Sherman's Circular Gallifreyan

What is Sherman's Circular Gallifreyan?

Sherman's Circular Gallifreyan, sometimes also called Circular Gallifreyan, short CG or SCG, is a writing system / alphabet invented by Loren Sherman back in 2011. Since then it has gained popularity and even made it's way onto the Doctor Who show. I'll cover everything that Sherman covers in his guide and maybe even a bit more.
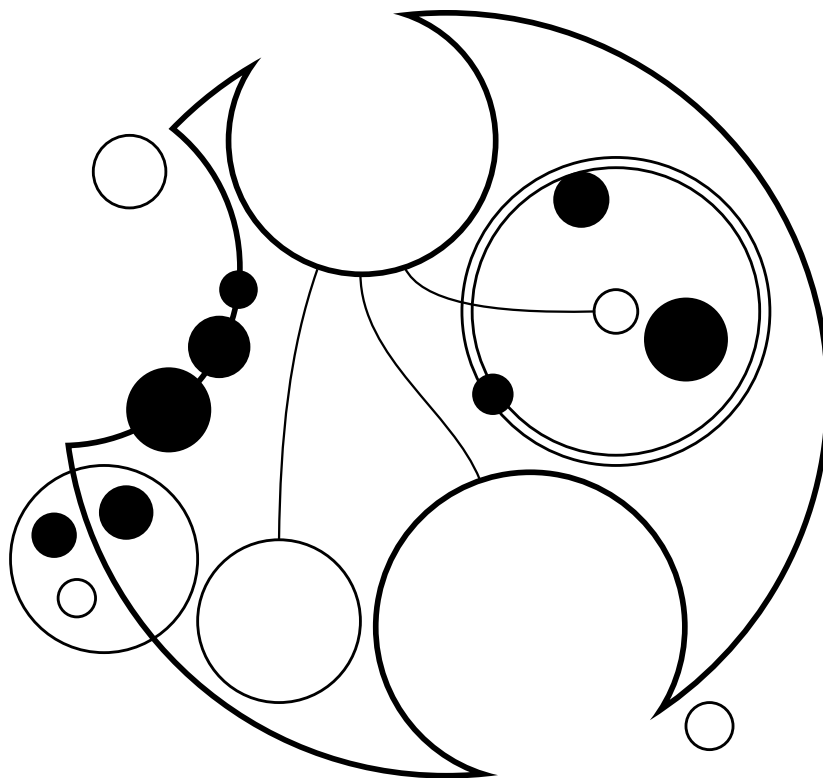

Fig. 1: The word `Gallifreyan` written in CG

How to write in Gallifreyan

Introduction

Gallifreyan is a made up writing system used by the Time Lords of Gallifrey, from the BBC series Doctor Who. This writing system was created by Loren Sherman and is

free for anyone to use. Thanks a lot Loren!

This guide deals with Circular Gallifreyan. To clarify, this is not a language - it's just a way to write words and sentences in languages like English that use the latin alphabet.

The Alphabet Itself

The Consonants

Each word has it's own word circle, that the consonants attach to. This circle is called the word circle. Fig. 2 shows the consonant stems and the additional modifiers.

One can refer to the stems by naming each stem by the first letter in the row. Thus, the uppermost stem is the `b-stem`, the second stem from the top the `j-stem`, and so on.

		•	••	•••	::	I	II	III
Ω	B		CH	D		G	H	F
○	J	PH	K	L	C	N	P	M
⌢	T	WH	SH	R		V	W	S
⊖	TH	GH	Ч	Z	Q	QU	X	NG

Fig. 2: The left-most column shows all the consonant stems. The upper-most row shows the decoration. These two combined form a consonant.

Fig. 3 shows an example of how to apply all of the consonant stems from Fig. 2 to a word circle from top to bottom.
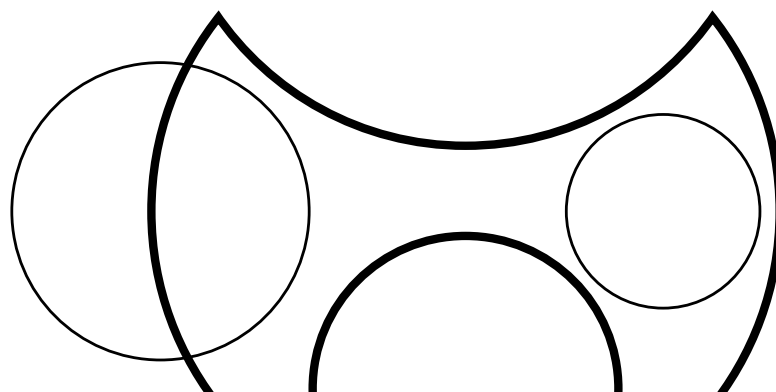
Fig. 3: This is an example of how to apply all of the consonant stems to a word circle. This graphic does not correspond to an english word, but means `bjtth`.

The Vowels

In Circular Gallifreyan you attach your vowels to the consonant which came before the vowel whenever possible. If the first letter of a word is a vowel, you can write the vowel without a consonant preceding it. Separating a vowel from its preceding consonant can also be done to improve visual appearance.
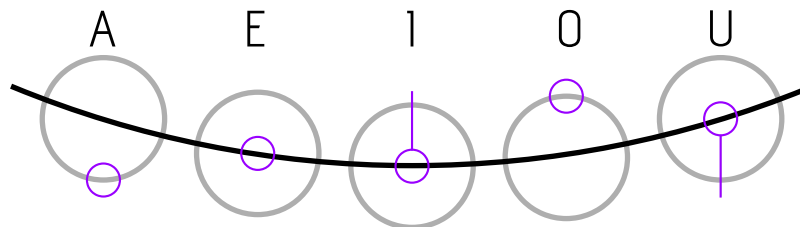
Fig. 4: The curved black path represents a fragment of a word circle. The grey circles are the `th-stems`, as seen in Fig. 2. The most important part are the violet objects. These are the vowels which are attached to their preceding consonant, here `th`.
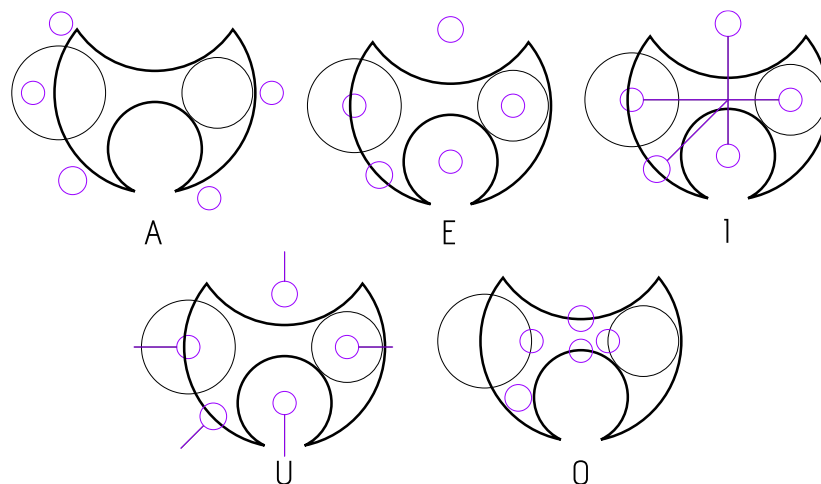
Fig. 5: In Fig. 3 you saw all of the consonant stems applied to a word circle. In this figure I have added the vowels so that you have an idea where to put the vowels on the preceding consonant. The violet objects are the vowels.

Words

To read a word in Gallifreyan, start with the letter that is the furthest at the bottom of the word circle, then read counterclockwise. Let's write some example words.
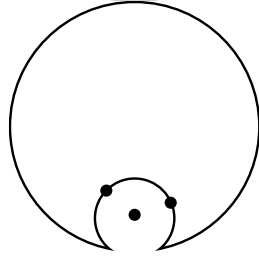
Doctor

D

Fig. 6: To construct the first letter of our word (`Doctor`), we draw the `b-stem`, which is a big divot with three dots. The dots can be placed anywhere, and can be as large or small as you wish, as long as as it's clear that they belong to the `b-stem`.
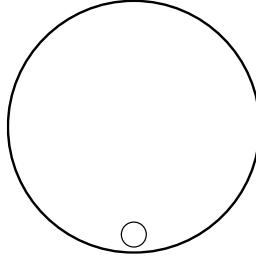
o

Fig. 7: To clearly separate every single letter, I first write `o` on its own and will then add it to `d` in Fig. 8.

Do
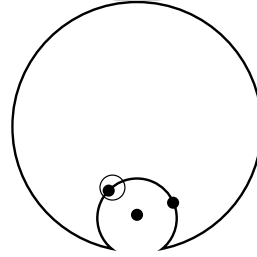
Fig. 8: Fig. 5 shows us how to combine the `b-stem`, which was used to create `d`, with the vowel `o`, to form `do`.
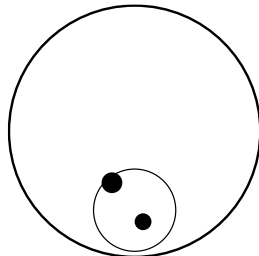
k

Fig. 9: To create the `c` we need the `j-stem` from Fig. 2, with two dots. You might be wondering why this is a `k` and not a `c`; to understand that, read the paragraph a little further down.
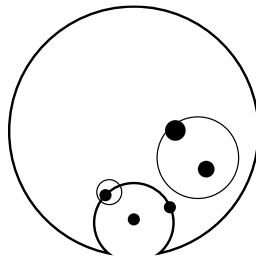
Dok

Fig. 10: Since words are read counterclockwise, we add the `c` in counterclockwise direction from `do`.

In `Fig. 9` I used the letter `k` instead of `c`, because it's discouraged to write the `c` in Gallifreyan, unless you're writing a name. In the consonants table it's clear that the `q` and `c` are greyed out. You should rather use their phonetic equivalents, `s` or `k`. In the case of `q` you should use `k` whenever the `q` is not followed by a `u`.
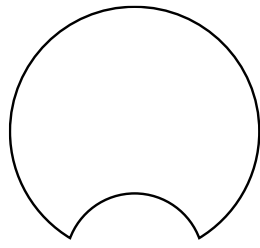
t   **Dokt**   **o**
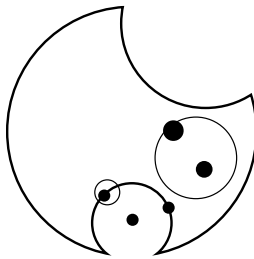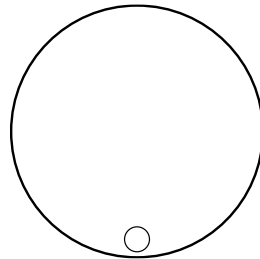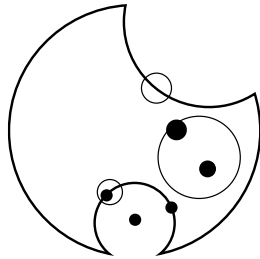
Fig. 11: t

Fig. 12: Doct

Fig. 13: o

Dokto

r

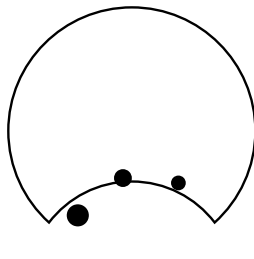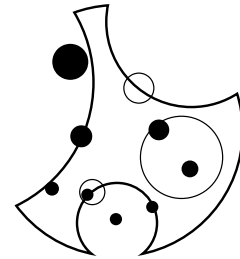## Doktor

Fig. 14: Docto

Fig. 15: r

Fig. 16: Doctor

Who

Wh
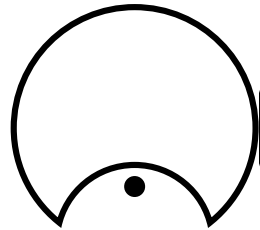

Fig. 17: You can write wh either as one letter, as seen in this image, or as two separate letters. This is visible in Fig. 18, Fig. 19 and Fig. 20.
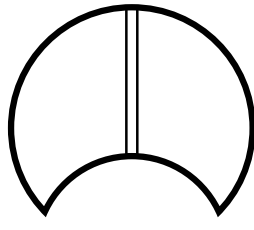

Fig. 18: To write wh as two letters, you first need the w.
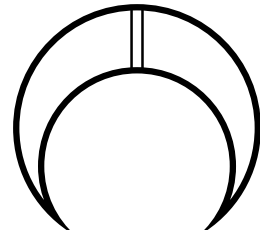

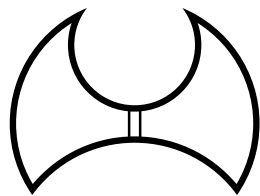Fig. 19: To complete wh we're just missing the h, which is shown in this picture.

Fig. 20: Now we just put together w and h from Fig. 18 and Fig. 19.
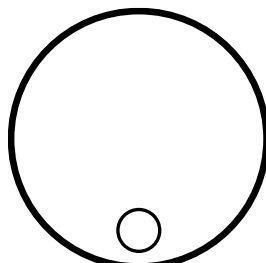
o

Fig. 21: The o in this case is simply the same thing as the o from Doctor in Fig. 13.
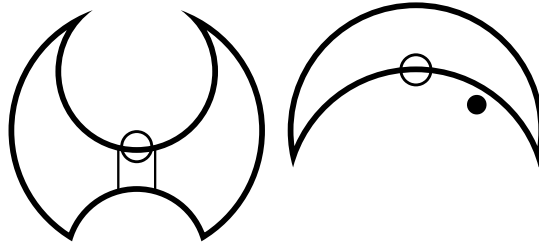
Who

Fig. 22: Here we combine wh from Fig. 17 with o from Fig. 21 to create who.

Fig. 23: Here we combine wh from Fig. 20 with o from Fig. 21 to create who.

Double Letters

Double letters, such as the oo in cool or the ll in all can be denoted by another circle of the same thickness. So all and cool could be written like this:
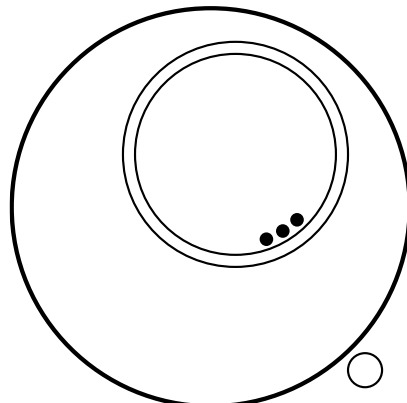
Fig. 24: all
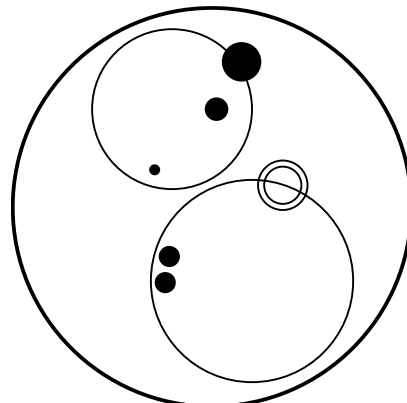
Fig. 25: cool

The & Character

On the right hand side you'll see the word and. Once you start writing a bit of CG, you'll realize that it doesn't look that good. Since it's used quite often in the english language, the Gallifreyan community on Reddit had a discussion about the matter and decided to substitute and with a newly created character, the ampersand. Feel free to substitute and for &. The ampersand is just the letter e with a line across it, as seen in Fig. 27.

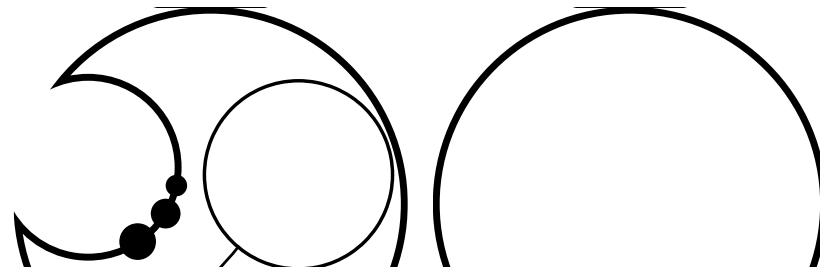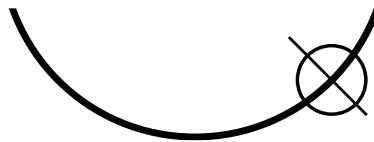Fig. 26: and

Fig. 27: &

Sentences

Words are good alright, but sentences are even better! Like words, they're read counterclockwise starting from the bottom. The letters `T`, `WH`, `SH`, `R`, `V`, `W` and `S` can be used to interconnect letters by interlocking them. This convention exists purely to improve visual appearance. It gives a sentence more coherence. The words in the following picture mean `Bow ties are cool`.
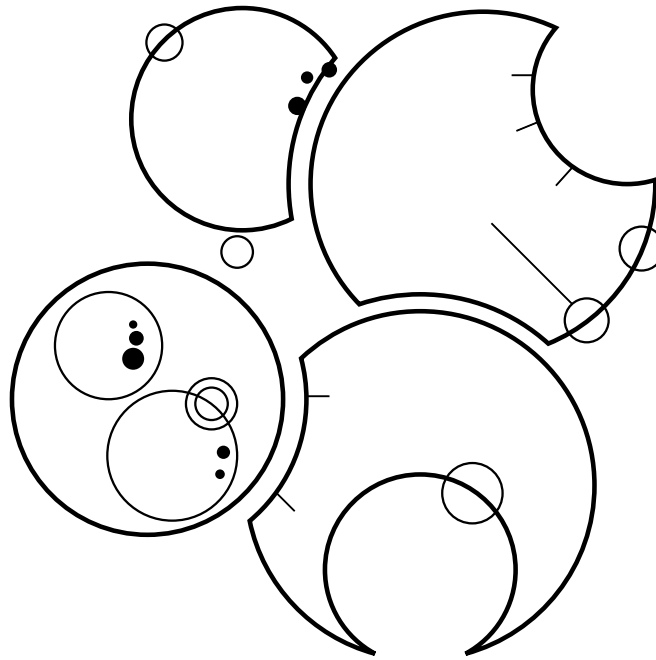

Fig. 28: Bow ties are cool

Next we'll add two circles around all of the words. The inner circle has multiple divots to fill the space that the letter circles don't cover. This convention is purely aesthetic and doesn't change anything about the

meaning of what is now a sentence. The outer circle is a little bit bigger than the inner one and has no divots, unless there is more than one sentence, but we'll get to that later.

Now it's time to extend the lines. For the meaning of any one letter, all that matters is that the right number of

lines terminate at that letter. It doesn't matter to which other object these lines connect.

One exception is that the lines from `i` and `u` should face in the approximately right direction. Lines can connect letters and even sentences.
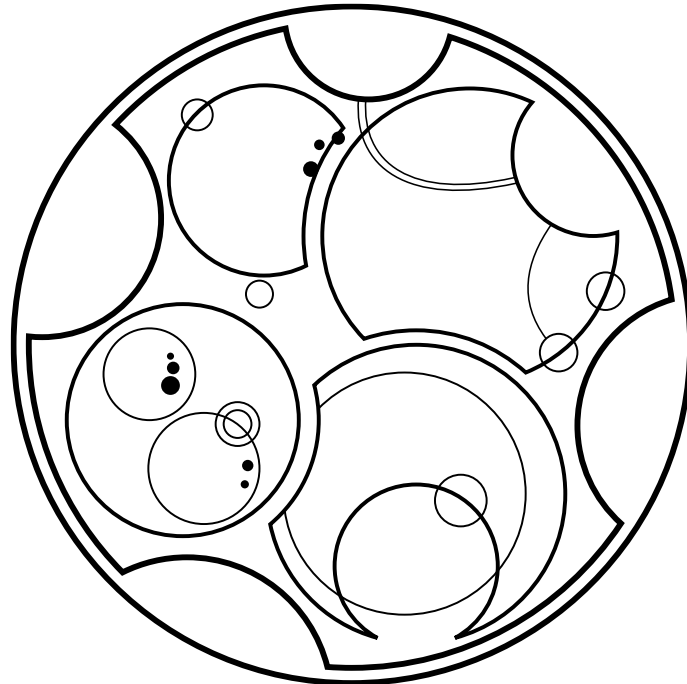

Fig. 29: Bow ties are cool.

The punctuation

Fig. 30: The Gallifreyan punctuation

In Fig. 29 there are two sentence circles. The inner sentence circle, with the divots, and the outer sentence circle which just wraps everything up.

The punctuation of a sentence is always placed on the inner sentence circle. The `?`, `!` and `;` can be situated on the inside or outside of the inner circle. All other punctuation marks should stay on the inner circle.

The `'` is a special case. The two lines that designate an `'`, must not start on the inner circle and end on the outer circle. Instead they must start or end in between the two letter/consonant stems, and start/end on the inner sentence circle. The following examples show good and bad practice.
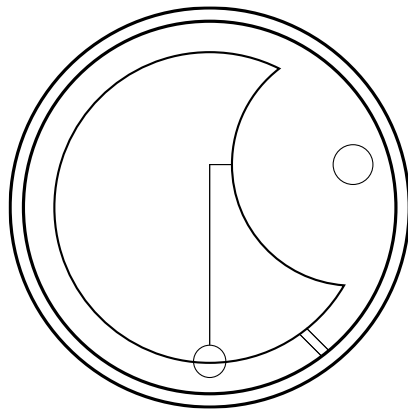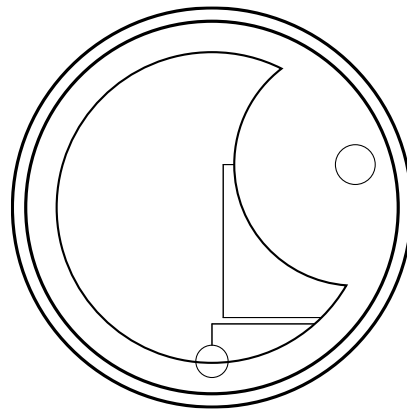
Fig. 31: Correct: I've   Fig. 32: Wrong: Ive

Connected Sentences

Sentences are connected by interlocking them with the use of the divots on the inner sentence circle. In this way the sentences form chains like shown in Fig. 31. These chains are originally read from left to right, but you might want to add your own touch and rearrange them differently. The order of the sentences should at least be guessable from context.
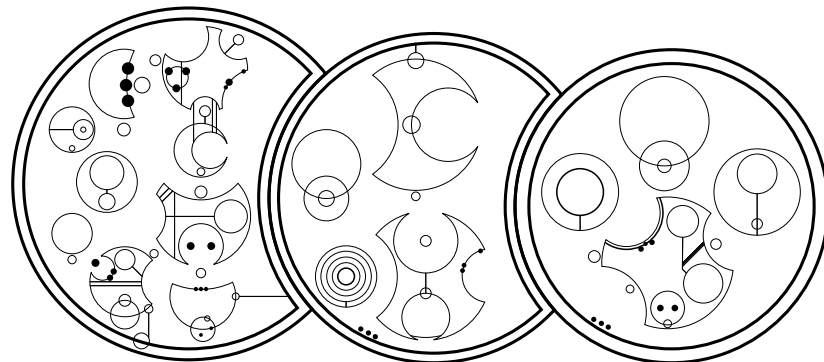

Fig. 33: Your chances of survival are one in thousand. Forget about the thousand! Concentrate on the one!

Numbers

Numbers can be written as concentric circles. The area between two adjacent circles is called a ring and represents a digit. The number of lines inside a ring specifies the value of that digit. Small circles inscribed into a ring denote the value of five. The numbers in Fig. 34 and Fig. 35 are 1048 and -13.37.

Numbers are read from the outermost to the innermost ring. If one circle is thicker than the others, it specifies the decimal point. If there is not thickest circle, the number is not a decimal number. Negative numbers are

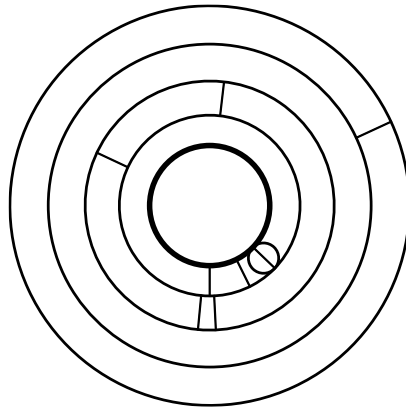recognisable by a line that is drawn across the innermost circle.
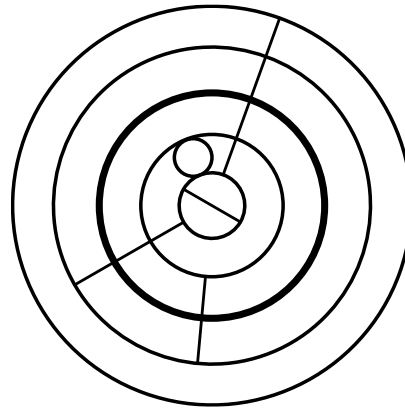

Fig. 34: 1048   Fig. 35: -13.37

The Final Test

Gallifreyan sentences are read from outermost to innermost word. Translate this sentence to know if you're a real Gallifreyan pro!
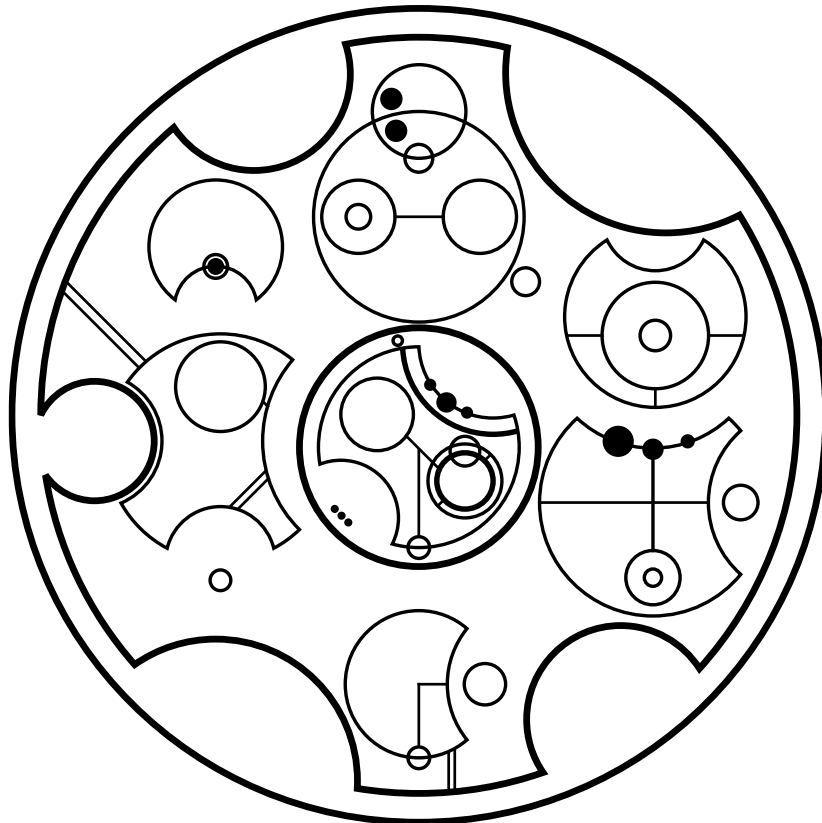

Fig. 36: The final test

FAQ

What editor can you recommend to start writing SCG?

The best known graphics designer program to write Circular Gallifreyan is Inkscape. However Inkscape is

overkill to write Gallifreyan and not that easy to use. I use and recommend Gravit Designer because it's free and easy to use and can be downloaded on any operating system. It can even be used in the browser. Something that I really appreciate is the amazing support.

Can you translate something for me?

Contact me and I'll see what I can do.

Is it possible to combine two consonants or vowels that aren't the same?

Yes, but it's a little more complicated. To find out more about it, check out this guide made by u/SpellKeeper AKA Kemipo.

How do I write a U if it's just one word?

Either make the line which originates from the u circle back to the word circle, or make another circle around the word which would be the sentence circle for the line of the U to go.

Ask another question