

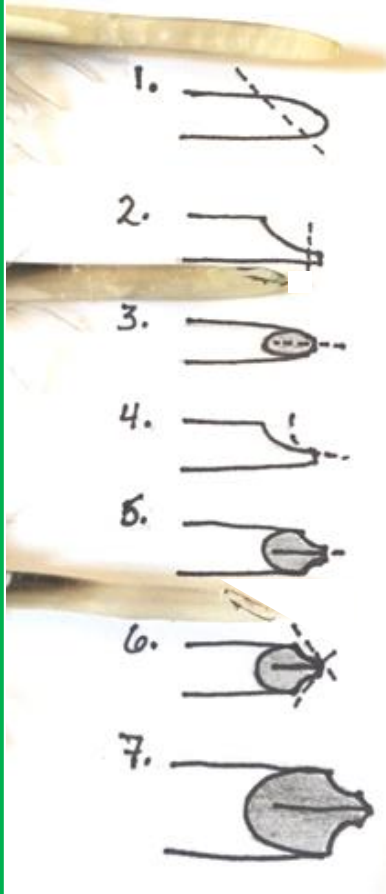
Quill Pen

Ages
9 & Up

People have always found uses for all sorts of bird feathers. We use the soft downy feathers to keep us warm or make a cozy feather bed. The colourful ones decorate our homes and clothing. For centuries the big strong wing and tail feathers have been used as writing tools. The feather or quill pen is easy to make and fun to use.

Almost all wild birds and their feathers are protected under the Migratory Birds Convention Act. You may use wild turkey feathers or find a feather from a domestic bird, such as chicken, duck or goose. Colourful dyed feathers are available at craft shops. If you do not have a large feather, a drinking straw will make a fine pen. Create a paper vane/web (see parts of a feather photo) for your straw.

- ◆ Choose a feather with a quill (calamus) in good condition. If you wish, your feather can be gently washed in warm soapy water and left to dry.



- ◆ Look closely at the quill. It is oval shaped. Work with the quill so it is deeper top to bottom and narrower side to side.
- ◆ Use a very sharp utility knife to make your cuts. Work on a cutting board. First cut (1) is from top to bottom.
- ◆ Square the tip with cut (2). Cut a slit in the quill as in (3). You can stop here for a basic quill pen and see "Loading the Quill!".
- ◆ Follow the cutting diagram to (5) for a finer tip and all the way to (7) for a professional quill.

Loading the Quill

- ◆ Be sure to clean out any stuck debris from inside the quill with fine tweezers. Dip just the tip (nib) of your quill into your ink (See **Tips**). Wipe the nib on the edge of the ink bottle to prevent blots and blobs.
- ◆ With the slit side of the nib touching the paper start writing. It is best to have your paper propped up at a slant of about 25 degrees so the ink flows more slowly. This is why monk always worked on slanted desks while writing.

TIP: Water based craft paints work well for "ink" when cleaning up is a consideration. You can make your own beautiful (permanent) inks. Acorns, beet root powder, black walnut hulls, berries, coffee, flowers, tea, and more can be used. Simple step by step illustrated directions at [Natural Inks](#) and more ideas at [Hobby Farms](#)

