

Nib Smoothing Notes

Brian Gray/FPGeeks - 4/27/2013

- Disclaimer - all of the following techniques are for you to decide if you'd like to try them on your pens. Brian Gray and/or the FPGeeks cannot be held responsible for any damage that occurs to your pens as a result of attempting techniques shown during the workshop. That being said, use your cheap steel-nibbed pens first!
- Please note. These notes are intended to accompany the video broadcast. In order to get all of the information as accurately as possible, we recommend that you watch this broadcast in conjunction with these notes. You can find the broadcast at www.edisonpen.com or www.fpgeeks.com. Look for the Tweaks For Geeks broadcast on 4/27/13.
- The most important lesson to be learned is this - ***Actually write with the pen as your first and final diagnosis!*** Your loupe can deceive you in some cases. If you are writing with the pen, and nothing is wrong, ***then nothing is wrong!*** Don't "create" issues because you see something that you ***think*** is wrong. The ultimate test of a good nib is actually writing with it, not what you may see in the loupe!
- Today we will cover nib smoothing, minor tine alignment, and flossing the nib. Within future workshops, we can address issues such as flow, complex tine positions, grinding/shaping, feed issues, etc.
- Smoothing kits that we are using are available from Richard Binder... www.richardspens.com.
- Generally speaking, nib "smoothing" issues are rarely primarily related to actually smoothing the nib. Tine alignment is responsible for probably 95% of all "smoothing" issues.
- Loupe and how to use it.
- Take a look at your nib....



These tines are clearly misaligned when magnified. Without magnification, this is not easy to see. 95% of "smoothness" problems are exactly what you see above. The tines do not usually need smoothed, just realigned.



The alignment on these tines are pretty good, but the left tine is just a touch high. This will probably not effect the nib, however. This looks pretty good, but I would still bump the right tine up just a touch.



These tines are just about perfectly aligned. This nib is probably perfectly fine. I would prefer to see a little tiny gap at the bottom, however.



My opinion is that these tines are ideal. The alignment is perfect, with a very small gap on the bottom.

- When to call a professional? Splayed tines, spread tines, baby's bottom, bad slit, poor contact with feed, etc.
- So let's align the tines. Only use your fingers/fingernails to do this. Do not use tools. Push the high tine down first and check alignment. If needed, you can lift the low tine, but keep pressure on the body of the nib to avoid separating the nib and the feed from each other.
- After doing this, you should already notice a difference in smoothness. Now we can work the nib on smoothing paper if needed.
- Sandpaper - 2000 grit or higher silicone carbide (wet/dry). Use for shaping nibs. I never use this for smoothing of any kind. Be careful with this!
- Micromesh - 2400 = Pink. 4000 = White. 12000 = Grey.
I typically use only use 12000 for most smoothing. 2400 is more for shaping. 4000 is for more aggressive smoothing on the way to 12000.
Use care with Micromesh and sharp italic nibs or XF or finer nibs. MM can "grab" the nib, ruining your alignment.
- Lapping Film - 1.0 Micron = Green. .3 Micron = White.
Use the non-shiny side.
1.0 is for more aggressive smoothing on the way to .3 Micron.
.3 Micron is usually my very last step with smoothing a nib.
Make your final touches with .3 Micron very light if you want extra smoothness.
- When smoothing a nib on these abrasives, do figure 8's, and also roll the nib side to side, and up and down. Don't make the mistake of thinking that smoothing for a real long period will keep making the nib smoother and smoother. After about 15-20 seconds of properly smoothing the nib, you will have achieved the limit of whatever grit you are using.

- Remember that the smaller a nib tip, the more difficult it is to get it super-smooth. Broad nibs are generally easier to get to be super-buttery smooth. If you are trying these techniques on an XXF or smaller nib, maybe leave it to the pros.
- Flossing Tines. Use either a very thin brass shim, or the thinnest gauge from a feeler gauge set.
- When do you floss tines? Look with magnification. Do you see debris in between the tines? In the slit? Paper fibers caught? If so, floss.