

# Typesetting Tips

*Put your best type forward.*





# **Do you want your audience to read your document?**

**Improve your chances  
by making your article  
easy to read.**

**Make the document  
difficult to read and...**

*To learn tips used by the professionals, continue...*



# Keep it simple

The number of typefaces<sup>1</sup> should be limited to 3 or 4 maximum.

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<sup>1</sup> 10 point Arial Bold and 12 point Arial Bold constitute two (2) different typefaces. Further, Arial Bold and Arial Regular constitute two different typefaces.



# Emphasis

Type is often compared to speech...

soft voice ..... light typefaces and some scripts

regular voice ..... most *regular* typefaces

shouting voice ..... most *boldface* typefaces

Use boldface type to get attention (as in the title).

Use regular typefaces to get your message across.

If you find you are using boldface type every few words in your document, you are probably upset. Take it easy on yourself and your reader. No one likes to be shouted at all of the time.



# Fitness

Use type that is appropriate to your document.

*Jester, Comic Sans, or P.T. Barnum* may be totally appropriate for a happy and fun document.

These same typefaces would be totally inappropriate for a document, say an observation, that may have to be presented in court to terminate someone.

Did you get a new typeface for your computer? Resist the urge. Use the font on a job where when it would be appropriate.



# Unity

Keep to the subject. Keep the elements (type, graphs, graphics, photos, etc.) of your document tied together.

If it enhances or makes your document easier to understand, you may elect to use it.

If an element adds extra weight without substance, or just looks pretty, save it for another time. Why waste your reader's time and add cost to the printing of your document?



# Spelling

Use the spell check supplied with your word processing program.

Remember, however, that your spell check will not alert you to all spelling problems, i.e., to, too, two. It is always appropriate to have a dictionary nearby when you may question the use of a word in your document.



# Proofing

Proofing a document involves two (2) people.

One reads the original copy, slowing down to emphasize or spell out unusual words and to say the words *open double quote*, *semicolon*, *period*, *comma*, *close single quote*, and so on. The second person faithfully follows his proof, makes corrections, and stops the reader to ask questions concerning anything that may seem strange or unusual.





# Spacing

Use one (1) space after all punctuation.

No exceptions.

The rule: two spaces after colons and periods applies *only* to typewriters.



# Underlining

Don't do it. Modern word processing programs now have italics. You don't have to underline any more.

Use italics for titles of books, newspapers, magazines, and foreign words and phrases. Italics is also used in your document for emphasis.



# Dashes

There are three:

- 1) the hyphen (-) is used for hyphenated words.
- 2) the en dash (–) is used in dates and times such as May 23–25 from 7:30 – 4:00 P.M.
- 3) the em dash (—) is the standard dash. In the old days on typewriters, two hyphens were substituted for the em dash. This is not acceptable on modern computers.



## Quotes and Apostrophes

Use the smart (curly or typesetters—“, ”, ‘, or ’) quotes in most of your text. Most modern word processing programs use these by default.

Use the dumb (typewriter style—" or ') quotes to indicate feet and inches as in 5' 6". You may have to look for these in a character or font chart.



# Reversed Type

Reversed type is white set against a black or color background.

Used inappropriately, it can be a nightmare for the reader—very difficult to read.

Used appropriately, reversed type can attract your attention.

You will probably have your best success with reversed type when using large bold sans serif fonts.

Before using reversed type on a layout, ask your printer if his machinery can produce quality reverses.



## All Caps

The use of all caps in the middle of a sentence (one or few words) can be used effectively for emphasis.

You may also try small caps (SMALL CAPS) if available.

DO NOT set blocks of type in all caps as it is difficult to read.



## **Line Lengths**

Line lengths that are too long, or too short can slow down the reader.

Some typesetters recommend an alphabet and one half (39 characters) as a maximum.

Others say people are comfortable with as many as 74, about average for books.

Before making a line length decision, consider the content and your audience.



## Body type

Body type should usually be between 9 and 12 points.

You may get away with 9 points when targeting teenagers, but do not even think of it when trying to reach seniors. Don't select 12 point for everything simply because it is the default setting on most word processors.

Further, remember that all 10 point type is not created equal. Because of differences in x-height, some 10-point type will be easier to read than others. Experiment.





## **Sans serif type**

For readability, a serif and sans serif type are preferred for large bodies of text.

Readability of type may also be improved by increasing leading.

Leading has been defined two ways:

- 1) the distance between consecutive lines of type
- 2) the distance from base line to base line of consecutive lines



## **Decorative Type**

Decorative type is best reserved for display such as headlines.

Readability usually suffers when decorative type is used in small sizes.



## **Masses of type**

Large amounts of text can be overwhelming to read.

If your document looks to be too much, it will be to others.

Consider breaking the text into reasonable chunks. Provide contrast by inserting subheads, pull quotes, large initial caps, or white space.



## **Vertically Stacked Type**

This is type set in columns, one letter to a line, or type that has been rotated 90°.

Avoid it. You may get away with it on the spine of a book.



## **Script type**

Script type is never set in all caps.

Further, large blocks of script are difficult to read.



## **Outline type**

Outline type is very difficult to read in small sizes.  
This style is best used for display purposes.



## **Bad Justification**

Be careful when using forced justification. Short lines can produce some horrible results.



## **Boxes**

Using too many boxes in your document to separate type can make your document look choppy.





## **Widows and Orphans**

A word that sits on a line by itself at the end of a paragraph is usually referred to as a widow.

The last line of a paragraph that sits at the top of a column is usually referred to as an orphan.

You don't want either to appear in your document.



## **Ladder**

A ladder is a succession of hyphens on the right side of your text.

You would prefer no more than one hyphen in a row, two at most. If you have three, look for ways to eliminate the third hyphen.



## Tabs

Use them!

The use of the space bar to place text on opposite margins of a line or to produce columns is unacceptable. When using proportionate type, everyone who looks at your document will know what you did. It will be distracting to your reader.



# Leaders

This is not leading.

The repetitive use of a graphic symbol such as a period to fill in text that is placed at the beginning and at the end of a line is called a leader.

The correct way to produce leaders is by using tabs. Your word processing program (Word, PageMaker, or InDesign) will allow you to produce professional leaders. If you need assistance to produce professional leaders, go to the HELP section of the program.



# Shading

Computer generated shading behind text is not always impressive.

Shading that is too light will print blotchy and produce a distraction.

Shading that is too dark can result in a text block that is impossible, or nearly impossible to read.