



The Design Couch Sessions

#02 : Type

Version 2 - July 2023

Originally compiled for the Edenspiekermann Singapore team in 2019



**Type is
visible language.**

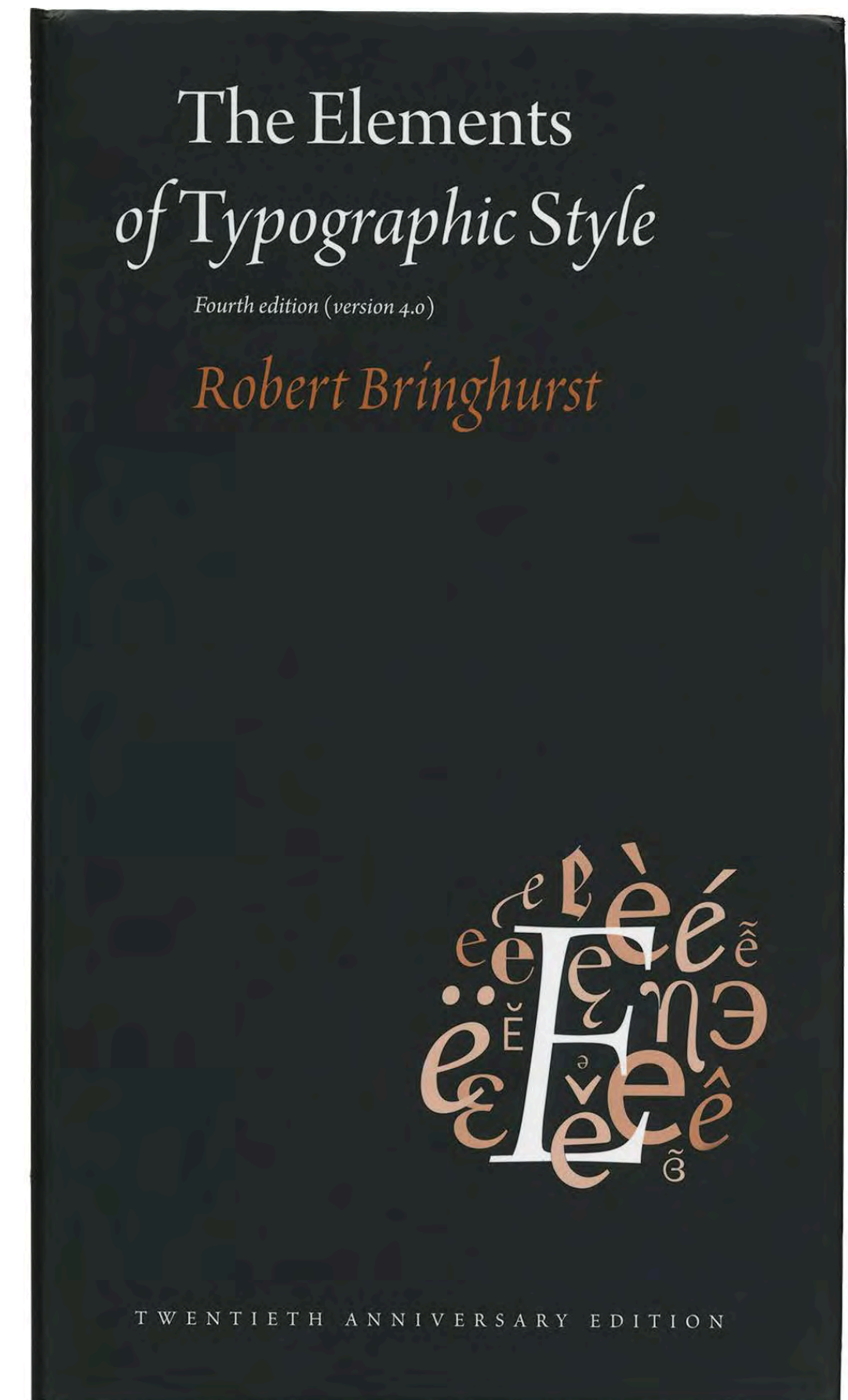
– Erik Spiekermann





Typography invites a reader into text, reveals its meaning, clarifies its structure and connects it with other surrounding elements.

— Robert Bringhurst





Today's program

Type anatomy
Type classifications
Type character sets
Type & reading
Type & scale

Typeface selection
Typeface pairing
Typeface licensing
Micro typography
Variable fonts

DESIGN COUCH SESSIONS #02 : TYPE

Type anatomy

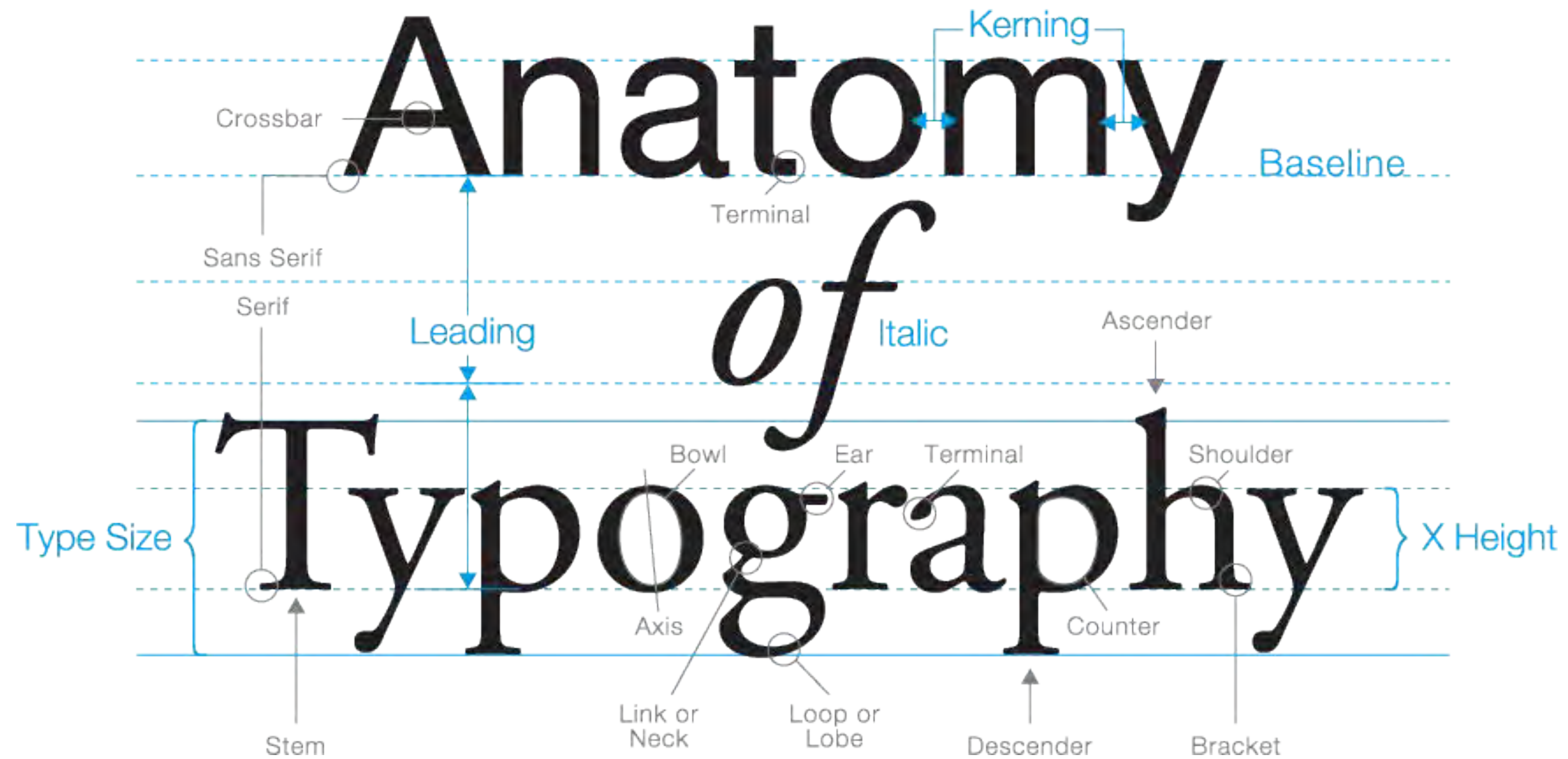


Font or typeface?

A **font** is a specific weight or style within a typeface family, such as Garamond Italic.

A **typeface** comprises a family of fonts such as Garamond Regular, Garamond Italic, Garamond Bold, etc.

Each part of a letter has its own special term, similar to bones in a human body.



Fontshop Glossary

A VISUAL GUIDE TO THE ANATOMY OF

Typography

The words you see on a page are so much more than just letters. Like people, they have personalities, moods, styles—and even anatomical features! Here's a quick overview of the different details that make up letters and their real-life counterparts.

Leg

A portion of a letter that extends downwards, attached at one end and free at the other.



Arm

A straight or curved portion of a letter that extends upwards or outwards, attached at one end and free at the other



Ear

The small stroke that extends outwards from a lowercase g in some typeface styles.



Shoulder

The stroke that curves downwards and to the right of the lowercase h, m and n.



Tail

The decorative curved descender of a capital Q, R and K. The descenders of the lower case g, j, p, q, and y are also sometimes called tails.



Cap Height

The cap height is a measurement of capital letters. All capital letters in the same typeface have the same cap height. The most accurate measurement is taken from flat-bottomed characters like the letter E.



Stroke

A stroke is the main vertical diagonal line in a letter.



Bar

A bar is a horizontal stroke in letters like A, H, e and f.



Serif

A serif is a short line added at the beginning and the end of strokes. Serifs are what make a typeface a serif or a sans serif.



Terminal

When a letter doesn't have a serif, the end of the stroke is called a terminal.



Bowl

A bowl is a stroke that creates an enclosed curved space, like in the letters d, b, o, D and B.



the main vertical stroke in upright characters. The first diagonal in "A" or "V" is also called the stem.



Link

A link is a stroke connecting the bowl and loop of a two-story, lowercase g.



Loop

A loop is an enclosed counter connected to a letter, most specifically the double-story g.



Visme Blog

Source:
<http://blog.visme.co/type-anatomy/>



TYPOGRAPHY TERMS

ASCENDER AND DESCENDER Term for upward/downward parts along the edges of letterform outlines to smooth-jagged edges	BOW-TIE Self typeface designed between 1900-1970s century for new designs following the style	COUNTER The opening of a partially enclosed counter shape	JERK Point at the top of a letterform where two strokes meet	JERK Curved part of a letterform leading into a straight stem	TALL A stroke that doesn't connect to another stroke or stem on one or both ends	DESCENDER On lowercase letters the vertical stroke that extends above the x-height	HEAD The vertical stroke that extends above the x-height in a font	OVERSHOOT The part of the glyph from top to bottom to its thinnest point	FOOT Terminal with a stroke or shape	ZIG-ZAG Multiple line in which the letters in a font rest	SLOPE Decorative stroke at the end of the stem of a letter similar to a serif but more pronounced	KERNING Self extending to both sides of a main stroke	BOW-TIE Curved in-wedge-like connection between the stem and bowl of some fonts	LIGATURE Curved in-wedge-like connection between the stem and bowl of some fonts
CAP HEIGHT Height of a capital letter measured from the baseline	CONSISTENCY Type style designed with narrow width proportions	COUNTER An area partially or entirely enclosed in a letterform or symbol like an 'l', 'y' or 'f'	OVERSHOOT The horizontal stroke above lowercase 't' or 'f'	CROSSBAR Horizontal stroke like the middle of 'h', 'n' and 'v'	EYE The angle where two strokes meet	EYE The angle where two strokes meet	CURVE Handwriting with joined-up letters. Can be used to describe a font which is similar to handwriting	CURVE Handwriting with joined-up letters. Can be used to describe a font which is similar to handwriting	CURVE Handwriting with joined-up letters. Can be used to describe a font which is similar to handwriting	CURVE Handwriting with joined-up letters. Can be used to describe a font which is similar to handwriting	CURVE Handwriting with joined-up letters. Can be used to describe a font which is similar to handwriting	CURVE Handwriting with joined-up letters. Can be used to describe a font which is similar to handwriting		
ASCENDER An embellishment in a ligature that is not originally part of either letter	LIGATURE A single character (number, letter, mark or symbol) is represented by a glyph	ZIG-ZAG Common name for some serif	X-HEIGHT The height of the tallest lowercase letter	EYE The angle where two strokes meet	EYE The angle where two strokes meet	EYE The angle where two strokes meet	EYE The angle where two strokes meet	EYE The angle where two strokes meet	EYE The angle where two strokes meet	EYE The angle where two strokes meet	EYE The angle where two strokes meet	EYE The angle where two strokes meet		
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Fontsmith Blog



Some terms that can be confusing

Spacing
Kerning
Tracking



Some terms that can be confusing

Spacing
Kerning
Tracking

Spacing refers to the distribution of horizontal space on both sides of each character in a font to achieve a balanced and even texture. Spacing problems in difficult letter combinations (exceptions) are solved with kerning. Well-spaced fonts need comparatively few kerning pairs.



Some terms that can be confusing

Spacing
Kerning
Tracking

Kerning refers to the horizontal space between individual pairs of letters (a kerning pair), and is used to correct spacing problems in specific letter combinations like “VA”. Well-spaced fonts need comparatively few kerning pairs. Fonts that are properly kerned appear evenly spaced without large open gaps of white space between any two characters.



Some terms that can be confusing

Spacing
Kerning
Tracking

Tracking adds space between successions of characters, as opposed to kerning which only adds space between two consecutive characters.



Some terms that can be confusing

Linespacing
Line-height
Line feed
Leading



Some terms that can be confusing

Linespacing
Line-height
Line feed
Leading

The vertical space between lines of text, measured from baseline to baseline.



Some terms that can be confusing

Linespacing
Line-height
Line feed
Leading

Its original meaning is increasing the vertical space between lines of metal type by literally inserting lead strips. In the digital age it now means the vertical space between lines of text, from baseline to baseline. Also known as linespacing, line-height, or line feed.

DESIGN COUCH SESSIONS #02 : TYPE

Type classifications

THE TYPE CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

THE VOX-ATYPI CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

CLASSICAL

HUMANIST

Also known as: Humanistic, Humanes, or Venetian

Humanist typefaces represent the handwriting within renaissance manuscripts. Humanes include the first Roman typefaces created by Venetian printers (such as Nicolas Jenson) during the 15th century.

- Characteristics:**
- Low contrast between strokes
 - Heavy and short bracketed serifs
 - Slanted serifs on ascenders
 - The lowercase 'e' features a diagonal cross stroke

Examples include:
Centaur, Cloister, Jenson



CLASSICAL

GARALDE

Also known as: Aldine

The garaldes are named after typeface designer Claude Garamond and printer and publisher Aldus Manutius. In the mid 16th century, under the rein of King Francis I, garaldes were used to support the official grammar and orthography used across France.

- Characteristics:**
- Stronger contrast between strokes
 - Slanted axis
 - Finer proportions than those of the Humanist category

Examples include:
Bembo, Garamond, Sabon



CLASSICAL

TRANSITIONAL

Also known as: Realist, Réales, or Baroque

In the mid 18th century, the printer and type designer John Baskerville established transitional typefaces. These typefaces take inspiration from both old style and neoclassical type designs, and use characteristics from both of these styles. Baskerville's developments with calendered paper and printing methods, opened up opportunities to create typefaces that maintained finer strokes and shapes.

- Characteristics:**
- Contrast is more distinctive
 - Vertical axis on the strokes and inclined axis for curved strokes
 - Bracketed serifs and slanted serifs on ascenders

Examples include:
Baskerville, Perpetua, Times New Roman



CALLIGRAPHIC

GLYPHIC

Also known as: Incised, or Incise

Glyphic typefaces are based on engravings or chisellings of letterforms within materials such as stone or metal. Because of this, they have small triangular shaped serifs or flared terminals. These typefaces particularly focus on the uppercase characters, and many of which don't contain any lowercase letters altogether.

- Characteristics:**
- Minimal contrast between thick and thin strokes
 - Vertical axis for curved strokes
 - A tapering effect at the terminals or triangular shaped serifs

Examples include:
Albertus, Copperplate Gothic, Trajan



CALLIGRAPHIC

SCRIPT

Also known as: Scripts

Scripts represent the formal penmanship and cursive writing, as a result they have strong sloping forms and letterforms can often be connected together. Included in this category are typefaces that imitate copperplate scripts.

- Characteristics:**
- Appear to be written with a quill
 - Strong slope
 - Letters can often be connected together

Examples include:
Francesca, Mistral, Shelley



CALLIGRAPHIC

GRAPHIC

Also known as: Manual, or Manuales

By far the broadest type category, these typefaces are not intended to be used for body copy but for display purposes. They often reflect a particular time, period or theme but can also be based on hand-drawn designs written with a wide range of writing instruments.

Examples include:
Banco, Klank



MODERN

DIDONE

Also known as: Modern

First created in the late 18th century, didones are named after type-founders Didot and Bodoni, masters of this style. These typefaces provided the First French Empire with a new letterforms. The contrast between the thick and thin strokes are dramatic and the designs look completely different to any other typeface that had come before.

- Characteristics:**
- Very strong contrast between thick and thin strokes
 - Vertical axis for curved strokes
 - Very little to no bracketing on serifs
 - Terminals often have "ball" shapes

Examples include:
Bodoni, Didot, Walbaum



MODERN

MECHANISTIC

Also known as: Mechanical, Slab Serif, or Mécanes

The design of mechanistic typefaces coincides with the Industrial Revolution at the start of the 19th century. This mechanical style, with thick and rectangular serifs became very popular at the time for display advertising. In the Thibaudeau classification system these Mechanicals are named Egyptianes.

- Characteristics:**
- Low contrast between thick and thin strokes
 - Heavy strokes with rectangular thick serifs
 - Very little to no bracketing on serifs

Examples include:
Clarendon, Egyptianne, Ionic No. 5, Rockwell



MODERN: LINEAR

GROTESQUE

Originating in the 19th century, this category contains early sans serifs, many of which become commercially popular. The grotesques feature many awkward characteristics and quirks, including an odd distribution of line thicknesses on curved letterforms. A double story lowercase g, a spur on the uppercase G and a curled leg on the uppercase R are also common characteristics.

- Characteristics:**
- Noticeable contrast between thick and thin strokes
 - Vertical axis
 - The lowercase 'g' often is double story or 'bowl and loop'
 - 'R' commonly has a curled leg and the 'G' usually has a spur

Examples include:
Headline, Monotype 215, Monotype Grotesque, Grot no. 6



CALLIGRAPHIC

BLACKLETTER

Also known as: Gothic script, Gothic minuscule, or Textura

Based on the medieval scribe hands written with broad-nibbed pens, blackletter types were first used by Gutenberg. They were used to print body text until eventually Humanist typefaces took over with the invention of movable type in the early 20th Century.

Examples include:
Fraktur, Schwabacher, Textur



CALLIGRAPHIC

GAELIC

Also known as: Irish character, Irish type, or Gaelic script

Used as early as the 16th Century, these typefaces originated from Irish insular scripts found on medieval manuscripts. Gaelic type was used for mainly setting body text and was used throughout Ireland before falling out of favour in the mid 20th Century. In modern times, Gaelic type is used for decorative purposes, commonly found on pub signs, greeting cards and display advertising.

Examples include:
Ceanannas, Corcaigh, Doire, Duibhlinn



OTHER

NON LATIN

This category includes all non-latin typefaces (regardless of style) for example: Greek, Cyrillic, Hebrew, Arabic, Chinese, etc. As the Vox type classification system is very Latin based, non-latin types are very underrepresented. As a result, it is worth taking some time to discover the other writing systems and their typographic designs and considerations.



MODERN: LINEAR

NEO-GROTESQUE

Also known as: Transitionals

Based on the earlier grotesque typefaces, the neo-grotesques category contains some of the most famous sans serif designs. Developing on the grotesque designs, the letterforms are much more refined and simplified. There is less variation in stroke weight and the lowercase g is now a single story.

- Characteristics:**
- Less variation between thick and thin strokes than in Grotesques
 - Single story lowercase g
 - No spur on the uppercase G

Examples include:
Bell Gothic, DIN 1451, Helvetica, Univers



MODERN: LINEAR

GEOMETRIC

Geometric typefaces are created with an equal or almost equal stroke width and are designed using simple geometric forms, which are repeated and used throughout the design. As a result, geometric typefaces are less readable and letters are harder to differentiate from one another.

- Characteristics:**
- Little to no contrast between the vertical and horizontal strokes
 - Character shapes are influenced by geometric forms

Examples include:
Avenir, ITC Bauhaus, Eurostile, Futura, Harmonia Sans



MODERN: LINEAR

HUMANIST

Humanist typefaces are not inspired by the Grotesque faces of the 19th Century but, by earlier classical letter forms. The uppercase of humanist typefaces relate to Roman inscriptional letters and the characteristics of the lowercase are similar to those of Carolingian script. Because of this, humanist typefaces are said to be the most legible and readable of all the sans-serif classifications.

- Characteristics:**
- Noticeable contrast between strokes
 - Proportions and characteristics match serif typefaces and are influenced by calligraphic forms

Examples include:
Gill Sans, Optima, Tahoma





HUMANES Néora

DIDONES Néora

MÉCANES DE TRANSITION Néora

LINÉALES XIX^e SIÈCLE Néora

INCISES Néora

TECHNIQUES Néora

GARALDES Néora

MÉCANES Néora

LINÉALES MILIEU XX^e SIÈCLE Néora

SCRIPTES Néora

INCLASSABLES NEORA

RÉALES Néora

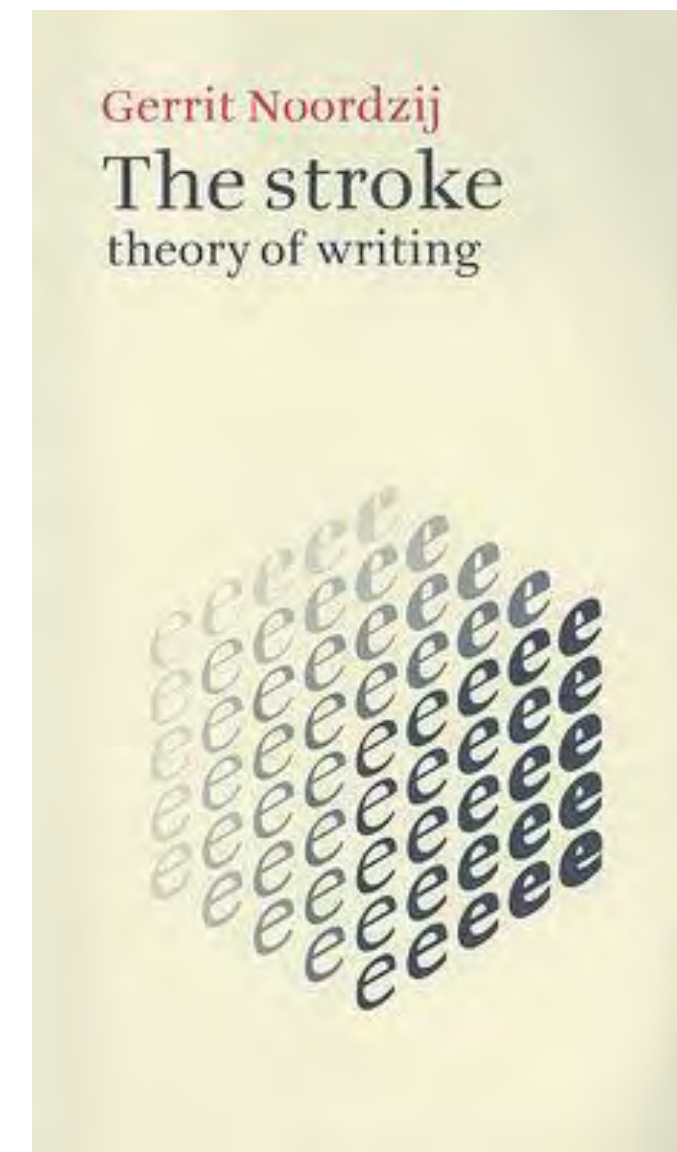
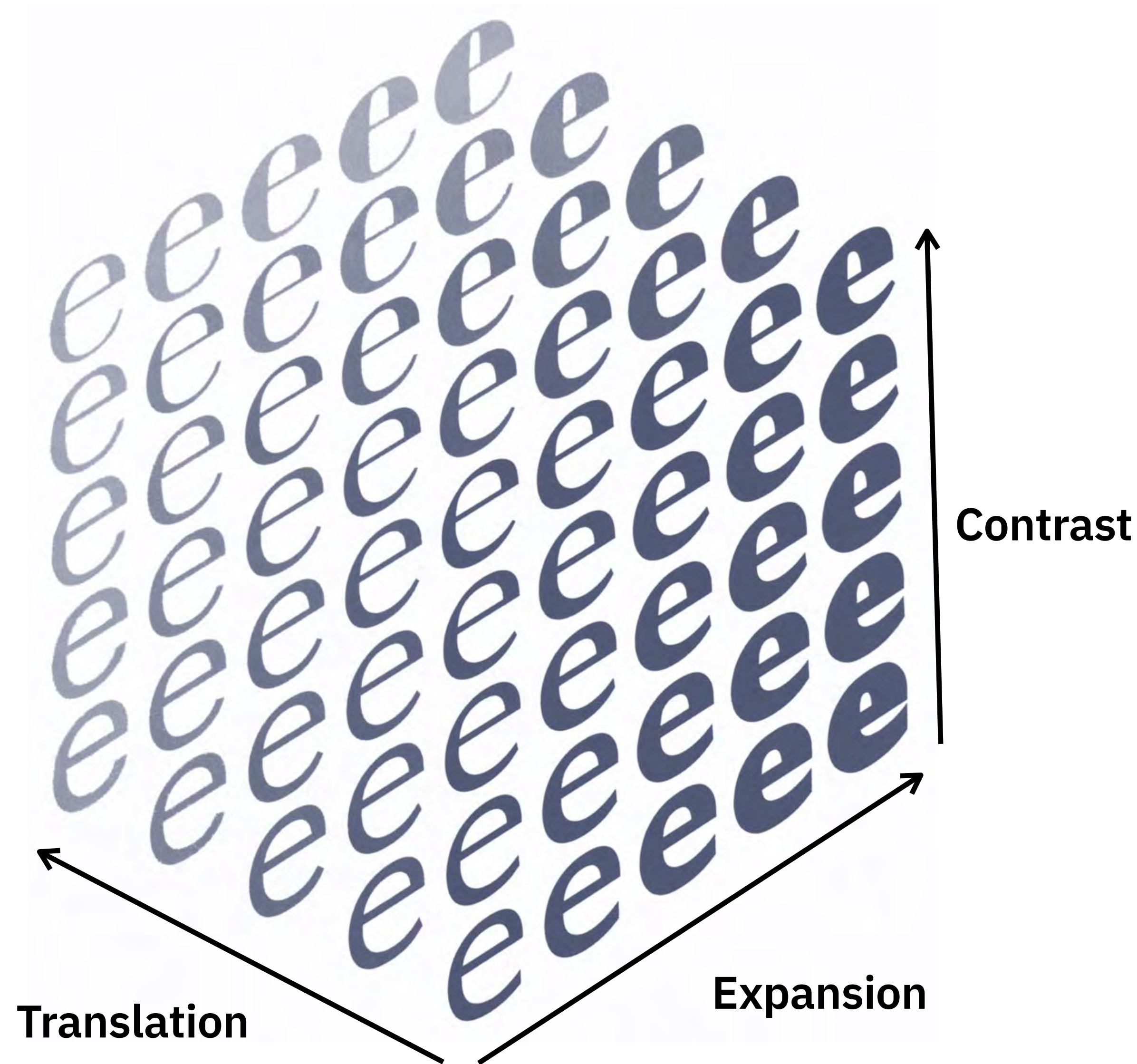
LINÉALES GÉOMÉTRIQUES Néora

FRACTURES Néora

LINÉALES HUMANISTES Néora

ATypI Type Classification SIG

To Dutch type designer Gerrit Noordzij, there is no essential difference between the written and the printed word – he defines typography as ‘writing with prefabricated letters.’ Printing types betray their origin in (hand)writing by their construction. A typeface may show diagonal or vertical contrast or stress, referring respectively to the broad-nibbed or the pointed pen – Noordzij invented the terms translation and expansion for these two extremes.

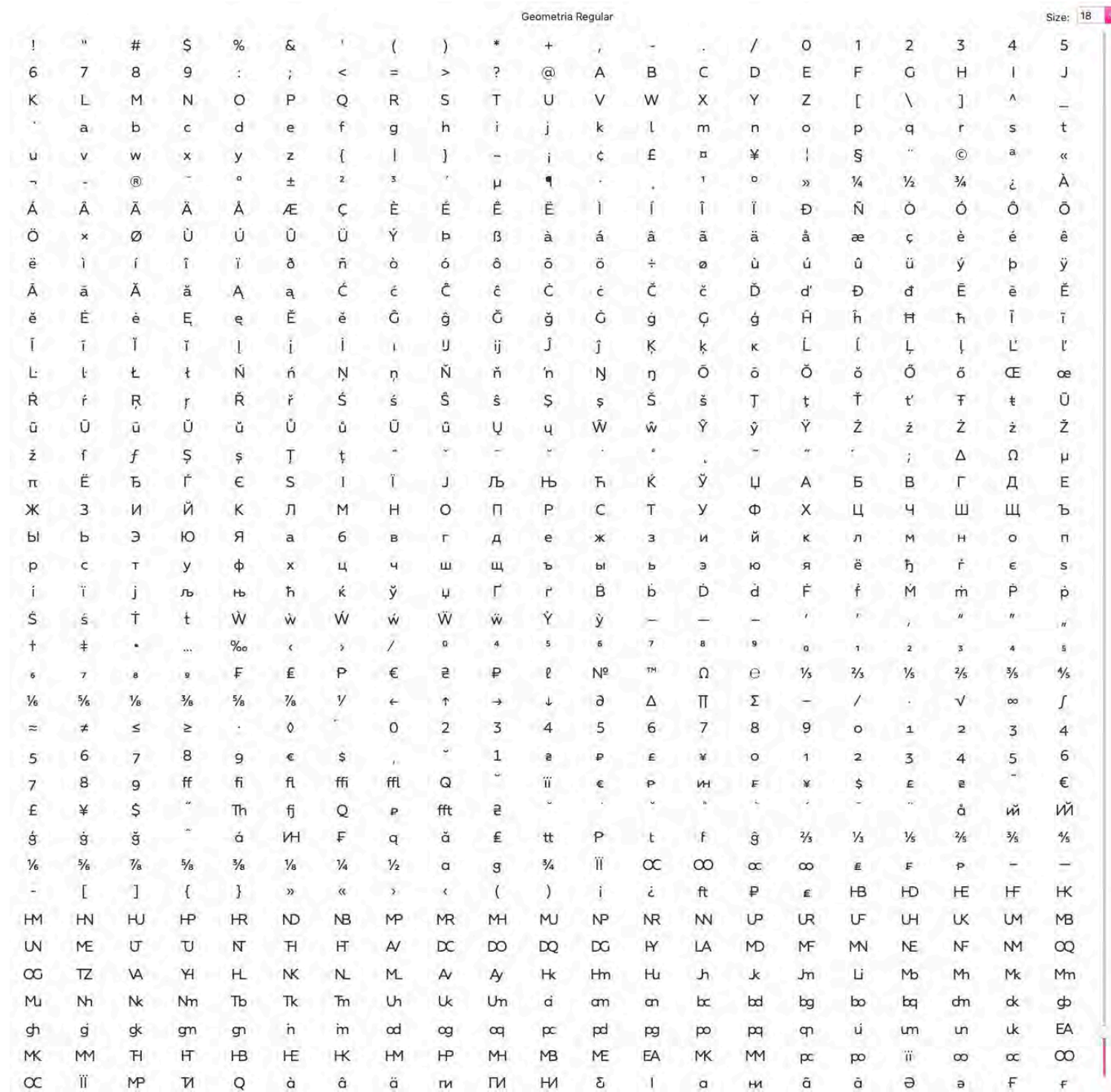


DESIGN COUCH SESSIONS #02 : TYPE

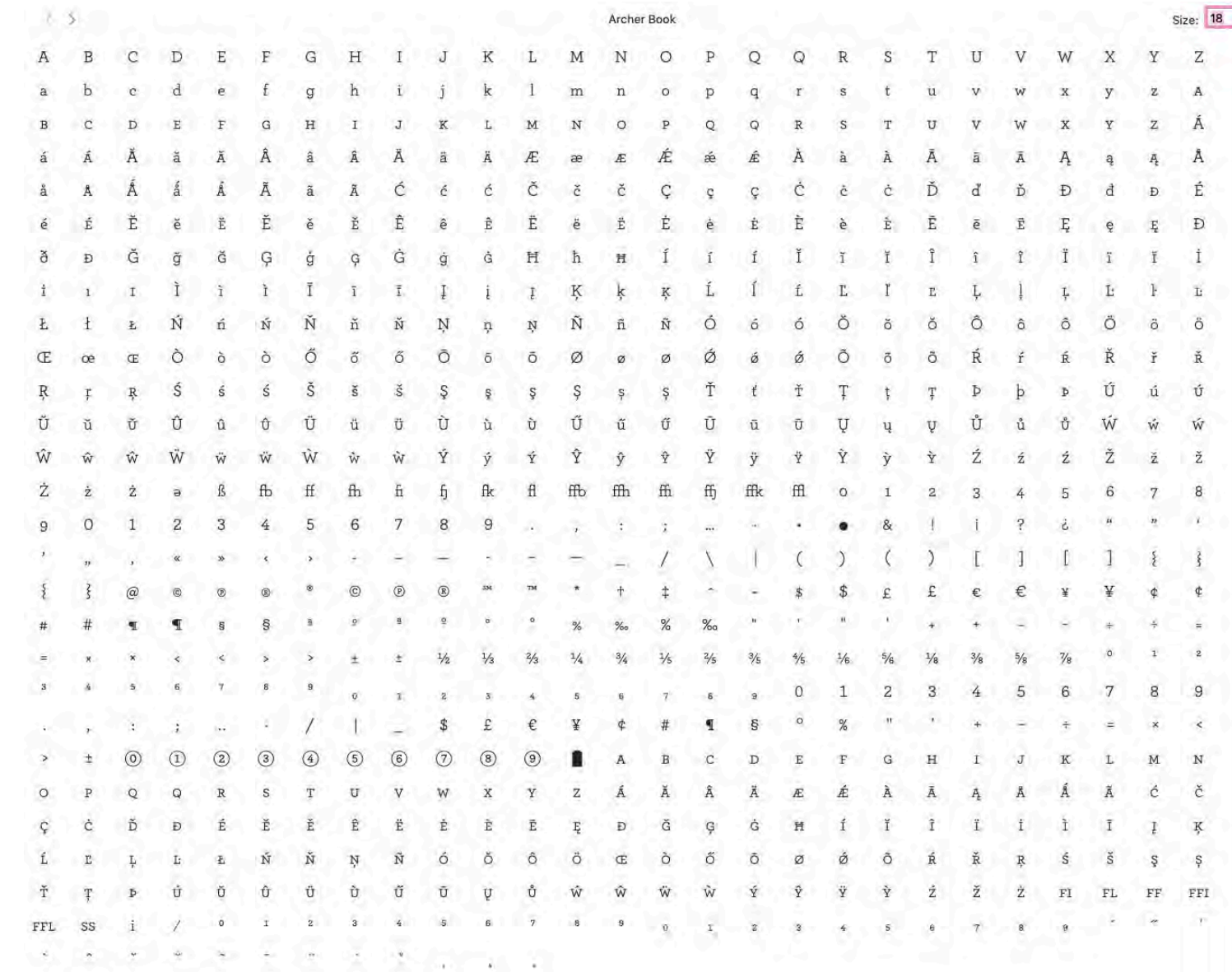
Type character sets



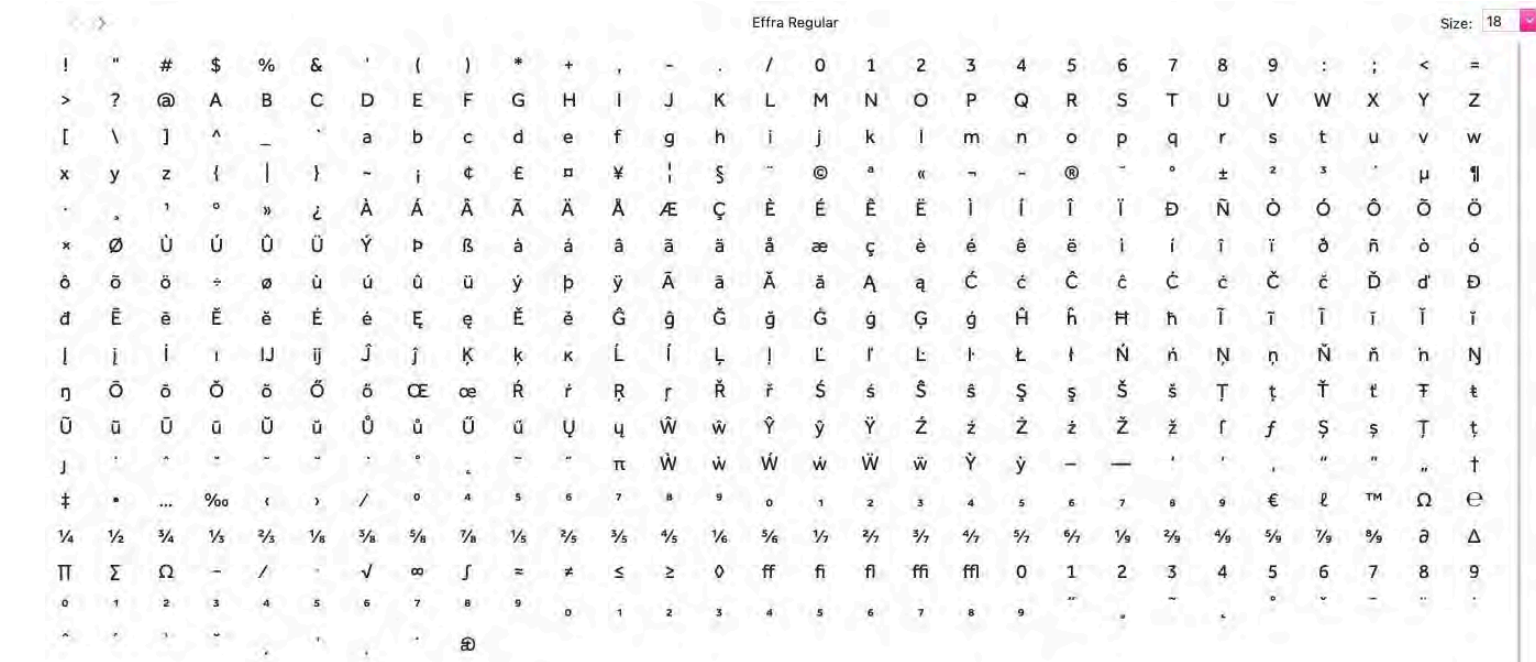
Typefaces can have vastly different character sets



Geometria (835 glyphs)



Archer (753 glyphs)



Effra (478 glyphs)



Frutiger LT Std (253 glyphs)



Character encoding and Unicode

Common character encodings [edit]

- ISO 646
 - ASCII
- EBCDIC
 - CP37
 - CP930
 - CP1047
- ISO 8859:
 - ISO 8859-1 Western Europe
 - ISO 8859-2 Western and Central Europe
 - ISO 8859-3 Western Europe and South European (Turkish, Maltese plus Esperanto)
 - ISO 8859-4 Western Europe and Baltic countries (Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia and Lapp)
 - ISO 8859-5 Cyrillic alphabet
 - ISO 8859-6 Arabic
 - ISO 8859-7 Greek
 - ISO 8859-8 Hebrew
 - ISO 8859-9 Western Europe with amended Turkish character set
 - ISO 8859-10 Western Europe with rationalised character set for Nordic languages, including complete Icelandic set
 - ISO 8859-11 Thai
 - ISO 8859-13 Baltic languages plus Polish
 - ISO 8859-14 Celtic languages (Irish Gaelic, Scottish, Welsh)
 - ISO 8859-15 Added the Euro sign and other rationalisations to ISO 8859-1
 - ISO 8859-16 Central, Eastern and Southern European languages (Albanian, Bosnian, Croatian, Hungarian, Polish, Romanian, Serbian and Slovenian, but also French, German, Italian and Irish Gaelic)
- CP437, CP720, CP737, CP850, CP852, CP855, CP857, CP858, CP860, CP861, CP862, CP863, CP865, CP866, CP869, CP872
- MS-Windows character sets:
 - Windows-1250 for Central European languages that use Latin script, (Polish, Czech, Slovak, Hungarian, Slovene, Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian, Romanian and Albanian)
 - Windows-1251 for Cyrillic alphabets
 - Windows-1252 for Western languages
 - Windows-1253 for Greek
 - Windows-1254 for Turkish
 - Windows-1255 for Hebrew
 - Windows-1256 for Arabic
 - Windows-1257 for Baltic languages
 - Windows-1258 for Vietnamese
- Mac OS Roman
- KOI8-R, KOI8-U, KOI7
- MIK
- ISCII
- TSCII
- VISCII
- JIS X 0208 is a widely deployed standard for Japanese character encoding that has several encoding forms.
 - Shift JIS (Microsoft Code page 932 is a dialect of Shift_JIS)
 - EUC-JP
 - ISO-2022-JP
- JIS X 0213 is an extended version of JIS X 0208.
 - Shift_JIS-2004
 - EUC-JIS-2004
 - ISO-2022-JP-2004
- Chinese Guobiao
 - GB 2312
 - GBK (Microsoft Code page 936)
 - GB 18030
- Taiwan Big5 (a more famous variant is Microsoft Code page 950)
 - Hong Kong HKSCS
- Korean
 - KS X 1001 is a Korean double-byte character encoding standard
 - EUC-KR
 - ISO-2022-KR
- Unicode (and subsets thereof, such as the 16-bit 'Basic Multilingual Plane')
 - UTF-8
 - UTF-16
 - UTF-32
- ANSEL or ISO/IEC 6937

Character encoding tells the computer how to interpret raw zeroes and ones into real characters.

There are many different types of character encodings floating around at present, but the ones we deal most frequently with are ASCII, 8-bit encodings, and Unicode-based encodings.

Unicode is a standard which defines the internal text coding system in almost all computer operating systems at present.

UTF-8 (Unicode Transformation Format) is gaining traction as the dominant international encoding of the web.



OpenType Std vs Pro fonts

- Pro variants have a larger language support included within the font and include additional stylistic (OpenType) alternates.
- For instance at FontShop, **Std** fonts are good for typesetting Western languages, while **Pro** fonts include Central European, and often Greek and/or Cyrillic and Extended Cyrillic (for Russian, Bulgarian, etc).

Std
±250 characters

Supports 21 languages: Afrikaans, Basque, Breton, Catalan, Danish, Dutch, English, Finnish, French, Gaelic (Irish, Scottish), German, Icelandic, Indonesian, Irish, Italian, Norwegian, Portuguese, Saami (Southern), Spanish, Swahili, Swedish.

Com
at least 400 characters

Supports 53 languages: Afrikaans, Albanian, Basque, Bosnian, Breton, Catalan, Cornish, Croatian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Faroese, Finnish, French, Frisian, Friulian, Gaelic [Irish, Scots], Gagauz [Latin], Galician, German, Hungarian, Icelandic, Indonesian, Irish, Italian, Karelian, Ladin, Latvian, Lithuanian, Maltese, Moldavian [Latin], Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Rhaeto-Romanic, Romanian, Saami [Southern], Serbian, Slovak, Slovenian, Sorbian, Spanish, Swahili, Swedish, Turkish, Turkmen [Latin]

Pro
at least 370 characters

Supports 33 languages: Afrikaans, Basque, Breton, Catalan, Croatian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Finnish, French, Gaelic (Irish, Scots), German, Hungarian, Icelandic, Indonesian, Irish, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Saami [Southern], Serbian, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish, Swahili, Swedish, Turkish.

W1G
±600 characters

Supports 89 languages: Latin: Afrikaans, Albanian, Alsatian, Arumanian, Asturian, Basque, Bosnian, Breton, Catalan, Cebuano, Chichewa, Cornish, Corsican, Croatian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Esperanto, Estonian, Faroese, Filipino, Finnish, French, Frisian, Friulian, Gaelic, Gagauz (Latin), Galician, German, Greenlandic, Hungarian, Icelandic, Indonesian, Irish, Italian, Karelian, Ladin, Latin (Lingua Latina), Latvian, Lithuanian, Luba, Maltese, Moldavian (Latin), Norwegian, Occitan, Polish, Portuguese, Rhaeto-Romance, Romanian, Sámi (Lule), Sámi (Northern), Sámi (Southern), Serbian, Slovak, Slovenian, Sorbian, Spanish, Swahili, Swedish, Turkish, Turkmen (Latin), Vepsian, Welsh, Wolof, Zulu. Cyrillic: Agul, Avar, Balkar, Belarusian, Bulgarian, Chechen, Erzya, Gagauz, Ingush, Karachay, Khvarshi, Komi, Komi-Permyak, Lezgian, Macedonian, Moldavian, Nenets Tundra, Ossetian, Russian, Rutul, Serbian, Ukrainian. + Greek.

A warning: some free fonts can only be used for typesetting English...

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?	@	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	[\
]	^	_	`	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k
l	m	n	o	p	q	r	s	t	u	v	w	x	y	z
{		}	~	£	¨	´	À	Á	Â	Ã	Ä	È	É	Ê
Ë	Ì	Í	Î	Ï	Ñ	Ò	Ó	Ô	Õ	Ö	Ù	Ú	Û	Ü
à	á	â	ã	ä	è	é	ê	ë	ì	í	î	ï	ñ	ò
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The free Google Font Karla (by Jonny Pinhorn) is a beautiful typeface, but it has only 167 characters per font.

Typical Western characters like ß, ø, ç, å, and æ, even € and ¢ are not included.



Therefore: always check the character set and language support before you start using a typeface

The image shows two side-by-side screenshots of a font manager application window titled 'User (168 Fonts)'. The left screenshot shows the font list with 'Lato Regular' selected. The right screenshot shows the detailed information for 'Lato Regular', with the 'Language' field circled in red. The 'Language' field lists various languages including Afrikaans, Albanian, Asu, Basque, Bemba, Bena, Catalan, Chiga, Cornish, Danish, Finnish, French, Friulian, Galician, German, Gusii, Icelandic, Indonesian, Irish, Kinyarwanda, Low German, Luo, Luxembourgish, Luyia, Machame, Makhuwa-Morisyen, North Ndebele, Norwegian Bokmål, Norwegian Nynorsk, Nyankole, Rombo, Rundi, Rwa, Samburu, Sango, Sangu, Scottish Gaelic, Sena, Shambala, Swedish, Swiss German, Taita, Teso, Vunjo, and Zulu. The 'Script' is listed as Latin. The 'Language' field is circled in red in both screenshots.

Character	Character	Character	Character	Character	Character
!	"	#	\$	%	&
1	2	3	4	5	6
A	B	C	D	E	F
Q	R	S	T	U	V
a	b	c	d	e	f
q	r	s	t	u	v
£	¤	¥		§	¨
³	´	µ	¶	·	¸
Ā	Ă	Ą	Æ	Ç	È
Ó	Ô	Õ	Ö	×	Ø
ã	ä	å	æ	ç	è
ó	ô	õ	ö	÷	ø
ć	Ę	ę	ı	ł	ł
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DESIGN COUCH SESSIONS #02 : TYPE

Type & reading

Readability & Legibility

Readability is related to how the type is arranged, or typeset, and therefore is controlled by the graphic designer who uses the typeface. Factors affecting type's readability include:

- type size
- type case
- line spacing
- line length
- color & contrast

Legibility is a product of the typeface design, and relates to the ability to distinguish one glyph from another when reading. Factors contributing to a typeface's legibility include:

- x-height
- character width
- weight
- stroke contrast
- counter size



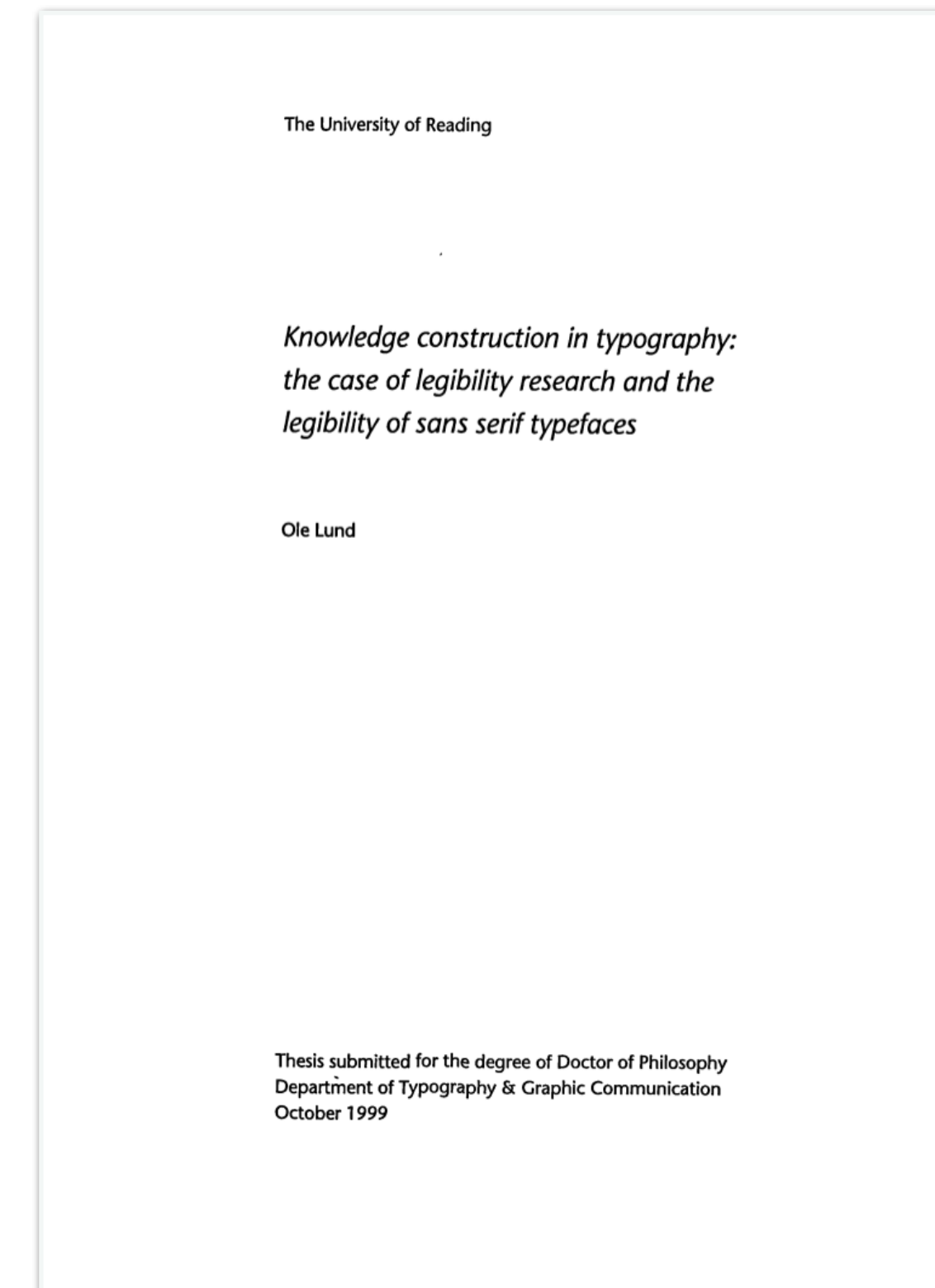
We read (groups of) words, not individual letters

Teh old utsabliiy gudeiinle for olinne toyghrappy was spimle: scitk to snas-srief tpeefaycs. Baeucse cpoumter seercns wree too losuy to rdneer sefris prpleory, amtntetipg sreif tpye at byod-xtet seizs rtelesud in brlury ltteer sphaes.

The old usability guideline for online typography was simple: stick to sans-serif typefaces. Because computer screens were too lousy to render serifs properly, attempting serif type at body-text sizes resulted in blurry letter shapes.

Myth 1: Serif typefaces are more legible

“Legibility itself is still poorly defined, even today, and is not well distinguished from readability. It turns out a surprising number of otherwise convincing ‘legibility studies’ have been based on reading speed or reading comprehension, which have no bearing on glyph recognition per se. Reading speed is now known to be mainly a function of cognition speed, which varies considerably from individual to individual and is not related in any straightforward way (and possibly in no way) to typeface design. Reading comprehension is even further removed from type design.”



The Serif Readability Myth - Kas Thomas

1999 Ph.D. dissertation - Ole Lund

Myth 2: Sans-serif is better for web typography

The old usability guideline for online typography was simple: stick to sans-serif typefaces. Because computer screens were too lousy to render serifs properly, attempting serif type at body-text sizes resulted in blurry letter shapes.

...

The old guideline was dictated by the poor screens on all mainstream computers. Now that we have high-quality screens, it's time to change the guideline.

...

Unfortunately, the new guideline is not as clear-cut as the old one. Legibility research is inconclusive as to whether serif fonts are truly better than sans-serif.





Which 24pt typeface is more legible?

The old usability guideline for online typography was simple: stick to sans-serif typefaces. Because computer screens were too lousy to render serifs properly, attempting serif type at body-text sizes resulted in blurry letter shapes. The old guideline was dictated by the poor screens on all mainstream computers. Now that we have high-quality screens, it's time to change the guideline. Unfortunately, the new guideline is not as clear-cut as the old one. Legibility research is inconclusive as to whether serif fonts are truly better than sans-serif.

Agenda Regular 24/32 pt

The old usability guideline for online typography was simple: stick to sans-serif typefaces. Because computer screens were too lousy to render serifs properly, attempting serif type at body-text sizes resulted in blurry letter shapes. The old guideline was dictated by the poor screens on all mainstream computers. Now that we have high-quality screens, it's time to change the guideline. Unfortunately, the new guideline is not as clear-cut as the old one. Legibility research is inconclusive as to whether serif fonts are truly better than sans-serif.

Helvetica Neue Regular 24/32 pt

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IBM Plex Sans Regular 24/32 pt



Which 24pt typeface is more legible?

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Garamond Premier Pro Regular 24/32 pt

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Georgia Regular 24/32 pt

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Merriweather Regular 24/32 pt



Which typeface is more legible?

(corrected for optical size)

The old usability guideline for online typography was simple: stick to sans-serif typefaces. Because computer screens were too lousy to render serifs properly, attempting serif type at body-text sizes resulted in blurry letter shapes. The old guideline was dictated by the poor screens on all mainstream computers. Now that we have high-quality screens, it's time to change the guideline. Unfortunately, the new guideline is not as clear-cut as the old one. Legibility research is inconclusive as to whether serif fonts are truly better than sans-serif.

Garamond Premier Pro Regular 28/32 pt

The old usability guideline for online typography was simple: stick to sans-serif typefaces. Because computer screens were too lousy to render serifs properly, attempting serif type at body-text sizes resulted in blurry letter shapes. The old guideline was dictated by the poor screens on all mainstream computers. Now that we have high-quality screens, it's time to change the guideline. Unfortunately, the new guideline is not as clear-cut as the old one. Legibility research is inconclusive as to whether serif fonts are truly better than sans-serif.

Georgia Regular 24/32 pt

The old usability guideline for online typography was simple: stick to sans-serif typefaces. Because computer screens were too lousy to render serifs properly, attempting serif type at body-text sizes resulted in blurry letter shapes. The old guideline was dictated by the poor screens on all mainstream computers. Now that we have high-quality screens, it's time to change the guideline. Unfortunately, the new guideline is not as clear-cut as the old one. Legibility research is inconclusive as to whether serif fonts are truly better than sans-serif.

Merriweather Regular 22/32 pt

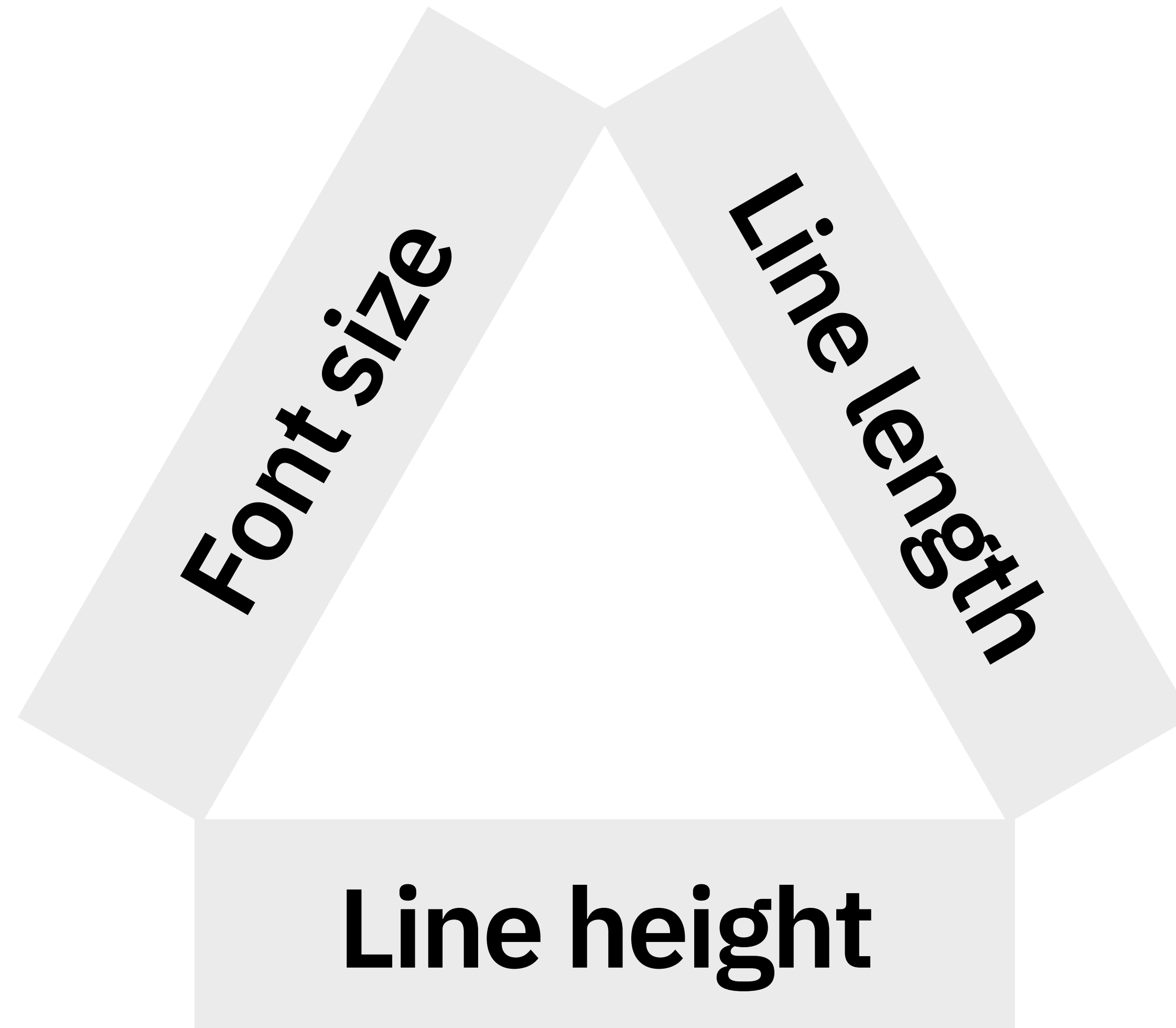


How to build the perfectly readable paragraph



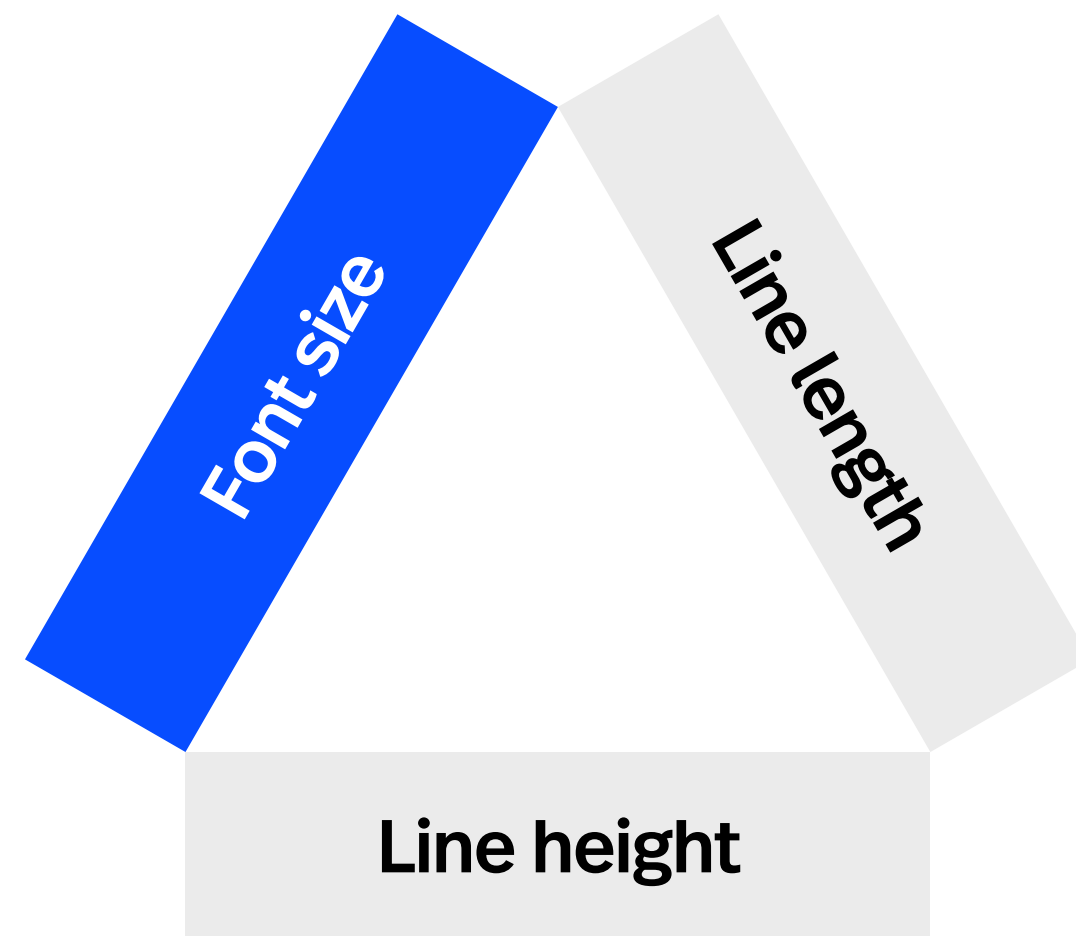


How to build the perfectly readable paragraph





Recommended font size



- ±16px for mobile devices
- 18-24px for desktop
- depending on typeface characteristics

Mobile

16px

The old guideline was dictated by the poor screens on all mainstream computers. Now that we have high-quality screens, it's time to change the guideline. Unfortunately, the new guideline is not as clear-cut as the old one.

Desktop

18px

The old guideline was dictated by the poor screens on all mainstream computers. Now that we have high-quality screens, it's time to change the guideline. Unfortunately, the new guideline is not as clear-cut as the old one.

21px

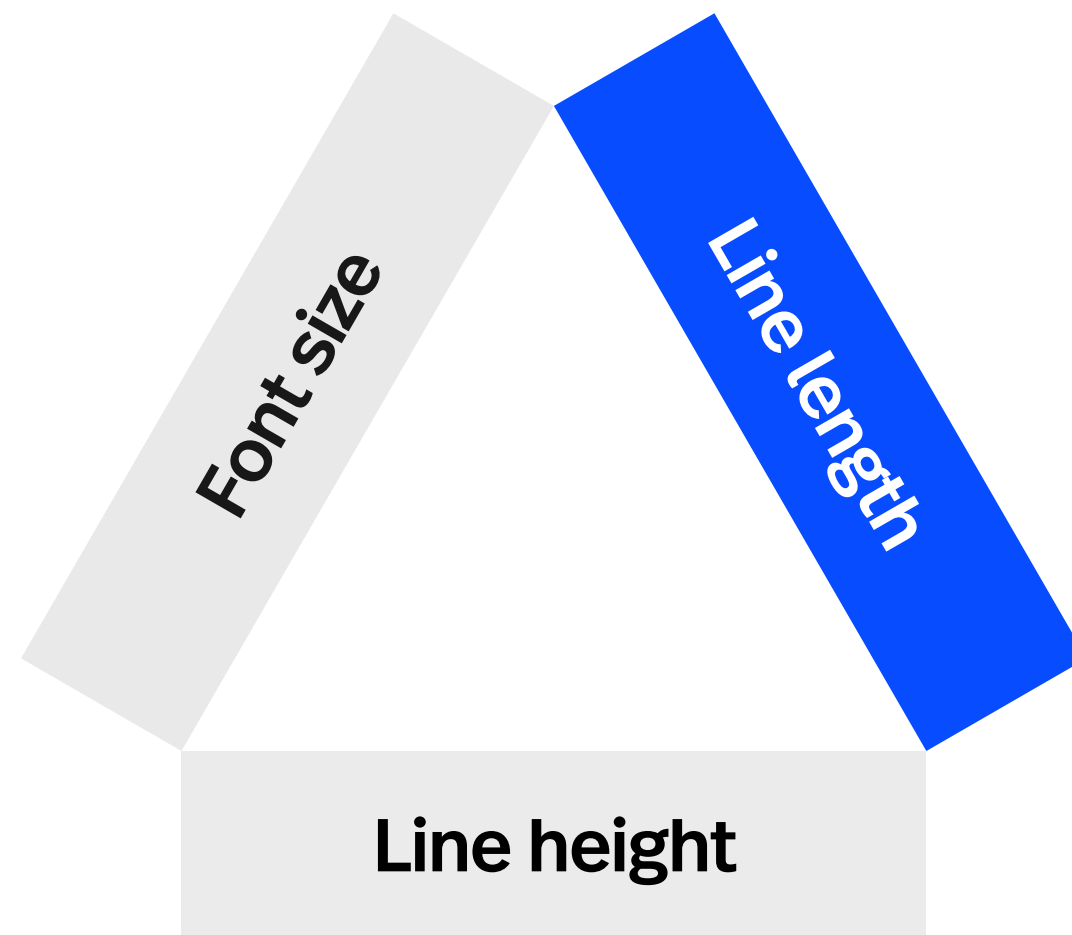
The old guideline was dictated by the poor screens on all mainstream computers. Now that we have high-quality screens, it's time to change the guideline. Unfortunately, the new guideline is not as clear-cut as the old one.

24px

The old guideline was dictated by the poor screens on all mainstream computers. Now that we have high-quality screens, it's time to change the guideline. Unfortunately, the new guideline is not as clear-cut as the old one.

Recommended line length

→ 45 to 75 characters (including spaces)



The old usability guideline for online typography was simple: stick to sans-serif typefaces. Because computer screens were too lousy to render serifs properly, attempting serif type at body-text sizes resulted in blurry letter shapes. The old guideline was dictated by the poor screens on all mainstream computers. Now that we have high-quality screens, it's time to change the guideline. Unfortunately, the new guideline is not as clear-cut as the old one. Legibility research is inconclusive as to whether serif fonts are truly better than sans-serif.

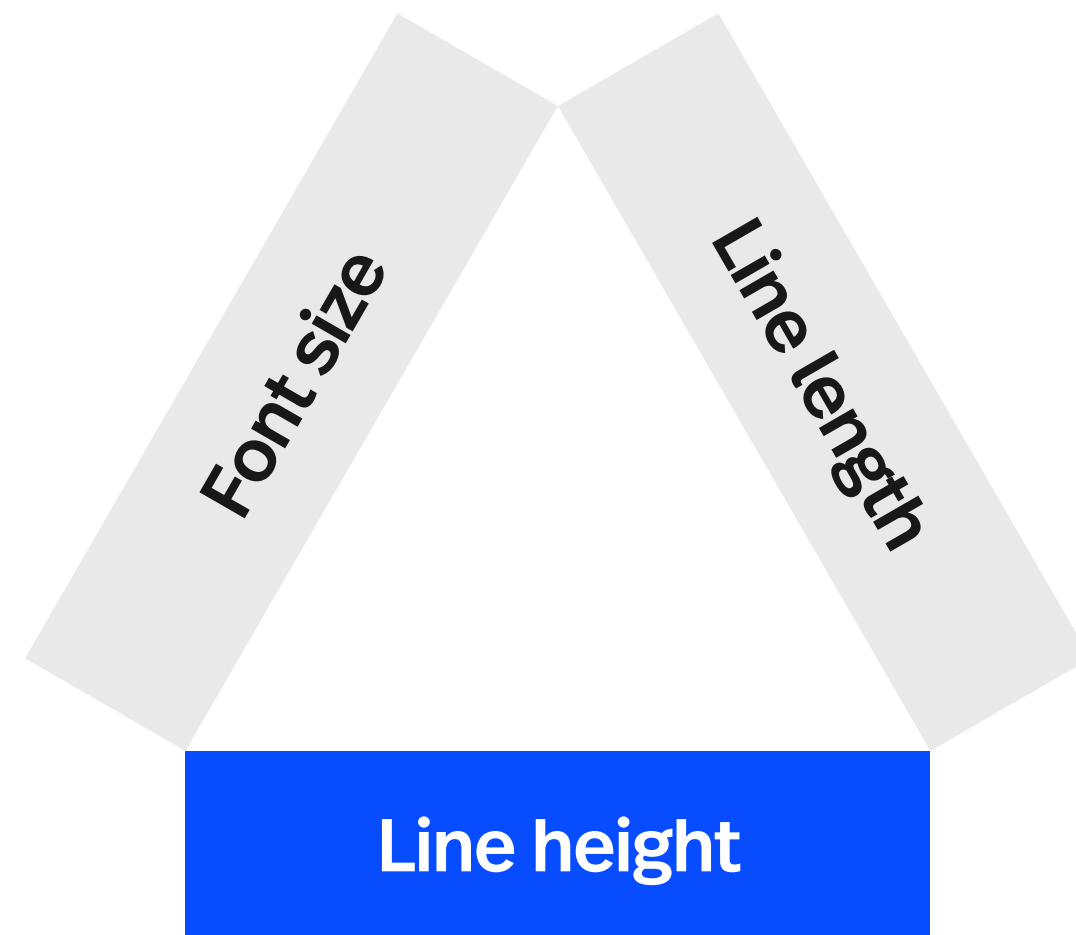
~45 characters wide

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~75 characters wide



Recommended line height



- for paragraphs, ideal line height is between 1.25 and 1.6x the font size
- for headings, a line height of 1.0 to 1.25x the font size is usually the best

The old usability guideline for online typography was simple: stick to sans-serif typefaces. Because computer screens were too lousy to render serifs properly, attempting serif type at body-text sizes resulted in blurry letter shapes. The old guideline was dictated by the poor screens on all mainstream computers.

Body 24/32px (1.25x)

The old usability guideline for online typography was simple: stick to sans-serif typefaces. Because computer screens were too lousy to render serifs properly, attempting serif type at body-text sizes resulted in blurry letter shapes. The old guideline was dictated by the poor screens on all mainstream computers.

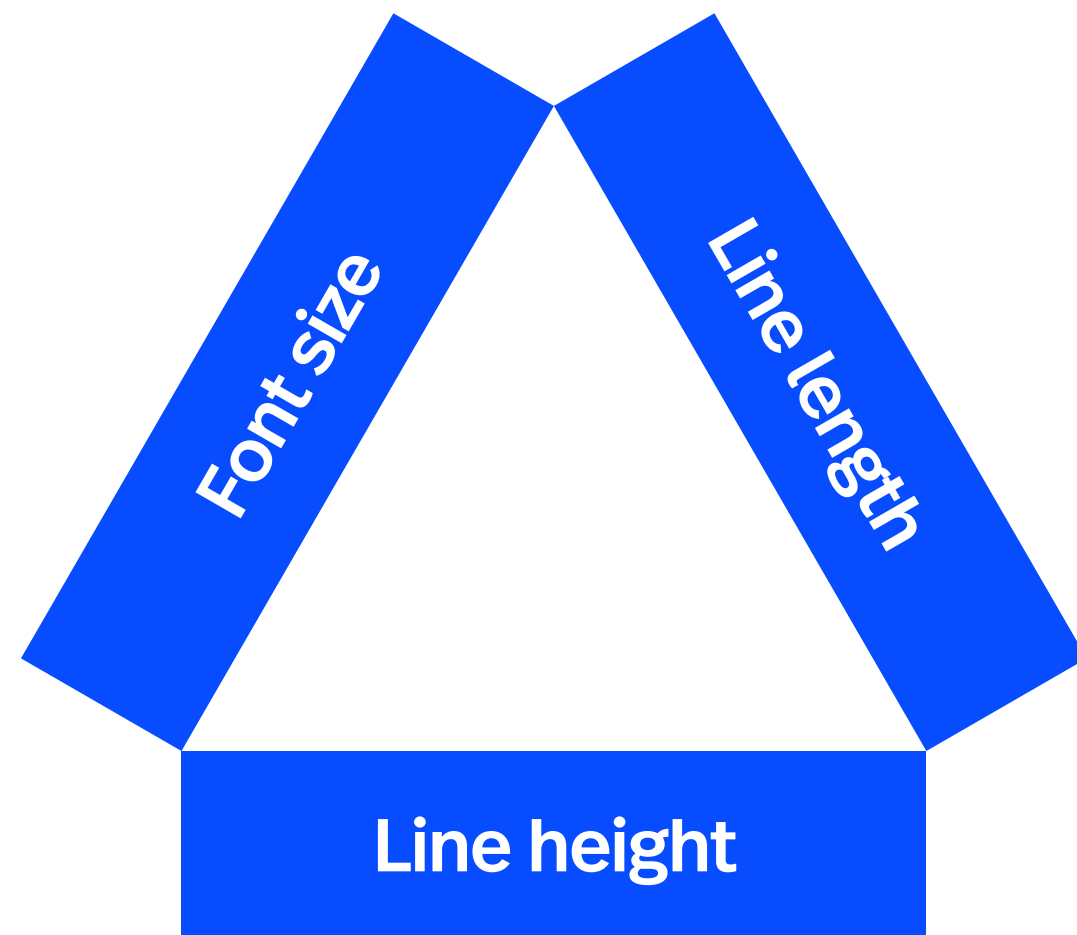
Body 24/36px (1.5x)

The old usability guideline for online typography was simple: stick to sans-serif typefaces. Because computer screens were too lousy to render serifs properly, attempting serif type at body-text sizes resulted in blurry letter shapes. The old guideline was dictated by the poor screens on all mainstream computers.

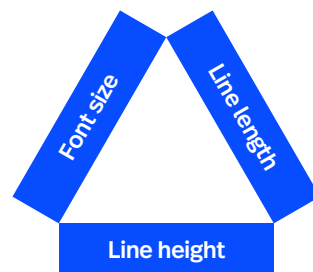
Body 24/42px (1.75x)

The equilateral triangle

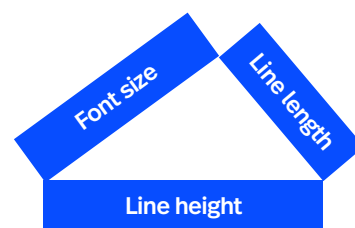
→ font size, line length and line height shouldn't be judged in isolation; they are interconnected



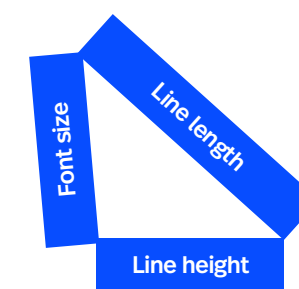
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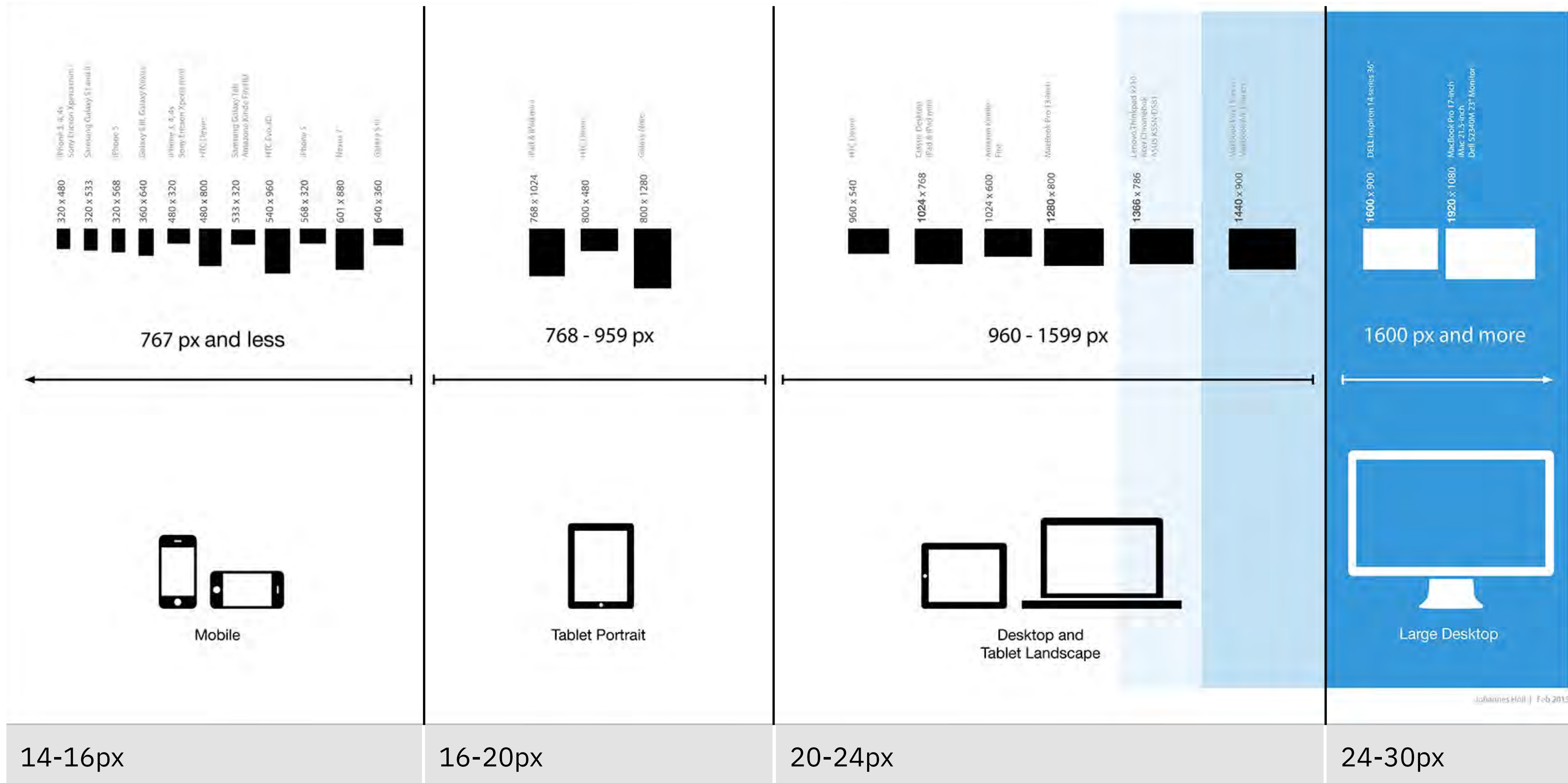
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DESIGN COUCH SESSIONS #02 : TYPE

Type & scale

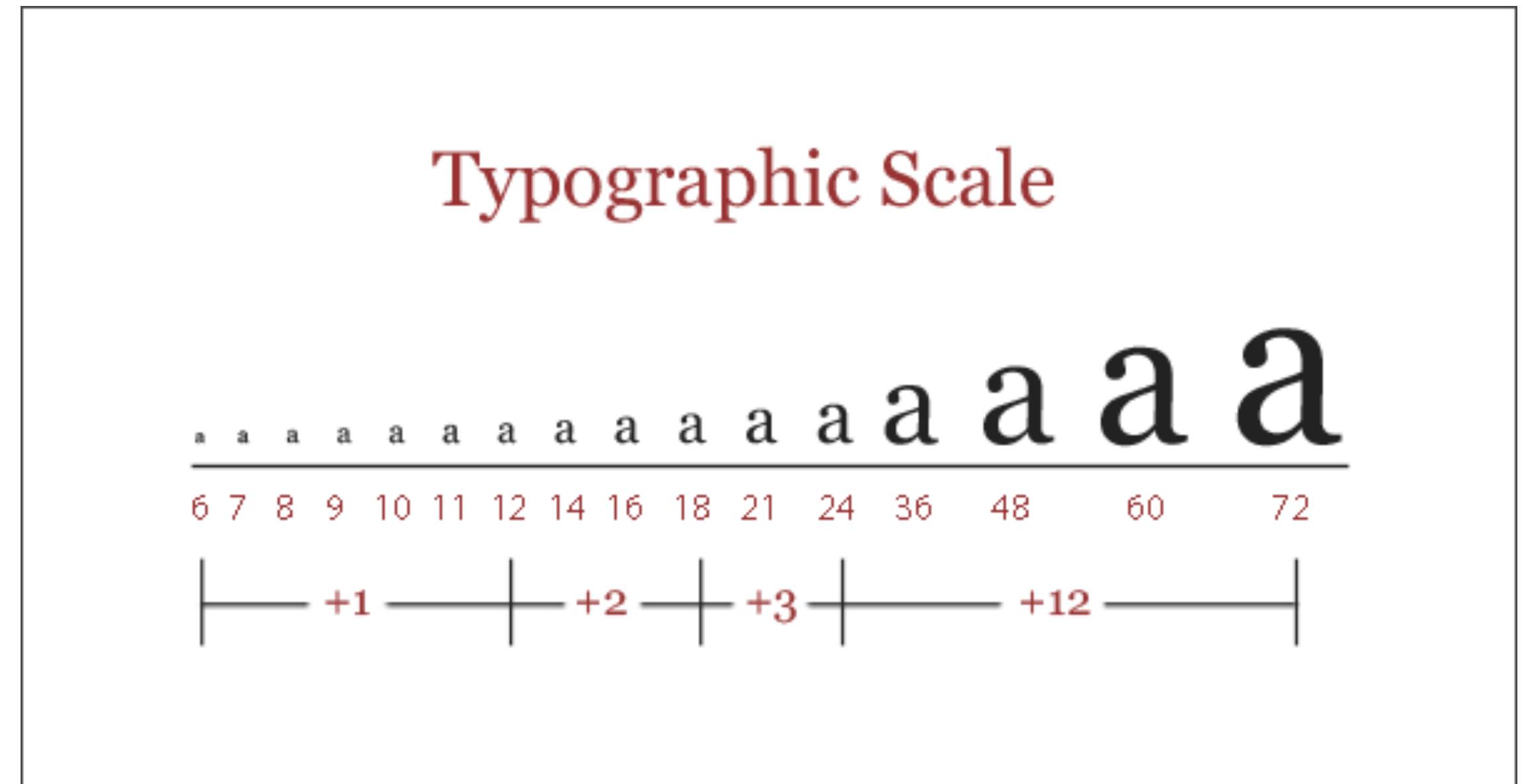
In digital, we design for a fluid range of screen sizes



Body text size
(single column)

The concept of 'modular scale'

Modular scale brings order, harmony and meaning to your text.



The Diatonic Scale which punch cutters have used since the 15th century

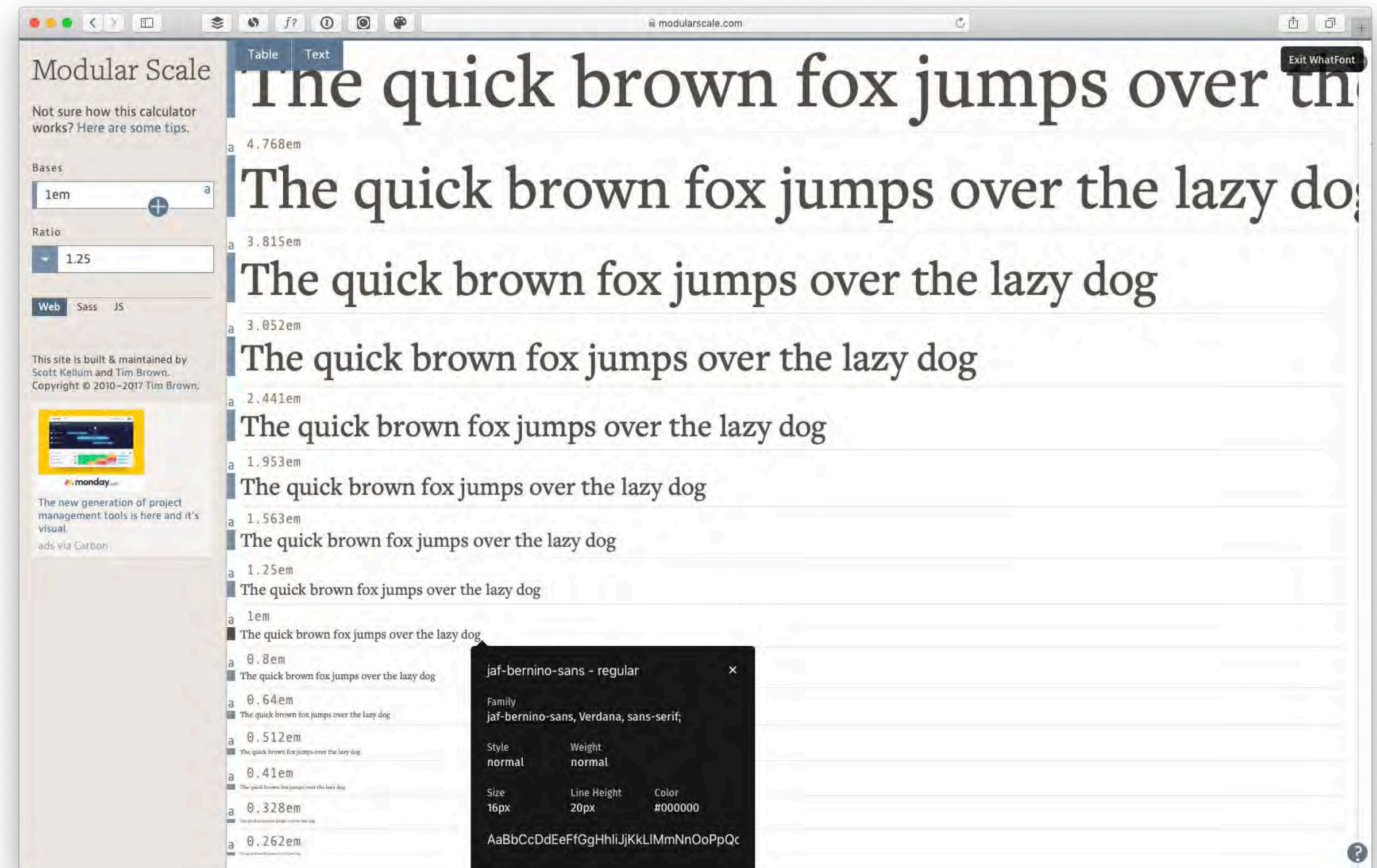
Creating your own harmonious typographic scale

You can create your own typographic scale with this handy online tool.

By default, most browsers assume the base font size to be 16px. That means that by default, a font size of 1em is equal to 16px.

Steps to take:

- Choose your base font size
- Decide on a scale (ratio)
- Choose the text sizes from the scale that you need for your typography.



More Meaningful Typography

Modular Scale

More about creating scales

Modular scale: an example

- Main body text: 18px
- Perfect Fifth scale (3:2)

It's important to keep in mind that a modular scale is not a law. It's a design tool. And, like any tool, it's just an aid.

A Visual Type Scale tool

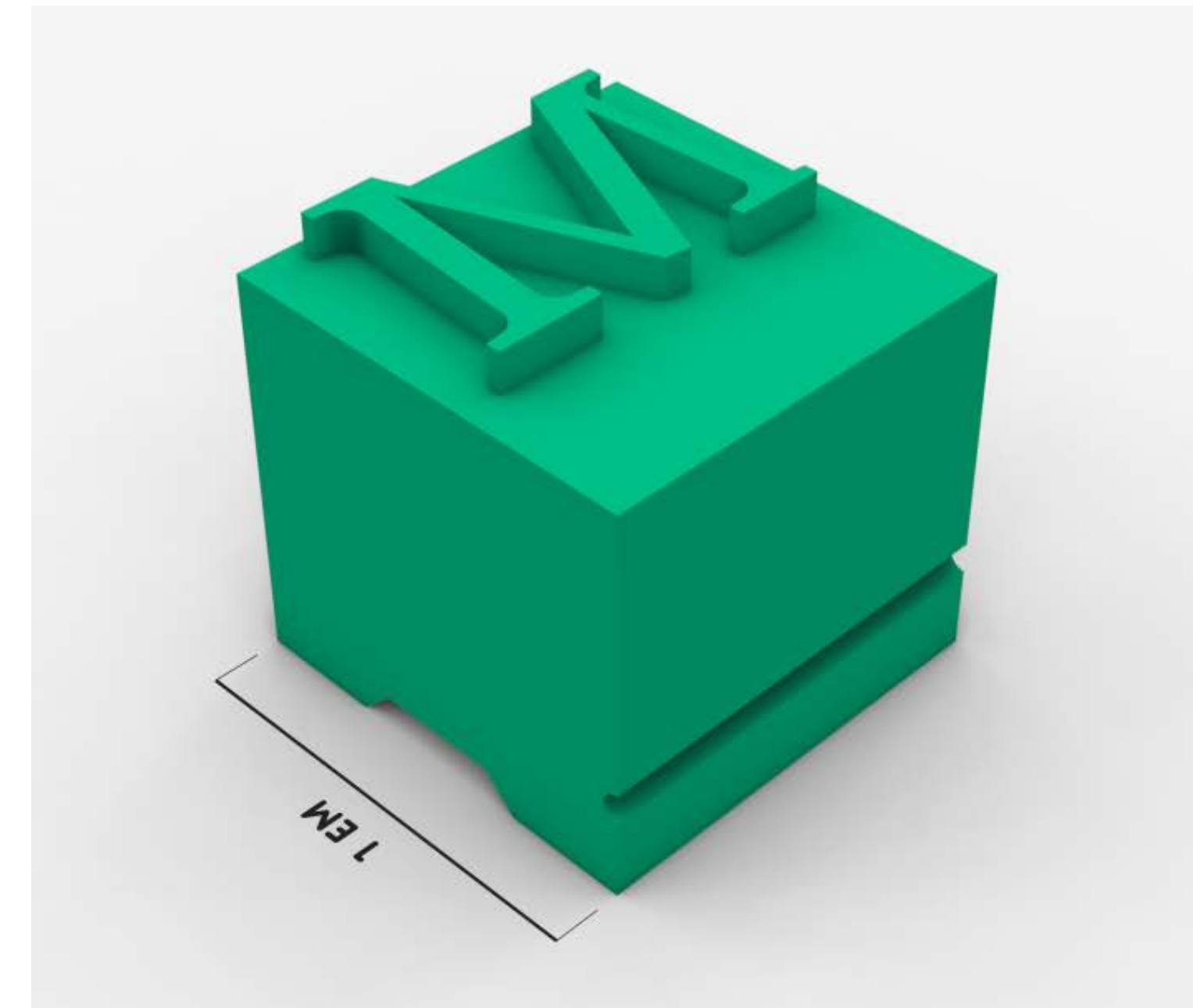


Introducing Em, the Elastigirl of CSS

The em is a unit of measurement in typography. The em is as powerful and flexible as Elastigirl; she doesn't mind what the font size is, whether 12px, 16 or 36, she will always be exactly equal to it.



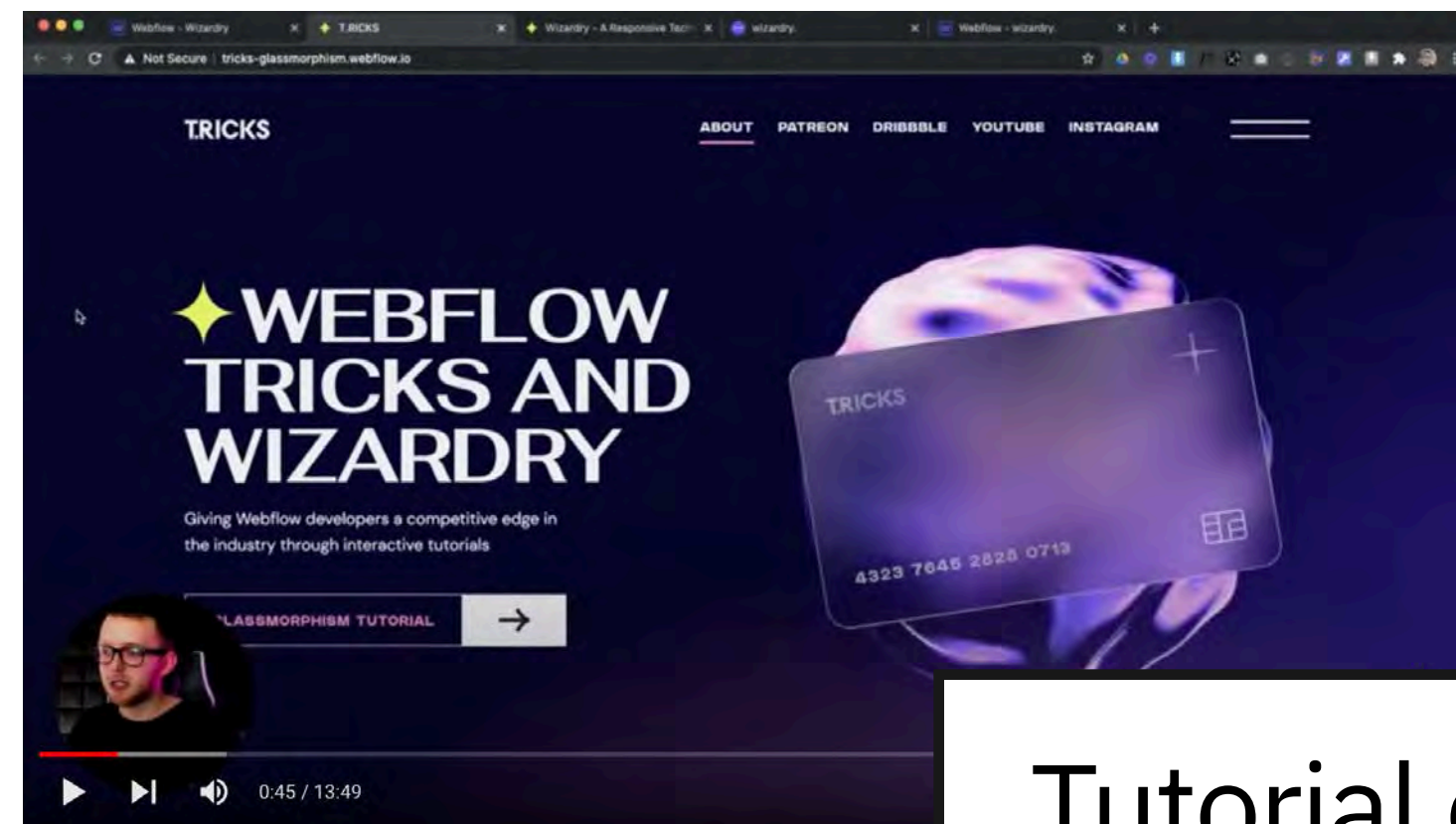
Convert pixels to ems



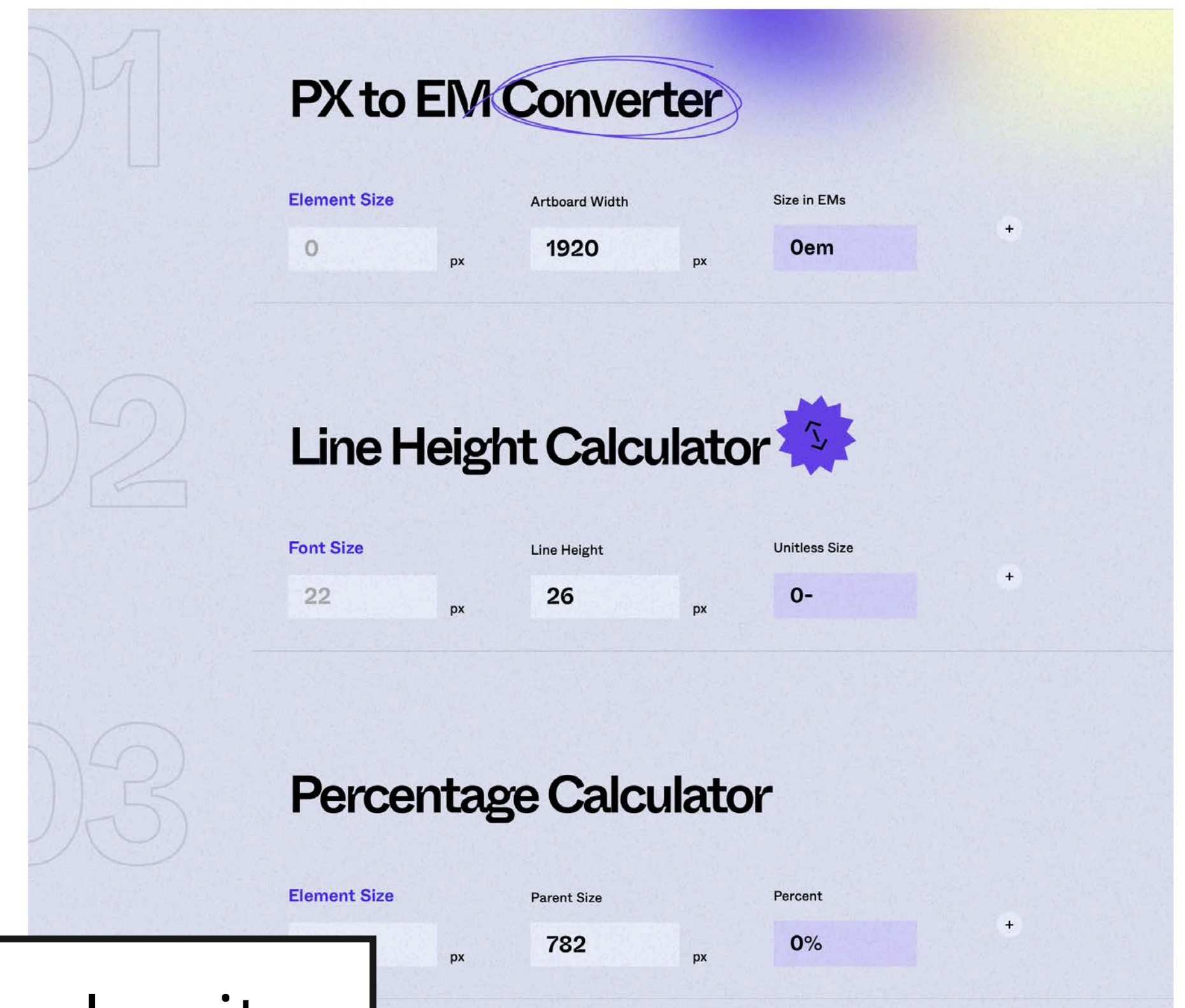
An em was originally equal to the size of the metal block used to cut a single letter of type for a specific font. It was roughly equivalent to the width of a capital letter 'M'.

Wizardry - by Timothy Ricks

Wizardry is a frontend development technique that brings together the best of responsive, adaptive, and fluid typographic design. It uses a clever mix of em and rem type sizes to create a flexible typographic system across screen widths and break points.



Tutorial on YouTube



Wizardry site

DESIGN COUCH SESSIONS #02 : TYPE

Typeface selection



Rule #1
Don't stick to free typefaces



Rule #2
Don't stick to what's on your hard disc

Choosing a typeface

1. Honour content
2. Read it
3. Consider your audience
4. Consider your canvas
5. Does it look right?

And finally:

Type choice is subjective and that's perfectly fine!

As long as you take **3.** at heart...

Further reading:

A brief primer on typeface selection

How To Choose A Font - A Step-By-Step Guide

Selecting Type for Text: Factors to Consider

DESIGN COUCH SESSIONS #02 : TYPE

Typeface pairing



Guiding principle #1

Don't use more than 2 and definitely not more than 3 typefaces in your design.



Guiding principle #2

Combine typefaces that are clearly different¹, but share certain design traits².

1 serif & sans - sans & slab - old style & humanist sans

2 shape of a and g - character width - angle of axis - etc



Guiding principle #3

**When you combine
typefaces that are similar,
use contrast to make
them work together.**

large <> small

light <> heavy

narrow <> wide

roman <> italic

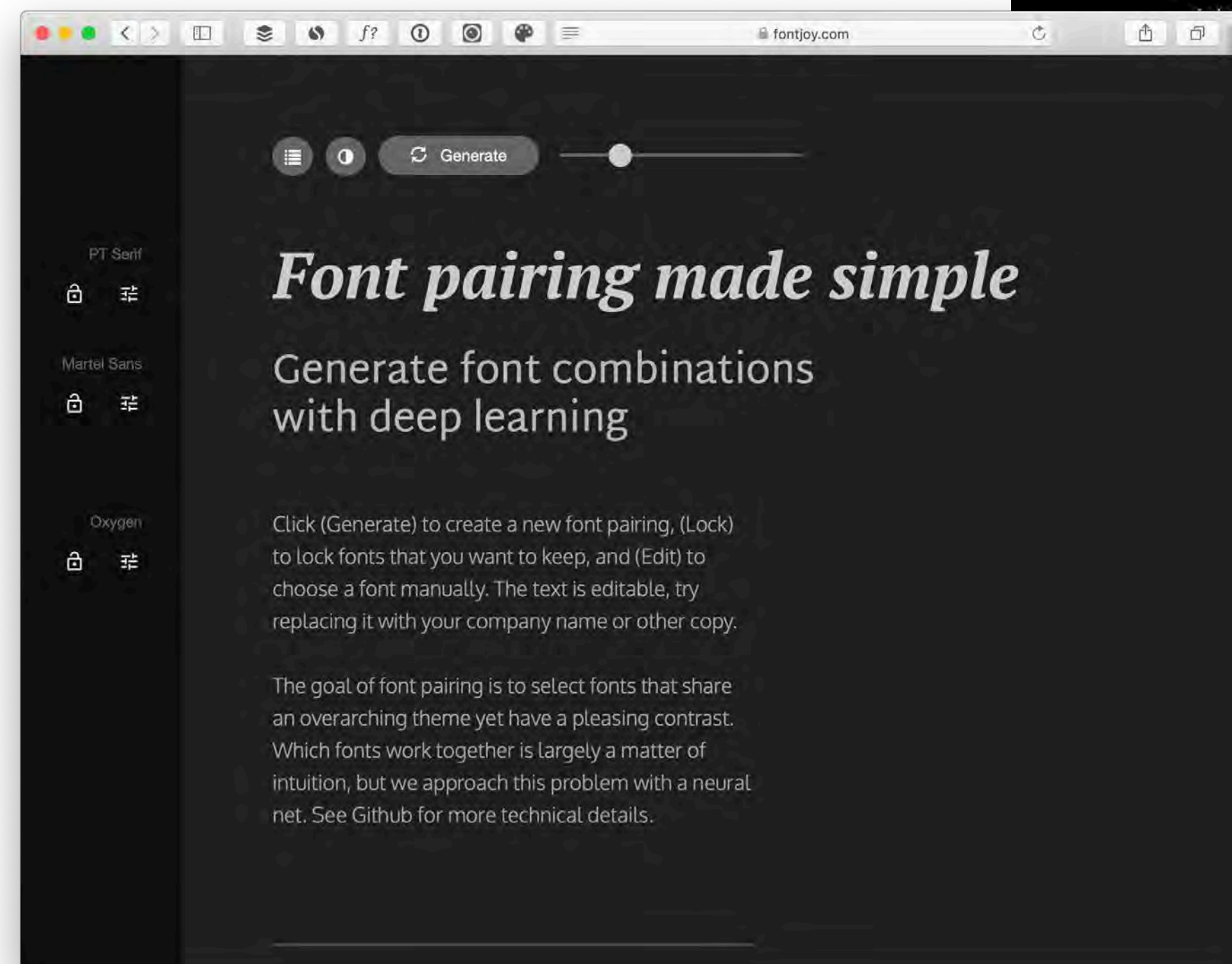
Good places to start

Fastprint Blog - The art of mixing typefaces

Fontjoy - Font pairing made simple

Visme Blog - Pairing fonts

Typ.io - Fonts that go together



the ART of MIXING TYPEFACES

GOOGLE FONTS EDITION

Google Fonts offers hundreds of free, open-source fonts for designers, but knowing which combinations are a match made in heaven can be tricky.

This 'cheat sheet' contains **twenty** of the most popular (and beautiful) typefaces from Google Fonts and shows the combinations that work **beautifully well**, **not-so-well** and those of which you should likely **avoid at all costs**.

Simply **cross-reference from horizontal to vertical** (or vice-versa) to determine the compatibility of each typeface combination.

A compatibility matrix for font pairings. The columns are labeled 'DISPLAY' and the rows are labeled 'TEXT'. The columns list 20 fonts: Open Sans, Roboto, Oswald, Lato, Droid Sans, PT Sans, Source Sans, Droid Serif, Ubuntu, Raleway, Montserrat, PT Sans Narrow, Oxygen, Arimo, Newsreader, Lora, Legater, Bitter, and Francois One. The rows list 3 fonts: Open Sans, Roboto, and Oswald. The matrix consists of a grid of squares, each representing a font pair. The squares are shaded in three ways: white (Great combination), light gray (Unlikely combination), and dark gray (Avoid).

Great combination Unlikely combination Avoid

We determined the compatibility of each typeface above visually and we think this infographic should not be used as an absolute definitive guide; it is intended for use as a rough guide **ONLY**. We must stress that there is **no** **aphic absolute** and there may be some instances in which normally compatible typefaces simply do not mix well together (and vice-versa).

we wholeheartedly encourage you to use this infographic as a good reference (please, feel free to bookmark it!), we urge you to think twice before mixing any typefaces and make **wise design decisions**.

DESIGN COUCH SESSIONS #02 : TYPE

Typeface licensing

Typefaces are intellectual property

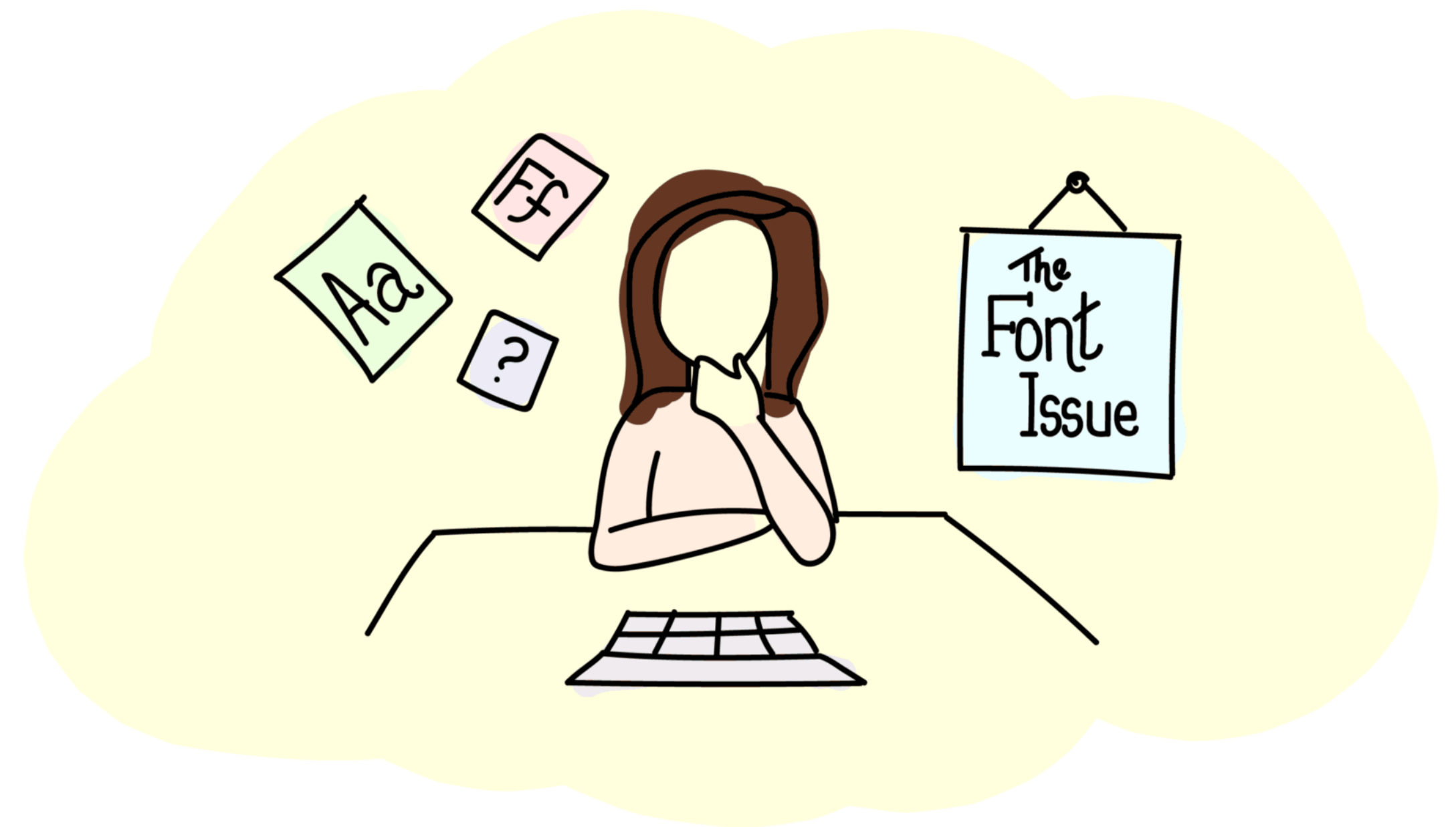
Like art, music, or literary works, typefaces are designed by real people (they're called type designers) and are protected by certain intellectual property rights.



Fonts for personal use or commercial use

Fonts are actually software. So, unless your fonts are free for commercial use, you must purchase a license to use font software.

Unless you download the font from a reputable source that states it is free for commercial use, it's probably not free.



The font issue: Is your company playing by the rules?



The different types of licenses (or EULA's)

- Desktop licenses allow you to install a font on one or more computers
- Webfont licenses allow you to embed the font into a website or email message
- Embedded licenses let you distribute fonts in a physical product like a medical device, cars, or in a software program
- Mobile app licenses allow fonts to be embedded in phone/tablet apps
- ePub licenses cover usage in digital publications that are sold for a certain price
- Server licenses enable web or cloud-based services and SaaS use cases.



<https://www.monotype.com/fonts/licensing-101/>

DESIGN COUCH SESSIONS #02 : TYPE

Micro typography

“Don't be dumb”

“You're smart!”

What constitutes micro typography?

- Ligatures
- Small caps
- Alternate figures
- Superscript & subscript
- Fractions
- Punctuation (dashes, quotation marks)
- Spaces

<i>AE</i> → <i>Æ</i>	<i>ij</i> → <i>ij</i>
<i>ae</i> → <i>æ</i>	<i>st</i> → <i>st̂</i>
<i>OE</i> → <i>Œ</i>	<i>ft</i> → <i>ft</i>
<i>oe</i> → <i>œ</i>	<i>et</i> → <i>&</i>
<i>ff</i> → <i>ff</i>	<i>fs</i> → <i>ß</i>
<i>fi</i> → <i>fi</i>	<i>ffi</i> → <i>ffi</i>

victory lustig

LAMORE

This is real SMALL CAPS

This is fake SMALL CAPS

This is real SMALL CAPS

This is fake SMALL CAPS

$\frac{1}{8}$ $\frac{1}{4}$ $\frac{3}{8}$ $\frac{1}{2}$ $\frac{5}{8}$ $\frac{3}{4}$ $\frac{7}{8}$

$\frac{1}{8}$ $\frac{1}{4}$ $\frac{3}{8}$ $\frac{1}{2}$ $\frac{5}{8}$ $\frac{3}{4}$ $\frac{7}{8}$

Quotation marks in different languages

'English' (GB)

"English" (USA)

«*French*»

„*German*“ or »*German*«

«*Spanish*»

«*Italian*»

«*Swiss*»

«*Greek*»

«*Russian*»

«*Portuguese*» (Portugal)

"Portuguese" (Brasil)

'Dutch'

„*Polish*“

"Swedish"



Alternate figures in context

0123456789

LINING

top 40 in 1987

RIGHT

TOP 40 IN 1987

RIGHT

0123456789

OLDSTYLE

top 40 in 1987

RIGHT

TOP 40 IN 1987

WRONG

\$11,234.16

PROPORTIONAL

\$80,765.00

\$11,234.16

TABULAR

\$80,765.00

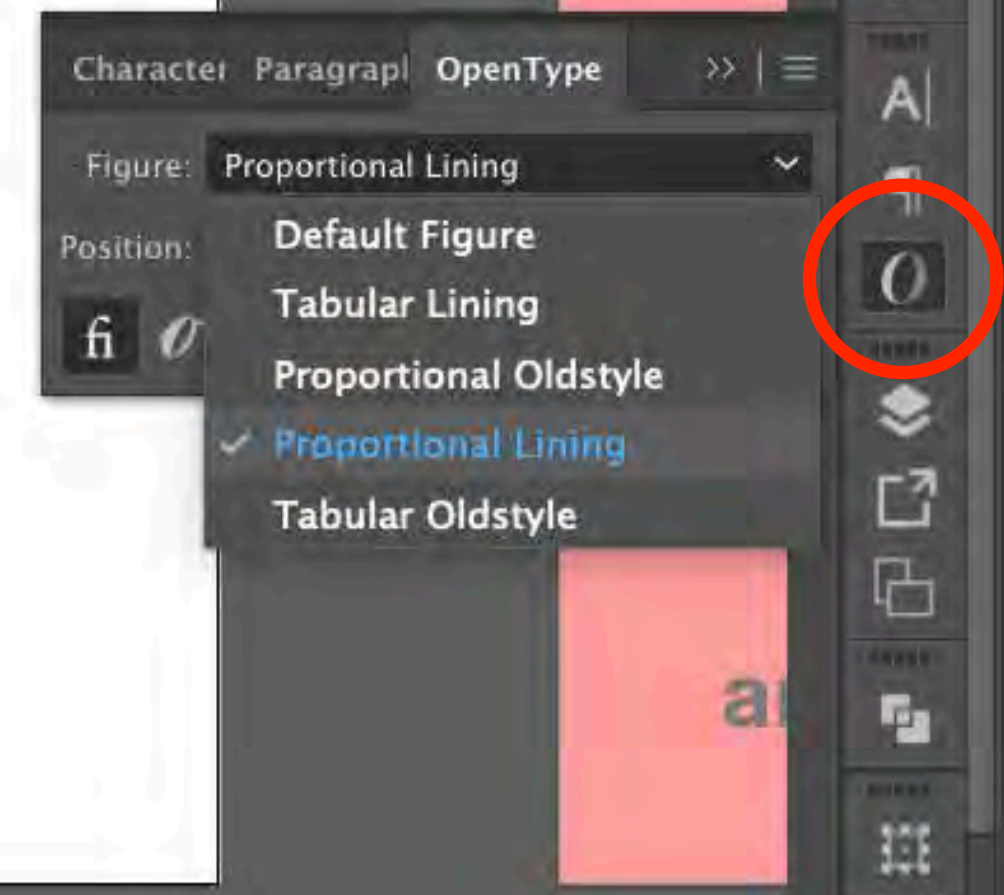
Notes:

- Not every font has the sets of alternate figures listed here. Alternate figures are added based on the type designer's idea of how the typeface will be used, and whether the alternates will be useful.
- If alternate figures are included in your font, they'll be implemented as OpenType features. [These are not always easy to find...](#)

In Adobe Illustrator there's a separate panel where you can access OpenType features of the selected font

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www.edenspiekermann.com

A screenshot of the Adobe Illustrator OpenType panel. The panel has tabs for "Character", "Paragraph", and "OpenType". Under the "OpenType" tab, there are sections for "Figure" and "Position". The "Figure" section has a dropdown menu set to "Proportional Lining". Below it, a list of features is shown: "Default Figure", "Tabular Lining", "Proportional Oldstyle", "Proportional Lining" (which is checked), and "Tabular Oldstyle". A red circle highlights the "OpenType" icon in the right-hand toolbar.



In Keynote, the OpenType features are quite well hidden, and have different naming than in Illustrator or InDesign

The screenshot shows the Keynote interface with a presentation slide in the background. The slide contains the text: "Supporting Sustainable Capital", "> \$2 Billion", "30 Countries", and "SURF's mission is opportunistic returns, investments that create positive social and environmental outcomes for all." Below the slide, the word "Themes" is visible. The font settings panel is open, showing the font "Gotham" in size 16. The "Number Case" menu is expanded, and "Old-Style Figures" is selected and circled in red. Other menu options include "Ligatures", "Number Spacing", "Vertical Position", "Contextual Fractional Forms", "Typographic Extras", "Mathematical Extras", "Case-Sensitive Layout", "Alternative Stylistic Sets", "Contextual Alternates", "Lower Case", "Upper Case", and "Glyph Variants".

Family	Typeface	Size
Europa-Boia	Light	16
Fedra Serif A Std	Book	9
Fira Sans	Medium	10
Fira Sans Compressed	Bold	11
Fira Sans Condensed		12
Founders Grotesk		13
Franklin Gothic Book		14
Franklin Gothic Medium		18
Franziska FF		24
FreightText		36
		48
		64
		72
		96
		144
		288



In Microsoft Word you'll find OpenType features under Advanced Typography

The screenshot shows the Microsoft Word interface with the Font dialog box open. The 'Advanced Typography' tab is selected, and the 'Number forms' dropdown menu is highlighted with a red circle, showing 'Lining' as the selected option. The document background contains the following text:

Singapore Post Limited
Group Procurement Department
10 Eunos Road 8, #07-31,
Singapore Post Centre
Singapore 408600

Singapore, 12 April 2019

Proposal Q2019-111 - Ref: Q/GC/19003

Dear Eunice,

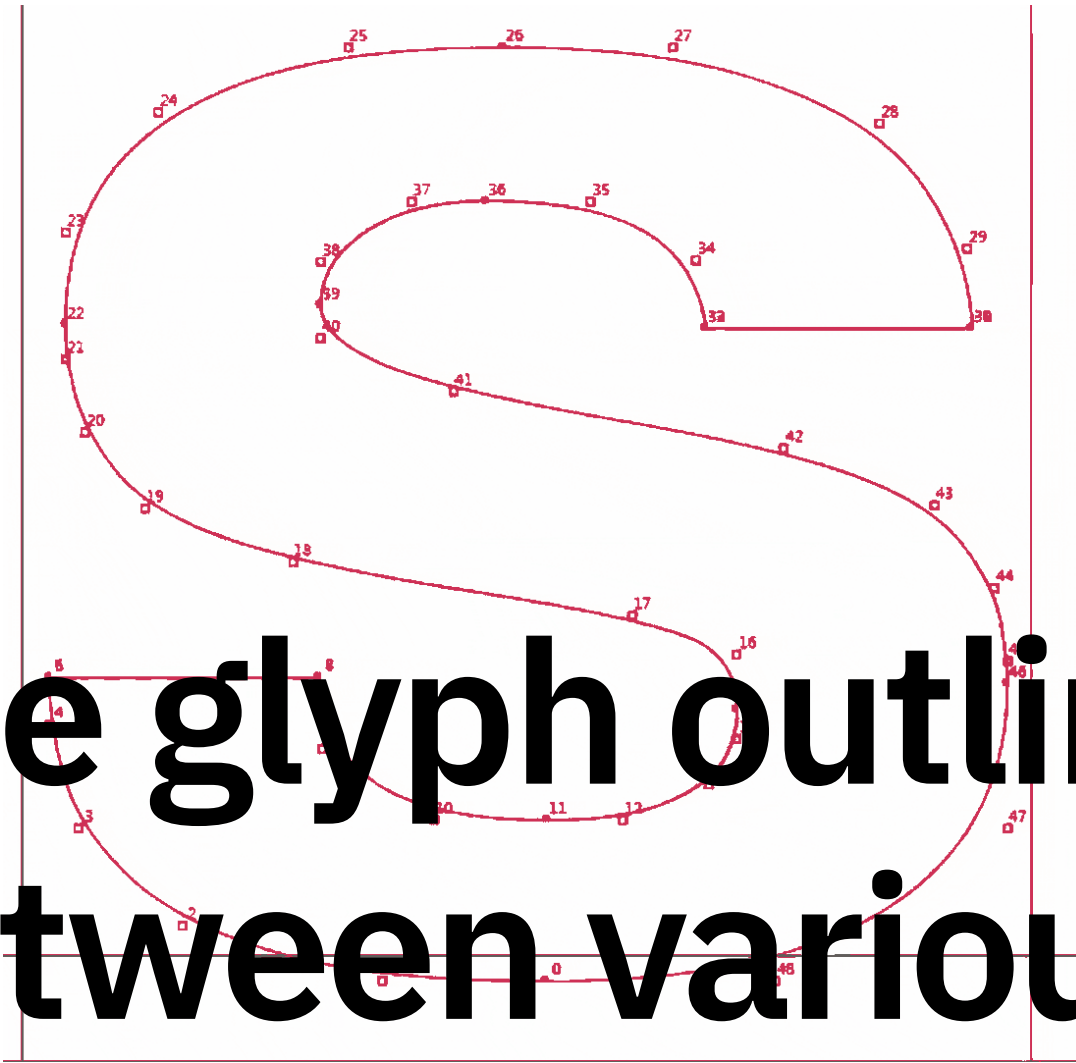
Thank you for inviting us to make a proposal for the curation and code development of a microsite for SingPost community to learn more about their postman and products & services. The microsite should give customers the possibility to give specific feedback on their experiences with their postmen.

Debriefing

Starting in June with a trial in 2 or 3 postal code zones, SingPost is rolling out a targeted campaign with the title 'Know Your Postman'. This campaign aims to make every household's postman more visible and accessible, giving customers

DESIGN COUCH SESSIONS #02 : TYPE

Variable fonts



The glyph outlines in a variable font morph between various family shapes using interpolation techniques defined in the OpenType 1.8.1 specification. This specification was the result of a remarkable working collaboration between Adobe, Apple, Google, and Microsoft.

— Bob Taylor, Monotype’s Font Technologies Director

Advantages of variable fonts

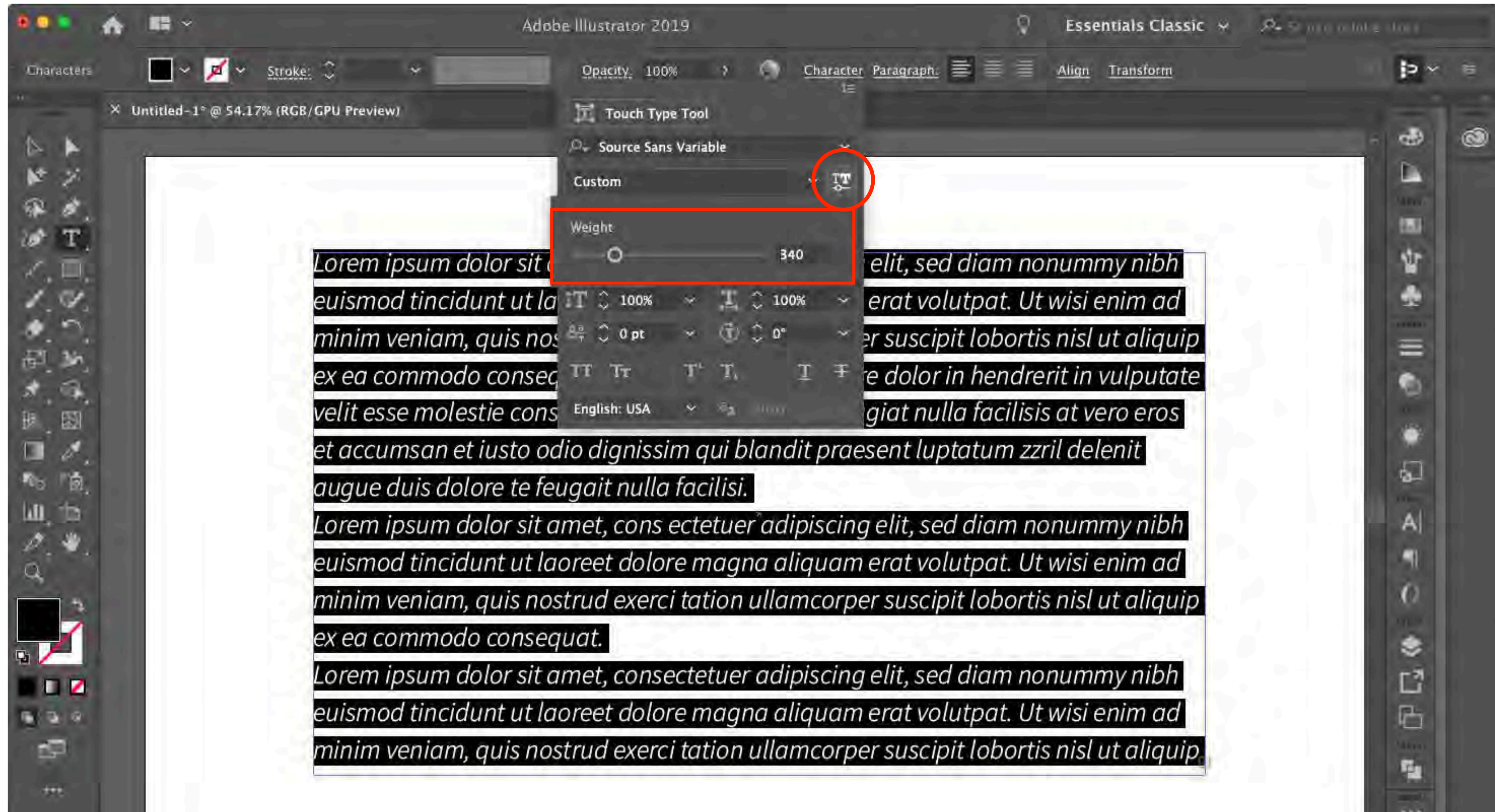
- The technology enables a single font file to behave like multiple fonts
- A variable font can respond (and be optimized) dynamically to the reader's device and environment, as well as to the text.
- A variable font file can be significantly smaller than four separate font weights
- With the added speed advantage of requiring just one call to the server.

Variable fonts are currently supported by Safari, Chrome, Edge and Firefox (the latter only on Mac and if you turn on some flags).



This image shows a variable font rendered in 36 different styles, all from one file.

Variable fonts in Adobe Illustrator



Fluid Font Weight with Viewport Size - Variable Fonts

A PEN BY Mandy Michael PRO

♥ Fork ⚙️ Settings 📺 Change View **Sign Up** Log In



```
HTML
<p id="text" contenteditable>Little fluffy
jello</p>

CSS (SCSS)
@font-face {
  font-family: "Source Sans Variable";
  src: url("https://s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/s.cdn.io/209981/SourceSansVariable-Roman.ttf");
}

html {
  height: 100%;
}

JS
// JS is to make the text editable, not
// required for the effect. Thanks for the
// suggestion @chriscoyier!
var p = document.querySelector("p");

p.addEventListener("input", function() {
  this.setAttribute("data-heading",
  this.innerText);
});
```

CoFo Peshka Variable



An industrial sans inspired by Russian lettering from the 1920s. Designed by Maria Doreuli with the help of Anna Khorash. Offered with discounted pricing while it's still a work in progress.

Design: Maria Doreuli
Publisher: Contrast Foundry
Characters: Cyrillic (limited), Latin (limited)
Release: 2019-03-18
Licensing: Paid/commercial
Info/fonts: futurefonts.xyz

А Б В Г Д Е Ж Ж З И Й К Л
М Н О П Р С Т У Ф Х Ц
Ч Ш Щ Ъ Ы Ь Э Ю Я А
В С D E F G H I J K L M
N O P Q R S T U V W X
Y Z 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
9



Objektiv VF



A geometric-ish sans that works as a companion to [Mokoko](#).

Design: Dalton Maag Ltd.
Publisher: Dalton Maag Ltd.
Characters: Latin
Release: 2019-03-07
Licensing: Paid/commercial, Trial
Info/fonts: daltonmaag.com

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W
X Y Z a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z 0
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

<https://v-fonts.com>

Introduction

MY SPECIMENS

SPECIMENS

- NEW** IBM Plex
- 方正悠黑
- 文鼎晶熙黑
- 晶熙ゴシック体
- Amstelvar
- Avenir Next
- Bitcount
- Bree
- Buffalo Gal
- Compressa
- Decovar
- DIN 2014
- Dunbar
- Fit
- Gingham
- Gnomon

IBM Plex is a new typeface.

It's global.

It's upright.

It's italic.

It's thin.

It's bold.

It's condensed.

It's regular width.

It's everything in between.

IBM Plex Variable is open

TEXTBOX

Textbox: line-1

Font: IBM Plex Sans Var Italic

Font size: 64 px

Line-height: [Slider]

Alignment: [Left, Center, Right, Justify]

Buttons: CSS, New textbox, Delete textbox

FONT VARIATIONS

Instance: Thin Italic

Weight: 700

Width: 100

FONT FEATURES

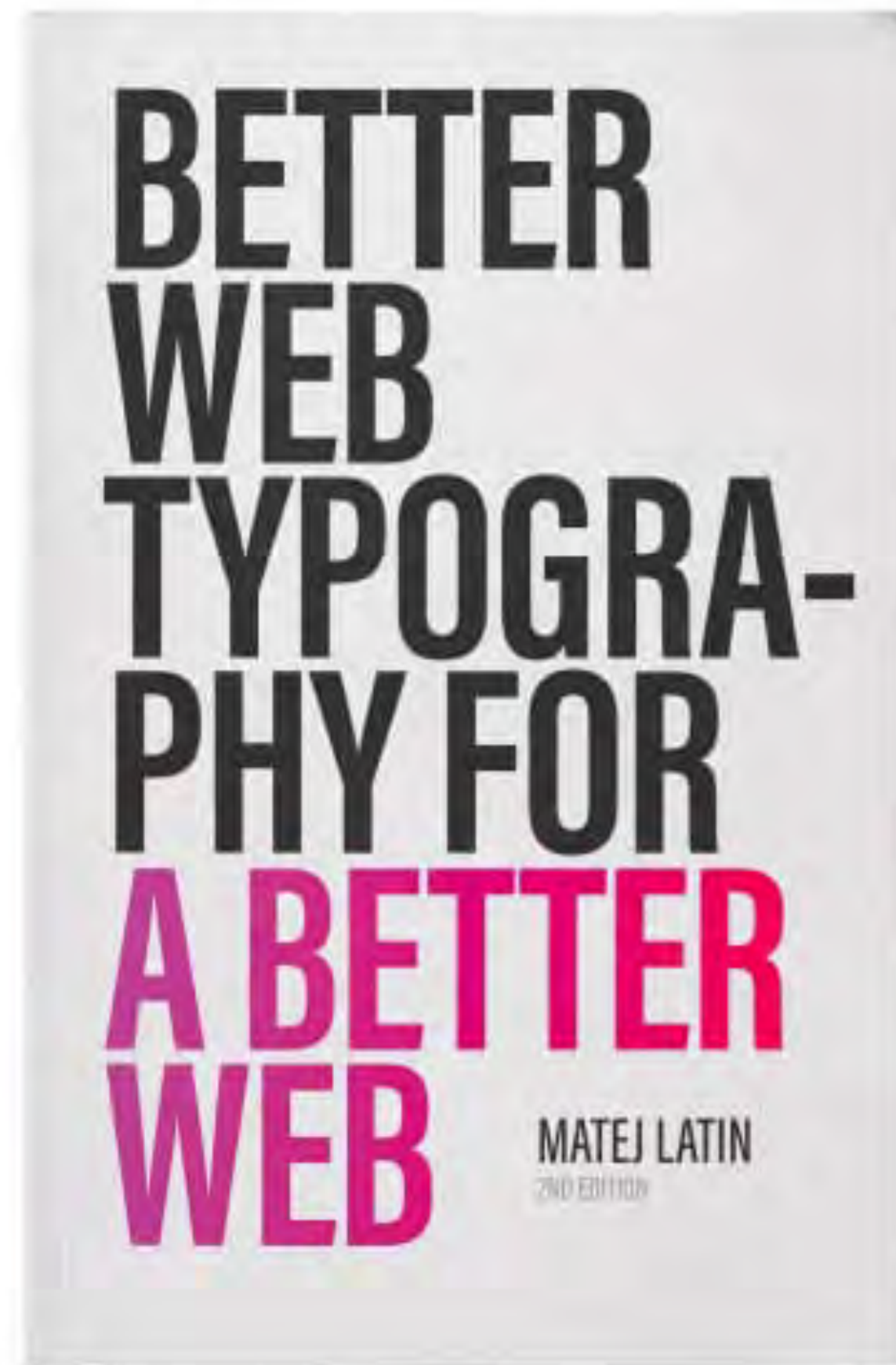
- aalt ccmp dnom frac liga numr ordn salt sint
- ss01 ss02 ss03 ss04 ss05 sups zero

COLOUR



<https://www.axis-praxis.org>

Further reading



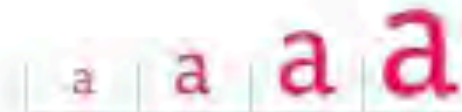
*How to choose typefaces
for your projects*



*How to combine typefaces like
a proper type geek*



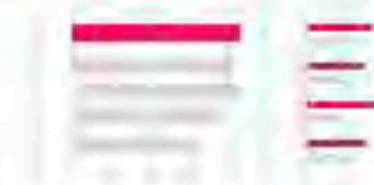
*How to set a
perfect paragraph*



*Why and how to use a
modular scale*



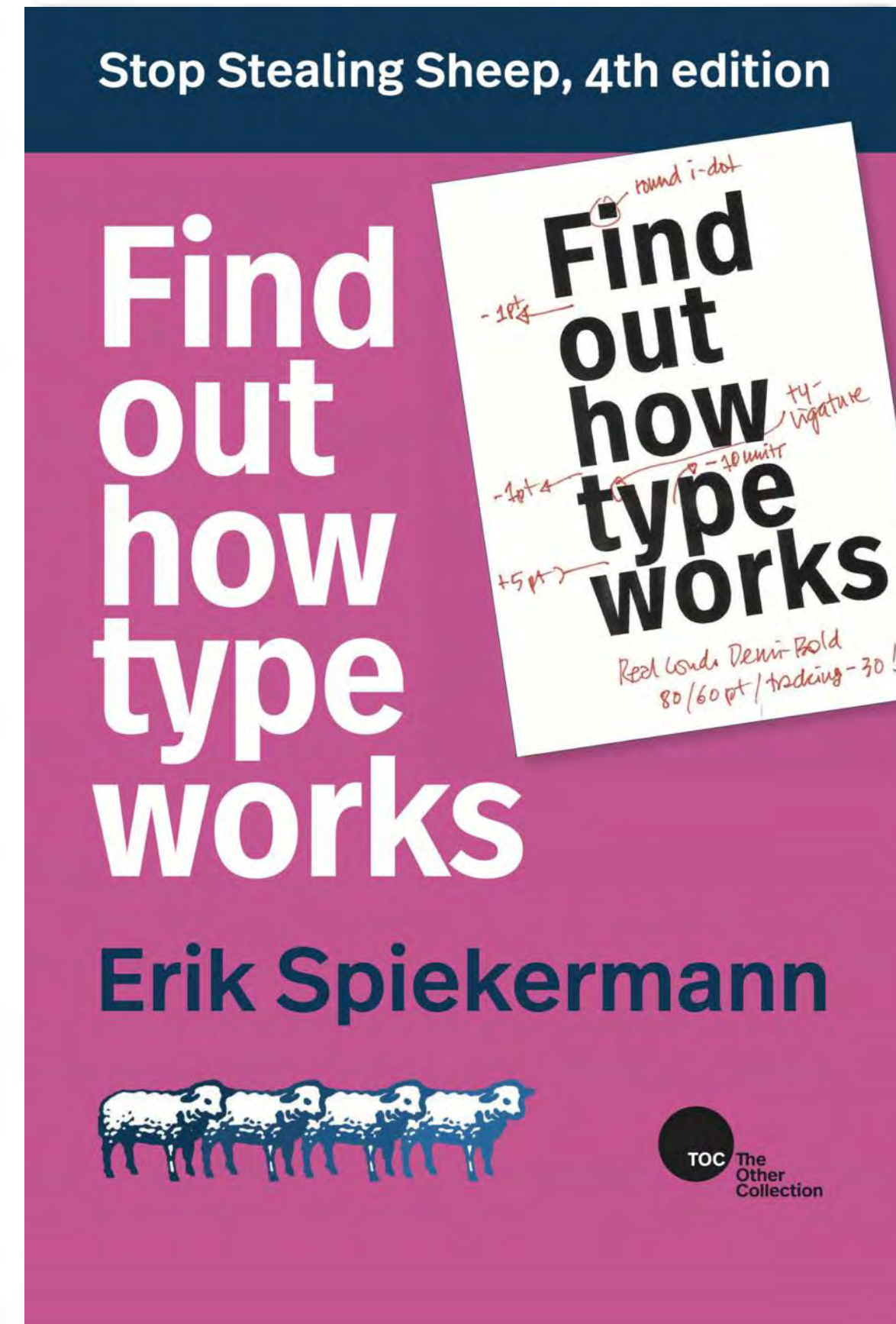
*How to set up vertical
rhythm for your website*



*How to shape pages and use
responsive web typography*

<https://betterwebtype.com>

Further reading



Erik Spiekermann knows everything about type – and likes to talk about it. He shows that typography is an effective tool for anyone who has something to say and wants or needs to do it on paper or on screen.



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Download book (PDF, 24 mb)



Have fun with type!

Edo van Dijk
@edoch

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