

Typography Vocabulary

ascender	The part of some lowercase letters that extends above the x-height.
ascender height	The height of the ascenders in a typeface. Can be higher than the cap height.
bar	The short horizontal stroke in letters such as "f, " "t" and "A."
baseline	The line along which the bottom of a capital letter rests.
bold or boldface	A thicker version of a typeface, used for emphasis.
bowl	A curved shape that creates an enclosed space in a letter.
cap height	<p>The height of the capital letters in a typeface.</p> <p>The large letters used for beginning a sentence or a proper name. From the latin <i>capitulum</i> from (<i>caput</i>, or "head") meaning the head or top of "stand at the head" of a word or sentence.</p>
caps	The abbreviation for capital letters. "All caps" means all capital letters.



character	Any element of a typeface including letters, numbers, symbols and punctuation marks. From the latin <i>character</i> , based on Greek words meaning "to stamp, impress, engrave."
counter	The enclosed space within a character
cursive	These fonts generally have either joining strokes or other cursive characteristics beyond those of italic typefaces. The characters are partially or completely connected, and the result looks more like handwritten pen or brush writing than printed letterwork.
descender	Part of some lowercase characters that extend below the baseline, such as the tail of the "p", or "g."
display type	A typeface designed to be decorative or eye-catching and meant to be used at large type sizes, such as 18 points or greater.
em dash	A dash that is about the width of the letter "M." It is used to set off a parenthetical thought, indicate a break or to set off the beginning of a line.
en dash	A dash that is about the width of the letter "N." It is used to separate numbers in dates and times of days.
flush	Text that is aligned to a margin with no indentation. A paragraph can be flush left or flush right.

font	A complete set of characters designed for one typeface, including lower case, capitals, small capitals, numerals, punctuation marks, ligatures and symbols in roman, italic, boldface and so on. Often used interchangeably with typeface.
italic	<p>A version of a typeface that is <i>slanted to the right</i> ; used for emphasis and to distinguish titles and foreign words.</p> <p>Italicized text looks nice in print, but is difficult to read on a screen because its angles fight the square pixel grid of the computer screen. On screen try using a different color instead of italics.</p>
justified	A column of text that is adjusted so that the lines are flush with both left and right margins.
kerning	<p>Reducing the space between any two letters, especially in headline, to create a more pleasing spacing.</p> <p>These letter pairs often need kerning in larger type sizes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● T and o ● T and r ● T and a ● Y and o ● Y and a ● W and o ● W and a ● P and . ● T and A ● P and A ● y and o ● w and e

leading	<p>The space between the baseline of one line of text to the baseline of the line below or above).</p> <p>In the early days of printing, typesetters used strips of lead to separate rows of type. The space between the lines contributes to how readable the block of text will be. The default leading in page layout programs is 120 percent. Type size and leading are often noted together with a slash separating the two. "10/12" means 10-point type with 12-point leading and can be read as "ten on twelve."</p>
letter	A letter of the alphabet; from the latin <i>littera</i> .
Letter spacing	The practice of adding spacing between the letters of a word
ligature	A pair of letters that are designed to fit together as one character.
margins	The area of blank space around edges of a printed page.
measure	The width of a column of text, measured in picas
monospace	The characters of this type of font have the same fixed width. The effect is similar to a manual typewriter, and is often used to set samples of computer code.
orphan	A single word of a sentence that is all alone by itself on a bottom line.
pica	A unit of type measure. One pica is equal to 12 points.

point	A unit of type measure. One point is equal to 1/72 of an inch.
ragged right	A column of text set with the right-hand margin set to unjustified.
roman	Regular style, as opposed to italic or boldface.
rule	A printed straight line
sans-serif	These fonts have stroke endings that are plain – without any flaring, cross stroke, or other ornamentation. Sans-serif fonts are typically proportionally-spaced. They often have little variation between thick and thin strokes, compared to fonts from the 'serif' family.
serif	The small horizontal head or foot that appears at the bottom of the vertical stroke of a letter.
small caps	Have a similar design but are smaller than true capitals. Use small caps for acronyms.
smart quotes	Curved typographer quotes and apostrophes.
stroke	The main straight or curved line of a letter, thicker than a hairline.
superscript or subscript	Small characters that print either slightly above (super) or below (sub) the baseline.

swash letters	Special decorative capital letters.
terminal	The end of a stroke, without a serif.
text	<p>The main part or "body" of a book, usually set in a single column using a "body type" such as old style roman. Also called "body text."</p> <p>Body text found in newspapers and magazine articles usually ranges from 10 to 14 point type.</p>
type	Originally, the wooden or metal block bearing a raised character, used for printing. From the latin <i>typus</i> , derived from a Greek word meaning "figure" or "impression," from a root meaning "to beat or strike."
typeface	A particular type of design such as Bookman, Caxton, Helvetica or Times.
type style	The style—such as roman, italic, bold and so on—in a particular typeface.
x-height	The height of the lowercase characters, such as "x," that have no ascenders or descenders.