

ALPHABET FAMILY TREE

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language (time) starts
with the letter T.*

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The letter T

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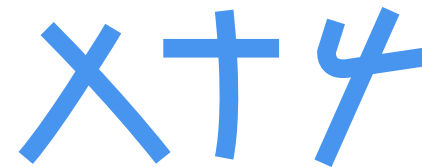
ALPHABET FAMILY TREE

The letter T

Four thousand years ago, just as today, people who could not write used a simple cross to sign letters and formal documents. In fact, the first name for this ancient symbol actually meant “mark” or “sign.”

One might logically assume that this common signature stand-in was the origin of our present X – but that’s not the case. Instead, what looked like an X to ancient writers eventually gave birth to the Roman T.

How did that happen? Let’s go back to around 1000 B.C. During this time, the Phoenicians and other Semitic tribes used a variety of crossed forms to represent the letter they called “taw.”



Phoenician Taw

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This letter, one of the first recorded, served two purposes: it represented the ‘t’ sound, and it provided a mark for signing documents that could be used by those who could not write their names.

When the Greeks adopted the tau for their alphabet ten centuries later, they altered it slightly until it looked pretty much like what our T looks like today. The Greeks called this letter “tau.”



Greek

The tau was passed on, virtually unchanged, from the Greeks to the Etruscans, and finally to the Romans.

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Roman Letter T

The most commonly used noun in the English language (time) starts with the letter T.

F. Scott Fitzgerald was reportedly the first person to use the term “T-shirt” in print. In 1920, when the main character in his novel “This Side of Paradise” brings a T-shirt with him to boarding school.

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Typographic Lexicon: Tellumo™

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