

Apostil Script

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I. Design Background

An apostil is a marginal note: something hand-written, and usually added after-the-fact. Apostils may be scholarly commentary written in the margins of ancient religious folios, or perhaps hastily-scrawled warnings added to the pages of a magical grimoire. Apostils written on ancient manuscripts often look cramped or rushed, and may be written in shorthand; they may have noticeably different handwriting, or even a different color ink, than the main text on the page.

This is why we created Apostil Script. Apostil Script is the handwriting of cryptic notes hastily scratched into the margins, adding mystery and intrigue to your world's scrolls and other artifacts. The main lettering of Apostil Script is based on hand-written notes found in the margins of work by Marsilio Ficino, written in the 1400's. However, we have also added several optional features that you can use to add to the cryptic and ancient feeling of your text: the "long S" (popular from the 8th to 19th centuries), so-called "insular lettering" (popular in the British Isles between the 7th and 12th centuries), and Tironian shorthand (used by monks and religious scribes from the 1st century BCE until the 17th century CE). Although based on the Latin alphabet, Apostil Script has extensive coverage of unusual and accented letters, allowing you to transcribe anything from Old English to (Latinized) Vietnamese.

The Apostil Script font is a perfect way to enhance props, costumes, and accessories associated with ancient magical texts and the wisdom of elder civilizations. Whether you are cosplaying Edward Kelley at an upcoming convention, or creating clues for adventurers to find in your next RPG campaign, let Apostil Script inspire you.

II. Design Details

A. Apostil script conjures a vision of a scribe sitting in front of parchment with an elegant quill... but who is in a hurry! The strokes of the lettering resemble a traditional flat nib ink pen, but they also look cramped and slightly rushed. The font has a small x-height, meaning that lowercase letters are much smaller than uppercase, with very long ascenders and descenders. Here are the uppercase and lowercase letters:

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z

B. Apostil Script is meant for mysterious and ancient manuscripts, and is designed for use with more than just English language text. Although based on the Latin character set, the font includes a wide range of archaic and specialized characters. It therefore can be used to write, for example, the opening lines from Beowulf:

Hnæt. We Gardena in gearðagum, þeodcyniga, þrym gefrunon, hu ƿa
 æpelinas ellen fremedon. Oft Scyld Scefing sceapena preatum,
 monegum mægþum, meoðsetla ofteah, egsode eorlas.

Apostil Script can also be used to write the opening lines to 1984 by George Orwell, translated into Vietnamese:

Đó là một ngày tháng tư sáng lạnh, vừa lúc đồng hồ điểm báo mười ba
 trăm. Cầm nút xoắn ngực để mong tránh gió ác, Winston Smith
 lướt nhanh qua cửa kính của khu Nhà Chiến Thắng.

As you can see, the rushed, cramped style may not be your first choice for writing long paragraphs of information; but it is perfect for adding a small *apostil* in the margin!

C. Throughout the middle ages, monks and other scribes were taught Tironian shorthand for quick notes or taking dictation. The Apostil Script font implements some of these shorthand characters as discretionary ligatures. (We sadly have not implemented all of Tironian shorthand characters, since over the many centuries that it was being used it amassed literally thousands of characters!) Compare this text:

Can you quote an amount that is perfect, better, or merely preferable
 in contrast with the previously named price?

With the same text using Tironian shorthand (as discretionary ligatures):

Cã ƿo gte ƿ amunt that is pfect, ƿtter, or mrelly pfeple in ƿtpt with
 the pvidly ned price?

You can easily turn these ligatures on or off, and most programs even allow you to select each individual occurrence, and decide whether you want to use the normal lettering or

the Tironian shorthand character. They add a little mystery and that "medieval writing" feel, but they also definitely force the reader to do a little more work!

Two shorthand characters have additional meaning, beyond simply being contractions for character combinations. First, the Tironian shorthand for "et" (1) was an abbreviation for "and," and so is also mapped to the ampersand character (&, Unicode U+0026). Second, the short-hand symbol for the letters "con" (ʎ) were also used in isolation to mean "not" or "against," and so it mapped to the "not" symbol (¬, Unicode U+00AC).

D. There are two archaic letters that have been phased out to contemporary English, but that can be found frequently in older writing and give any text a medieval flair. Unlike Tironian shorthand, there are fairly systematic rules for when these rules appear. As a result, Apostil Script implements them as standard ligatures that appear by default any time their rules are satisfied. (Note: Although these letter substitutions happen automatically, most programs will let you select any substitution and revert it to "normal" letters if you prefer.)

Long S is well known, and appears at the beginning and in the middle of words. The S at the end of a word is always the "standard" short S, and a double-S is always written as a long S followed by a short S. Some examples of short S versus long S:

<i>bus</i>	<i>mystic</i>	<i>stick</i>	<i>Paradise</i>	<i>Session</i>
bus	mystic	stick	Paradise	Session

Insular G is less well-known, but for a while was used in the British Isles to differentiate between the hard and soft G sounds. Some examples of Carolingian (standard) G versus insular G:

<i>get</i>	<i>edge</i>	<i>Egypt</i>	<i>egg</i>	<i>mixologist</i>
Get	edge	Egypt	Egg	Mixologist

Both of the above substitutions will happen automatically by default in most applications, but they also can be easily undone, usually either by selecting and hovering over the text or by finding a menu for "OpenType Features."

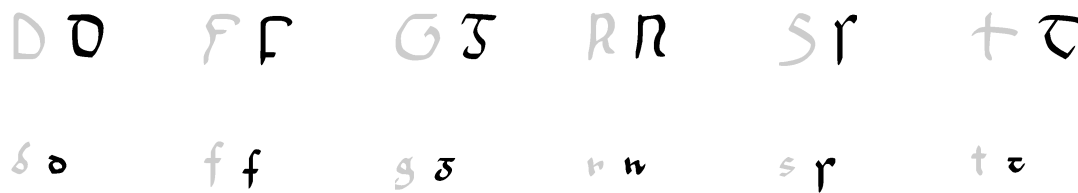
This sentence is a little less legible, because of these edgy letter substitutions!

This sentence is a little more legible, without these edgy letter substitutions!

E. In the middle ages, the region that would later become the British Isles developed a number of alternative letter forms called Insular Script. It began as a form of script for religious writings, but over time expanded to be used in any number of important documents.

Insular G, mentioned earlier, is the only form that had systematic rules associated with when the letter appeared. The other insular letters were purely a stylistic choice on the part of the scribe. In some texts you can find two different forms of a letter being used even within the same word! Presumably they were chosen for purely aesthetic reasons.

Apostil Script implements these letters as “contextual alternatives” so that, in most design and publishing applications, you have the freedom to select them in your text on a case-by-case basis. The Insular letter variants available in Apostil Script are:



One of the reasons medieval manuscripts can be difficult to read, even if you know Latin, is that the “r” looks so much like our standard “n,” and “s” looks like our standard “r.” If you are specifically interested in creating artifacts that are so ancient they are difficult to read, this feature may be perfect for you! However, if you are not looking for this effect it can easily be deactivated by disabling the Contextual Alternatives OpenType feature.

Consider the same sentence written three times: first with all special features deactivated; second, with only the standard long S and insular G features activated; finally, with all of the insular letter forms activated.

Round in circles we go, riding the edge of successes we never grasp.

Round in circles we go, riding the edge of successes we never grasp.

Round in circles we go, riding the edge of successes we never grasp.

F. Apostil Script also includes several special characters, both standard and non-standard. Some of the standard special characters include various currency symbols:

\$ ¤ £ ¥ ¢ € ₣ ₧ ₨ ₪ € ₧ ₨ ₪

And fractions and mathematical symbols:

5 × (5÷2) × ⅔ = 1 > 1/10

For the most part these symbols look exactly as you would expect, although you should keep in mind the way that the very small X-height of Apostil Script can distort the appearance of any symbols that use a mix of uppercase and lowercase lettering.

III. Implementation Details

The following table summarizes the special ligatures and substitution effects available with Apostil script, and the specific OpenType feature that implements it.

Standard legibility ligatures	liga
Archaic Latin ligatures	liga
Long S and Insular G rule-based substitutions	liga
Tironian Shorthand	dlig
Swash initial capitals	dlig
Optional Insular Letter Alternates	salt