EDUCATION

Big Meas Lettering Guide

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Mastering the Art of Bold Typography: Your Complete Big Meas Lettering Guide

In the vast and vibrant world of typography and hand lettering, few names resonate with as much authority and raw, urban energy as Big Meas. Renowned for his distinctive, bold, and intricate style that bridges the gap between traditional graffiti and high-end calligraphy, the Big Meas lettering guide has become a staple reference for artists, designers, and hobbyists alike. Whether you are a seasoned muralist looking to refine your throw-ups or a complete beginner picking up a marker for the first time, understanding the principles behind this iconic style can transform your approach to letter structure, flow, and visual impact.

This comprehensive guide will walk you through everything you need to know about the Big Meas approach to lettering. We will explore the foundational techniques, the essential tools required, and the mindset needed to create letters that command attention. From understanding the importance of consistency in weight and width to mastering the subtle art of connections and negative space, we will break down each element step by step. By the end of this article, you will have a clear roadmap to developing your own variation of this powerful style, allowing your work to stand out in a crowded visual landscape.

Who Is Big Meas and Why Does His Style Matter?

Before diving into the technical details, it is important to understand the context behind the name. Big Meas is not just a lettering artist; he is a pioneer in the field of modern calligraphy and graffiti lettering. Emerging from the East Coast graffiti scene, he distinguished himself by developing a style that is simultaneously aggressive and elegant. His work often features exaggerated structures, dramatic weight shifts, and a calligraphic fluidity that sets it apart from more rigid, traditional graffiti forms.

The importance of the Big Meas lettering guide lies in its emphasis on fundamentals. While many lettering guides focus on copying specific alphabets, Big Meas's philosophy encourages artists to understand *why* a letter works. He teaches you to see letters as living, breathing structures rather than static symbols. His approach stresses that every line, curve, and serif must serve a purpose. This focus on deliberate design makes his techniques incredibly valuable for anyone looking to move beyond simple lettering into the realm of expressive typography.

The Signature Characteristics of a Big Meas-Inspired Piece

What exactly defines a letter created in this style? While the term "Big Meas lettering guide" can encompass a wide range of variations, there are several consistent hallmarks that artists aim to replicate:

- Extreme Weight Contrast: The most obvious feature is the dramatic difference between thick and thin strokes. Downstrokes are frequently heavy and commanding, while upstrokes are hairline thin.
- Vertical Compression and Horizontal Elongation: Letters often appear compressed top-to-bottom with pronounced horizontal extensions, giving them a grounded, solid feel.
- Sharp, Angled Terminals: Instead of rounded ends, strokes frequently end in sharp, chisel-like cuts or deliberate slants.
- Aggressive Negative Space: The spaces inside and between letters are treated actively, often creating arrow-like or triangular forms that push the eye forward.

- Dynamic Baseline and Cap Height: Letters rarely sit on a perfectly flat line. Instead, they often rock or tilt, creating a sense of motion and rhythm across the word.

Understanding these characteristics is the first step. The next step is learning how to achieve them with consistency and control.

Essential Tools for the Big Meas Lettering Guide

You cannot create a Big Meas-inspired piece with just any pen. The tools you choose directly impact your ability to achieve the signature weight variation and crisp edges. Here is a breakdown of the recommended equipment for practicing this style.

For Practice and Sketching

Before you commit to a final piece, you need tools that allow for easy erasing and refining.

- Pencils: A mechanical pencil (0.5mm or 0.7mm with HB or 2B lead) is excellent for initial structure. For softer shading and sketching, a standard wooden pencil (2B or 4B) works well.
- Grid Paper or Dot Grid Notebooks: Maintaining consistent proportions is crucial. A grid provides a visual guide for height, width, and slant.
- Erasers: A kneaded eraser is ideal for lifting graphite without smudging, while a plastic eraser handles heavier corrections.

For Inking and Final Artwork

To capture the true essence of the Big Meas lettering guide, you need tools that can create both razor-thin lines and fat, solid fills.

- Pilot Parallel Pen: This is arguably the most popular tool for this style. Available in nib sizes of 1.5mm, 2.4mm, 3.8mm, and 6.0mm, it creates consistent, crisp lines with perfect ink flow. The 3.8mm version is a great starting point.
- Copic Markers: For broad strokes and blending, Copic markers (especially the broad chisel tip) are industry standard. They allow for smooth layering and shading.
- Speedball Pointed Nib and Holder: For the hairline thin strokes and delicate flourishes, a pointed flex nib (like the Hunt 101 or Zebra G) dipped in India ink gives you the extreme flexibility needed.
- Flat and Angle Brushes: For larger works, a flat brush or a lettering angle brush (often used in sign painting) allows you to create the sharp, chiseled ends characteristic of the style.

Tool Type	Best Use Case for Big Meas Style
Pilot Parallel Pen	Consistent strokes, straight lines, sharp terminals
Flex Nib Pen	High contrast, hairline thin upstrokes, expressive curves
Chisel Marker	Blocky letters, fills, shading, and speed
Flat Brush	Large format, painted pieces, blending edges

Foundational Principles of the Big Meas Lettering Guide

Now that your tools are ready, it is time to turn to the actual construction of letters. Many beginners make the mistake of trying to draw the "outline" of a letter first. In the Big Meas method, you build letters from their core strokes.

Understanding the Skeleton

Every letter in this guide starts with a basic skeleton. Forget about the thickness for a moment. Focus on the path that the pen will travel. For a lowercase 'n' or 'm', this means a simple curved arch. For a 'l' or 't', a straight vertical line. Draw this skeleton with a very light pencil or hairline pen. This is the backbone of your letter.

Applying Weight and Pressure

This is where the magic happens. Using your chosen broad-nib tool, follow the skeleton you created. Apply heavier pressure on downstrokes (strokes moving toward you or downward) and lighter pressure on upstrokes (strokes moving away from you or upward). The key is to do this in a single, fluid motion. Do not scribble.

- Downstroke: Push the pen. Apply pressure. The nib will open and lay down a thick line.
- Upstroke: Pull the pen. Lighten the pressure. The nib will close, producing a thin line.

Practice this basic rhythm: thick down, thin up. Repeat until it becomes muscle memory. This single principle is the foundation of the entire Big Meas lettering guide.

Mastering the 45-Degree Angle

Another non-negotiable principle in many Big Meas tutorials is the consistent angle of the pen nib. While there is some freedom for personal flair, a 45-degree angle relative to the baseline is the standard for achieving the classic sharp serifs and even weight distribution. Hold your pen so that the flat edge of the nib is at this angle. Every time you lift and place the pen, it should return to this same angle. This consistency creates unity across all letters in your piece.

Step-by-Step: Constructing Letters Using the Big Meas Method

Let us apply these principles to a practical example. We will break down a simple word, "BOLD," which is fitting for the style.

Letter 'B'

1. Skeleton: Draw a strong vertical stem. This is your main downstroke. Add two loops (top and bottom) to the right side.
2. Thick Strokes: Identify the downstrokes. The vertical stem is thick. The left side of the top loop (as you come

down) is thick. The bottom curve (the bowl) is thick on the downward motion.

3. Thin Strokes: The upstrokes connecting the loops (the right side of the top loop and the right side of the bottom bowl) should be hairline thin.
4. Terminals: Cut the top and bottom of the vertical stem with a sharp, flat angle (matching your 45-degree pen angle). The ends of the loops should also be cut sharply, not rounded.

Letter 'O'

1. Skeleton: A simple oval shape.
2. Thick Strokes: The left side of the oval (the downstroke) is thick. The bottom-right curve (as it starts moving down again) can also carry weight.
3. Thin Strokes: The right side of the oval (the upstroke) is thin. The top of the oval is also thin.
4. Terminals: The top and bottom points of the 'O' should be sharp, almost like a football, not round like a circle.

Letter 'L'

1. Skeleton: A vertical downstroke and a horizontal base stroke to the right.
2. Thick Strokes: The vertical stem is extremely thick. The horizontal base starts thin on the bottom and gets thicker as it moves right (if you are using a broad nib, the right side of the base will be where the nib pushes down).
3. Terminals: Cut the top of the vertical stem sharply. The end of the horizontal base can have a sharp upward flick or a clean, squared-off end.

Letter 'D'

1. Skeleton: A vertical stem on the left and a large curved bowl on the right.
2. Thick Strokes: The vertical stem is thick. The top curve of the bowl going down is thick. The bottom curve coming back up and connecting to the stem is thick.
3. Thin Strokes: The right-most point of the bowl (the upstroke) is thin.
4. Terminals: Sharp top and bottom on the vertical stem. The bowl should have a sharp point where it rejoins the stem at the top and bottom.

Practice these four letters repeatedly. Focus on maintaining the same pen angle and the same level of pressure control. Once these feel natural, you can apply the same logic to any letter in the alphabet.

Advanced Techniques in the Big Meas Lettering Guide

Once you have mastered the basic strokes and letter construction, you can begin to add the flair and complexity that makes this style truly stand out. The Big Meas lettering guide is not just about the letters; it is about the entire composition.

Connecting Letters with Flow

Unlike print writing, this style often benefits from connecting letters seamlessly. Look for opportunities to extend a hairline from the end of one letter to the beginning of the next. For example, the thin upstroke at the end of an 'O' can flow directly into the

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