



PHOENICIAN



GREEK



ROMAN

Q

Monkey Business or Knot?

The Q's sound comes from the same place that the K, C and G do, the back part of the throat. The Q has a similar sharp quality like the C and K. The back story on the Q is what I found very interesting.

The Q, is it monkey business or knot? This letter has an interesting origin. In its early inception, some say it may have been symbolic of a knot. Most agree that it eventually moved on to represent a qoph, which was the Phoenician word for monkey. The original glyph was a circle that had a vertical stroke running through its center and extended below the the circle.

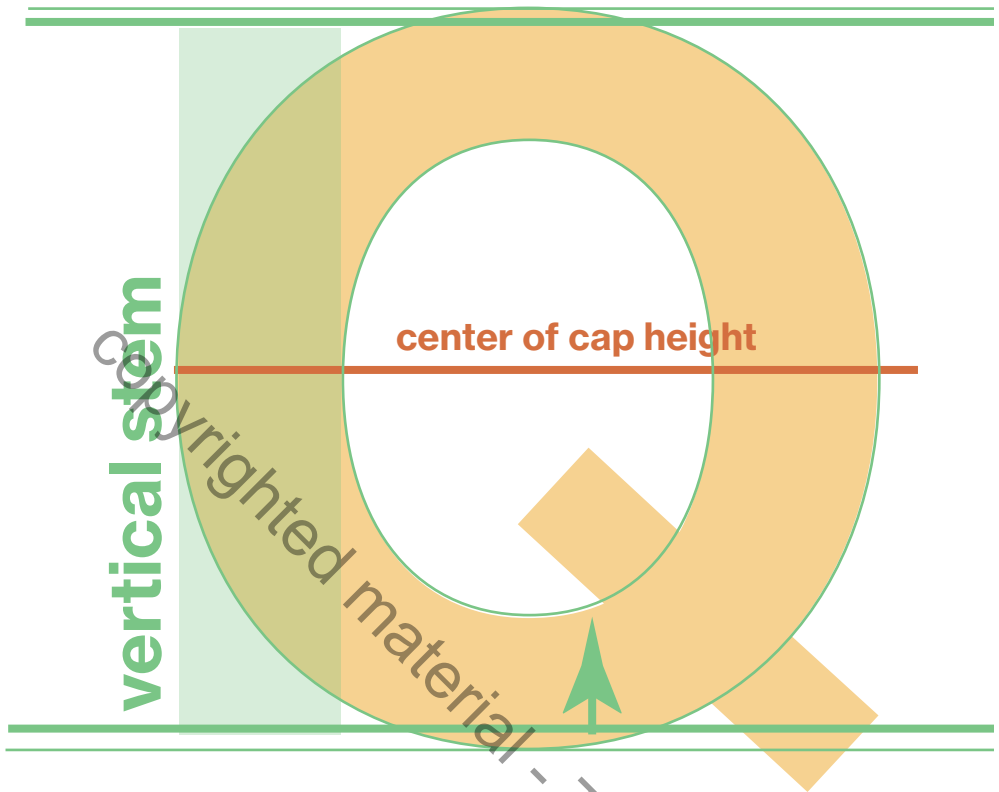
The Greeks updated the name, calling it Qoppa and by cutting the stroke from the circle's center. The Romans yet again tidied up the glyph by treating it more like an O with a smaller tail.

Drawing the Q

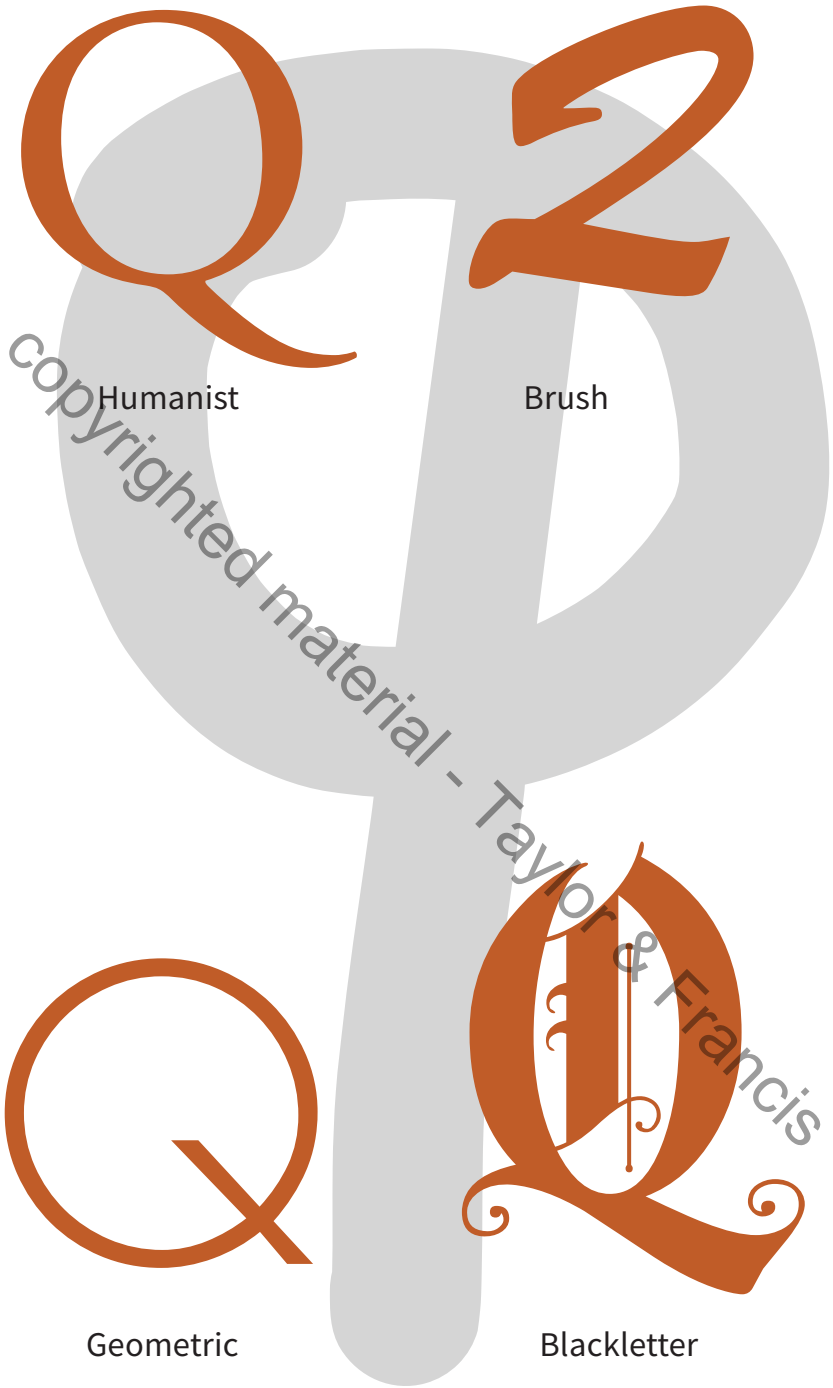
The Q has always been one of my favorite letters, even though it is one of the least used letters in the English alphabet. Knowing that the Q is drawn from a rear view of a monkey, I now have insight into why I find the letter somewhat whimsical.

Obviously, the designer can use the O as the starting point for the design of this letter, but the tail of the Q is where this letter's spirit comes from. Some designs, such as Futura and Neue Haas Grotesk have an angled tail, using the common angled stroke weight. Many serif typefaces, such as Didot, have more of a calligraphic flourish for its tail.

Some brush designs, such as Mistral, use a single, highly stylized stroke that renders the Q with a singular stroke rather than two individual strokes.



- Like the O, the stress on the character is on the top and bottom.
- The letterform also sits slightly below and above of the cap height.
- Note the curved stroke slightly thins where the tail intersects (compared to the O).
- If your design has more of an angular stroke, you may taper the intersection of the tail and O shape. This visually thins out the positive space at the point of intersection.



Humanist

Brush

Geometric

Blackletter



copyrighted material - Taylor & Francis

The lowercase q went through a number of redesigns. The first simplification can be seen in the Latin manuscripts of the seventh century. The tail of the q was replaced with a downward stroke or descender on the right side of the glyph. This was a time saving modification and carried through to today's modern typeface designs