



Glossary of basic terms

- Typeface** The overall design of a type family
Gill Sans, Univers & Georgia are all typefaces.

- Font** Referring back to when type was cast in molten metal using a mould, or *font*. A font is how a typeface is delivered. So you can have both a metal handmade font and a digital font file of the same typeface, e.g Times or Futura.

- Serif** Short strokes at the ends of horizontal and vertical strokes of characters. Generally considered to be easier to read for large quantities of text, and often, but not always, associated with more traditional and older themes.

- Sans Serif** Taken from the French word *sans*, meaning 'without', sans serif simply means without serifs. Generally, but not always, considered to be associated with modern themes.

- Slab Serif** A typeface with weightier, 'slab-like' serifs.

- Uppercase** CAPITAL LETTERS

- Lowercase** non-capital letters

- Mixed-case** A mix of the two above, that conforms to the standard rules of a normal sentence.
Sometimes called sentence-case.

- Title-case** Capitalising all of the major words in a sentence. There are various schools of thought as to what defines a 'major' word, but it tends to look neater when connecting words like *and, the, to, but, is & my* remain lowercase.

- Display font** A typeface or font designed to be used at larger sizes, like headers or on title pages. Usually too intricate or too bold to be legible at small sizes.

- Body font** A typeface or font designed to be used for greater amounts of text (often called 'body copy' or 'body text'). Readable at smaller sizes.

- Leading** The space set above and below lines of text. This text is 9pt in size, with 11pt leading.

- Kerning** The adjustment of the space between individual characters. Good typographers hand-adjust kerning by eye for perfectly balanced spacing.

- Tracking** The adjustment of the *overall* spacing between characters, usually for larger amounts of text.

Gill Sans Univers Georgia

You'll see that a typeface can come in various types of digital font; such as OpenType, TrueType and Postscript fonts. Each have different reasons for being, but they are essentially just different ways of delivering the same typeface.

Times
Hoefler Text
Baskerville
Minion
Georgia

Akzidenz Grotesk
Helvetica
Univers
Gotham

Rockwell
Lubalin Graph

ABCDEFGH

abcdefgh

Great, it'll be sunny on Saturday.

Improving your Typography: Easy with Practice

FUTURA STENCIL ITC Grouch

Lorum ipsor dolor set... Times
Lorum ipsor dolor set... Univers
Lorum ipsor dolor set... Plantin

The difference is visible when we increase the leading to 14pt as shown here.

WARM **WARM**
Bad kerning Good kerning



Anatomy of type

Below is a brief guide to the anatomy of typography. Not everything is listed below, but it's a good place to start or to keep as reference.

Remember that sizes and relationships between elements will vary depending on the typeface, but the general terminology always remains the same.

Cap height
x-height
(literally the height of a letter 'x')
Baseline

Ascender height
Often slightly above the cap height.

Descender line

Overhang
Curved characters such as o, e & s often hang slightly over the cap height, x-height or baseline.



Kerning & tracking

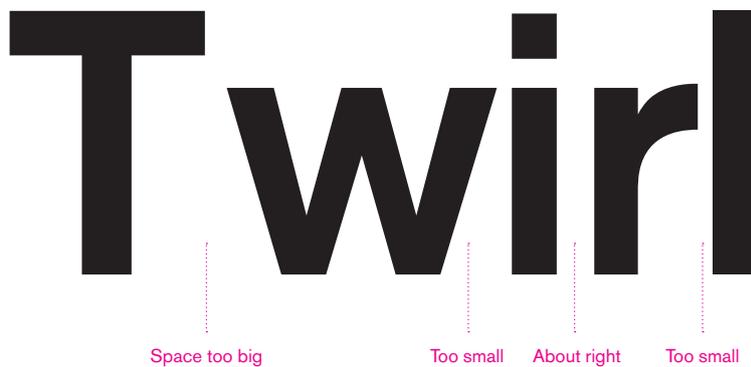
Kerning is the adjustment of the space between individual characters. Good typographers adjust kerning by eye for visually balanced spacing.

There are many different approaches to kerning and the space between characters depends, to a degree, on the style or type of design you are working on.

Whether your spacing is very tight, very wide or somewhere in the middle, making sure they are visually balanced is the key.

Good kerning takes a lot of practice, but once you can spot bad letter spacing, you can't help but notice it. Take a look at the examples below.

As you can see from the example on the right, the spaces range from being too big (or 'loose') to too small (or 'tight'). We need to visually balance these spaces by hand kerning each combination of neighbouring characters.



Here is the same word, but after some much needed kerning. The tightened gap between the T & w is the most noticeable difference. The spaces are now visually consistent with each other and appear much more balanced.



There are different schools of thought as to how to treat kerning of an uppercase T. Some believe that the following character should tuck right up underneath it, others think a slight overlap will do. It really depends on your personal preference and the overall balance of the word.

Typeface = Akzidenz Grotesk Medium

Things to note

Different characters come in all kinds of different shapes and sizes; whether they have straight edges, curved, are at an angle or with an overhang. Therefore a 'one-size-fits-all' approach when spacing letters will rarely look balanced.

For example, as curved characters overhang the x-height and baseline slightly, they will also need to 'overhang' your inter-character spacing also. Therefore a c & o together will need slightly tighter kerning to appear visually similar to an i & k.

collate

Here is an example of a well-spaced word. Inter-character spaces appear balanced and visually equal throughout...

collate

...but when we actually measure the spaces, we can see big differences between the relationships between curved characters, straight characters and combinations of both. Visually equal does not always mean numerically equal.



Kerning & tracking

Tracking is the adjustment of the *overall* spacing between characters and is useful for larger amounts of text (often referred to as *body text* or *body copy*).

Tracking differs from kerning only in so much as it is a uniform adjustment of character spacing, rather than an adjustment of individual characters.

In theory, a well designed typeface shouldn't need to be 'tracked' as it should already be well-spaced when designed* – but this isn't always the case in the real world. Tracking has a direct impact on legibility (or *the readability*) of text. Set tracking too high and you copy will look 'loose' and unrefined, set it too tightly and characters will merge into one another and be hard to read.

Too much: +100 tracking

2001: A Space Odyssey is a 1968 science fiction film produced and directed by *Stanley Kubrick*. The screenplay was co-written by Kubrick and *Arthur C. Clarke*, and was partially inspired by Clarke's short story *The Sentinel*. Clarke concurrently wrote the novel of the same name which was published soon after the film was released. The story deals with a series of encounters between humans and mysterious black monoliths that are apparently

Too little: -60 tracking

2001: A Space Odyssey is a 1968 science fiction film produced and directed by *Stanley Kubrick*. The screenplay was co-written by Kubrick and *Arthur C. Clarke*, and was partially inspired by Clarke's short story *The Sentinel*. Clarke concurrently wrote the novel of the same name which was published soon after the film was released. The story deals with a series of encounters between humans and mysterious black monoliths that are apparently affecting human evolution, and a space voyage to Jupiter tracing a signal emitted by one such monolith found on the moon. Keir Dullea and Gary Lockwood star as the two astronauts on this voyage, with Douglas Rain

Just right: 0 tracking

2001: A Space Odyssey is a 1968 science fiction film produced and directed by *Stanley Kubrick*. The screenplay was co-written by Kubrick and *Arthur C. Clarke*, and was partially inspired by Clarke's short story *The Sentinel*. Clarke concurrently wrote the novel of the same name which was published soon after the film was released. The story deals with a series of encounters between humans and mysterious black monoliths that are apparently affecting human evolution, and a space voyage to Jupiter tracing a signal emitted by one such monolith found on the moon. Keir Dullea and

* You'll often hear ex-Typographic Circle Chairman Bruno Maag passionately making this point.



Leading (or line spacing)

Leading, or line spacing, refers to the space above and below lines of text. Its name is derived from when type was set by hand by type-setters, who manually added strips of lead to increase or decrease the spaces between text.

Leading is measured from baseline to baseline and uses the same points scale that is used to measure type. Text is often referred to as being 9/11pt or 10/12pt when being specified by typographers and designers.

As with tracking (see *kerning & tracking*), leading greatly affects the legibility of text. Set your leading too small and your text will become a clumsy, solid block. Set it too large and lines of text feel disjointed and difficult to read.

It really comes down to personal preference and what you are trying to achieve. Tighter leading can be useful for smaller text that has to fit within a small area, like terms & conditions, whereas larger leading can often add a premium feel to an invite.

10/12pt

This number refers to the size that your type is set at.

This number refers to the size that your leading or line spacing is set at.

You may also see leading sizes referred to as 0, +2 or +3. This is simply another way of denoting the difference between the type size and the leading size, i.e 10/12pt could also be referred to as +2 leading.

Typeface = Futura Bold

Harder to read

The Shining is a 1980 psychological horror film produced and directed by *Stanley Kubrick*, co-written with novelist *Diane Johnson*, and starring *Jack Nicholson*, *Shelley Duvall*, *Scatman Crothers*, and *Danny Lloyd*.

The Shining is a 1980 psychological horror film produced and directed by *Stanley Kubrick*, co-written with novelist *Diane Johnson*, and starring *Jack Nicholson*, *Shelley Duvall*, *Scatman Crothers*, and *Danny Lloyd*.

Easier to read

The Shining is a 1980 psychological horror film produced and directed by *Stanley Kubrick*, co-written with novelist *Diane Johnson*, and starring *Jack Nicholson*, *Shelley Duvall*, *Scatman Crothers*, and *Danny Lloyd*. The film is based on the Stephen King novel *The Shining*. A writer, Jack Torrance, takes a job as an off-season caretaker at an isolated hotel. His young son possesses psychic abilities and is able to see things from the past and future, such as the ghosts who inhabit the hotel. Soon after settling in, the family is trapped in the

Getting the balance right for the typeface and type size that you are using is the key to good leading.

This will vary depending on what typeface you are using, and of course the context in which you are designing, but a good rule of thumb for long-form text is to set your leading at least 2 or 4 points more than your type's point size for print. Readable long-form text on screen generally requires a bigger difference between your type and leading sizes – around 5 to 7 points (or pixels).

A good tip for assessing whether your leading and point sizes are correct, particularly when designing for print, is to create a test sheet at the early stages of your design. By testing various combinations of type and leading size next to each other (and possibly different typefaces) you get to see which feel the most comfortable to read.

As well as determining your body copy size, it'll help you to answer other questions like the size of the headers compared to the text and how many columns your grid should have. It's a very quick way to rule out combinations that don't work and will always save you time in the long run.



Line length

The length of the lines you set your text at can greatly affect its legibility. Set your line length too long, and the reader's eye can struggle to maintain its position from line to line (*mistakenly skipping, or re-reading the same line*); set it too short and your text will look ragged, ugly and lead to orphaned and hyphenated words.

There is a general belief that around 50–60 characters (including spaces) or 5–7 words per line is a good rule of thumb. This however isn't an absolute rule and will depend on the context of what you're designing. For example, fine print at the bottom of a form may require lots of text within a shallow space, so a long line length may help.

Too long

Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb, commonly known as *Dr. Strangelove*, is a 1964 black comedy film which satirizes the nuclear scare. It was directed, produced, and co-written by *Stanley Kubrick*, starring *Peter Sellers* and *George C. Scott*, and featuring *Sterling Hayden*, *Keenan Wynn*, and *Slim Pickens*. The film is loosely based on Peter George's Cold War thriller novel *Red Alert*, also known as *Two Hours to Doom*. The story concerns an unhinged United States Air Force general who orders a first strike nuclear attack on the Soviet Union. It follows the President of the United States, his advisors, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and a Royal Air Force (RAF) officer as they try to recall the bombers to prevent a nuclear apocalypse. It separately follows the crew of one B-52 as they try to deliver their payload.

Too short

Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb, commonly known as *Dr. Strangelove*, is a 1964 black comedy

About right

Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb, commonly known as *Dr. Strangelove*, is a 1964 black comedy film which satirizes the nuclear scare. It was directed, produced, and co-written by *Stanley Kubrick*, starring *Peter Sellers* and *George C. Scott*, and featuring *Sterling Hayden*, *Keenan Wynn*, and *Slim Pickens*. The film is loosely based on Peter George's Cold War thriller novel *Red Alert*, also known as *Two Hours to Doom*. The story concerns an unhinged United States Air Force general who orders a first strike nuclear attack



Basic type setting

An eye for detail is a crucial quality for anyone wanting to produce good typography. This often means reading the text, spotting errors, making adjustments to the flow of type and generally not settling for awkward line breaks in text.

As well as details outlined in previous guides such as line length, leading and kerning, the purpose of hand-adjusting text is to make it both easy to read and beautiful to look at. Always consider the end reader when setting type.

Un-set text

Spartacus is based on the true life story of the historical figure and the events of the Third Servile War. The film was produced by Kirk Douglas who also starred as rebellious slave Spartacus, and Laurence Olivier as his foe, the Roman general and politician Marcus Licinius Crassus. Douglas hired Kubrick to take over direction soon after he fired previous director Anthony Mann.

Set text

Spartacus is based on the true life story of the historical figure and the events of the Third Servile War. The film was produced by Kirk Douglas who also starred as rebellious slave Spartacus, and Laurence Olivier as his foe, the Roman general and politician Marcus Licinius Crassus. Douglas hired Kubrick to take over direction soon after he fired previous director Anthony Mann.

Above is an example of text that has been pasted in with nothing altered. There are certain things we can do to make the flow of the text better, reduce the 'raggedness' of the right edge and remove the need for hyphenation.

Here you can see the same text, but we've adjusted where the line breaks. Moving the words 'of the' down from the first line to the second has helped us enormously; cleaning the right edge, removing any hyphenation and ensuring that names, like 'Kirk Douglas', are unbroken and over one line rather than two (this isn't always possible, but should always be the aim).

Badly set text is much more apparent with short column widths. Less room means an increase in the likelihood for hyphenation, or for there not to be enough room for multiple long words.

You can see the difference that an adjustment to line breaks can have to a piece of text on the right. Again, notice that we've tried to keep people's first and second names on the same line each time, but this isn't always possible.

Un-set text

Spartacus is based on the true life story of the historical figure and the events of the Third Servile War. The film was produced by Kirk Douglas who also starred as rebellious slave Spartacus, and Laurence Olivier as his foe, the Roman general and politician Marcus Licinius Crassus. Douglas hired Kubrick to take over direction soon after he fired previous director Anthony Mann.

Set text

Spartacus is based on the true life story of the historical figure and the events of the Third Servile War. The film was produced by Kirk Douglas who also starred as rebellious slave Spartacus, and Laurence Olivier as his foe, the Roman general and politician Marcus Licinius Crassus. Douglas hired Kubrick to take over direction soon after he fired previous director Anthony Mann.



Widows and orphans

Named such to describe type that is stranded and alone – away from the rest of the pack. They are very ugly and make reading text difficult.

A widow

Stanley Kubrick was filmmakers of all time. an American film director, screenwriter, producer, and editor. He is regarded as one of the greatest

Ugly huh?

On the right, option 1 is our easy solution; I've simply increased the length of this narrow column, meaning that my text runs over just one column rather than the two we started with. That, however may not be possible in the space that you are working in, so in the second example I've embraced that we're running over two columns and split the text to run over both to achieve a greater sense of balance.

An orphan generally refers to a word, or very short two-or-three-word line, that appears by itself on its own line at the end of a paragraph.

An orphan

Kubrick's films, typically adaptations of novels or short stories, were noted for their “dazzling” and unique cinematography, attention to detail to achieve realism and inspired use of music scores.

Here, our orphan is the word 'scores'. It looks ugly by itself on the last line of the paragraph.

A widow is a line at the end of a paragraph that falls at the beginning of the following page or column; separated from the rest of the text.

Widow solution 1

Stanley Kubrick was an American film director, screenwriter, producer, and editor. He is regarded as one of the greatest filmmakers of all time.

Widow solution 2

Stanley Kubrick was an American film director, screenwriter, producer, and editor. He is regarded as one of the greatest filmmakers of all time.

An orphan can be essentially the same as a widow, but in reverse: a paragraph-opening line that appears by itself at the bottom of a page or column.

Orphan solution

Kubrick's films, typically adaptations of novels or short stories, were noted for their “dazzling” and unique cinematography, attention to detail to achieve realism and inspired use of music scores.

To address this orphan, we've had to turn our attention to earlier in the paragraph. Dropping a word to the next line at the start of a paragraph can have an impact on where a word sits at the end of the paragraph. Here, I dropped the word 'novels' down onto the second line. This had a knock-on affect and pushed “inspired use of music” onto the last line – solving the problem.



Hanging quotes

Ugh. —————

“The first rule of
Fight Club is: You do not
talk about Fight Club.”

Above is an example of 'un-hung' quote marks. Hanging quotes simply means to ensure that any quote marks 'hang' over the straight edge of your type. The negative space created when we don't do this is ugly and creates an uneven looking edge.

Better. —————

“The second rule of
Fight Club is: You do not
talk about Fight Club.”

By hanging our quote marks over the edge – we give ourselves a cleaner, straighter vertical line, which looks much more elegant and considered.

The same rule applies to longer copy

“Fight Club is a 1999 American film based on the 1996 novel of the same name by Chuck Palahniuk. The film was directed by David Fincher and stars Edward Norton, Brad Pitt, and Helena Bonham Carter. Ed Norton plays the unnamed protagonist, “an everyman” who is discontented with his white-collar job. He forms a “fight club” with soap maker Tyler Durden, played by Pitt, and becomes embroiled in a relationship with him and a dissolute woman, Marla Singer, played by Bonham Carter”.

Typeface (above) = Trade Gothic Bold Condensed