your hand. Place a dot in this spot, approximately 1 inch from the tip of the feather.

Lay your feather on your work surface with the tip pointing away from you. Put your craft knife on the dot, and make a steep, angled cut away from you. Make the angle of the cut 45 degrees or less.

Inspect the inside of your tube. If there are any interior membranes, remove them with a thin wire and tweezers.

Cut a slit in the bottom center of the opening. Place your craft knife inside the opening, and gently score it a few times until you cut a slit.

Shape the nib. Shave the sides of the opening so that they are slightly curved and the opening tapers towards the tip. Use cuticle scissors to cut a sharp, angled tip that looks like the tip of a fountain pen.

### **Test Your Point**

- Dip your pen in ink or tempera paint and draw strokes on practice paper. Depending on your results, you may need to fine tune the shaping of your nib.
- If the paint spills out of the pen in messy blobs, then the edges from the outside to the tip haven't been cut properly. They should be gently curved, not straight, creating a flat surface area at the tip. Straight-cuts allow too much paint to cling to the surface area of the tube, releasing a blob when the pen touches the paper.
- If the tempera paint splatters in many different directions, then the shape of the tip is too narrow. Slice a bit off the tip to make a wider base.
- If the pen doesn't write at all, or the letters fade as you write, check the slit to make sure it is cut properly. Dip the pen in the paint and wipe away the excess with a clean cloth. If you can still see some paint where the slit is, then it is fine. But if this area doesn't hold on to some ink, then the slit isn't fully cut. Use your craft knife to fully cut the slit.
- If your pen isn't writing, another possible problem is that the two tines on either side of the slit are not even. Look at them under a magnifying glass, and make sure that they are perfectly even with each other.

[Making a Quill Pen](#) – YouTube video

[Writing with a Turkey Quill](#) - YouTube video