

LESSON: type and its categories

THE LETTER-FORM

The letter form in this text is called 'roman' (from the Romans who took from the Greeks who took from the Phoenicians). Most of what you read is roman. There is also 'italic' which is slanted to the right and is used for emphasis: it looks like this. The alphabet has capital and small letters. In type terminology they are called 'caps' or 'uppercase' (capital letters) and 'lowercase' (small letters). These terms derive from the early days of typesetting when caps were kept in the upper case or drawer, and the small letters were kept in the lower drawer.

Most letter-forms have certain things in common. These are:

- **Baseline**

An imaginary line upon which all characters of a given line stand.

- **Meanline**

An imaginary line that marks the tops of most lowercase letters.

- **X-Height**

The x-height refers to the lowercase letters only. It's the height of the body, or main element of the lowercase letter form, which falls between the meanline and the baseline.

- **Ascender**

The part of the lowercase letter that rise above the meanline.

- **Descender**

The part of the lowercase letter that falls below the baseline.

- **Counter Form**

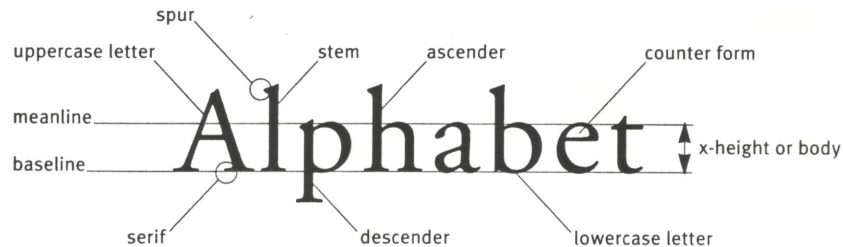
The enclosed portion of the letter form.

- **Stem**

The main vertical or oblique stroke of a letter.

- **Serif**

The stroke that projects from the top or bottom of the main stroke of the letter. Serifs originated with Roman masons who terminated each stroke in a slab of stone with a serif to enhance the appearance of the letter.



LESSON: type and its categories

X-HEIGHT

• Old Style — 10 point Garamond

The x-height is the height of the lowercase letter exclusive of ascenders and descenders. Typefaces which are the same point size may appear smaller or larger because of variations in the x-height. Study the following families of type closely: Garamond, with its small x-height, appears so much smaller than Franklin Gothic or Officina Serif with their larger x-heights.

• Modern — 10 point Bodoni

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• Slab Serif — 10 point Officina Serif

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• Sans Serif — 10 point Franklin Gothic

The x-height is the height of the lowercase letter exclusive of ascenders and descenders. Typefaces which are the same point size may appear smaller or larger because of variations in the x-height. Study the following families of type closely: Garamond, with its small x-height, appears so much smaller

• Script — 10 point Typo Upright

The x-height is the height of the lowercase letter exclusive of ascenders and descenders. Typefaces which are the same point size may appear smaller or larger because of variations in the x-height. Study the following families of type closely: Garamond, with its small x-height, appears so much smaller than Franklin Gothic or Officina Serif

• Display/Decorative — 10 point Eviscerate

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LESSON: type and its categories

CATEGORIES OF TYPE

There are many thousands of different typefaces in existence, and more being created everyday. Most can be dropped into one the six categories mentioned below.

Old Style

Modern

Slab Serif

Sans Serif

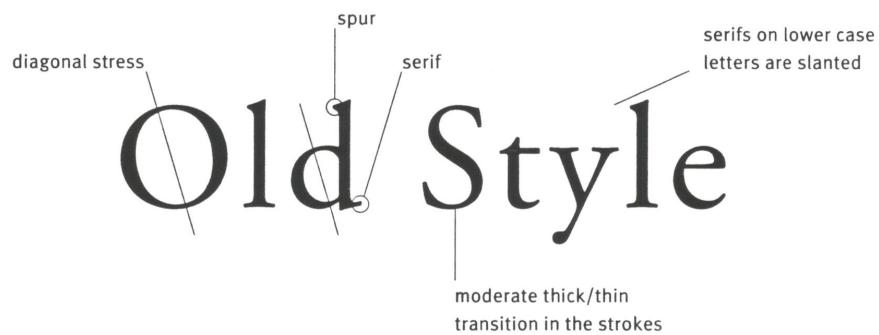
Script

Display/Decorative

LESSON: type and its categories

OLD STYLE

- based on the hand-lettering of scribes;
- always have serifs;
- letters have thick/thin transitions (based on the use of the reed pen of a scribe);
- letters all have a diagonal stress (again based on the use of a reed pen);

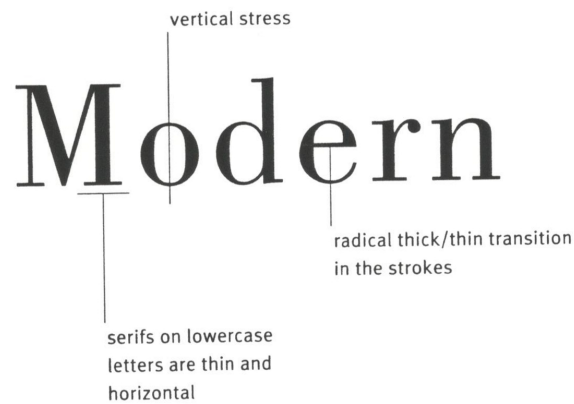


- if the design has a lot of text (referred to as body copy) use an Old style for easy legibility;
- some examples of Old style: Garamond (shown above); Palatino; Baskerville; Times Roman;

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MODERN

- technological refinements and advances in printing techniques, smoother papers, etc. allowed for greater stylistic interpretations;
- always have serifs;
- letters have a radical thick/thin transition;
- letters all have a vertical stress;

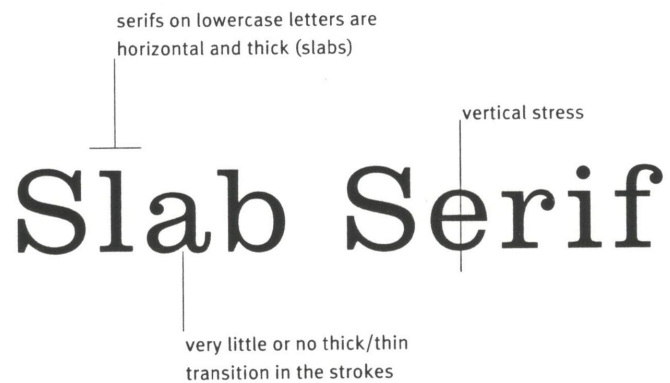


- because of their strong thick/thin transitions most Modern typefaces don't work well for large amounts of body copy;
- some examples of Modern: Bodoni (shown above); Fenice; Walbaum;

LESSON: type and its categories

SLAB SERIF

- sometimes called Egyptian;
- always have thick, horizontal serifs;
- letters have very little or no thick/thin transitions;
- letters all have a vertical stress;
- concurrent with the development of advertising;



- the Slab Serif typefaces with a slight thick/thin transition have good readability and are sometimes used for extensive text blocks;
- some examples of Slab Serif: Clarendon (shown above); New Century Schoolbook; Memphis; Officina Serif;

LESSON: type and its categories

SANS SERIF

- no serifs (“sans” means “without” in French);
- wide range of x-heights, weights and styles;
- letters are usually ‘monoweight’ (no visible thick/thin transitions);
- no stress because there are no thick/thin transitions;



- the San Serif typefaces combine well with serif faces to create interesting typographic contrasts;
- some examples of San Serif: Franklin Gothic (shown above); News Gothic; Bell Gothic; Futura;

LESSON: type and its categories

SCRIPT

- includes all typefaces which appear to be hand-lettered;
- some scripts 'connect' (meaning all the letter forms touch), and some don't;



- use sparingly, and never for extended blocks of copy;
- never use as all caps;
- some examples of Scripts: Typo Upright (shown above); Shelley; Snell; Kuenstler Script;

LESSON: type and its categories

DISPLAY/DECORATIVE

- fun, distinctive, emphatic;
- highly emotional, moody;
- based on expressiveness;

Display/Decorative

- use sparingly, and never for extended blocks of copy;
- some examples of Display/Decorative: Eviscerate (shown above); Hobo; Davida Bold;

Contemporary

Contemporary

Contemporary

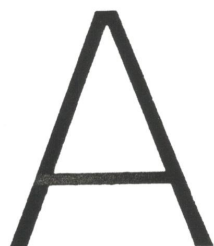
Contemporary

Contemporary

Contemporary

A thin, narrow uppercase letter 'A' with a condensed width.

LIGHT CONDENSED

A thin, standard-width uppercase letter 'A'.

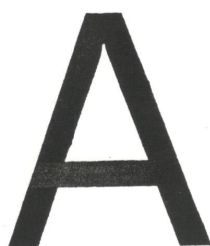
LIGHT

A thin, wide uppercase letter 'A' with an extended width.

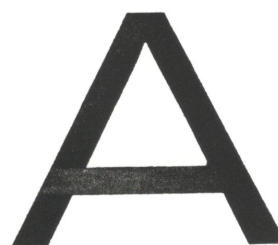
LIGHT EXTENDED

A medium-weight, narrow uppercase letter 'A' with a condensed width.

REGULAR CONDENSED

A medium-weight, standard-width uppercase letter 'A'.


REGULAR

A medium-weight, wide uppercase letter 'A' with an extended width.

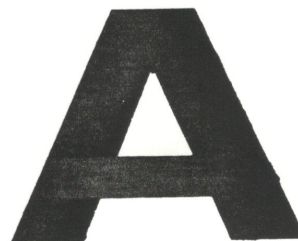
REGULAR EXTENDED

A thick, narrow uppercase letter 'A' with a condensed width.

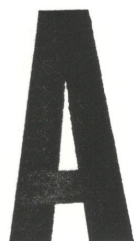
BOLD CONDENSED

A thick, standard-width uppercase letter 'A'.

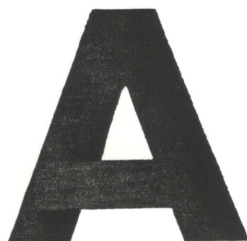
BOLD

A thick, wide uppercase letter 'A' with an extended width.

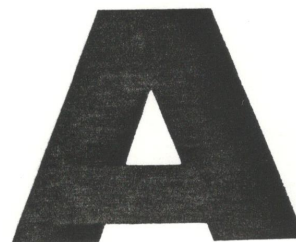
BOLD EXTENDED

A very thick, narrow uppercase letter 'A' with a condensed width.

EXTRABOLD CONDENSED

A very thick, standard-width uppercase letter 'A'.

EXTRABOLD

A very thick, wide uppercase letter 'A' with an extended width.

EXTRABOLD EXTENDED

26. Twelve versions of one letter, achieved by varying the width and weight of the letterform.