

## Basic rules of graphic design

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### Typeface and type size

Typeface refers to the style of lettering. You can choose between *serif* and *sans-serif* typeface design. *Serif* type has a finishing flourish on many letters, which leads the eye to the next letter. It is easier to read and is best used for text. *Sans-serif* types can be used for headings or other items to contrast with the text.

- Roman types have *serifs*— the finishing flourish, brush stroke, or tail.

Times New Roman

Book Antiqua

- The Gothic or Modern style eliminates the tails — *sans-serif* — and has a stark appearance reminiscent of letters carved in stone.

Helvetica

Century Gothic

Arial

Type size describes the height and width of type characters. The samples immediately above are all 12 point in size. The fine print in legal documents is usually 8 point or smaller. Most people are comfortable reading type that is 10 point or larger. People who have reached the age when they need bifocals find a larger type size more comfortable — at least 10 to 12 point.

### Whitespace or negative space

The whitespace framing and flowing through text can be used to good effect. Margins — left and right, top and bottom — should be at least one inch wide. Wider side margins are recommended for ease in reading and note-taking.

Within the text, white space can be produced by

- having short paragraphs,
- varying the size of paragraphs,
- using subheads,
- using indentations,
- making indented lists.

Whitespace promotes readability, but avoid the look of wasting space. Don't become so preoccupied with the whitespace that you lose sight of more substantive concerns.

## **Capitals or lower case?**

Lower case type helps the reader to recognize to recognize the words on the page. Words in lower case have distinct shapes that are recognizable — lower case letters have ascenders and descenders, heads and tails, which make them distinguishable from one another.

Capital letters should only begin sentences and proper names. Think twice about any other uses. You could use capitalized words as headings, or for emphasis, but keep this to a minimum. Don't include units of more than three or four capitalized words in the text. The old legal practice of using a string of capitalized words to indicate a new paragraph is no longer needed now that indentation, bold type, and double-spacing between paragraphs are being used.

## **Text line length**

The best length for a line of text is one that is most comfortable on the reader's eye. Lines that are too short increase the number of eye movements, while long lines make it hard for the eye to stay on the correct line. The suitable length lies anywhere between 3 1/2 inches to 5 1/2 inches, depending on whether you are using double columns or a single column of text.

## **No justification**

Justified margins are even, with text aligned along the margin. Ragged margins are uneven. Ragged right margins make text easier to read because the eye can use the variation in line endings to help keep track as it moves down the page. Ragged right margins also enable the spacing between words and between letters to remain constant and regular.

Justified left margins are common practice and preferable to centering. Headings and titles should be aligned flush with the left margin.

## **Columns**

Two 3 1/2 inch wide columns are easier to read than text spread six inches across the page. A narrower single column (less than 6 inches but more than 3 1/2 inches) is easiest to read, but space constraints may require two columns.