

**Typography 101**

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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.

*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.

*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.

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**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.

**Helvetica**

University Roman

**Cheltenham****Melior**

## Serifa

## Centaur

## Bembo

## Bodoni

## Palatino

## Weiss

**Souvenir****Cooper****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.

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.

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.

*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 of. 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.

Goudy Old Style  
Garamond

Helvetica  
Arial  
Times New Roman

Serif  
Sans Serif

Garamond Regular  
*Garamond Italic*  
Garamond Bold  
*Garamond Bold Italic*

### 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.

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.

### 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.

*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

*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. Each of these weights is contained in a single font file. 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. Body text families should have at least three weights (some older serif faces were not originally designed with bold-italic). Avoid inexpensive packages that provide one or the weights only, making the fonts much less versatile and useful than they should be.

*Body vs. Display.* Type can be broken down into two more categories: body and display. Body typefaces are designed to be read for paragraphs and pages but they can also be used in place of display text. Most body typefaces have serifs. Display text is larger type designed specifically for headings and headlines, that is, to be used only a few words at a time. Display faces should not be used for body text because they are too difficult to read in small sizes.

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The space between lines of text is called leading because in the days when metal type was used, the space between lines was achieved by using thin strips of lead hammered to a precise thickness.  
(auto 9/10.8)

The space between lines of text is called leading because in the days when metal type was used, the space between lines was achieved by using thin strips of lead hammered to a precise thickness.  
(9/9) = type set solid

The space between lines of text is called leading because in the days when metal type was used, the space between lines was achieved by using thin strips of lead hammered to a precise thickness.  
(9/7) = negative leading

The space between lines of text is called leading because in the days when metal type was used, the space between lines was achieved by using thin strips of lead hammered to a precise thickness.  
(9/15) = positive leading

The space between lines of text is called leading because in the days when metal type was used, the space between lines was achieved by using thin strips of lead hammered to a precise thickness.  
(9/18)

**Kerning** (needs adjustment)

*Leading.* The space between lines of text is called leading because in the days when metal type was used, the space between lines was achieved by using thin strips of lead hammered to a precise thickness. The default setting adds 20 percent to type size. For example, if you have 10 point text, you would have 12 point leading (10/12). For body texts, it is often beneficial to add more to give the text more room to breathe. However it cannot be too much otherwise the line flow will be broken. It should never reach twice the letter size (10/20). For large headlines, it can be beneficial to use negative leading which is slightly less than the text size (20/19).

*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.

### **Basic Type Rules**

- Body text should be between 10 and 12 points with 11 point best for printing.
- Use the same typeface, type size and leading for all your body copy.
- Use enough leading (or line spacing) or your text will be cramped and hard to read. Always add at least one or two points of leading for body type.
- Don't make your lines too short or too long. The optimum size is between 30 characters (6cm) and under 70 characters (12cm).
- Make paragraph beginnings clear. Use either an indent or line space, not both. Do not indent the first paragraph.
- Use only one space after a period, not two.
- Don't justify text unless you have to. If you justify text, you must use hyphenation or you will create rivers of white space running down your page.
- Don't underline headlines or subheads since lines separate them from the text with which they belong. Use italics instead.
- Leave more space above headlines than below them, and avoid setting them in all caps. Use subheads liberally to help readers find what they are looking for.
- Don't set long blocks of text in italics, bold, all caps, or reversed out because they are harder to read.
- Use smart quote and apostrophe marks, not the inch and foot marks.
- Always spell check!

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**Alignments***Justified type*

The kerning on some lines is too tight at places and too loose elsewhere. You need to manually break some lines to adjust for this problem.

*Flush left, rag right*

Much easier to read as the eye flows from one word to the next without jumping the space.

**Bullets and pull out quotes***Hard to read*

- Use enough leading (or line spacing) or your text will be cramped and hard to read. Always add at least one or two points of leading for body type.
- Don't make your lines too short or too long. The optimum size is between 30 characters (6cm) and under 70 characters (12cm).
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*Much easier to read* — space after bullet, indent lines below and give a small space after each bullet point

- Use enough leading (or line spacing) or your text will be cramped and hard to read. Always add at least one or two points of leading for body type.
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**Pull out quotes**

should be inset like this:

“Like the anatomy of typography, typographic syntax and communication have a language that must be learned to understand typographic design... The imaginative designer can expand and clarify content through the communicative use of visual form.”

— Meggs, Carter, Day, 1985.

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### Hyphens, em and en dashes

— Em dash (Alt 0151)

– En dash (Alt 0150)

- Hyphen

Em dashes are used within text to continue a thought. For instance...

By the time you graduate, you'll be ready to meet challenges of your chosen field

— whether that's a career or advanced study.

En dashes are used for number info like...

The rate of employment varies from 54% – 35%

Dinner is served from 5:00 – 7:00pm

Hyphens are used for phone numbers or compound words...

970-351-1786

real-life

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.

### Widows and orphans

These are short words or phrases that sit alone at the end of a paragraph or the top of a column — isolated from the rest of the paragraph. You may have to re-write, kern or manually break lines to adjust.

**TOP TEN TYPOGRAPHY ERRORS**

*Placing type too close to the edge of the paper*

## Leaving too much space between the lines

(auto leading)

## Leaving too much space between the lines

(negative leading)

Word spacing problems in body copy arise most often when the type is justified.

If the tracking is too tight, the letters look crowded.

If the letters are too loose, they look isolated.

Either they are trying to feel the teacher into thinking that they have written more copy than they actually wrote or they think the viewer is more likely to read it if it is big.

## Isolating small words in headlines.

*1. Placing type too close to the edge of the paper or to a graphic line or border.*

This applies to both headlines and body copy. You are generally safe if you leave at least 1 cm margin area between type and page edges, though you may need a wider gutter (inside) margin (1.5–2 cm). 3 mm margin between type and graphic borders generally is sufficient. If type is to be set over a color block having no border line around it, the type can be set as little as 2 mm from the edge of the color block.

*2. Leaving too much space between the lines*

Computers always put too much space between the lines when type is 18 pt. or larger. Manual adjustment must be made to avoid the appearance that the lines are floating. Line spacing may need to be adjusted further if one or more has no ascenders or descenders.

*3. Leaving too much or too little space between letters and words.*

The letter “i” is the gauge of appropriate word spacing in headlines. If the headline is set in all capital letters, the word spacing should be the width of a capital I. If it is set in caps and lower case letters, proper word spacing is the width of a lower case i. Word spacing problems in body copy arise most often when the type is justified. Hyphenation or a change in alignment will solve the problem.

Appropriate letter spacing is a bit of a judgement call. For body copy, it depends on the size of the type and the shape of the letters of the font being used. If the tracking is too tight, the letters look crowded. If the letters are too loose, they look isolated. Both situations make the copy harder to read. Improper letter spacing is most obvious in headlines. In order for the letters to appear to be evenly spaced, some space may need to be added or subtracted between letter pairs.

*4. Using type larger than 12 points for body copy.*

Students usually use larger type size for one of two reasons. Either they are trying to feel the teacher into thinking that they have written more copy than they actually wrote or they think the viewer is more likely to read it if it is big. Neither reason is acceptable. Size is never a substitute for substance. What makes a viewer read copy is an interesting premise in the design piece. In fact, readers tend to read more copy if it looks like there is less.

*5. Isolating small words in headlines.*

When a small word is isolated at the end of a longer line of type, the space before the word looks larger than other word spacing in the headline.

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S S  
t t  
a a  
c c  
k k  
i i  
n n  
g g

Stacking

Stacking

*SETTING A HEADLINE IN  
ALL CAPS IN A SCRIPT  
TYPEFACE.*

USING *too* much  
font **variety**.

between | words in a  
headline | align

Splitting the lines

6. *Stacking the words of a word vertically, as stair steps or in other unusual ways (unless there is a very logical reason for doing so.)*

Stacking letters makes them harder to read. Nowhere it is written that headlines or other large text must be set in straight, horizontal lines. A flowing headline set on a curve might amplify the visual and verbal message. Placing the lines of type at an angle, even 90° looks better than stacking while it fills space in a similar manner.

7. *Setting a headline in all caps in a script typeface.*

Alphabets with large, very ornate capital letters are not intended to be set in all capital letters. Some such ornate alphabets have no lower case letters. That doesn't change the situation. The caps can look good at the beginning of a sentence or a paragraph and make it easy for the viewer to know where to start but they are a legibility nightmare when used together to form words. Even some very contemporary typefaces are still too complex to use as caps only in a headline. As a rule of thumb, if it looks a little busy to you, considering you know what it says, it will look ten times worse to someone who doesn't.

8. *Using too much font variety.*

Having a word or a phrase in a variation of the main font in a headline or even using a different typeface can add emphasis and enhance the meaning visually. Using more than one variation makes the headline look disjointed and confusing.

9. *Having word spaces align vertically.*

When the spaces between words in a headline align vertically from line to line, they create a visual split. The white space becomes a barrier to reading the lines as a continuous unit. Often the problem can be adjusted by changing the alignment or positioning the lines as separate copy blocks in a headline.

10. *Splitting the lines of a headline.*

Unity applies to headlines just as it applies to overall design. Positioning a photo or an illustration between the lines of a headline requires the viewer to make a visual jump in order to get the full meaning. While there are exceptions, it is generally better to keep the lines of a headline together and flowing smoothly.

**of a headline.**