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# PRINTtips

## More Than Ever Before ... Type Matters



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**T**ypography has always been important as a design element in written documents. It attracts and holds the reader's attention, indicates a hierarchy of information, creates harmony, and builds recognition without the reader being conscious of it. Good typography is part of the design structure that underlies effective communication.

Now, as the world develops a new visual culture in smart phones, tablets, notebooks and e-readers, we are beginning to realize just how influential typography is in providing information and shaping opinion. More than ever before, type matters.

### Typography Basics

The basic element of typography is a typeface, a family of fonts in different sizes, weights, forms, and proportions. When movable type – letters that could be assembled, broken apart, and reassembled – was first developed, each font in a typeface consisted of an alphabet (the upper and lower case letters, numerals, punctuation marks, and symbols) in a single size, weight, and style:

- Size = the height of the alphabet measured in points (print) or ems (web)
- Weight = the thickness of the alphabet relative to its height. Weight is described as light, medium, bold, or black.
- Style = the slant of the letters. Upright letters are known as roman; slanted are called italics.



The distinction between a font and typeface began to blur when fonts became digital instead of physical. Without the need for actual type for each size, weight, and style, the two terms gradually became interchangeable. If you want to keep them distinct, design expert Gary Hustwit says a font is what you use, and a typeface is what you see. Just as individual songs make up an album, individual fonts make up a typeface.

### Typefaces Over Time: A Brief Summary

Typefaces have been continuously developed since Gutenberg designed the first one – Textura – in 1454 in Frankfurt. Based on Blackletter, the calligraphy style used by monks to transcribe church documents, Textura was used for the first 180 copies of the Gutenberg Bible. Today you can see Blackletter used as the logotype for The New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, and Corona beer.

**This is a sample of Blackface.**

Because Blackface is difficult to read and cutting fonts was difficult, it was replaced by Roman

## More Than Ever Before ... Type Matters (cont.)

*“Garamond is the typeface used for all the Harry Potter books.”*

*“Futura was used for the plaque left by the Apollo 13 astronauts on the moon ...”*

*“Like fashion and furniture, typefaces can be simultaneously aesthetically pleasing and functional.”*

type. Garamond is a Roman typeface. Developed in 1535 in Paris by Claude Garamond, royal printer to King François I, it marked the final transition from Blackletter to Roman. Garamond is the typeface used for all the Harry Potter books.

**This is a sample of Garamond.**

About 1720 in England, William Caslon refined the ampersand (&) in a font that bears his name. Caslon was the principal typeface used by Colonial printers and was used for the first printing of the Declaration of Independence.

**This is a sample of Caslon.**

Giambattista Bodoni, an Italian typographer who worked in Parma, Italy in 1790, developed the four principles of type design: regularity, cleanness, good taste, and charm. The typeface Bodoni is considered the first modern typeface, contrasting thick lines with hairline serifs. Calvin Klein uses Bodoni for its logotype, and Vanity Fair magazine uses it for titling.

**This is a sample of Bodoni.**

In 1926 in Frankfurt, Germany, type designer Paul Renner was arrested for denouncing the Gothic type that had been embraced by the Nazi Party. His font, Futura, was a key font in the Modernist movement. Futura was used for the plaque left by the Apollo 13 astronauts on the moon as well as the logotype for Volkswagen.

**This is a sample of Futura.**

The typeface Helvetica had its origins in 1957 in Switzerland. Its name comes from Confoederatio Helvetica, the Latin words for Swiss Confederation (the official name of Switzerland). Helvetica was designed by Max Miedinger and Edouard Hoffman and was one of the first fonts available on the Apple Macintosh in 1984. Because of its simplicity and readability, Helvetica is widely used worldwide, especially for signage. American Airlines, Crate & Barrel, and American Apparel use Helvetica as their logotype.

**This is a sample of Helvetica.**

### Why Typography Matters

A frequent answer to the question of why typography matters centers on creating a recognizable brand or citing studies comparing reader speed or comprehension using different typefaces. Thomas Phinney, vice president at FontLab and a self-professed type geek, gives a different reason. He argues that typography is like fashion or furniture – people don't need new type or clothing or furniture, but they want to look different or evoke a particular feeling or find a fit with a particular “look”. He continues that true innovation is rare, but people consistently come up with variations on existing themes or new combinations.

Like fashion and furniture, typefaces can be simultaneously aesthetically pleasing and functional. Phinney says:

“A great chair is not only visually attractive, but comfortable to sit in; a great typeface can be pleasing to the eye, and perform other functions as well, such as being legible for printing a newspaper, or on screen at body text sizes. Like furniture and clothing design, type design is a craft, blending art and science.”

### Typography as Visual Language

In professional graphic design, visual language refers to meanings created by the visual appearance of text and image. In contrast, verbal language is the literal meaning of words, phrases, and sentences.

Typography has a powerful effect on meaning and interpretation. As a visual language, it can either subtly shape meaning and interpretation or completely dominate the verbal meaning – in other words, the look can speak louder than the words.

We have all seen examples of typography badly matched to the verbal meaning – a child-like font used for a serious heading, or a hard-to-read font used for body copy, or too many different fonts used on a page.

## More Than Ever Before ... Type Matters (cont.)

In 2010, Jessica Glaser, a graphic communication specialist and partner in Bright Pink Communication Design in the UK, and Jeff Leak, a lecturer at the University of Wolverhampton in the UK, created an illustration to show just how much typography affects verbal meaning.

In the left image, the typography and design create a clear association with a warning sign. Conversely, the right image is definitely not commanding and could be interpreted as having a completely different meaning than the word.

Understanding how profoundly typography can



influence meaning and interpretation is a useful skill for anyone who designs for print or the web. If you need assistance in analyzing or developing effective designs, contact us at 513-248-2121.

*“Understanding how profoundly typography can influence meaning and interpretation is a useful skill ...”*

## Vocabulary of the Graphic Arts

**Alphabet length:** The length of an entire alphabet, A to Z, set in one row. The alphabet length of a type face will vary depending on the version (light face, bold face, roman, italic, condensed, or extended).

**Body type:** Type used for the main body of the page; usually measuring between 8 and 14 points.

**Display font:** Type 16 points or larger in size. Also called headline type.

**En dash/Em dash:** A punctuation mark roughly equivalent to the width of a lowercase n and m for the typeface in which they are used. En dashes (–) are primarily for showing duration or range; em dashes (—) set apart clauses in a sentence.

**Face:** The printing surface on a piece of foundry type.

**Foundry type:** Metal type cast as individual pieces from molds.

**Glyph:** The individual characters in a typeface, including the letters of the alphabet, numbers, and punctuation marks. May also include symbols, such as dingbats.

**Kerning:** To adjust the spacing between individual pairs of letters. See also: tracking.

**Leading (rhymes with heading):** The space between rows of type. Also called line spacing because thin strips of lead were inserted between lines of type to add space and make the type easier to read.

**Letter spacing:** The adjustment of spaces between letters to improve legibility or readability. Also known as tracking or character spacing.

**Logo:** An abbreviation of logotype, originally meaning a signature or trademark.

**Pica:** A measure of type size. One pica equals one-sixth of an inch.

**Point:** A unit of measure. Twelve points equals one pica. Pica was once the name given to 12-point type, and a 12-point capital letter M was exactly square.

**Tracking:** To adjust letter spacing for an entire range of text (such as a headline or paragraph). See also: kerning.

**Typeface:** A complete alphabet, including both letters and characters. Also called font.

*“Glyph: The individual characters in a typeface, including the letters of the alphabet, numbers and punctuation marks. May also include symbols, such as dingbats.”*



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## Greeking...

*“A paragraph  
commonly used for  
greeking is called  
lorem ipsum ...”*

**A** good way to test the overall effect of typography is to use greeking, a paragraph of nonsense words to which you apply the specific typographic effects you are considering. A paragraph commonly used for greeking is called lorem ipsum after the first two words. Although the text looks like Latin, it is nonsense:

*Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris nisi ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat. Duis aute irure dolor in reprehenderit in voluptate velit esse cillum dolore eu fugiat nulla pariatur. Excepteur sint occaecat cupidatat non proident, sunt in culpa qui officia deserunt mollit anim id est laborum.*