

Even if you are not a computer whizz, you can still make your manuscript as appealing and easy to read as possible if you follow a few simple guidelines.

In this second Tantamount Guide, we take a “big-picture” look at typography, fonts and layout.

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Write on track Typographic tips for technophobes

Limited fonts

Text size

White space

Text alignment

Serif / Sans serif

Transforming text

Bold & italics

Arial vs Helvetica

Being consistent



Write on track

Too many fonts spoil the text

Don't be tempted to think that a variety of fonts will make a text more interesting and attractive: if we use sizing, bold and italics carefully, in most cases, just two fonts can do everything that's needed.

Size is important

In order to indicate text hierarchy, we don't need to change font; instead, we can use different sizes of the same font for our headings. And, except in legal documents or reports, it's usually best to avoid paragraph numbering.

NO

2. Book the Second—the Golden Thread

2.1. Five Years Later

Tellson's Bank by Temple Bar was an old-fashioned place, even in the year one thousand seven hundred and eighty. It

YES

Book the Second—the Golden Thread

Five Years Later

Tellson's Bank by Temple Bar was an old-fashioned place, even in the year one thousand seven hundred and eighty. It was very small,

2

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Let the text breathe

On the page, white space is not the same as empty space: it forms a part of the text, and makes for a better reading experience. As well as making the text more appealing and adding to legibility, white space allows us to separate elements in the text and/or draw attention to them.

NO

Las ruinas circulares

Los Nilsen eran calaveras, pero sus episodios amorosos habían sido hasta entonces de zaguán o de casa mala. No faltaron, pues, comentarios cuando Cristián llevó a vivir con él a Juliana Burgos. Es verdad que ganaba así una sirvienta, pero no es menos cierto que la colmó de horrendas baratijas y que la lucía en las fiestas. En las pobres fiestas de conventillo, donde la quebrada y el corte estaban prohibidos y donde se bailaba, todavía, con mucha luz. Juliana era de tez morena y de ojos rasgados; bastaba que alguien la mirara, para que se sonriera. En un barrio modesto, donde el trabajo y el descuido gastan a las mujeres, no era mal parecida.

Eduardo los acompañaba al principio. Después emprendió un viaje a Arrecifes por no sé qué negocio; a su vuelta llevó a la casa una muchacha, que había levantado por el camino, y a los pocos días la echó. Se hizo más hosco; se emborrachaba solo en el almacén y no se daba con nadie. Estaba enamorado de la mujer de Cristián. El barrio, que tal vez lo supo antes que él, previó con alevosa alegría la rivalidad latente de los hermanos.

Una noche, al volver tarde de la esquina, Eduardo vio el oscuro de Cristián atado al palenque. En el patio, el mayor estaba esperándolo con sus mejores pilchas. La mujer iba y venía con el mate en la mano. Cristián le dijo a Eduardo:

-Yo me voy a una farra en lo de Farías. Ahí la tenés a la Juliana; si la querés, usala.

El tono era entre mandón y cordial. Eduardo se quedó un tiempo mirándolo; no sabía qué hacer. Cristián se levantó, se despidió de Eduardo, no de Juliana, que era una cosa, montó a caballo y se fue al trote, sin apuro.

YES

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Sometimes, though, once we start to understand how white space works, we can see that there are times when it needs to be down-sized. With very large font sizes (over 36 point) it's a good idea to reduce line spacing. Sometimes it can also help to close up the space between characters, but this should only be done with care (see page 6).

NO

a tale of
two cities

Minion Pro, 36pt, standard line spacing

YES

a tale of
two cities

Minion Pro, 36pt, reduced line spacing

Line up on the left

In order to avoid unwanted and badly placed spaces, text should always be aligned on the left. To successfully justify with straight margins on both sides (flush left and right) requires professional typesetting skills.

NO

It was the Dover road that lay, on a Friday night late in November, before the first of the persons with whom this history has business. The

Full justification can lead to bad spacing

YES

It was the Dover road that lay, on a Friday night late in November, before the first of the persons with whom this history has business. The

Left justified text is correctly spaced



Write on track

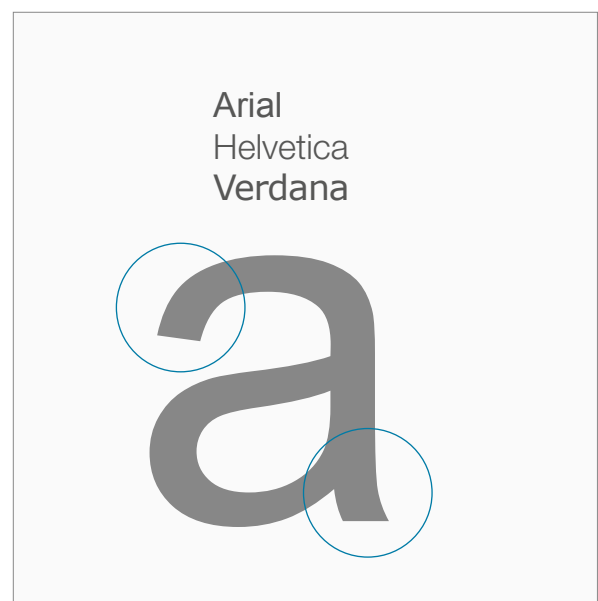
Serif or sans serif

Serif is the name given to the little projection used in certain fonts (e.g. Times New Roman and Baskerville) at the ends of the strokes that make up each character. Some experts suggest the serif termination came about originally as it was easier for carving inscriptions, others say it was in imitation of painted lettering, while others say that the serif provided a tiny “overflow tank” that stopped ink spilling from letter moulds on early printing presses.

In the past, it has been suggested that serif fonts are easier to read as they help the eye travel between letters, but with low resolution computer screens that couldn’t render the fine serif details, sans serif fonts such as Arial, Helvetica and Verdana became popular. Now, though, tablet screen resolution is so high that there is no reason that serif fonts should not be used for digital publications.



Serif. Notice the curled ends of the letter strokes



Sans serif. The letter strokes are cut straight across at the ends



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Designed by experts

Capital letters, lower case, numbers, symbols... every single character – and the spacing between characters – of any given font was designed by an expert. That means that unless we are absolutely sure of what we are about, we should not start “tweaking” things. Altering the horizontal scale or changing the kerning (the space between characters) is far more likely to make things worse rather than better. Some font families include extended or condensed versions and it is much better to use one of these than to tinker with the horizontal scale manually.

NO

a tale of
two cities

Helvetica Light, 120% horizontal scale

YES

a tale of
two cities

Helvetica Light Extended, 100% horizontal scale

NO

a tale of
two cities

Helvetica Regular, 80% horizontal scale

YES

a tale of
two cities

Helvetica Condensed, 100% horizontal scale



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Be bold, but not too bold

It shouldn't be necessary to warn against overuse of bold and italics. These should only be used to highlight elements of the text, not simply because they "look good".

When we do use one of these effects, the correct way to do so is to use the true bold or italic font, (e.g. Times Bold) not to apply the effect to the regular font (e.g. Times Regular) by simply clicking the "bold" function – usually a button marked with a capital B – in our word processor.

abcde

Times Regular, without any style

abcde

Times Regular, with italic style applied via button or after copy/paste. It's just the text skewed

abcde

Times Italic, the real font we should use for italics





















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Arial vs Helvetica

Apple or Microsoft, Liverpool or Everton, Coke or Pepsi, Arial or Helvetica... whose side are you on? If you don't know what the fuss is all about in the Arial-Helvetica war, check out the image below for some clues.

Arial vs Helvetica



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Consistency is king

Above all, the key to professional texts is consistency. Whichever font and type size you choose for your headings, whether you centre or left justify titles, use italics or bold to draw attention to key points etc., the most important thing you can do to make your text appear polished is be consistent.



Write on track



authorbranding



Tantamount's international team of professionals boasts over a quarter of a century of experience in areas including graphic design, publishing, IT and language training. Now we are working to push the boundaries of the evolving space where technology and tradition, image and language meet and interact.

We are proud to offer our expertise in design, education and digital publishing to clients of all sizes, from individuals to professional associations to multi-national publishing houses.

Take a look at our [creative portfolio](#) and visit the [Tantamount website](#) to find out more about us and about our projects, and check our blog for more technological tips and news for writers and publishers.

The concept of author branding spans three important areas: publishing, visual design and marketing. At [authorbranding.co.uk](#) we harness state-of-the-art technology to empower indie authors to discover the right tools and formats for their work so they can develop and present a clear, coherent and consistent brand image.

We can help you give your writing a professional edge. Working with us will allow you to focus on your writing while we deal with all your digital, editorial and design needs, saving you time, money and headaches.

To learn more about the importance of a coherent, unique and professional image, check [authorbranding.co.uk](#), where you'll find full details of our services for authors, artists, publishers and businesses.