

# Vellum Preparation

by Duchess Alethea Charle, O.L.

Hello, and congratulations on your new acquisition. Let me give you a little advice regarding the care and upkeep of the vellum you have just purchased.

Before you attempt to use your vellum you will need to prepare the surface you work on. Vellum has a hair side and a flesh side. The flesh side is rougher. The hair follicles can be seen on the hair side, which is much smoother, and the side I prefer to work with. Of course, medieval calligraphers worked with both so you may choose to practice with both. If the surface is not prepared properly, paint and ink will tend to bead up and be very difficult to make stick.

To prepare the vellum you will need to take a piece of 400 or 600 grit, wet/dry sandpaper (or pounce if you prefer to do it the period way) and sand the surface to bring up a nap. Sand side to side and then top to bottom. Avoid sanding in a circle. The vellum will feel soft and velvety when you are finished. You will need to be careful not to sand it too much (you'll see why), and be very diligent to remove the dust left behind, as it will clog up your pen if you don't.

Once you have practiced using vellum it will never again be that scary surface you've always been afraid to touch. In actuality it is much more forgiving than paper and a lot tougher. Its one drawback is that, like all other leather products, it is not happy when in the presence of moisture. Be sure to keep it flat and pressed between heavy books when not in use or it tends to warp.

Enjoy!