Learn and be inspired.

LetterMat: 140
Getting Started With Captions

Instructor: Brian Wolf, CPF, GCF

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When letters could only be cutouts, their minimum height was around 2 inches. A full name would be three feet wide—an impossibility for most pictures.

Now that the Wizard can deboss letters and draw them with a pen, a typical name can be 4 or 5 inches wide. Suddenly complete, informative captions are an everyday item.

With these possibilities in mind, the focus in this series of presentations will be on designing debossed and pen captions, using the fonts specifically designed for these tools.

There will be later discussions about spacing questions and artistic touches, but first it is important to review how to begin a caption and how the simple variables under the Properties tab will improve every caption.

Adding a LetterMat Caption

‣ Click the **Openings** tab at the top of the design screen.

‣ Click the **Add LetterMat** button at the left.

‣ Select a font from the list that appears.
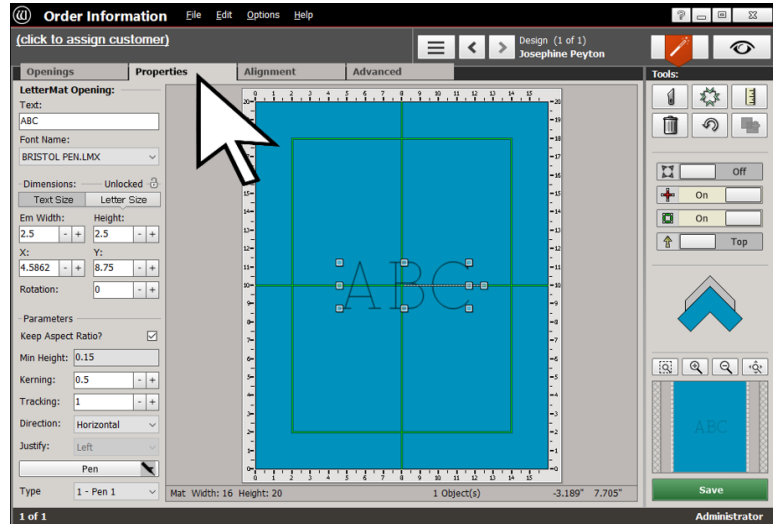
Note: Bristol Pen *is selected for this example.*
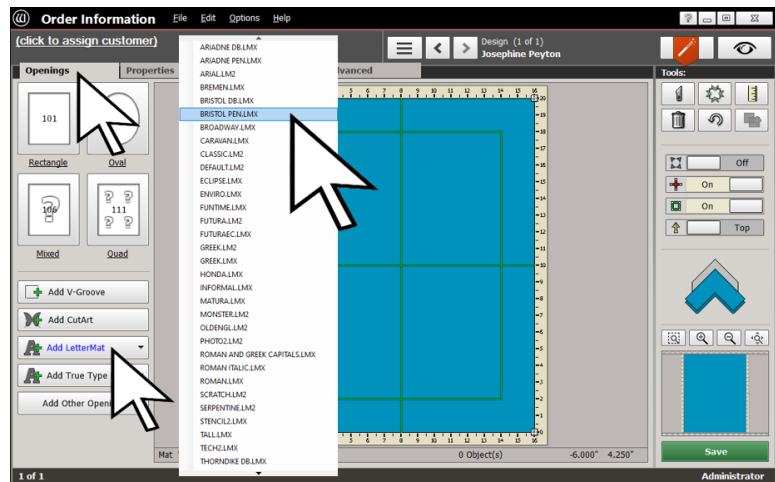
The default text appears in the selected font.

‣ Click the **Properties** tab. Here everything about the caption can be altered.

‣ Look at the fields and buttons down the left.

Each button helps transform and refine the caption to make it fit the space and look its best.


The Properties Tab

The Text Field

‣ Click on it and type the caption.

‣ Use capital letters, spaces, and common punctuation marks.

Note: Do not worry about the letters' spacing yet.

Next is the **Font Name** field.

‣ Click the drop-down arrow at the right of the current font name to change the font. The list of fonts will appear just as seen at the beginning.
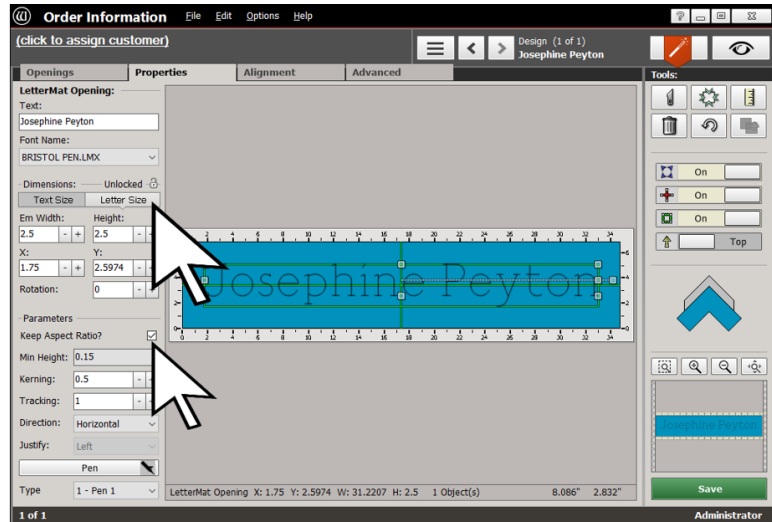
‣ Select a new font from the list.
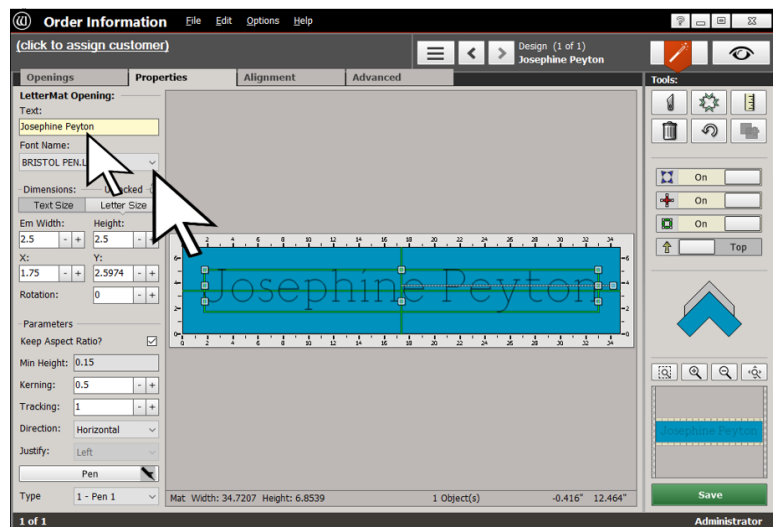
The Dimensions Fields

There is a **Text Size** button (gray here) and a **Letter Size** button (selected and active here).

Keep the **Letter Size** button selected for this project. The uses of the **Text Size** button will be shown in a later presentation.

Before we change the size of the letters, take note of 2 items in the **Parameters** section below.

The Keep Aspect Ratio Button

This button is checked. It locks the letters' original proportions. With cutout letters, this is to ensure cut quality, so it is not critical with debossed and pen letters. While letters look best at their original proportions, it is a viable option to uncheck **Keep Aspect Ratio** to condense or expand the caption.

The Minimum Height

This field displays the minimum recommended height for the font. The machine will form the strokes of smaller debossed and pen letters easily. But keep in mind that the details of smaller letters may be blurred because of the width of the chosen tool. This will impact readability.
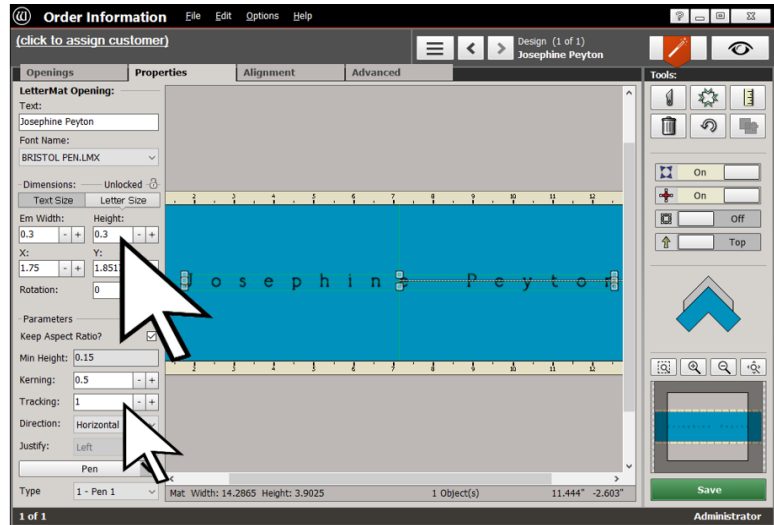
Changing the Letter Size

This caption will be under a small photo, so the letters need to be small—0.3 inch high.

‣ Enter the size of the letters in the **Em Width** or **Height** field.

*Note: If **Keep Aspect Ratio** is checked, both the **Height** and **Width** will instantly be the same.*

The letters were 2.5 inches high in the previous illustrations. The spacing looked reasonable.

Now that the letters are 0.3 inch high, though, it is obvious that the spacing needs attention.

The bottom arrow points to the **Kerning** and **Tracking** fields that adjust the spacing.

New Letter Spacing

Kerning—*the size of the spaces between the letters*—has been set to 0.07 inch.

Tracking—*the size of the spaces between the words*—has been set to 0.28 inch.

*Note: Remember to hold the **Alt** key on the keyboard as you click the **Plus** and **Minus** buttons beside the fields. The values then change 0.01 inch (0.2mm in metric) per click instead of the usual sixteenth inch (1mm in metric). This level of precision is necessary when adjusting the spacing on letters this small.*
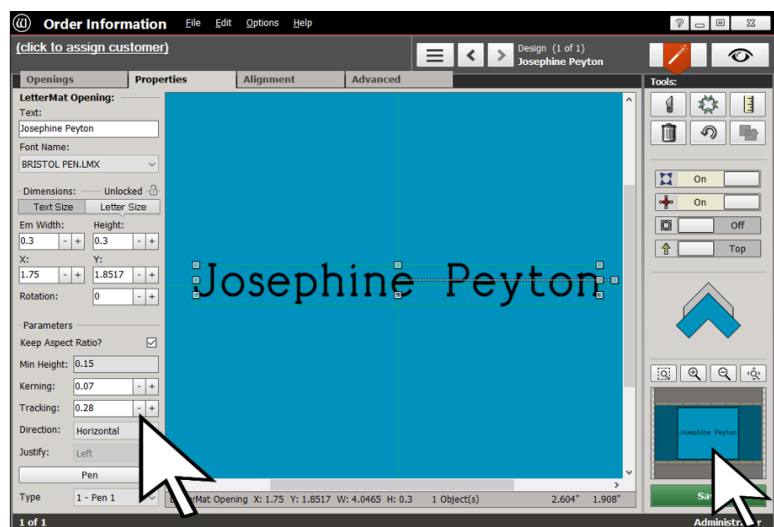
Zooming

Note, too, that both the illustrations here were zoomed in for a closer look at the caption as spacing was being adjusted. The **Zoom** buttons are at the lower right.

A Sentence with Punctuation

The debossed and pen fonts have common punctuation marks so that complete correct sentences can be included.

The period, comma, question mark, exclamation point, hyphen, and apostrophe can be used by typing the appropriate keys.

*Note: The font used in this example is **Vienna Pen**.*
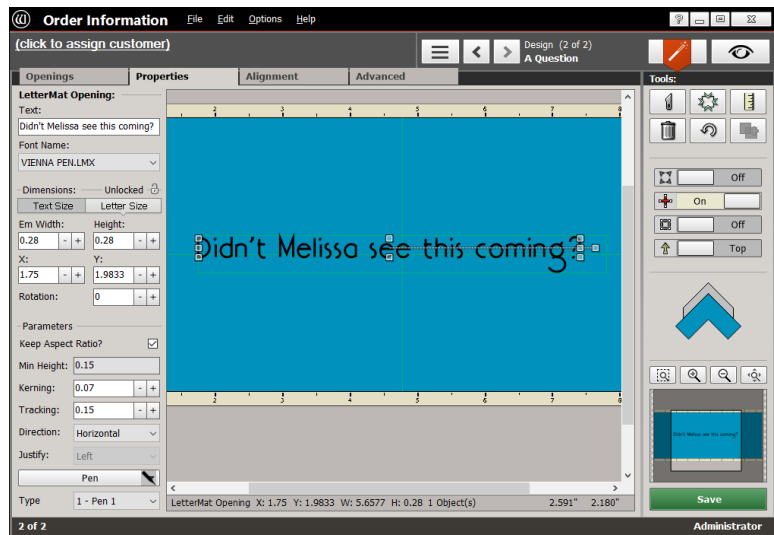
A Note on the Fonts

Cutout letters are rendered in the Wizard program by outlining the shape of the letter. A simple lower case l, for example, is a tall thin rectangle.

Another method for rendering letters is to draw each stroke as a single line—not the outline of a shape. The simplicity of a single line letter allows a caption to be much smaller.
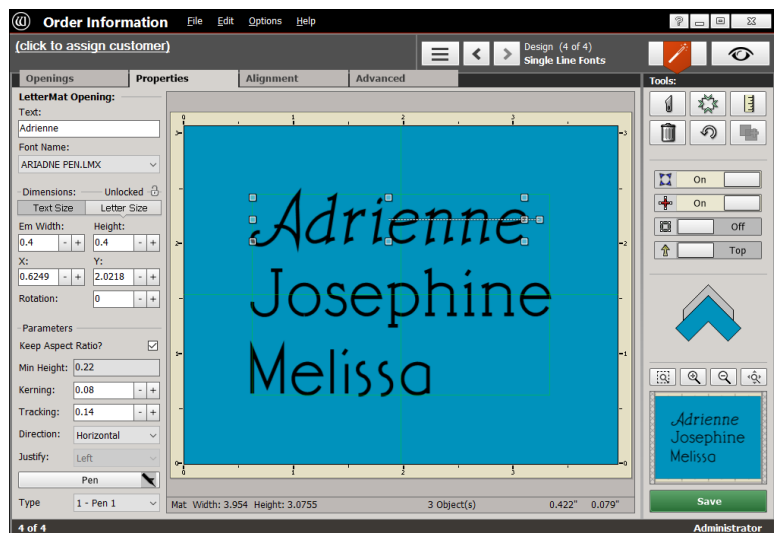
There are 3 *single line* fonts in FrameShop set for the pen and for debossing.

‣ At the top of the illustration is *Adrienne* written using the **Ariadne Pen** font. It is a decorative Italic font.

‣ Next is *Josephine* written using the **Bristol Pen** font. This is a classic Roman serif font.

‣ At the bottom is *Melissa* written using the **Vienna Pen** font. Vienna is a simplified sans serif font with several decorative touches.

Note: There are also debossed versions of all three of these single line fonts.

Foreign Characters

It is also important to be able to include foreign characters in a caption. The pen and debossed fonts have German and Scandinavian characters.

The LetterMat fonts work differently from other typing programs, so the keys to enter these characters are different.

‣ Type @ to enter Ä
‣ Type # to enter ä
‣ Type $ to enter Ö
‣ Type % to enter ö
‣ Type (to enter Ü
‣ Type) to enter ü
‣ Type \ to enter ß
‣ Type [to enter Å
‣ Type] to enter å
‣ Type : to enter Æ
‣ Type ; to enter æ
‣ Type + to enter Ø
‣ Type = to enter ø
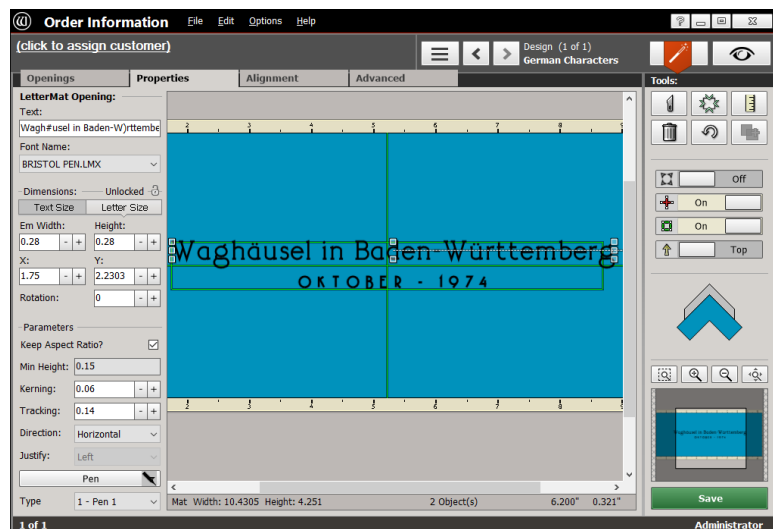
A Second Line in the Caption

‣ Add a second LetterMat opening just as you added the first one from the **Openings** tab.

The top line uses the **Bristol Pen** font. Its **Height** is 0.28 inch, and the **Kerning** is set to 0.06 inch. This is set small to keep the caption as short as it can be.

The second line uses the **Vienna Pen** font. Its **Height** is 0.17 inch, and the **Kerning** is set to 0.14 inch. This is set to a larger value for a more spread out effect for the date.

The geometric simplicity of the Vienna font is a good contrast to the formality of the Bristol font used for the name of the city.

‣ Space and center the 2 lines as if they were any other openings.
  - Use the arrow keys on the keyboard to move them.
  - Use the Alignment tools to line up their edges or centers.

Together, these 2 lines of the caption are slightly over 7 inches wide and ¾ inch high.

Things to Remember

Review the fields on the **Properties** tab—particularly **Kerning** and **Tracking** to space the words and letters. For most captions, these may be all you need to make them look great.

★ The 3 fonts here are specifically designed to be debossed and drawn with the pen. They are single line fonts, so their minimum height can be less than half an inch. When an entire name can be 4 or 5 inches wide it becomes a possibility for so many more projects.

★ There are punctuation marks along with German and Scandinavian characters in these fonts, too. Remember that LetterMat fonts do not work exactly like word processing fonts. The map for which keys enter which character is included above.

★ Multiple line captions become another important option when the letters are this small. Feel free to experiment. There will be another course coming soon with more details.