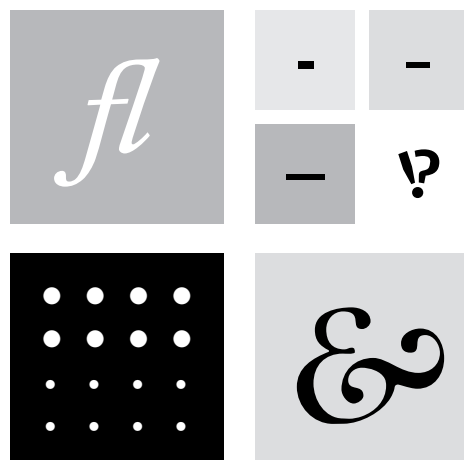
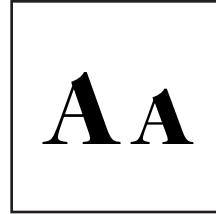


Erik Spiekermann's Typo Tips

Seven Rules for Better Typography





TYPO TIPS
Small Caps

A CAPITAL MISTAKE

NEVER use CAPITAL letters to accentuate words in running copy. They STICK OUT far too much spoiling the LOOK of the column or page. Use italics instead. If you have to set words in capitals, use proper small caps with or without initial capitals.

RUNNING COPY

BETTER

When you need to use capitals, for something like an acronym or abbreviation, use small caps.

**Ninety JPG files
on CD-ROM.**

**Ninety JPG files
on CD-ROM.**

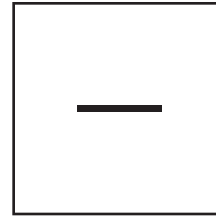
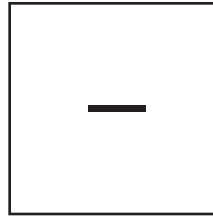
EMPHASIS

BETTER

Use italics for emphasis rather than all caps.

**She sits AROUND
the house!**

**She sits *around*
the house!**



TYPO TIPS
Connections

Connections

There are three different ways to connect or separate words: the hyphen -, the en dash –, a little wider than the hyphen, and the em dash —, wider still. The regular hyphen is easily accessible on any Mac or PC keyboard, whereas the en dash needs the combination option-hyphen on the Mac. The em dash is accessed by pressing option-shift-hyphen on the Mac. The use of these dashes depends on house styles and tradition. The em dash with no space around it is traditionally used to separate thoughts—like this one—but I think its length is a distraction in running text. Try using the en dash to separate thoughts – like this one – with a character space on either side. En dashes without space on either side are also used between numbers and compound words as in: the shop is open 10–7, while you can take the New York–Kansas City train or the New York–Baltimore train only 8am–3pm.

EN DASH

BETTER

En dashes without spaces are used to separate numbers and compound words.

OPEN 10-3

OPEN 10–3

EM DASH

BETTER

Em dashes or, En dashes with spaces, are meant to separate thoughts.

How nice - to feel full -
and still get full credit for
appearing hungry.

How nice – to feel full –
and still get full credit for
appearing hungry.



TYPO TIPS
“&”

“ & ”

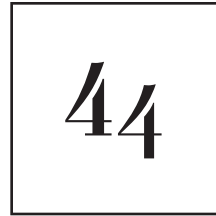
A dead giveaway for unprofessional “desktop typography” are wrong quotes and apostrophes. Quotes can have different shapes. They generally look like “this”, and can be remembered as beginning and ending quotes by thinking of “66” and “99”. Beginning quotes are found on the Mac by pressing option-[, closing quotes, option-shift-]. The apostrophe is simply a raised comma, the shape of a ’9 in most typefaces. It is identical to the closing single quote, while the open single quote looks like a ‘6. Beginning single quotes are found on the Mac by pressing option-]; the apostrophe and closing single quote, option-shift-].

REAL QUOTES

BETTER

When using quotes remember “66” and “99”. Straight quotes are often caused by copying and pasting text, and a general lack of attention to detail.

"hello" *“hello”*



TYPO TIPS
Figuring It Out

Figuring It Out

Good text typefaces have “old style”, “text”, or “lowercase” figures – 1234567890 – instead of “lining” ones – 1234567890. Lowercase figures blend in better with the text settings, as the figures behave like lowercase letters with ascenders (6 and 8) and descenders (3, 4, 5, 7, 9) and x-height-only characters (1, 2, 0). While they fit in text very nicely, the good looks have one disadvantage: each of the figures have individual widths, meaning they won’t sit directly underneath each other in columns. Their descenders may also clash with ascenders when the columns sit closely on top of one another, as happens quite often in tabular settings. Most lining figures are “tabular”, however, all the same width, making for a somewhat uneven appearance, as the 1 takes up the same space as the 8, but in tables, they are much easier to add up. Some fonts offer “tabular oldstyle figures”, which will allow table setting.

OLDSTYLE FIGURES

BETTER

Oldstyle figures blend better with text settings.

Without fail, now for 365 days
straight, he rose and turned
towards the sun.

Without fail, now for 365 days
straight, he rose and turned
towards the sun.

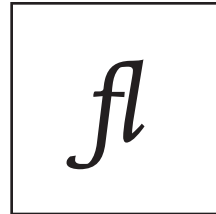
TABULAR FIGURES

BETTER

Lining figures are all the same width and appropriate for lists and tables.

4129.82
23.16
257.00

4129.82
23.16
257.00



TYPO TIPS
Joining Forces

Joining Forces

A ligature is defined as the visual or formal combination of two or three letters into a single character. They consist of letter combinations such as ff, fi, fl, ffi. Ligatures keep letters from overlapping and improve legibility. For example: affluence, configure, deflate, affinity.

LIGATURES

Ligatures improve legibility by preventing overlapping characters.

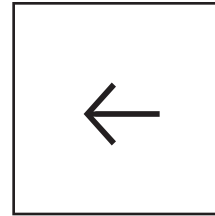
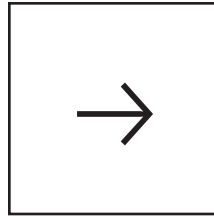
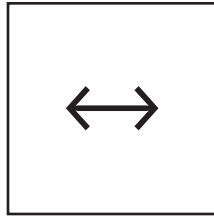
BETTER

affinity *affinity*

DISCRETIONARY LIGATURES

Discretionary ligatures are stylistic and add character or flair to text setting.

ffi gi sp it tt ck ee



TYPO TIPS
Not Justified

Not Justified

Avoid flush settings! Most applications create justified text by hideously stretching and squishing words and spaces. Note that it takes many hours of tedious work to typeset justified text that is truly well-proportioned and legible. For this reason, professionals prefer to use ragged-right composition, either with or without hyphenation, depending on how much line-length variation they wish to allow. This gives the text a more harmonious appearance and makes it easier to read, since all wordspaces have the same width.

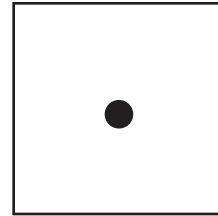
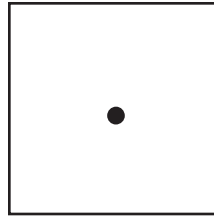
ALIGNMENT

Auto justified text often causes unsightly rivers in a block of text. Try flush right text instead.

The world at once present and absent which the spectacle makes visible is the world of the commodity dominating all that...

BETTER

The world at once present and absent which the spectacle makes visible is the world of the commodity dominating all that...



TYPO TIPS
Bite The Bullet

Bite the Bullet

Use bullets or centered points instead of hyphens (-) when you list items. Bullets are part of the standard character set and are located in the following positions:

- OPTION-8 (MAC), ALT+0149 (WINDOWS)
- OPTION-SHIFT-9 (MAC), ALT+0183 (WINDOWS)

BULLETS

When setting lists use bullets rather than dashes. Bullets are part of the standard character set.

BETTER

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| - Straight 3 miles | • Straight 3 miles |
| - Left at 22nd | • Left at 22nd |
| - Soft right at Howard | • Soft right at Howard |
| - 300 feet to destination | • 300 feet to destination |



FontShop Education

Without training the best typefaces can only go so far. That's why FontShop is more than a shop that sells fonts — we want to help you do great work too. Get more typography tips and tutorials at fontshop.com/education.

About FontShop

Founded by Erik Spiekermann and Neville Brody in 1989, FontShop is the original independent retailer of digital type. We offer more than 100,000 fonts from dozens of expert-selected foundries, including our house brand: FontFont.

Colophon

This document is set in FF Meta Headline for titles, FF Meta Serif for text, and FF Unit for captions.

Further Reading

- [FontShop Fundamentals 2 Alternatives to Helvetica](#)
- [Erik Spiekermann's Typo Tips](#)
- [Type Glossary](#)
- [Type Anatomy](#)

Online Resources

- [FontShop.com](#)
- [FontFeed.com](#)
- [Spiekermann.com](#)

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