

# Quill

*A letter-writing roleplaying game for a single player*





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# Foreword

I want to thank you for taking an interest in Quill, my weird little game that turned out much better than I ever dreamed. As of writing, Quill has won an Indie RPG Award, is a Platinum seller on DriveThruRPG and has spawned multiple third party products that are all fantastic. Nearly every month I receive an email from teachers in colleges and high schools who are using Quill as a teaching aid, whether it's to make a new subject more palatable or just to help kids get reading.

I've been overwhelmed with the response to Quill and its supplements (see the back of this book) so I wanted to give the rulebook a bit of a refresher and a new lick of paint. So what's changed? Not much, really. I have clarified some rules based on some questions I'm commonly asked, added some new art, layout, and a rules summary, but pretty much everything remains in tact.

For fans who have already played the scenarios, you will notice a few little tweaks to a couple of Rules of Correspondence where the rule didn't make a lot of sense.

Lastly, I just wanted to thank all the Scribes in the Quill community who create new scenarios, blog about their playthroughs and just like to chat Quill. You're all amazing and I hope you like the new version, even if not much has changed.

Scott Malthouse  
June 2018



# What is Quill?



Quill is a roleplaying game of letters for a single player - you. This may sound quite strange for those of you who are already familiar with the concept of a roleplaying game - ones where you gather around a table with friends to tell tales of orc-slaying and delving into ancient caverns. Quill is a different concept altogether, but it remains one in which you, the player, take on the role of a character in order to achieve a goal. In a game of Quill, you will take on the role of a letter-writer, who, for whatever reason, is scribing a letter to a recipient. Like other roleplaying games, you have a series of attributes that determine how well your character can accomplish certain tasks. However, instead of having statistics like strength or wisdom, Quill characters have very special attributes - Penmanship, Language and Heart. Like in other games, each attribute is important and will be used to determine the outcome of the challenges you face along the way- but in Quill you won't be rolling for combat or to see how far

You can jump - you will be rolling to see how eloquent you write and how much you can impress your recipient. In addition, you won't be playing this with a group - Quill is played alone. This may sound confusing at first as it is so far removed from many other traditional games on the market, but through Quill you will find the freedom to tell your own stories through different scenarios.

In a typical game of Quill the aim is to impress your recipient into responding favourably to your letter. You will accomplish this through deft use of language and presentation, rolling dice to determine whether or not you succeed in using the right words, the best descriptors and the most beautiful penmanship. Once you have completed your letter - one which you will actually physically write yourself - you will count up your total score and discover how your letter has been received.

## What do you need to play?

Very simply, you will need at least three six-sided dice (d6), some paper to write on, a pen or pencil and one of the scenarios from this book or from one of the supplements that are currently available to download from the internet. It might be a good idea to go to your favourite quiet spot and pour yourself a nice hot drink before playing.

## The setting

Quill's default setting is Quillia, a quasi-medieval land with some light fantasy elements. This is a green and pleasant land where high kings reign over the peasantry, monks toll the monastery bells and knights ride into battle on the emerald fields. While the setting isn't detailed in these rules, it's likely you can conjure this image fairly easily in your imagination and, of course, part of the fun is adding your own details to the



world. After all, it's your own world - nobody else's.

## Setting up

Before you begin, you will create a character. This is the person that you will be embodying when it comes to writing your letter. Each character comes with its own strengths and weaknesses, each of which is detailed in the next chapter.

Once you have chosen your character, you must select a skill. This skill will give you an edge in play.

After noting down your skill, select a scenario from the back of this book. Each scenario has a different objective and different potential outcomes. Once you've done that, you're ready to play Quill.



# *Characters*

# Choose your Character

Before you play a game of Quill you will select a character from the list below. Each character has their own individual strengths and weaknesses. These are represented by the attributes: **Penmanship**, **Language** and **Heart**.

## Penmanship

Penmanship determines the aesthetic style of your writing, how your quill marks flow and the ability to leave a parchment free of ink blotches. Good penmanship can make a letter look pleasing to the eye of the recipient - the best penmanship will make a letter into a piece of art.

## Language

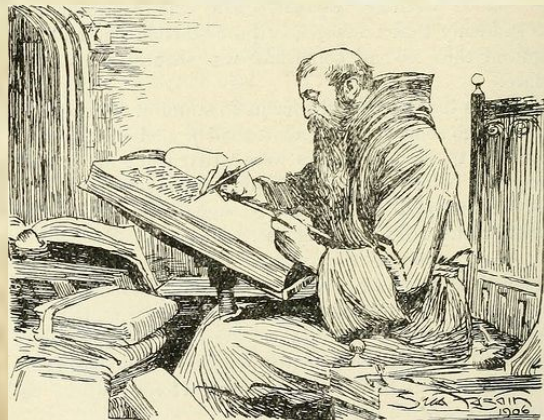
Language determines how eloquent you are, showing how broad your vocabulary is. Having a high language score shows that you have a fine grasp of your native lexicon.

## Heart

Heart determines the sheer emotion and effort you imbue in your letters. The higher your heart, the more of your soul you can pour into your writing and the more persuasive your writing becomes.

Each attribute is rated **Poor**, **Average**, or **Good**, each of which determines how many dice you roll.

- ❖ Poor = 1 die
- ❖ Average = 2 dice
- ❖ Good = 3 dice





# The Monk

The holiest of people, monks come from all walks of life, whether they are rich or poor. Monks devote their life to the teachings of their deity, living a secluded, quiet life in the monastery. Monks must take three vows that they keep sacred - the Vow of Poverty, the Vow of Chastity and the Vow of Obedience.

Monks are very well respected in society. Monks have excellent penmanship, having been taught the art of calligraphy in the monastery. However, they tend to write matter-of-factly.

The female version of the monk is the nun.



- ❖ **Penmanship: Good**
- ❖ **Language: Average**
- ❖ **Heart: Poor**



# The Knight

The knight is the bastion of chivalry and romance. Tales are told of great knights and their bravery in the battlefield.

Knights embark upon grand quests, often given by the King or Queen – whether it is to save a village from marauders or to rid a forest of boggarts.

It is worth noting that knights can be either men or women.

While knights write with all their heart, they do not have the best grasp of language.



- ❖ **Penmanship: Average**
- ❖ **Language: Poor**
- ❖ **Heart: Good**

# The Poet

The poet is a master of language – able to create beauty with just a quill and parchment.

Many poets form literary groups, or Poet Corners, where they meet and discuss their works. Some will even read out loud their epic works in front of an audience for payment.

Because the poet is more concerned with the words on the page rather than how they are presented, their penmanship isn't the best.



- ❖ **Penmanship: Poor**
- ❖ **Language: Good**
- ❖ **Heart: Average**



# The Aristocrat

The aristocracy represents the most wealthy and privileged people in society. They have everything they could ever need – stately homes, valuable trinkets and servants at their disposal.

Naturally aristocrats have a high standing in society, although not all are respected as many are seen as pompous and arrogant, throwing their money away on frivolous things rather than aiding those less fortunate.



- ❖ **Penmanship: Good**
- ❖ **Language: Poor**
- ❖ **Heart: Average**

# The Scholar

Scholars are the great minds of the world – studying subjects like mathematics, literature, botany and geography.

The halls of universities are packed with scholar, some of which teach while others study their discipline in the library.

Scholars are well-educated, so their grasp of language is second-to-none.



- ◆ **Penmanship: Average**
- ◆ **Language: Good**
- ◆ **Heart: Poor**



# The Courtier

Walking the halls of power, the courtier is a social butterfly who aims to climb the ranks through flattery and intrigue. They live within the walls of palaces and castles, aiding the monarchy with their duties.

Courtiers are experts at winning people over and gaining their trust, although they are known to play people off against each other through deception in order to get ahead.



- ❖ **Penmanship: Poor**
- ❖ **Language: Average**
- ❖ **Heart: Good**

# Choose your Skill

Now you have chosen your character, you need to select a skill. **Skills can be used once per scenario**, potentially giving you an advantage when writing your letter. There are three skills in the game:

## *Augmentation*

You are an emotive writer with the ability to describe a scene in such a way to transport the reader with your language.

**Gain +1 dice to a Heart Test**

## *Inspiration*

You are a born leader, with the ability to use powerful language to inspire others in your letters.

**Gain +1 dice to a Language Test**

## *Illumination*

You have studied the art of calligraphy and manuscript illumination, able to conjure incredible works for art from the tip of your pen.

**Gain +1 dice to a Penmanship Test**





# *Rules*

# Playing the Game

This section will explain how to play a game of Quill, from rolling your attributes to totalling up your Letter Score.

A game of Quill begins with a scenario, which you can find further on in this book. The scenario sets out who you are writing to and why you are writing to them (**the Profile**), any special rules that apply to that specific scenario (**Rules of Correspondence**), and the words that you will be using as part of your letter (**The Ink Pot**).

In Quill your aim is to write a letter using the words in The Ink Pot and get the highest score at the end of the scenario. You have five paragraphs to achieve this and in each paragraph **you must use just one of the words from The Ink Pot.**

You can augment words with **Flourishes** to gain extra points and after every paragraph you must make a **Penmanship test** to find out how well presented your letter is.

It is entirely up to you what you want to write in each paragraph, as long as you are following the story presented in the Profile and using the words in the Ink Pot. Because the Ink Pot contains more than five words you can play the same scenario again and write an entirely different letter.





## The Profile

The Profile is the first thing you will need to read. The Profile details the recipient of your letter and a short explanation of why you are writing to them. You should refer back to the Profile when writing your letter.

## Rules of Correspondence

The Rules of Correspondence details any special rules that the scenario contains. Such rules will usually affect the rolls that you make during play. For example, one scenario may have a rule that because of the superior parchment that you are using you may roll one extra die when testing for Penmanship. Make sure you remember any effects listed under the Rules of Correspondence because

## The Ink Pot

The Ink Pot contains all the words that you can use to structure your letter in order to score points. Words are presented as such:

*Wood/Emerald Forest*. The first word is called the **Inferior Word** and the second is called the **Superior Word**. The aim is to fill

your letter with Superior Words, as these score points. Inferior Words do not.

Note that sometimes a Superior or Inferior Word may consist of multiple words or a phrase.



## How to Score Points

There are three ways to score points in the game:

- ❖ Use Superior Words from the Ink Pot. A Superior Word is worth 1 point.
- ❖ Be successful in a Penmanship test when you have finished a paragraph. A successful Penmanship test is worth 1 point.
- ❖ Flourish words with adjectives or adverbs using Heart tests. A Flourished Superior Word is worth 2 points. However, a Flourished Inferior Word reduces your final points total by 1.

## The Flow of Play

In Quill you must write **five paragraphs**, each containing only one word from the Ink Pot.

When you want to add a word, you must **roll your Language dice** – also called a Language Test. **Any 5 or 6 is a success** – you can add a Superior Word to your paragraph and gain 1 point. Anything lower and you must add an Inferior Word and **score no points**.

You may add any word you want, but once it has been used you cannot use it again.





## Flourishes

Flourishes add an adverb or adjective (i.e. a descriptive word) to enhance the word you choose. For example, 'stallion' could be augmented to 'white stallion'. To augment a word you must make a Heart Test **before** you roll your Language dice to draw from the Ink Pot. To do this, roll your Heart dice. Rolling a 5 or 6 on any dice is a success, meaning that you can add a Flourish to the word. Flourishes are entirely optional.

If the word you have augmented turns out to be a Superior Word, you score 2 points for your augmentation. If the word is an Inferior Word, you do not score any points and must reduce your total score by 1, representing a clunky writing style.

## Penmanship Tests

Every time you finish a paragraph, you **must** make a Penmanship Test. To do this, roll your Penmanship dice, any 5 or 6 is a success and you gain 1 point. Note that you can only score a single point per test, no matter how many 5s or 6s you roll.

## Using a Skill

You may use a skill once per scenario at any time. Just make a note that you have used the skill so that you don't use it again later in the scenario.



# Scoring

When you have finished your letter, total up your Letter Score. Each scenario will have its own consequences section when it comes to scoring, showing how the recipient responds to your letter. Each consequence will be different depending on the scenario, but the scoring is always the same:

**Less than 5 points:** The letter is received unsuccessfully. There will be negative consequences.

**5 to 7 points:** The letter has a tepid reception. There will be negative and positive consequences.

**8 to 10 points:** The letter has a favourable reception. There will be positive consequences.

**11+ points:** The letter has an excellent reception. There will be very positive consequences.

## Rules Summary

- ❖ Select a character, skill and scenario
- ❖ Read the Profile and note any Rules of Correspondence
- ❖ Write your letter using one Ink Pot word per paragraph, making a Language test to determine if the word is Superior or Inferior. 5 or 6 succeeds.
- ❖ Use Flourishes to augment words with a Heart test. 5 or 6 succeeds
- ❖ Make a Penmanship test after every paragraph. 5 or 6 succeeds
- ❖ Use a skill once per scenario
- ❖ End the letter after the fifth paragraph
- ❖ Total up your points and refer to the consequences table to determine the reaction to your letter



# *Scenários*

# The Archduke

## Profile

- ❖ You are corresponding with the Archduke Godfrey, a powerful member of the royal family who is known for his serious demeanour.
- ❖ You are writing to give your condolences for the passing of his sister, Mary of Linchester. She came down with the consumption and passed a week ago. You were acquainted with her, having been in the same school when you were young. You will bring up your past and what you both did when you were children.

## Rules of Correspondence

- ❖ Courtiers and Aristocrats gain an extra Heart die in this scenario
- ❖ You are using a superior parchment in this missive. Gain an extra Penmanship die.



## Ink Pot

Climbing Trees/ Scaling Oaks  
Death/ Passing  
Teachers/ Scholars  
Rode Horses/ Rode Stallions  
Town/ Riverton  
Ducks/ Mallards  
Angels/ Seraphim  
Fields/ Heather Fields  
Church/ Cathedral of Light  
Young Boy/ Young Harold of Whent

## Consequences

**Less than 5 points:** The Archduke is disgusted by your letter. You have lost his respect and will no longer be in contact with you.

**5 to 7 points:** The Archduke responds kindly, but is quick to criticise your letter. You will unlikely hear from him for some months.

**8 to 10 points:** The Archduke thanks you for your kind letter. He invites you over next week to stay on his estate.

**11+ points:** The Archduke thanks you profusely for your excellent letter and promises that you will be repaid for your kindness with a gift of great worth.



# The Art Dealer

## Profile

- ❖ You are corresponding with Christina Bowbridge, renowned art dealer who is known for her enthusiastic personality and adoration of the monarchy.
- ❖ You are writing to inquire about buying a portrait of Prince Edward IV, however you have heard rumours that this painting could be a fake, but you must find this information from Christina without offending her.

## Rules of Correspondence

- ❖ Ms Bowbridge likes to be impressed with beautiful calligraphy so you must take care. When making a Penmanship test, re-roll the highest die and accept the final roll.



## Ink Pot

The Prince/ His Royal Highness Prince  
Edward IV

Fake/ Reproduction

Colours/ Spectrum

I'm sorry/ I apologise profusely

Fountain/ Great Fountain of Aleah

Look at/ Inspect

Skill/ Esteemed expertise

My mum/ My dear mother

Signature/ Inscription

Tick you off/ Offend you

## Consequences

**Less than 5 points:** Christina takes great offence to your letter and responds with a scathing letter about your character. She will not sell you the painting...ever.

**5 to 7 points:** Christina's response is mild, but she has obviously taken some offence. She will sell the painting but for double the price.

**8 to 10 points:** Christina is pleased with your letter and responds enthusiastically. She clearly has taken little offence and will sell you the painting.

**11+ points:** Christina is overwhelmed by your letter and wishes to give you the painting as a gift.

# The Father

## Profile

- ❖ You are corresponding with Mr Anthony Winsborough, an old friend of yours, whose son, Rupert, was found dead near your residences.
- ❖ You are writing to inform Anthony of his son's death. You must be sensitive and explain what happened and how you found Rupert.

## Ink Pot

Your boy/ Your dear son  
Corpse/ Body  
Bawdy house/ Drinking establishment  
Brutal/ Harrowing  
I'm sorry/ My infinite condolences  
At peace/ In heaven  
A guard/ The police  
Sadness/ Sorrow  
Rain/ Downpour  
Box/ Coffin

## Rules of Correspondence

- ❖ Anthony would prefer to hear this news from a person of the cloth. Monks and nuns gain an extra die when rolling Language tests for this scenario.



## Consequences

**Less than 5 points:** Anthony responds aggressively, blaming you for not being there for him and for not caring. You no longer hear from Anthony.

**5 to 7 points:** Anthony's is clearly disappointed in how you have relayed the information to him, but he does not blame you.

**8 to 10 points:** Anthony thanks you for telling him about his son and invites you to his funeral.

**11+ points:** Anthony commends you for your letter and wishes you to speak at his son's funeral.



# The King

## Profile

- ❖ You are corresponding with King Gerald V, who you have only met on one occasion. He is a tyrant and unloved by the populace.
- ❖ You are writing to inform the King of a suspicious fellow you have seen about town who you believe to be a spy. You must convince him that you are not a raving lunatic and to take your concerns seriously, while being cordial.

## Rules of Correspondence

- ❖ You are using a high quality parchment and seal. Gain an extra Penmanship die.
- ❖ Courtiers gain an extra Heart die this scenario.



## Ink Pot

Gerald/ Your Majesty  
Smithy/ Blacksmith  
Funny man/ Curious individual  
Hidden/ Concealed  
Poison/ Deadly Nightshade  
Big bloke/ Imposing man  
Cow house/ Barn  
Furry lip/ Moustache  
Buggered face/ Scarred visage  
Worrying/ Alarming

## Consequences

**Less than 5 points:** The King does not respond. Several days after you sent your missive you are visited by the royal guard and brought to prison for your disrespectful letter.

**5 to 7 points:** You receive a letter from the captain of the royal guard thanking you, but she does not believe you and does not wish you to write again.

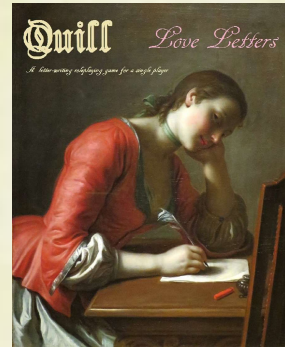
**8 to 10 points:** You receive a letter from a senior official close to the King thanking you. You also receive a monetary reward in the letter.

**11+ points:** The King writes to you personally with great thanks. He has positioned his guard close by and the spy will be caught. You are invited to the King's court as a guest and hero.

# Other Quill Products

## Quill: Love Letters

A collection of five new scenarios for Quill, all themed around the heart. You will be trying to win the hearts of aristocrats, professing love to a dear friend, persuading overseas lovers to cross the ocean for you, and more.



## Quill: Shadow and Ink

Lovecraftian horror comes to Quill with Quill: Shadow and Ink. This campaign of cosmic terror includes five interlinked scenarios, where your success determines the ending of the story.



## Quill: White Box

For the first time, create a classic fantasy character from classes like fighter, cleric, thief, elf and dwarf, each with its own special ability to help you on your letter-writing adventures. Use the same character through multiple adventures, gaining treasure and magical items like enchanted perfumes and hypnotic parchment to give you the edge.



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from DriveThruRPG.com*