



# Fountain Pen Maintenance



*By Bob Altig*

## Introduction



Congratulations on purchasing a custom made fountain pen from Altig Turnings. If you have owned fountain pens for many years, you may

wish to disregard this instruction. However, if you are just beginning your venture into the rewarding world of writing with a fine fountain pen, these instructions will help you enjoy many years of good service from your purchase.

## Use It or Lose It

Please use your pen. Your fountain pen was designed to be used, not hidden away in a desk drawer. If a fountain pen is not used regularly, the ink in the feeder mechanism of the pen will dry, clot, and impede the free flow of ink from the storage chamber to the nib. Getting the ink to flow again can be an extremely time consuming and messy process, so it is best to write something, even doodles, everyday and keep the ink freely flowing through the feeding mechanism.

Do not loan you pen to others. Each person has unique movements when they write. The point of contact between the paper and the pen nib will cause the nib to wear over time. You want this wear pattern to fit the way you write so that continued use only makes the pen write smoother. Allowing others to use your fountain pen will change this wear pattern and cause the pen to write more roughly.

## Carrying Your Pen

Many people are hesitant to carry a fountain pen for fear that it will leak. Most leaks that ruin clothing are caused because the pen isn't carried in an upright position and/or the cap isn't tightly secured to the pen. Very seldom are leaks caused by leakage from the internal workings of the fountain pen.

## Care of Your Pen

1. Never leave your pen in a car on a hot day. Heat can thin the ink to unacceptable levels as well as damage the finish and seals of the internal workings.
2. Always store your pen in an upright position.

3. Use the velveteen sleeve included with your pen to protect it if carrying it in a shirt pocket or a purse.
4. Cap the pen when not in use. Exposure to the environment can cause the ink to dry in the feeder mechanism and prevent ink flow.

**Resin:** If you have purchased a fountain pen made from a man made resin product, care is quite simple. Care will involve removing those tiny scratches the pen will incur under normal use. To do this, I use an automotive chrome polish. I apply the polish, let it dry to a haze and buff with a terry cloth towel.

**Wood:** As with anything made from wood that has had a finish applied, removing surface scratches properly will restore the object to its original appearance. Do not use any abrasives to do this such as car wax, sand paper, metal polish, etc. to remove scratches. Rather, use a good quality furniture paste wax to prevent scratches to the finish surface. Personally, I wax my pens at least three or four times a year.

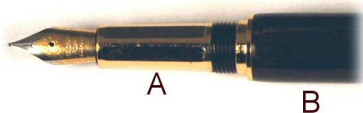
**Inking System:** I completely drain the inking system at least once a year. Once it is drained, I flush the system with room temperature water. I never use cold or hot water to do this flushing. I also do this using a large plastic bucket and wear latex gloves. Otherwise be prepared to have some ink remover on stand by because you will make a mess. Although it's messy, it's an important part of fountain pen maintenance.

## Filling a Fountain Pen

The pen shown to the right is my personal fountain pen. I'll bet you figured that out when you it engraved with my name. The pen you receive



should look something like this after you remove the cap. Depending on the type of fountain pen you have purchased, I will have included either an international ink cartridge or a piston ink pump with your pen. The installation of these two items is virtually the same process. If I have shipped the ink pump and you would like to switch to a cartridge, you may do so easily. Most serious pen owners prefer to use the ink pump, but the cartridge is definitely more convenient.



*A is the nib assembly and B is the main pen body.*

Grasping the pen nib assembly, rotate it counter-clockwise and remove the entire nib assembly from the main body of the pen. Set the main body aside so that no ink accidentally gets on the pen body.

If your pen was shipped with an ink cartridge, simply press the cartridge onto the feeder tube located inside the nib assembly. Now reattach the nib assembly to the main body of the pen. Dip the pen nib point into some room temperature water to prime the feed mechanism. You will know the feeder mechanism is primed when colored ink appears in the water.

Filling a piston ink pump can be a messy endeavor. Be sure to wear latex gloves, do the filling over something you don't mind throwing away afterwards, and have a few tissues on hand.

If your pen was shipped with a piston pump installed, it should look like this once the nib assembly is out of the body.



**DO NOT** remove the pump mechanism from the nib assembly for routine filling operations. Each time it is removed, the seal formed where the pump is attached to the feeder tube is weakened and eventually it will leak.



Only for demonstration purposes has the pump has been removed in this picture. C is the actual piston and D is the knob you will turn to fill the pump reservoir with ink. Turn the

pump knob (D) clockwise as far as you can. You should be able to see the piston moving to the bottom of the ink chamber. Dip the pen nib into your bottle of ink, and twist the pump knob counter-clockwise to fill the ink reservoir. Continue twisting until the reservoir is full. Carefully wipe off the excess ink from the nib with a tissue. Remove your gloves so no excess ink gets on the main body material and then reattach the nib assembly to the main pen body. That's it. Enjoy your new pen.

*Bob*

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