

Hi there!

I hear you want to get better at writing with royal icing.

The good news – anyone with the will can do it.

The bad news – it will take time and practice.

Let's get started and get better together. Practice makes progress.

Writing with royal icing is dependent on: font style, font size, icing consistency, piping tip/size, piping pressure, piping technique. Today, I'll talk with you about how I approach writing with icing. This isn't comprehensive, but it's a great starting point. Once you gain an understanding of how I approach various fonts, you'll be able to apply the same principles to your future cookies, and over time with much practice, figure out what works best for you.



This beginners' writing class is offered to you for free. To continue offering you amazing content, please support the Borderlands Bakery team by making a [Shop](#) purchase, a purchase from [our Amazon storefront](#), or paying what you can via our virtual tip jar on Venmo @borderlandsbakery .

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This is how I personally approach writing. As you get comfortable, you may find you prefer different techniques. If you're a seasoned cookier, you may prefer different techniques from me. I'm not here to delineate what is "right" or "wrong"; simply here to share my experience.

I always tell people that the best thing they can do is print out some practice sheets, stick them into some sheet projectors and practice. You can also pipe directly on your printed sheets! You can find both [full and half size sheet protector sizes on amazon!](#) No wasted cookies. Practicing is also a great way to use up any extra icing you might have. You may also use the sheet protector (or even cello bag) as a way to create [Royal Icing Transfers](#) (see my post on that [HERE](#)). I'm going to run you through a series of examples where I talk you through my approach for writing with icing. My hope is that you'll see a pattern in how I think, and then apply the same approach for attacking YOUR next lettering project.

While you can practice writing on sheet protectors until you're blue in the face, mimicking the EXACT same font on a cookie can be enhanced by a projector. There are some VERY affordable projectors on the market now such as the ones with great reviews on [Amazon](#). Click [HERE](#) for my post regarding projectors. I show you how I angle it for best view of the projection and holy smokes – I am like 3 inches away from the cookie when I work on it. So yeah, get close to your cookie.

What if you don't have a projector? Check out YouTube for some ideas on what you can do: https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=tracing+on+cookies+without+a+projector

I have never used a piping tip while writing with icing. I use my tipless bags and trim the tip to the exact size needed for the project. See how I approach this in [my video](#). Learning how much of your bag to trim off comes with practice, but a starting point is to match up the size of the hole with the width of the thinnest line in your text.

To this day, to ensure consistency in writing, I use a projector. I know people who are able to freehand such as the amazing [@maddiescookieco](#), but not everyone is a unicorn. I adore and respect Maddie, and I didn't tell her ahead of time that I was going to single her out... But going free hand is possible. Some of us have some innate talent, and for those of us not born with it, we have to put in extra time and effort.

Some skills I think you should already have before we get into the technicalities: general understanding of icing consistencies, be comfortable outlining and piping medium-complexity shapes and designs.

Make sure you ALSO watch [our video](#) for a visual demonstration of the techniques described below. It is a huge help to see it in action, in addition to reading.

Also, where to find fonts? Do an internet search for free fonts and you'll get a TON, including dafont.com. But honestly, my most favorite fonts were purchased. You can check [fontbundles.net](#) for frequent deals of popular fonts, and other fun lettering designs you can transcribe onto your cookies! You can also google for something like "Happy Mother's Day typography" and get a good selection of options or purchase from a stock photo website like shutterstock.com . One of my favorite cookie shops such as [Kaleidacuts](#) has a selection of original lettered designs you can use with purchase! In any case, try to give credit where credit is due and ask for permission to reproduce someone else's art when applicable.

Fonts come in two main types—single width (most basic type fonts), varied width (most lettering or calligraphy style fonts).

THIS IS THE SUPER POPULAR RAE DUNN STYLE FONT

And this is what I call a single width font. Depending on the size, you'll want to vary your technique. Have a 20-25 second icing (slightly runnier than toothpaste consistency) prepped and cut your hole size small to begin, making it bigger as needed. The size of the hole you cut should match the width of the font. This depends on how large your text is! If your font is big enough, you can use a drag and drop motion. If the text is really small, you'll get more control if you keep your piping tip barely touching the surface, and simply dragging it across the lettering using very little pressure. PS—the name of this font is The Skinny but I bet if you google “rae dunn fonts”, you'll get a bunch of options.

THIS IS A BIGGER SIZE

SMALLER TEXT, SAME FONT, DIFFERENT TECHNIQUE

With the larger font, I use mainly the drop and drag technique for the longer lines. For small lines such as the horizontal line connecting the two vertical lines on the “H”, I like to place my piping bag almost directly on the cookie. Make sure to clean your piping tip often, by pinching the tip, never wiping, as that will ruin your tip. When the tip is small, the icing dries faster. Any dangling icing can cause your line to come out the piping bag wonky. If your tip is absolutely too small, this can cause your icing to curl as well.

You want to make sure that your consistency is not so thick that it does not adhere to the surface of the cookie—this results in it flaking off when it dries. It also helps to pipe onto a surface that's still tacky (Imagine a flood layer that's been dried for 20 min in the dehydrator, read about that [HERE](#)), or something dried for a few hours at room temp- your detail layer will adhere better that way! Bonus: Your icing will dry faster and shinier.



And to throw it out there, not all fonts need to be written in icing to look amazing. Here, I'm using a [Food Doodler](#) pen for that Rae Dunn style font!

Let's look at a different, but predominantly single-width font like

THIS WEIRD BUT GUTE FONT

IT'S CALLED : GLN HEROPY RESTORE2 (WUT?)

For squirrely, mostly single width fonts like this, I limit my drag and drop—because we have so many of those little dangly things at the end of the text. And lots of abrupt turns. It would work for curly and single “stroke” letters like I, U or W or T, but for like E, B, F, S, I would want to get close and really follow the lines. However, if it's thick enough, I'll start with a drag and drop, then “fill in” the extra space and I show in [the video](#). You can also use a scribe to carefully drag out the dangly bits if your piping tip is cut too wide!

OK so what about SUPER F-ING thin lines?

Like this beauty of a font called Attila Regular?

This is the crazy shit that incredible people like [@downtowndoughto](#) are known for. Clean, super thin lines. I believe Megan also offers workshops and will teach this to you, but here is how I approach these fonts...

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I like to use a combination of methods for swirly, thin fonts like this. I lift, drag and drop for the long strokes, and for the short strokes, keep my piping bag just above the piping surface.

I think the thinner fonts are a bit harder to master than the hand written/calligraphy type fonts. Consistency is always important but this one also requires you to have pretty good control of your icing. Using a super tiny tip (or our [awesome tiptless bags](#)), snip off a bit and start playing around. Make sure your piping tip is always clean to prevent icing curling—pinch the tip to clean (never wiping, as that will ruin your tip over time). Sometimes, you'll get some chunks of powdered sugar or meringue powder and it stretches the tip upon exit, no worries, simply transfer icing to a new bag if your tip gets messed up. Make sure your piping bag doesn't have a seam to impact the icing stream exiting the tip.

Let's start with a larger size word like:

A handwritten cursive word "Congrats!" written in black ink. The letters are fluid and connected, with a large, sweeping "C" at the beginning and a long, trailing "s" at the end.

As I demonstrate in [my YouTube video](#), I drag/drop the curve of the big "C", and part of the "o", but have my piping bag very close to my cookie for the small parts of the "o". I always touch down and/or release my piping bag when there's a sharp change in direction. Once you try both 'distanced' and 'close' techniques, you'll find what you prefer. YOU may not like what I like, and that can only be discovered by repetitions. Again, make sure you clean off your piping bag often.

TBH I would avoid going small with already TEENY TINY lines like this—it would have to be a super thin line (read: small ass hole in the bag), and it would be massively challenging. IF I'm piping a small word with thin lines, I barely apply pressure and gently drag my piping bag across the surface of the icing, tracing the font.

OK, so what about the ever popular "hand lettering" or "calligraphy" style fonts? These are what I like to call variable width fonts.

Like this one?

Notice—if you were writing these letters as you normally would with pen and paper, "down" strokes are thick, "up" strokes are thin. If this is relatively large and thick, I would outline, and then fill in the wider parts as I demonstrate in [my video](#). You can choose to go with 2 consistencies, but I prefer a single, thick as you-can-possibly-get-it-to-still-settle consistency. I call this ATAP - As Thick As (practically) Possible. The consistency is so thick that it will NOT settle without the use of a scribe! This helps to reduce

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cratering—which can also be reduced by getting your freshly detailed cookies in front of a fan or into a dehydrator ASAP. You can also omit corn syrup and glycerin in your icing to reduce cratering (lots to do with surface tension, a whole different topic). Another option is to add some base squiggles to amp up the structural integrity of the icing, as we often seen fellow cookie queen [@corriannes_custom_cookies](#) do! You'll see me use this technique in the Monogram M later for the wide sections.

Pro tip- If your consistency is a tad off and you're getting ripples as you pipe, SOMETIMES, it's possible to salvage by gently dabbing down tips icing of with a SLIGHTLY wet finger.

If we're using the same font but going smaller,

I would change up my technique to pressure piping. PS this font is called KH Mellow Yellow Butterball.

I would apply more pressure on downward strokes (more icing comes out so we get a thicker line) and less pressure on up strokes (less icing comes out, thinner line).

THIS FONT IS CALLED "RAIN ON"

And it's a combo of techniques if the squirrely font plus varied width. However, if we have

ONE

big word on a cookie, I'd outline (maybe add squiggles in the middle depending on how thick the lettering is) and flood to get as much of puff as possible. And of course, get that in front of a fan or dehydrator ASAP to prevent cratering. This same approach goes for large monograms:

M

Some culprits of cratering can be: under-beaten meringue powder/icing, too much corn syrup, too much vegetable glycerin, too much food color, too much flavoring. If you've left your icing sitting around too long your container or piping bag, that can also cause craters because your icing has become to separate and all the air has risen to the top (physics and gravity at work, this is normal). Make sure your icing is mixed well before using for text to reduce chances of craters. I usually dump it out, remix to ensure consistency is still OK, and rebag it.

If you are still getting cratering after trying all these things, time to revisit your icing recipes. To identify the cause of your specific issue, change on parameter at a time, and write down all your results to help with troubleshooting.

IF IT'S A SMALLER VERSION OF THE SAME FONT,

I'm honestly going with varied pressure piping.

Varied width fonts are also common for fancier, hand lettered or calligraphy type fonts and graphics like the following (FYI these are all googled stock images, I don't own them and they are only here for demo purposes):



HELLO
gorgeous



Please watch [this video](#) that we put together for you—basics of writing with icing. It contains many examples of writing and I talk you through my approach for each.

[CLICK HERE](#)

for our video: Intro to Writing with Royal Icing – and please like, comment and subscribe to our YouTube Channel! It helps us so much!

Final words: I know. That was a TON of info. But if we can summarize it, please remember the following as Lisa’s tips for writing with icing:

- As with all forms of cookie decorating, icing **consistency is key** and takes the longest to figure out – please give yourself lots of time and practice to learn this skill.
- As a general rule of thumb—use icing that’s ATAP - As Thick As (practically) Possible. For thinner lines, it should be a little runnier (think 15 second icing vs. like 25 seconds+) so that it can adhere to the cookie surface without flaking off when drying.
- Trim your piping bag tip to match the width of the smallest width of your text.
- For “single width” large letters: drag, let the icing fall behind you and only touch down for sharp changes in direction or when there are tiny lines where it’s hard to control the drag and drop.
- For “single width” small letters: keep your piping bag close to the surface and trace, using very little pressure.
- For “varied width” large lettering/monograms:
 - o If it’s a huge monogram, outline, flood, and get it in front of a fan or dehydrator ASAP to reduce chance of cratering—make sure icing is ATAP!!
 - o If it’s a smaller design, feel free to find what works for you- outline, or varied pressure technique
 - o If using varied pressure technique, it is usually more pressure on the down strokes, less pressure on the up strokes

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- Many lettering designs consist of a combination of techniques.
- Clean (pinch off) your piping tip often to reduce dry-icing clogs.
- What I like may not be what you like. Only practice and repetitions will tell what works for you. Most of us end up combining techniques, and that's great!! You got this!!

All that said, I've put together a variety of writing and general icing practice sheets for you [HERE](#). Each set serves a different purpose, so make sure to read the descriptions! You can even project the text onto your cookie as a guide for future designs! I will continue to add to it over time, and am happy to take suggestions, so please leave them for me below.

Don't forget to check fontbundles.net for amazing font deals. My favorites that I currently own include:

- [This one](#) is a HUGE bang for your buck
- Holiday ish fonts [HERE](#)
- I also own [this one](#) with LOTS of lettering options
- [This bundle](#) contains fonts AND graphics
- My most recent purchase [HERE](#)

You can also purchase graphics and SVG files in addition to fonts on designbundles.net (a sister company of fontbundles.net).

I also use [PicMonkey.com](https://picmonkey.com) for a TON of image editing, graphic creation, etc. .. in fact, I used this almost daily and it is 100% worth it to upgrade your account. They also have a great selection of pre-made graphics to put your own spin on. Great for non-designers like me!

Other website for great instant font generation: <https://www.fontspace.com/>

Now it's time for you to give us some feedback. We want to keep creating content you find interesting/useful, so please leave us a comment in the blog post and/or [the YouTube video](#), and include any put you may have! We fight to keep our website ad-free, so it would mean the world to us if you supported us by sharing this post/[the video](#) on social media and/or by making a purchase from our [SHOP](#). Thank you from the bottom of our hearts!

Here are also other posts that may be of huge interest to you, as they are directly related to tools and techniques used in writing with royal icing:

- [How to use tipless piping bags](#)
- [About Royal Icing Transfers](#)
- [Using Dehydrator for Decorated Cookies](#)
- [My Projector set up](#)