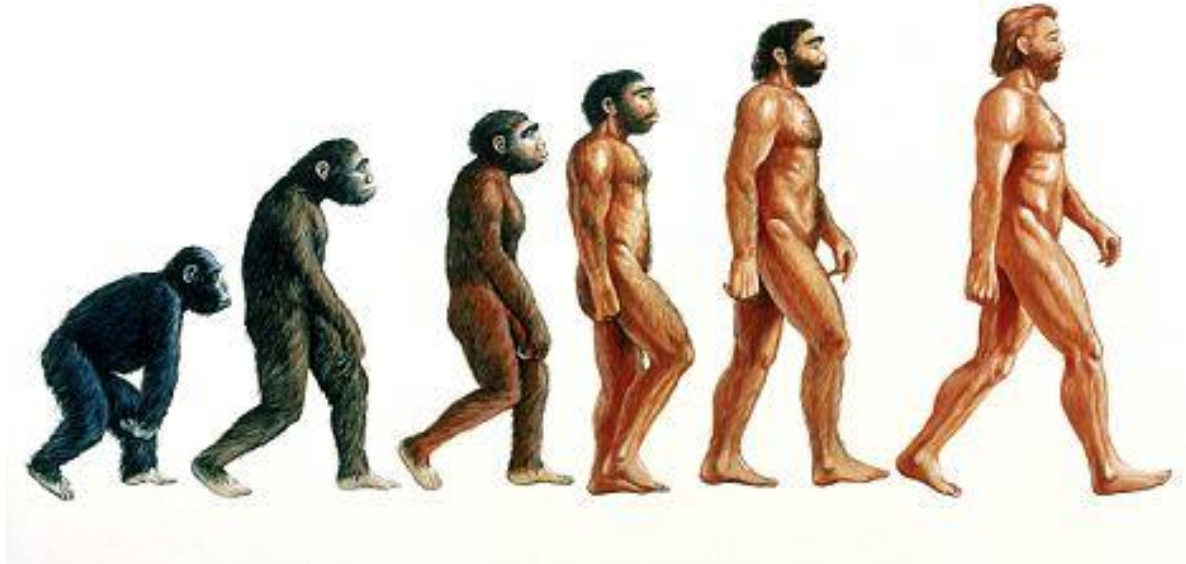


# Creating Constructed Writing Systems

—

Trent Pehrson

# Introduction

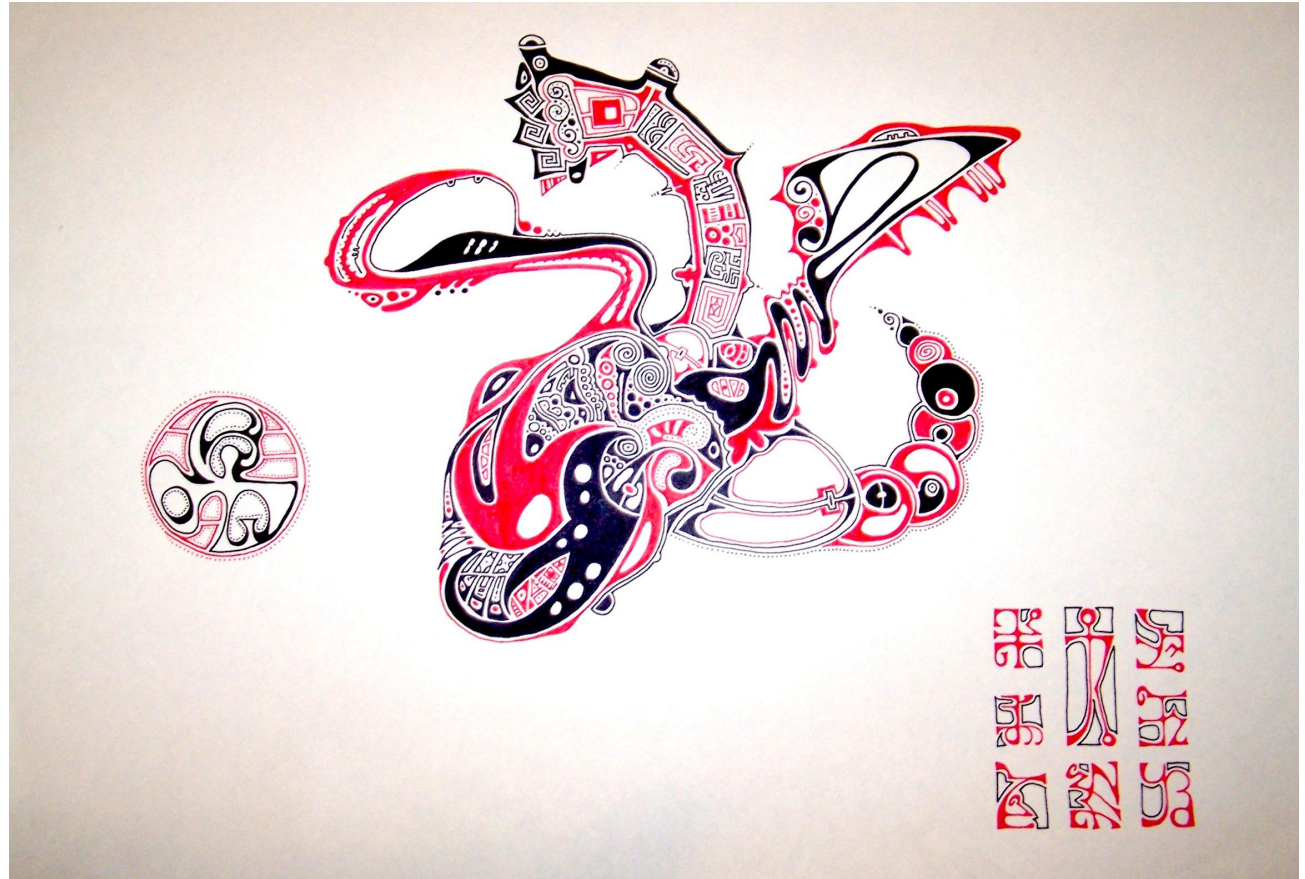


# Narrowing It Down

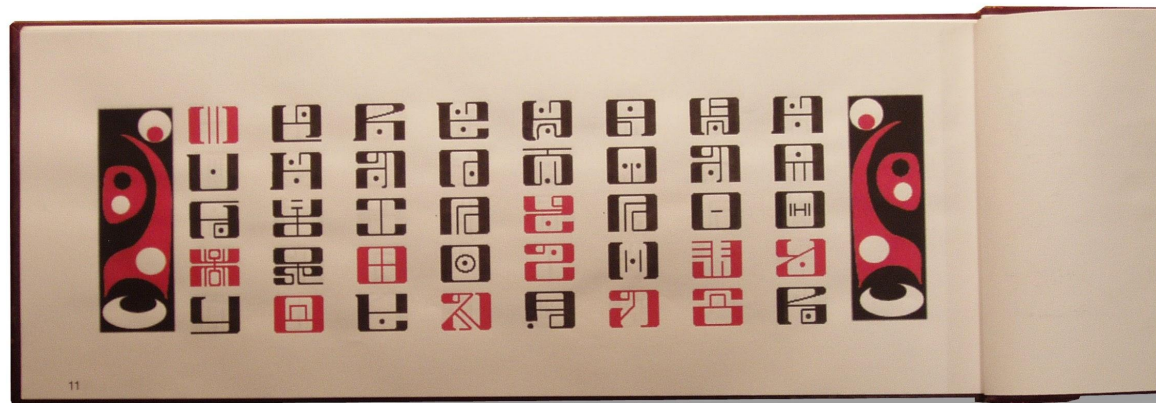
Asking questions about the constructed culture helps to provide parameters for a constructed writing system:

- What kind of beings exist in the culture?
- To what kinds of tools and media does the culture have access?
- What role(s) does writing play in the culture?
- What world view(s) exist in the culture?
- How widespread is literacy in the culture?
- What elements of the culture are inherited or borrowed from other cultures?

Example 1:



## Example 2:



Example 3:





Example 4:



# The Assigned Culture

When we ask these cultural questions within the cultural constraints you have been given for this project, what answers do we get?

- What kind of beings exist in the culture?
- To what kinds of tools and media does the culture have access?
- What role(s) does writing play in the culture?
- What world view(s) exist in the culture?
- How widespread is literacy in the culture?
- What elements of the culture are inherited or borrowed from other cultures?



# Further Practical Questions

Making some structural decisions before designing a writing system will also make things a lot simpler:

- What kind of writing system will I use?
- What writing direction(s), line proportions and text flow will I use?
- How many units will my writing system need to encode?
- What implements, media, and anatomy are involved in writing?
- What cool ideas, or other systems can I draw from?

# Demonstration Activity

We will now attempt to begin designing a writing system making the following assumptions:

- The writing system will be an alphabet.
- The writing direction will be left-to-right in top-to-bottom rows.
- The writing system will encode 30 discrete phonemes.
- A flat-tipped pen, quill, or reed and paper or parchment are used for writing.
- The strokes of western, medieval scripts will be the inspiration for our glyphs.

# How far Can Borrowing Go?

Borrowing does not curtail  
being creative.

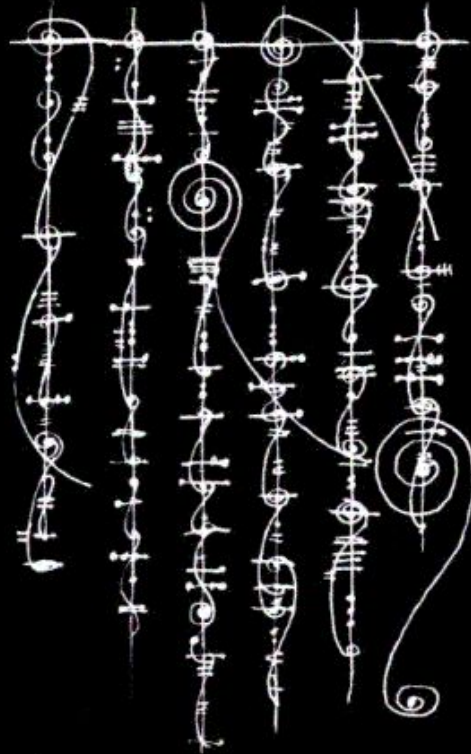




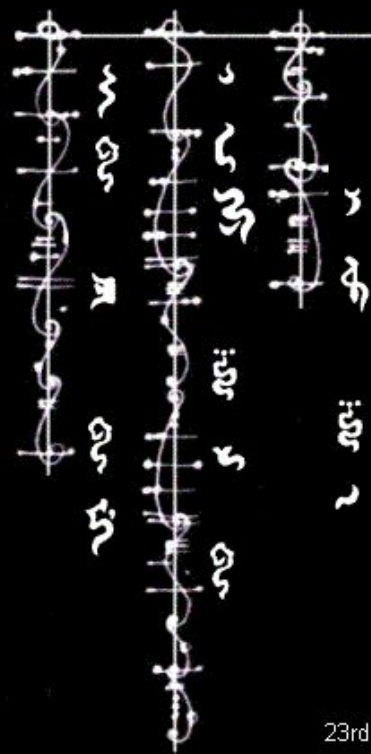
Ancient Vulcan Calligraphy



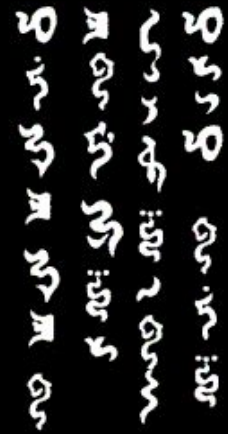
22nd Century Vulcan calligraphy



22nd Century Vulcan printed script



23rd Century Vulcan printed script



24th Century Vulcan printed script



23rd Century Vulcan ship hull script





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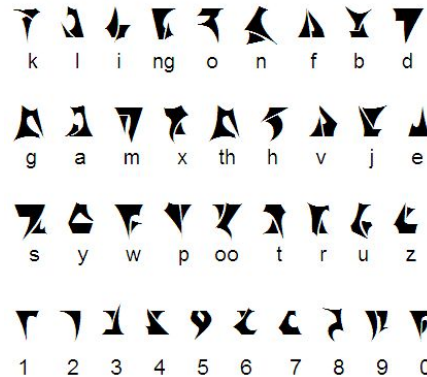
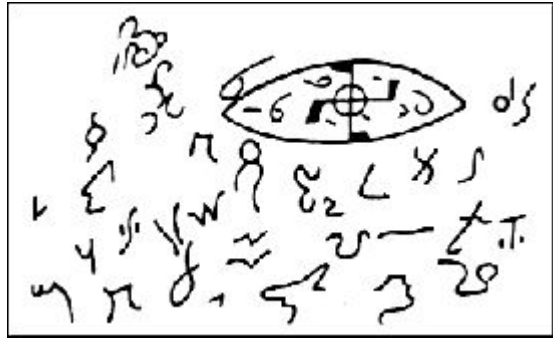


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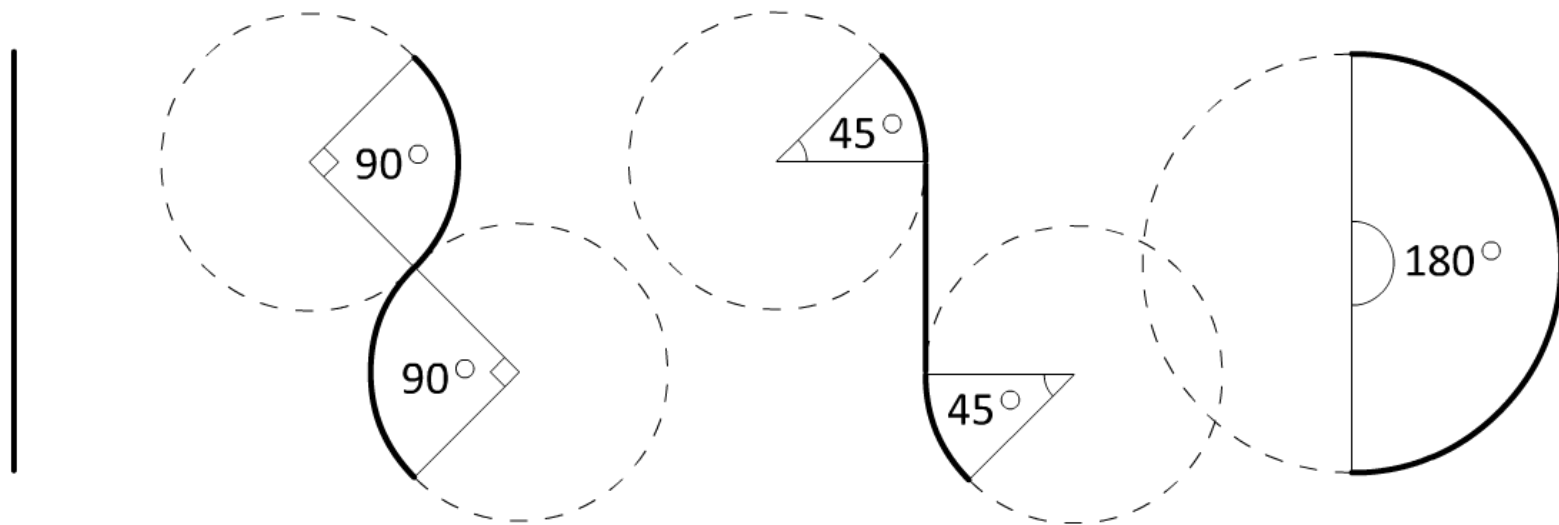


# Step 1: Creating Harmony

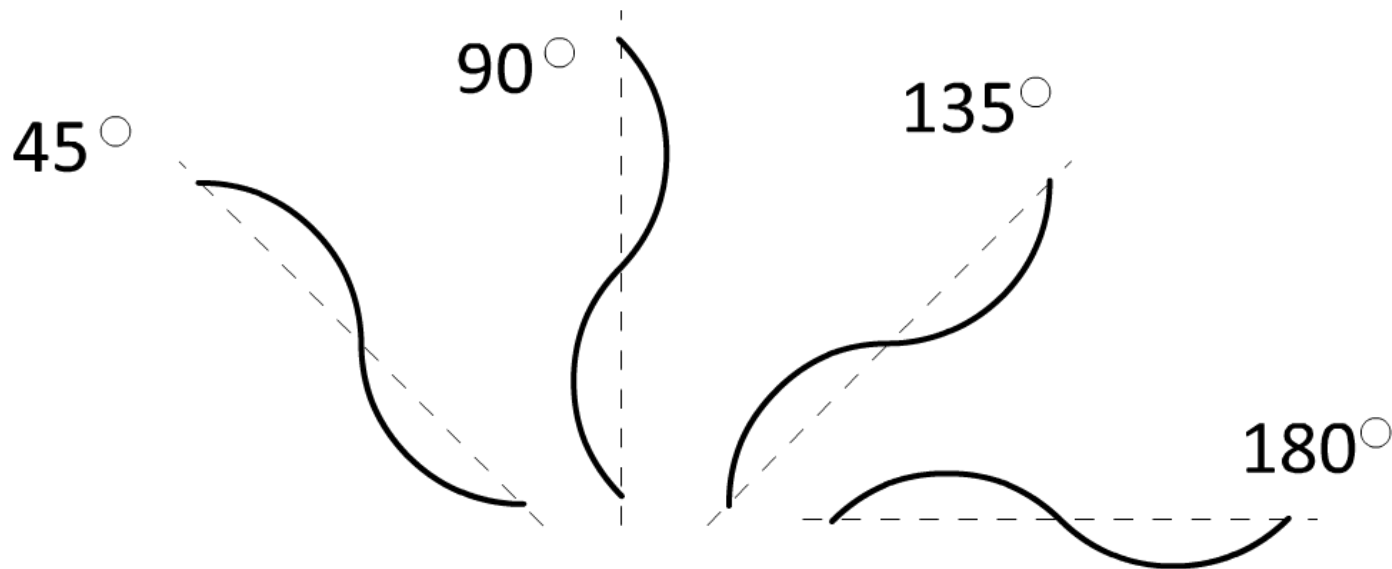
Many writing systems include a kind of aesthetic harmony that gives them cohesion. To achieve this, we will create a small set of graphical forms from which we will construct our glyphs. This will automatically lend harmony to our script. Our base graphical forms will be constructed by combining 4 strokes, 4 pen angles and 4 stroke angles.



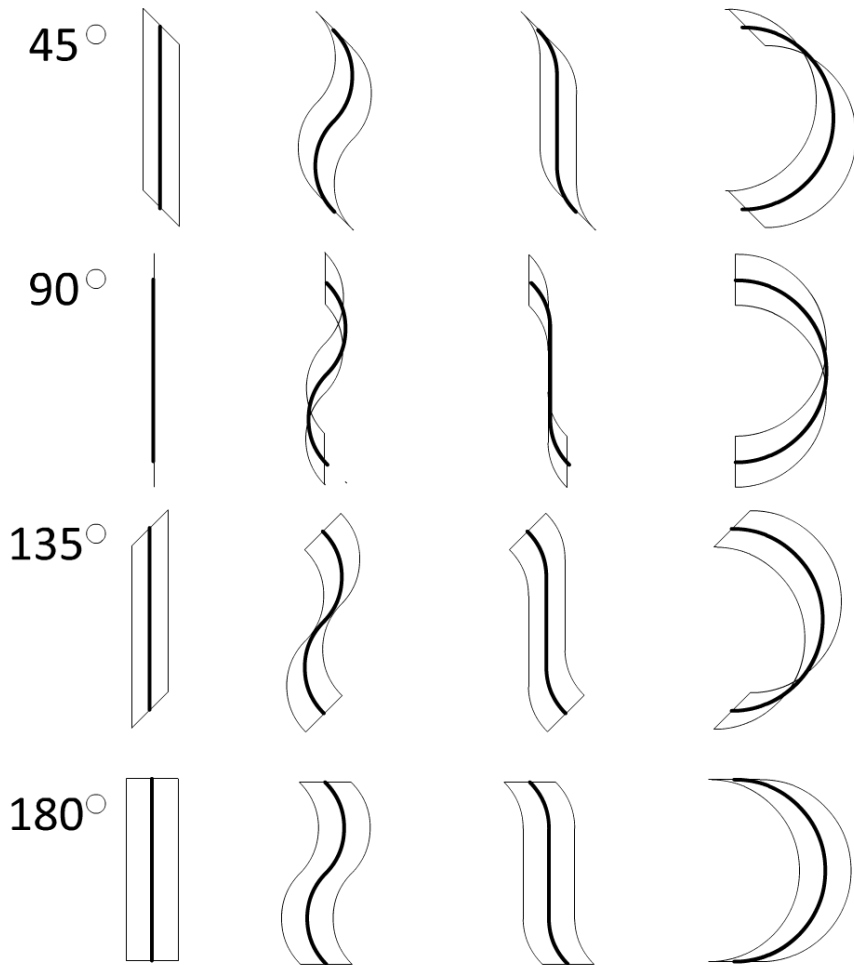
# The Four Strokes:



# The Four Stroke Angles:

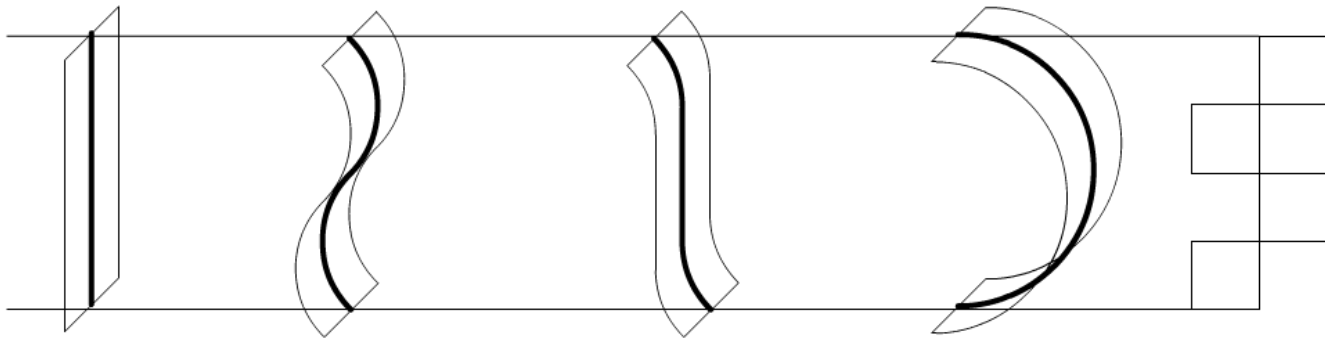


# The Four Pen Angles:



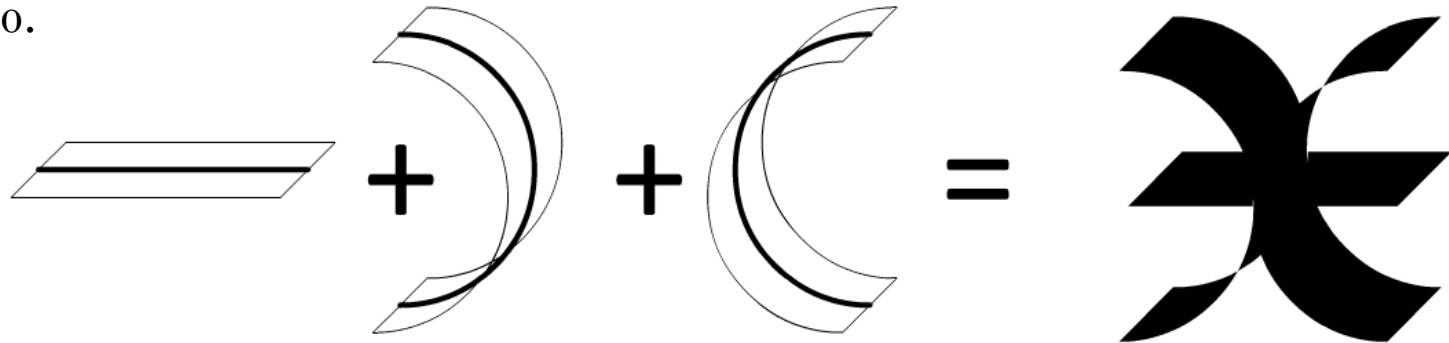
## Step 2: Experiment with Base Forms

Using various combinations of the 4 strokes, 4 stroke angles, and 4 pen angles, create a series of base forms. Use a regular pen or pencil to draw the line of the stroke at the desired stroke angle first. Then place the center of the pen tip on the line and execute the stroke at a given pen angle. Height and width of the finished constituent should be about 4 or 6 pen tip widths. When finished, circle the forms you like best:



# Step 3: Experiment with Combined Forms

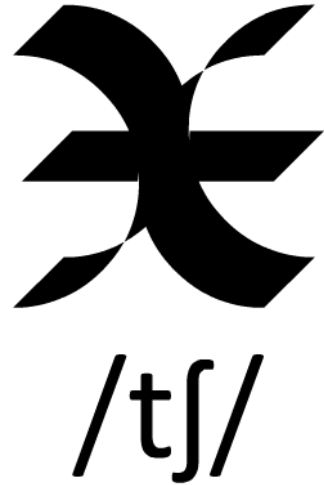
Using your favorite base forms from Step 2, create glyphs by combining them in groups. Use exponents to determine approximately how many base forms you will need to combine to make enough glyphs. For example, we want to make 30 glyphs. If we select 6 base forms, we will have enough to make 36 glyphs if we use every possible pairing of two of those 6 base forms. It is better to have too many possibilities than too few. Circle the glyphs you like and strike the ones you don't as you go.





## Step 4: Assign Units to Glyphs and Test

Once you have circled 30 glyphs that you like, you can assign phonemes to them. This may not be a completely random thing. You may want to consider that many scripts include visual relatedness that correspond to phonemic or other kinds of relatedness. Test your glyphs by writing some phrases. You may see aesthetic problems that aren't as evident when you see the isolated glyphs.



# Thank You for Having me Here!

You are welcome to contact me via email if you have further questions and you are welcome to look at my orthographies for ideas:

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[http://idrani.perastar.com/ISMS\\_orthography.htm](http://idrani.perastar.com/ISMS_orthography.htm)

