

Quenya Tengwar Step-by-Step

by ~Mirimë~

"It's some form of Elvish, I can't read it."

~ Frodo Baggins

Introduction:

Although there are no examples of Quenya written in Elvish script in either 'The Hobbit' or 'The Lord of the Rings', Tolkien did publish some examples, (such as 'Namárië' in 'The Road Goes Ever On') so we know that it was used.

As with any language, whenever possible, it is best to learn the alphabet and language at the same time, rather than learning the alphabet afterward. This article will give you ideas on ways to learn the Tengwar script and Quenya simultaneously. It is not necessary to do every exercise given, and hopefully they will inspire you with ideas of your own.

To understand this article, there are a few terms you must know:

Romanized Alphabet: This means that the tengwar letters have been transliterated or transcribed into the western alphabet, the alphabet that we use, to make it easier for speakers of English, French etc. to understand, although the sounds associated with the letters may differ from what they used to. In the present day, transliteration is often used in Oriental restaurants where customers would be unable to recognize the native script. This is the method used in the Quenya Workbook, and in The Lord of the Rings.

Tengwar: The script or alphabet of the Elvish languages. This is how Quenya would have been written by the Elves themselves. Tengwar is a phonetic alphabet, which means words are spelled exactly as they sound. Examples include the inscription on the One Ring and the writing at the top of the COE Legolas Theme.

Step One: *Familiarize yourself with the alphabet.*

This does NOT mean trying to memorize the entire alphabet; memorization comes naturally with use. Rather, it means getting a feel for the alphabet, word formation and the look of the letters. Dan Smith has a good help file available at:

http://www.acondia.com/font_tengwar/TengwarQuenya_v19E.zip

It is strongly recommended that you print pages 8-12 of the Tengwar Help PDF for reference. A font set is also included.

Exercise: Transcribe Quenya tengwar into the romanized alphabet.

For this exercise, it is not necessary to know the meaning of the words, only how to spell them. If you are interested in the meaning of the words, feel free to look them up in a dictionary when you are finished.

Directions: Go to <http://www.uib.no/People/hnohf/tgenesis.pdf> at Ardalambion. On page 4 (of 5) transcribe lines one and two (marked with blue numerals) into the romanized script. Answers are on page 2 of this PDF file.

Step Two: Writing the alphabet.

There are three things you need in order to write Tengwar:

- A good set of calligraphy pens
- Paper (of course)
- PATIENCE

Learning to write in a new alphabet (especially a non-roman one) can be challenging, but it is also fun; there is nothing quite like learning to write your name in a new language!

Exercise: Write a Quenya word in Tengwar.

Directions: Choose one or two short words in Quenya that you know well, such as your Quenya name, or a favorite vocabulary word. Using your chart as reference, write the words in Tengwar.

Note: This takes lots of practice and you won't be likely to get it right on the first few tries, but that's O.K. It gets easier the more you do it.

Once you feel comfortable with this, write out new vocabulary in tengwar as you learn it. If you are writing out your workbook lessons (highly recommended), be sure to write out your vocabulary in tengwar, romanized Quenya and of course the translation. Seeing the three side-by-side should help you remember the word.

Exercise: Trace tengwar words.

This is very much an optional exercise, because using Tengwar fonts can be a bit tricky, but if you would like to have a Tengwar font on your computer, this may be a worthwhile activity for you.

Font Installation Instructions (for Windows):

1. Download Dan Smith's Tengwar Quenya font from:
http://www.acondia.com/font_tengwar/TengwarQuenya_v19E.zip
2. Unzip the file using a program such as WinZip.
3. Find the TengwarQuenya.ttf file. (The other fonts are optional)
4. Drag this file to My Computer > C: > Windows > Fonts.

5. It's recommended that you print pages 1-6 of the file TengwarQuenya_KeyboardMap.pdf, also included in the zip file; it makes typing Tengwar on the computer easier.

Directions: Using the character map (or the Keyboard Map) and your chart, write out some words in Tengwar Quenya, using a large font. Print your words. Then, place lightweight paper over the top and trace the tengwar letters.

Exercise: *Create tengwar flash cards.*

Directions: Make flash cards of your vocabulary words with tengwar Quenya on one side and romanized Quenya on the other. Use them when studying.

Exercise: *Create a tengwar alphabet chart.*

If you are particularly ambitious, you may wish to create a tengwar alphabet chart, such as those hung in classrooms.

Directions: Write each tengwar letter in large lettering on a separate piece of paper. On each page, draw or paste a picture of a Quenya word that starts with or contains that letter. Due to the amount of vocabulary needed for this exercise, you may wish to use a dictionary for reference.

I hope you have fun and success writing tengwar!