

MY LITTLE

BOOK of

GOOD

T

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GRA
PHY

WHAT IS GOOD TYPOGRAPHY?

Typography has a specific purpose of so arranging letters, distributing the space and controlling the type as to aid to the maximum the reader's comprehension of the text.
(Stanley Morrison)

Good typography has to be legible and, as such, the result of intelligent planning.
(Jan Tschichold)

Out of thousands of typefaces, all we need are a few basic ones, and trash the rest."
(Massimo Vignelli)

Form follows function
(Marshall McLuhan)

Do not mistake legibility for communication
(David Carson)

'Good typography' has the very broad aim of designing and setting text in a way that maximises comprehension of its message by the reader. Many of the current 'rules' originated in modernist approaches to design, particularly International Swiss Style that became prominent in Europe from 1920s and spread to United States after the war. They are also based on scientific research into visual perception and how readers read and comprehend texts.

However there are significant disagreements on exactly what 'good typography' means in practice. Influential typographers have radically changed their opinions in the course of their career. Research findings are often inconclusive, contradictory or dependent on specifics of the reader samples involved.

Any attempt to lay down unequivocal 'rules' for 'good typography' will inevitably always be contentious because:

- **texts vary in purpose and intention:** what is good in medical instructions or highway signs is not necessarily applicable for novels, poetry or photobooks. Some messages require more or less thought on the part of the reader than others.
- **aesthetic fashions are not fixed:** reader expectations change over time as new trends and practices become mainstream. People from different cultures react differently to particular styles, typefaces and layout depending on traditional art forms and/or historical associations.
- **different reader needs:** there are age differences, specific needs of readers with dyslexia and different types of visual impairment.
- **technologies change:** advances in digital and on-line software make new forms possible, in turn leading to new reader demands, for example 'quick soundbites' or cross-platform compatibility of texts
- **cost practicalities:** typography choices depend on budgets and specific client requirements for their readers - the types of typefaces and layouts that are possible in high-end colour printing in large formats on quality paper are different from those on newsprint or small low-cost publications that will need to be cheaply copied in black and white.

Good typography cannot be seen as implementation of a set of rigid rules. It should be conceived more as a delicate balancing of different priorities implied by the purpose and intention of the text, and how best to communicate desired meanings in the context of (multiple) visual perceptions of the intended readers and available budgets of clients.

Communication must mean more than just bland readability and legibility. It requires also selection of a style appropriate to the subject matter that is capable of having maximum impact on the reader.

COMMUNICATION

Message: *Do the typographic elements of typeface, layout and design work together to convey a clear message?*

Meaning: *Are elements in tension to convey multiple meanings? Is this appropriate to the text's purpose and readership?*

Page 4
expression
emphasis
colour
contrast
hierarchy

READABILITY

Comprehension: *How easily is the text can be read? Does the layout enable the eye to move between words and from line to line with the minimum of effort and maximum understanding?*

Motivation: *How much does the reader WANT to read the text? Does the layout attract and retain the reader's attention?*

Page 5
line length
alignment
justification
hyphenation

LEGIBILITY

Typeface: *Are the individual characters or letters (glyphs) understandable or recognizable as distinct from each other?*

Text: *Is the overall spacing between words, lines and paragraphs optimal for the forms and counterforms of the typeface?*

Page 6
typeface
size
style
leading
tracking

IMPACT

Distinctiveness: *Is the text attractive compared to other competing texts and/or calls on the reader's attention?*

Aesthetics: *Are the aesthetic forms appropriate for the intended audience?*

Page 7
entry points
titles
dropcaps
kerning
texture
shape
whitespace

COMMUNICATION

Communication requires balancing of expressive function of different elements to facilitate comprehension of meaning/s.

Hierarchy through contrast

Considered use of contrast in typeface, colour and style to differentiate the most important from subsidiary elements guide the reader through the different elements on the page

Hierarchy between different elements in the text enables the reader to navigate through and easily find the sections of the text they are most interested in. This requires the designer to analyse different levels and dimensions of meaning and how these can be clarified by separating different types of text, quotations, captions, bylines, information boxes and tables and so on.

Hierarchy is partly achieved through consistent use of a layout grid, rules and background elements.

Two different typefaces or styles within a type family are generally used: one serif and one sans serif with the same x-height. Contrasts in typeface colour, size, weight and style also differentiate different blocks of text.

Emphasis

Different letterforms have their own visual dynamic conveying different moods and meanings to the reader.

Display type gives greatest scope for different type choice

USED FOR HEADINGS AND EMPHASIS.

Some typefaces like Garamond recall old timeless novels.

Sans serif fonts like Arial may seem rather boring.

Calibri may be overfamiliar from Microsoft documents.

'Ugly' fonts (Monotype Corsiva, Haettenschweiler, Comic Sans italicised) may help the reader remember more of the text.

Expressive Typeface

Type size, weight and style can make text stand out and emphasise meaning.

Type size, weight and style can be used to emphasise particular words within the text.

But use only **ONE** element at a time or **IMPACT IS LOST.**

The increase of letter-spacing in text has a cultural association of a more objective typographic voice as in monospaced fonts.

Tighter letter-spacing indicates speed and cramming into tight space.

Colour

Use of colour can convey expressive meaning and emphasis in small blocks of text.

Professional, corporate, Serious business
Subtle use of tints

Playful, young, trendy, artistic

Readability is concerned with how type is arranged on the page, and how easily the eye can move from one element to another.

READABILITY

For a single-column design measure should ideally lie between 40 and 80 characters - some say 45 - 75. Many typographers consider the perfect measure to be 65/66 characters. Punctuation should preferably hang outside the measure..

For multiple column setups, 40–50 characters are often preferred. For multiple column setups, 40–50 characters are often preferred.

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Generally, if the measure is wide, the leading of a text should be increased.
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Line length or measure

The number of characters on a line including Caps, lowercase and numerals affect the ease with which the reader's eye moves from one line to another.

Flush left text is generally easiest to read because Roman alphabets are read from left to right and the eye needs to easily locate the beginning of each line. It is used for most body text

Centered text is used sparingly because both beginnings and ends of lines are irregular.

Justified text can be used for small blocks of text. It is also used stylistically for longer text. But can create distracting anomalies and spaces unless used with tracking and hyphenation.

Flush right text is generally used only for subheads and margin notes. Because we read left to right, the eye has to work harder to find the beginning of each line.

Alignment and justification

Alignment or range is the setting of text flow or image placement relative to a page, column (measure), table cell or tab. This affects the ease at which readers locate beginnings of lines.

Hyphenation is used in order to overcome distracting typographic anomalies like 'orphan' and 'widow' words on their own at the top of columns or end of paragraphs, and 'rivers' or gap patterns breaking up the type.

Most modern word processors hyphenate automatically by using a hyphenation algorithm. This can be set at various settings to determine which words can or cannot be hyphenated and where the hyphen would occur within words.

Hyphenation

Hyphenation is the splitting of words at the end of a line to make ends of lines clearer and reduce spaces within lines.

Legibility is determined by typeface design, size, style and vertical and horizontal spacing of glyphs to make them easily recognisable.

Typeface

Typeface design may have different purposes. The main aim for long blocks of text is legibility to increase readability, Each individual character or glyph should be unambiguous and distinguishable from all other characters in the font.

x-height: characters with greater x-height are more legible

character shapes: typefaces that are true to the basic letterforms are more legible than typefaces that have been condensed, expanded, embellished, or abstracted.

stroke contrast: if stroke contrast is too high then it make text more difficult to read

large open counters make easier reading

serifs help to distinguish between letters. Serifs may be less legible on certain types of paper where ink is likely to puddle.

Sans serif fonts are more legible on screen and for large type like highway signs.

Upper portions of letters play a stronger part than lower portions in the recognition process.

Extenders (ascenders, descenders and other projecting parts) increase salience (prominence).

Letterspacing or tracking

Consistent uniform degree of horizontal increase (or decrease) of space between letters affects overall density and texture in a line or block of text.

The amount of letter-spacing in text can affect how easily the eye recognises and distinguishes glyphs and is able to move from one glyph to the next.

As reading with phonetic writing systems is based in part on context, recognition of individual characters can be aided by slightly increased letter-spacing.

In digital software the default setting of tracking is zero, using the widths (and kerning information) built into the font itself. Letter-spacing adjustments are frequently used in news design to rewrite paragraphs that end in split words or that create orphans or widows.

Leading or linespacing

Leading refers to vertical spacing and distance between the baselines of successive lines of type.

A key element affecting legibility of different fonts is the linespacing or leading. Unlike traditional typesetting, digital typesetting can easily insert leading of any thickness. Auto-leading is conventionally set at 120% of type size or 2pt greater.

The aim is to clearly separate ascenders and descenders of subsequent lines. Without adding so much leading that the eye has difficulty moving from one line to the next.

Reverse text, i.e. white text on black requires larger text size and more leading. 12pt leading

Impact requires use of layout and contrast so that the reader's attention is captured and guided to the relevant parts of the text. It requires balancing boldness and 'style'

IMPACT

TITLES

should be bold - distinctive typeface, colour and style. Titles should not be predictable or cliché. Liberties can be taken here with legibility and readability considerations. Exaggerate the contrast to attract the reader's attention. But do not to overdo too many different contrasts on the page.

Entry Points

Bold entry points like titles and images are used to first attract the reader's attention.

Drop Caps

Drop Caps are used to guide the eye to the beginning of key sections.

Drop Caps are used to guide the eye to the beginning of key sections. They can be very large and bold.

DROPCAPS CAN also be smaller and cover whole words. Kerning may be necessary after the dropcap to wrap the text around the letter, depending on the style and effect required.

WA

Kerning is often needed in very large text so that blank spaces between glyphs all have similar area. Kerning is also used for impact and artistic effect in titles and logo design.

Kerning

Kerning (mortising) adjusts the horizontal spacing between individual characters

Interesting shapes of text can be created through manipulating the borders of the text blocks. Texture can be created through varying text size to make text blocks to rest the eye. Texture can be created through varying tints and text size to make text blocks to rest the eye. Texture can be created through varying tints to make text blocks to rest the eye. Texture can be created through varying tints and text size to make text blocks to rest the eye. Added whitespace around the characters allows the individual characters to emerge and be recognized more quickly. Used sparingly all these devices can create variety and increase impact of the text.

Whitespace

White or negative space is built into layout as an underlying abstract structure to avoid information overload and give prominence to the key elements on the page.

**Balance
'beauty',
expression
tension**

Legibility vs

vs?
IMPACT

*the new question is ...what ideas will we assemble and how will we relate them to each other? to visualize a modernism based on a radical reconception and an optimistic new agenda.
(Dan Friedman)*

Readability
vs?

Communication

The design's final visual form may be as much to do with working against rules and logic as working with them. The experiment is in finding the point where the form is in dynamic tension with the underlying information structures and hierarchies. A much more untuitive, creative approach.
(Hamish Muir)

Beauty

vs

vs?
TENSION