

Choosing typography

Typography

In your lifetime you've seen billions of letters and millions of words, yet you might never have consciously noticed the typefaces you read.

Type is important because it is an unconscious persuader. It attracts attention, sets the style and tone of a document, colors how readers interpret the words, and defines the feeling of a page — usually without the reader realizing. In short, the best typography goes often unnoticed. The art of typography illuminates the meaning of the copy. The basic rules of page layout help the designer to express the content visually.

Typography

Type is your personality on paper.

Change your typeface and you go from casual to formal, silly to serious, staid to stylish, old-fashioned to modern.

Type is image.

You'd dress your best if you were going to an important meeting, and your documents need to be well-dressed, too. Type can reinforce your image as a company or an individual. If you use it consistently enough, people will start to associate you with certain typefaces. They might find themselves thinking of you when they see that typeface, without knowing why.

Typography

Type is power.

Type has an effect on you even if you don't consciously notice it. You can use this power to your advantage to attract attention, strengthen message, and improve your image, or you can overlook it and work against yourself saying one message with your text while conveying another with your font.

Type is communication.

Communication means relaying information about our logic and emotions to others. The better you learn to communicate, the better others will know your message.

Type is important.

The right typeface can encourage people to read your message. The wrong typeface or wrong typography (type usage) can make your message go unread.

Typography

Two most important things to remember:

Type is on the page to serve the text.

It should make the words easy to read and provide a suitable background. Type should not overpower the text. Type can be beautiful and decorative — but if it calls undue attention to itself or makes it more difficult to read the text — then it becomes self-conscious and distracting — like bad movie direction.

There are not good or bad typefaces, there are appropriate and inappropriate typefaces.

Think about your reader and the feeling you want to convey, then choose a typeface that fits.

Typography

What's Appropriate?

Type is emotional on subliminal level because of the connotations it conveys. For example, Helvetica is used on tax forms. Now, how do you think you're going to feel when you read something in Helvetica? You may not consciously realize it is the same typeface, you may not even know it is Helvetica. What matters is that you've seen the typeface before and not under the most pleasant circumstances.

Typography

If your business is one that needs to be taken seriously, such as banking, don't choose a whimsical such as University Roman or you'll lose credibility.

If you have a fun business, don't use serious typeface such as Helvetica or you'll come across as boring. With that in mind, find the most appropriate typeface, not the prettiest, not the most space-efficient but the most appropriate.

University Roman

Helvetica

Typography

If the absolutely most important thing about your document is that it has to be easy to read by anyone of any age with any kind of eyesight under any kind of lighting conditions, then the typeface you choose must fit those criteria and you will probably end up with something that has large x-height such as **Cheltenham, Melior, or Serifa**.

If the most important thing is that it looks traditional, then you'll choose a typeface such as **Centaur, Bembo, Bodoni, Gilliard, Palatino, or Weiss**.

If you want something casual and friendly, you'll choose something like **Souvenir or Cooper**.

Serifa

Palatino

Souvenir

Typography

How do you tell which font is formal or informal?

Look at it and decide for yourself or hand out samples to your friends and ask them what it reminds them off. Think about the reader and what you want to convey. See how different typefaces convey different feelings. At least 80% of typography is common sense.

Typography

Which faces work best together?

The answer is usually simple: serif faces work best with sans serif faces. This means that if your body text is in **Goudy Old Style**, a serif face, you should use a sans serif as a companion. Don't use **Garamond with Goudy** (they're both serif faces). It will look sloppy if you do.

Goudy

Garamond

Goudy

Frutiger

Typography

Avoid the overused. Most people turn first to the default fonts in their computer when they are choosing type. While this is convenient it is not necessarily effective because these typefaces are overused and have lost some of their impact. **Helvetica, Arial and Times Roman** are the most overused ones. When you use them, you are looking like everyone else. There are thousands of typefaces to choose from so choose wisely.

Typography

Type Terms and Fundamentals

Fonts are the electronic files that contain typefaces. A single typeface is made up of the upper and lowercase letters of the alphabet, the numbers, punctuation marks, and special characters, all in particular style, such as Garamond.

Type size is always measured in points. There are approximately 72 points per inch. Body text is generally set from 10 to 12 points.

Typography

Serif or Sans Serif Typefaces. A serif is the small crossbar (or finishing stroke) that ends the main stroke of letters. Sans (French for “without”) serif typefaces don’t have serifs.

Classic serif: Goudy, Garamond, Caslon, Palatino, Bodoni, Times, Baskerville, Cheltenham

Classic sans serif: Helvetica, Folio, Impact, Futura, Frutiger, Gill Sans, Univers, Optima

→ **Serif** ←

Typography

Weights. Typefaces generally come in several weights such as regular, italic, bold and bold italic. Different weights of the same typeface are called a family.

Faces designed for headings and headlines may have only one weight but body text face usually have four, with professional fonts offering as many as 16 or so, from very light to very black.

Adobe Garamond type family, designed by Robert Slimbach, 1988

The roman font is the core or spine from which a family of typefaces derives.

Adobe Garamond Regular

Italic fonts, which are based on cursive writing, have forms distinct from roman.

Adobe Garamond Italic

SMALL CAPS HAVE A HEIGHT THAT IS SIMILAR TO *the lowercase* X-HEIGHT.

Adobe Garamond Expert (Small Caps)

Bold (and semibold) typefaces are used for emphasis within a hierarchy.

Adobe Garamond Bold and Semibold

Bold (and semibold) typefaces each need to include an italic version, too.

Adobe Garamond Bold and Semibold Italic

A full family has two sets of numerals: *lining* (123) and *non-lining* (123).

Adobe Garamond Regular and Expert numerals

Typography

Kerning involves moving letters closer together or farther apart so that they appear evenly spaced which in turn makes them easier to read. Most fonts include kerning pairs (To, Tr, We and so on) that adjust their spacing automatically when typed consecutively. These are all you need for body text but sometimes you need to kern large type manually.

Takes two

SCALA, WITH KERNING SUPPRESSED

Spacing appears uneven, with gaps around the T and w.

Takes two

SCALA, WITH KERNING

Spacing seems more even.

nearly touch

SCALA ITALIC, WITH KERNING SUPPRESSED

A gap appears between the l and y.

nearly touch

SCALA ITALIC, WITH KERNING

The intimacy of italic requires kerning.

LOVE LETTERS

The VE and TT combinations make the whole word look mismatched.

LOVE LETTERS

Kerning has been manually adjusted for a more even appearance.

rub

my back

TYPE CRIME:
TOO MUCH SPACE
*Mind the gap,
especially at larger
sizes*

Typography

Tracking involves the spacing within a whole word, sentence or paragraph.

Too loose > letters do not relate

Too tight > letters collide

LOVE LETTERS

SCALA CAPITALS, *normal tracking*

LOVE LETTERS

SCALA CAPITALS, *loose tracking*

LOVE LETTERS LOVE LETTERS

SCALA SMALL CAPITALS, *normal vs. loose tracking*

love letters love letters

SCALA ROMAN AND ITALIC, *normal tracking*

love letters love letters

SCALA, ROMAN AND ITALIC, *loose tracking*

Lowercase letters respond less favorably to letterspacing than do uppercase letters, because they are designed to sit together intimately on a line.

NORMAL TRACKING

Letters do love one another. However, due to their anatomical differences, some letters have a hard time achieving intimacy. Consider the letter V, for example, whose seductive valley makes her limbs stretch out above her base. In contrast, L solidly holds his ground yet harbors a certain emptiness above the waist. Automated kerning tables solve these problems in most situations, but some letters may require personal attention at larger sizes. Capital letters, being square and conservative, prefer to keep a little distance from their neighbors.

NEGATIVE TRACKING

Letters do love one another. However, due to their anatomical differences, some letters have a hard time achieving intimacy. Consider the letter V, for example, whose seductive valley makes her limbs stretch out above her base. In contrast, L solidly holds his ground yet harbors a certain emptiness above the waist. Automated kerning tables solve these problems in most situations, but some letters may require personal attention at larger sizes. Capital letters, being square and conservative, prefer to keep a little distance from their neighbors.

TYPE CRIME:

NEGATIVE TRACKING

Make the shoe fit, not the foot. Don't use negative tracking to save space.

Typography

Classification of typefaces

Aa Aa Aa Aa

Humanist

Transitional

Modern

Egyptian

Aa Aa Ad

Humanist Sans

Transitional Sans

Geometric Sans

Few good fonts

.....

BASKERVILLE

Designed by *John Baskerville*, 1757

.....

BODONI

Designed by *Giambattista Bodoni*, 1790s

.....

ADOBE CASLON

Designed by *Carol Twombly*, 1990, based on
types by *William Caslon*, 1734–70

.....

CENTAUR

Designed by *Bruce Rogers*, 1912–14.

The italic, by *Frederic Wards*, is based on the
fifteenth-century hand of *Ludovico degli Arrighi*.

.....

CENTURY EXPANDED

Designed by *Morris Fuller Benton*, 1900

.....

CLARENDON

Named for the **Clarendon Press**, Oxford,
who commissioned it in 1845

.....

HTF DIDOT

Designed by *Jonathan Hoefler*, 1992,
based on types by *François Ambroise Didot*, 1784

.....

FEDRA SANS

Designed by Peter Bilak, 2001, who was asked
to create a "de-Protestantized **Univers**"

.....

FILOSOFIA

Designed by *Zuzana Licko*, 1996,
a revival of the types of *Bodoni*

.....

FRUTIGER

Designed by **Adrian Frutiger**, 1976

.....

FRANKLIN GOTHIC

Designed by **Morris Fuller Benton**, 1904

.....

FUTURA

Designed by **Paul Renner**, 1927, who sought
an "honest expression of technical processes"

.....

GEORGIA

Designed by *Matthew Carter*, 1996,
for display on screen

.....

GILL SANS

Designed by **Eric Gill**, 1928.
It has been described as Britain's *Helvetica*.

.....

ADOBE

GARAMOND

Designed by *Robert Slimbach*, 1989,
based on pages printed by *Claude Garamond*
in the sixteenth century

.....

HELVETICA

Designed by **Max Miedinger**, 1957

.....

HOEFLER TEXT

Designed by *Jonathan Hoefler*, c. 1995

.....

INTERSTATE

Designed by **Tobias Frere-Jones**, 1993,
inspired by U.S. highway signs

.....

ADOBE JENSON

Designed by *Robert Slimbach*, 1995

.....

META

Designed by *Erik Spiekermann*, 1991

.....

MRS EAVES

Designed by *Zuzana Licko*, 1996,
inspired by pages printed by *John Baskerville*

.....

NEUTRAFACE

Designed by **Christian Schwartz**, House Industries,
2002, based on lettering created by the architect
Richard Neutra in the 1940s and 50s

.....

NOBEL

Designed by **Tobias Frere-Jones**, 1993,
based on 1929 types by the Dutch typographer
Sjoerd Henrik de Roos.
Frere-Jones describes Nobel as
"Futura cooked in a dirty pan."

.....

NEWS GOTHIC

Designed by *Morris Fuller Benton*, 1908

.....

QUADRAAT

Designed by *Fred Smeijers*, 1992

.....

SABON

Designed by *Jan Tschichold*, 1966,
inspired by the sixteenth-century types of
Claude Garamond