

Diggin' it?!

The buried treasures
of typography

by Nick Shinn



ILLUSTRATION BY EDWARD O. WILSON, 1928

The treasure is split into two piles.

One is yours for the taking—just follow the *Style Guide* and apply the rich detailing of traditional typography to your work.

The other requires a small outlay, but what a return! The *Expert Font Guide* shows how to use expert fonts to access the accumulated wealth of typographic culture.

The typesetting trade has all but vanished. For five centuries its technology and tradespeople evolved within a clearly defined niche, with the result that any example of the craft, pre-1970, exhibits qualities of subtlety and sophistication, conforming to a shared canon of high aesthetic standards.

Let's pick up the torch, it sheds a lot of light.

The traditional standards of typography are not remnants of a bygone era—they are no more obsolete than the letter A. Such standards represent the core discipline of graphic design, so dependent upon the visible word. Just as the pattern drafter's skill is the basis of the fashion industry, making clothes that are comfortable to wear and that fit without ugly wrinkles, so the traditional standards of typography produce words that are comfortable to read, and type that smoothly fits ideas.

These standards represent a communal value, an aesthetic for the ages. They tap into a timeless quality of living tradition which brings a richness and beauty to the simplest of designs. That's the partnership that best transmits the full power and nuance of meaning in the written word: simple design plus quality finish.

Of course, there are no standards, *per se*. It's accepted that, like writing, there are various authorities on *style*. In the era of

trade typesetting each type shop had a house style, much of which was common practice. Now it's the responsibility of the designer or art director.

Good typography is 90% attitude and 10% know-how.

The attitude is stated clearly in item 1.1.1 of the definitive modern work on the subject, *The Elements of Typographic Style*, by Vancouver's Robert Bringhurst:

"Typography exists to honour content."

In other words, read the frigging copy. And care about it.

But don't stop there. Make sure someone else proofreads it after typesetting. It's that second set of eyes that has the objectivity to spot mistakes and suggest improvements. After all, the best writers employ the services of editors and proofreaders to check their prose before and after it's typeset. Many firms don't have literary specialists on staff. But the same care and attention that goes into making sure you don't screw up the client's 1-800 number in an ad, misspell the product name, or offer it to the public for \$13 instead of \$18, should be applied to the niceties of typography.

Why bother? Isn't the trend—spearheaded by the roughshod text of e-mail—going in the other direction?

In some contexts, yes. But manners, grooming, and professionalism still count for something, and it's not called a typeFACE for nothing. Typography is the surface of your client's textual message, and you want to make them look as good as possible. If that's not reason enough, bear this in mind: quality is insidious.

Nick Shinn, RGD, is an art director and type designer: www.shinntype.com.

Style Guide

This is intended as a *guide* to typographic styling.

Many typographers have their own guidelines that may differ slightly. Note: Don't think you can shirk your responsibility to the noble art because you're 'only' doing Web design!

Compiled by the Style Guide Committee of the Type Club of Toronto, with examples and comments by Nick Shinn.

APOSTROPHES

Do not use to pluralize abbreviations or numerals (MPS, 1970s) except where ambiguity is likely to arise: e.g. the a's in a font. (If using small caps a thin space may be inserted before the s). Use as: '89, not '89. Never use (') as an apostrophe.

It's It's 60' = 1°
RIGHT WRONG BECAUSE

"III" "III" 1' = 12"
RIGHT WRONG BECAUSE

The bugbear of the age, the faux pas sans pareil, the dillerooney, THE boner. If you want to erect a flashing beacon that says "Warning, inept typographer at work"—use the single prime (hash mark) instead of the apostrophe, and the double prime (inch/hash marks) instead of quotation marks (curly quotes). The primes are abbreviations for feet, inches, and arcs of degree, nothing else. *In 99% of fonts, their crude, abrupt shape is at odds with the way curved and straight strokes are used to construct the letterforms, and upsets the smooth flow of characters.*

CAPITALS

Words in full capitals should not appear within text settings, small caps are preferred. Full capitals may be used in headings or display. Words in capitals should always be visually letterspaced.

STUPOMATRON 2 is here! New, warmer, friendlier and more responsive STUPOMATRON 2! Discover the incredible value of STUPOMATRON 2 with free matching STUPOMATRON vinyl cover! EXTREMELY DUBIOUS

Brand managers love to see their product name in ALL CAPS, but it's sooo tacky. Sure, it's effective, but how will you feel the morning after? Go ahead, if you want to imbue your work with the sleazy cachet of a down-market retail promotion.

LAVA LAVA
RIGHT WRONG

Most typefaces these days have built-in kerning that produces nice letterspacing in all-cap settings. However, you can never afford to drop your guard. Georgia, for instance, is a lovely face designed for the Web, but it has no kerning (above right). If you decide to use it in a bitmapped or print setting, manual kerning will be necessary to even out the spacing between capitals (above left).

COPY INTERPRETATION

Underlined words or passages in the copy will be set in italics unless specified otherwise. Underlined words or passages within italic settings will be set in roman. Words with double underlines will be set in small caps, if available. Italic or semibold may be used for emphasis, but only where really necessary.

DASHES

Always use the em dash or the en dash, not a hyphen.

To - and fro To—and fro
SPACE, HYPHEN, SPACE: WRONG EM DASH: RIGHT
To – and fro To— and fro
SPACE, EN DASH, SPACE: RIGHT EM DASH: WRONG

The width of the dashes varies from face to face; furthermore, some have built-in space on either side, others don't. The Electra em dash (above right) is preferable to its en dash – it's not too wide, and doesn't need spacing. But the Futura em dash is a dangerous beast. So a good rule of thumb is to play it safe and always use the en dash with spaces either side.

DIMENSION

In serifed faces, use a multiply sign (Symbol font: Option y) not x, and, if you like, the Symbol inch mark (Option ,) 9" × 12" not 9" x 12".

DROP CAPS AND ELEVATED CAPS

Drop caps and elevated caps should have the following text nicely fitted. Traditionally, the first word or phrase after the drop cap is set in caps or small caps, to provide a transition zone that eases the reader into the text.

THIS TERM-LONG to important so is that diversification the maintain you help can and process selection the simplifies success.

The initial cap can be set in a different typeface from the text, or the same – but if it is a serifed typeface, a display version should be used, not just the text font at a larger size. Above: Castellar with Adobe Garamond. Below: the Adobe Garamond Titling font has been used for the drop cap.

A LONG investment "stop-one" effective, simple a you give portfolios the, policies these by provided protection benefit death the with decision to important so is that.

Fitted drop caps are especially important when the first letter is A or I, because the reader may otherwise wonder whether the initial letter is itself a word.

Tip #1: Use the tab command, and soft return (Shift-Return) to position text next to the drop cap.

WHEN level comfort your and goals your for assets of mix right the determining is investment any selecting to step first the questions fundamental answer to asked be.

Drop caps are a great opportunity for typographers to practise their craft. It's fun to experiment with letters such as T, V, W, and Y, hanging the left arm into the margin – and this can give an edge to an otherwise rigid page layout.

LEVEL TO STEP FIRST the questions fundamental answer to asked be you'll. Your horizon time investment and risk for tolerance your gauge to you allow and, are you investor of type.

The top of the drop cap should line up with the top of the following text. Tip #2: Do a "two character" drop cap, with the first character as a space, then use negative kerning to move the capital to the left.

ELLIPSIS

A character consisting of three dots (...) a mark of omission preceded and followed by a word space. Keystroke: (Option ;).

Now is the time ... to ... party.

FIGURES

Use old style, i.e. lowercase figures (123) in text settings and with small caps. Use lining, i.e. capital (123) figures in headlines and with full capitals.

In text, descriptive numbers of one hundred and under should be spelled out, except when they refer to specific sequences or references: e.g. The book had eighty pages and on page 65...

A hundred or a thousand should be spelled out. If a sentence begins with a number it should be spelled out.

Dates should be printed as: May 12, 1946. (exceptions may be made in descriptive matter, display settings, invitations or legal documents).

Times should be set without punctuation: 10:30 am, not 10:30 a.m.

Use the fewest possible figures, 1977–78. Where the word from precedes the first figure do not use a hyphen but spell out: e.g. from 1929 to 1932, not from 1929–1932.

Percent should be spelled out where it occurs singly in text matter. In all other cases % should be used.

When figures are preceded by a dollar sign and there are no cents, the decimal point and zeros may be omitted.

SINCE 1961

RIGHT

Since 1961

RIGHT

SINCE 1961

RIGHT

SINCE 1961

WRONG

Since 1961

WRONG

SINCE 1961

WRONG

Typefaces with large families, such as Scala Sans, often include fonts with lowercase and cap figures. Notice how the capital figures are full cap height, and monowidth, for use in tables; and the lowercase figures are proportional width.

SINCE 1961 SINCE 1961

The standard typefaces, such as Century Schoolbook and Helvetica, usually have only one set of figures. The figures are short of the cap height and monowidth, and never look comfortable in all-cap settings.

SINCE 1961

Fonts designed for display use, such as Brown, usually have proportional width figures that are also kerned, providing a really even colour.

FOOTNOTES

References in the text to footnotes should be made using superior figures.¹Use full figures, not superior figures, for numbering of the footnotes themselves.²Footnotes should normally be set one or two points smaller than the text depending on the typeface.³

- 1. For only a few footnotes, use *, **, † (Dagger: Option T), ‡ (Double Dagger: Option-Shift 7), in that order.
- 2. The same applies for ©, ®, and ™. Use the trademark character (Option 2) in the text, but type out TM in the footnote if the symbol gets too tiny.
- 3. Legal footnotes may be set even smaller.

FRACTIONS

Fractions should be set with figures smaller than those used for integers, using the solidus (fraction bar), not the virgule (slash).

10¹/₂"

RIGHT

10 1/2"

WRONG

A few typefaces have alternate fonts containing superior/inferior figures and/or composite fractions. But generally, you can construct fractions by customizing the QuarkXPress character preference values for the superscript and subscript commands, and use these in combination with the fraction bar (Option-Shift 1). The appropriate values vary from face to face, so some experimentation is required. This is a rock solid technique that survives copy and design edits such as font and size changes.



Create correct fractions using the superscript and subscript commands

HYPHENATION AND JUSTIFICATION

A hyphen is used to indicate that part of a word at the end of a line will be carried over to the next line. Leave at least two characters behind and take at least three forward. Avoid using more than three hyphenated lines in a row.

A word should not be broken at the bottom of a page or at the end of a column or the last full line of a paragraph.

Do not divide names of persons or companies and, if possible, do not separate first names or initials from last names.

Break words so that the part left at the end of the line suggests the whole word: e.g. starva-tion, not star-vation. Avoid divisions that may confuse or alter the meaning: e.g. exact-ing, not ex-acting.

Do not hyphenate numerals or one-syllable words.

Avoid hyphenation in headlines or display settings.

INDENTS

The first line of the first paragraph, or of any paragraph following a heading, subheading or line space should not be indented. All following paragraphs should be indented at least one em of the text type size. If indents are used to indicate new paragraphs do not use extra leading between paragraphs.

FIAT FLORA

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet consectetur, fiat voluntasua sicut in caelos et in terra.

Pater noster qui est in caelos nter voluptate velit esse molestaie son consequet magna aliquamigue at veros eos et accusam minimum blandit.

Pro videre consequat commodo et anim question diaum tu vos nostrum si veneratum.

RIGHT

FIAT FLORA

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet consectetur, fiat voluntasua sicut in caelos et in terra.

Pater noster qui est in caelos nter voluptate velit esse molestaie son consequet magna aliquamigue at veros eos et accusam minimum blandit.

Pro videre consequat commodo et anim question diaum tu vos nostrum si veneratum.

WRONG

ITALIC

Used for references to book titles, magazines and periodicals, plays, operas, ballets, films, radio and television programs, works of art, and the names of ships. The definite or indefinite article: e.g. The, should be italicized if part of the title.

PARENTHESES AND BRACKETS

Parentheses () are used to indicate author's explanations, insertions and references. Square brackets [] should be used for references to other works, source material or editorial comments. If parentheses occur within parentheses, the inner pair should be square brackets and the outer pair should be curved.

PERIODS

Never use double spaces after the period or other punctuation, except when using mono-spaced fonts. Minimize the use of the period after the following abbreviations and contractions, Ave Co Dr Inc Messrs Mr Mrs No St 8vo am pm.

Visually equalize spacing around initials in names, if time permits.

Dr Jekyll Mr. Hyde

RIGHT

WRONG

Canada's proximity to the U.S. and its British heritage pull in different directions. The Yank style is to put periods after all abbreviations, whereas the Brits omit them. However, the world's foremost authority on matters typographic, Vancouver's Robert Bringhurst, favours Blighty, arguing against "text full of birdshot and wormholes."

PULL-OUT (BLOCK) QUOTATIONS AND EXTRACTS

If possible, extracts should be given the standard paragraph indent. Do not add further indentation for the first line of the opening paragraph. Spacing between the text and pull-out material should be either a full line space or a half line space. Pull-outs and extracts usually do not require quote marks. As Bringhurst notes,

Block quotations can be distinguished from the main text in many ways, for instance: by a change of face (usually from roman to italic); by a change in size (as from 11 pt down to 10 pt or 9 pt); or by indentation.

QUOTATIONS

Use double quotes outside and single quotes inside for quotations within quotations. Where long extracts are indented, or set in a smaller point size, quote marks are not used.

Punctuation marks used at the end of a quoted passage must be inside the quotation marks if they belong to the quotation, otherwise outside. When isolated words or an incomplete sentence are quoted, the punctuation mark is placed outside the quotes, with the exception of the question mark and the exclamation point, which are placed inside the quotes if they belong to the quotation.

Never use the primes, aka hash marks, (' ') as quotation marks.

SMALL CAPITALS

Small capitals are used to give more emphasis to a word or sentence than may be conveyed by using italics. They can also be used for chapter headings and running heads. Use small capitals, without periods, in text setting for degrees (BA LL D MA PH D), abbreviations (BNA CBC RCMP USA), and for roman numerals, George V, Chapter X, Richard III. Small caps should be letterspaced.

If available, use small caps and old style figures for Canadian and British postal codes: e.g. M2N 1K8, not M2N 1K8.

Lynn Lee, MD, FRCS(C)

RIGHT

Lynn Lee, M.D., F.R.C.S.(C)

WRONG

Toronto, ON M5R 2R6

RIGHT

Toronto, ON M5R 2R6

WRONG

To keep stationery neat and tidy, choose typefaces that have small caps and old style figures fonts. These days, there is an ample selection, even for sans serif typefaces. Tip: Look for a small cap font that has old style figures, it will reduce the amount of fiddly work you have to do.

SUPERSCRIPTS

Brand®

OK

Brand®

BETTER

The trademark, copyright, and registered symbols are legalese of absolutely no interest to the reader. Therefore, they should be as small as possible. Use the Superscript or Superior command (the little '2's on the measurement palette) for this. In headlines, apply both, and baseline shift, to get the desired result.

Abba.*

OK

Abba.*

BETTER

When a superscript character follows a comma or period, it can end up closer to the next word than the one it refers to. Kerning solves the problem.

TABLES

Treat tables as text to be read. Do not use unnecessary horizontal rules and avoid using vertical rules all together. All text should be set horizontally, avoid setting column heads vertically.

Use the correct tab settings. Align on the decimal if the figures are decimal, otherwise figures should align on the right.

WORD SPACING

All text composition should be as closely word-spaced as possible. Letter combinations that create unsightly gaps in words should be kerned to get a better fit. Text settings of roman and italic lowercase should not be letter-spaced or tracked open.

On ragged-right settings it is often better to break words than have overly uneven line endings. The space between words should never be greater than the space between lines.

Segregated funds are worth a look. Just keep in mind that there is a cost associated with the benefits seg funds offer. Before you invest, you should decide if the cost is appropriate for you.

BEFORE

Segregated funds are worth a look. Just keep in mind that there is a cost associated with the benefits seg funds offer. Before you invest, you should decide if the cost is appropriate for you.

AFTER

The soft return (Shift Return) can be used to move words or syllables down to the next line. But beware: if further editing is done, or copy reflowed into reconfigured text boxes, or re-used in other documents, you'll get boo-boos. For instance, short lines, or unwarranted hyphen-ations in the middle of lines.

Expert Font Guide

Small caps, old-style figures, ligatures, alternates and display—the expert styles take typography beyond the basics, enhancing the subtlety and meaning of both text and design.
Compiled by Nick Shinn.

How typeface families are organized

There are two principles at work here: style and proportion.

Figure 1, the style series, shows the different styles in which a character can be typeset.

Figure 2, the proportional series, shows how a single character can be set with varying degrees of weight and horizontal scaling.

The big difference between the two series is qualitative: each style is quite distinct from any other, whereas the proportional series is smoothly incremental.

Any style can have its proportions varied; similarly, any instance of the proportional series can be set in any of the styles (theoretically, at least).

The different meanings of the word *style* can be confusing. In the *Style Guide* it means the way type is set, which is all about the typographer's know-how and personality. Here, *style* is a rather dull noun referring to the specific category of letterform in which a character exists.

What's in a font

A font is comprised of alphabets in one, two or three styles from a horizontal row in the style series; also figures, punctuation, accents, and a few ligatures (æ, œ, ß, fi, fl, &)—up to 256 characters. All in one instance of the proportional series.

Expert fonts contain styles from around the square in the middle of the style series.

Fonts are grouped in packages

The four styles in the centre of figure 1—upper and lowercase roman and italic—are the basic styles for the majority of typefaces; the two shaded instances in figure 2—regular and bold weight, with no horizontal scaling—are their usual proportions. Hence the members of a typical base font package, Palatino:

Roman, *Italic*
Bold, Bold Italic

The size of this family can be increased in two ways. Either by adding instances from the proportional series, with the Palatino 2 package:

Light, *Light Italic*, Medium, *Medium Italic*
Black, Black Italic

or with the expert package containing additional styles, Palatino Small Caps/Old-style Figures:

SMALL CAPS OSF, *Italic OSF*
Bold OSF, Bold Italic OSF

There are as yet no expert styles for Palatino 2, and no fractions or swash characters in the expert package. However, a little research reveals that Zapf Renaissance is remarkably similar to Palatino, and would round out the family as a display face.

Some typeface families offer more variety in the proportional series, especially sans serifs; others focus on styles. Truly comprehensive families (see figure 3) contain several expert fonts at a number of weights.

	SMALL CAP	CAP	LOWER CASE	LIGA- TURES
DISPLAY	A	A	a	fi
ROMAN	A	A	a	fi
ITALIC	A	A	a	fi
ALTERNATE	A	v	st	

Figure 1. The Style Series: Expert styles are around the outside of the square.

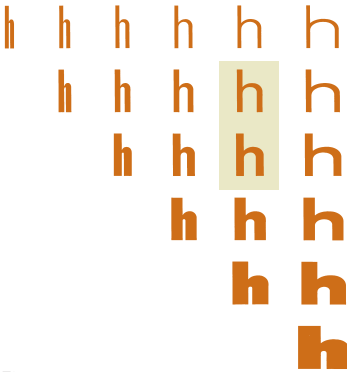


Figure 2. The Proportional Series
from *The Modification of Letterforms*
by STANLEY HESS © 1981 Art Direction Book Company

BASE PACKAGE

Roman

abc...ABC...123...æœÆCE&ßfi
abc...ABC...123...æœÆCE&ßfi
abc...ABC...123...æœÆCE&ßfi

Italic

abc...ABC...123...æœÆCE&ßfi
abc...ABC...123...æœÆCE&ßfi
abc...ABC...123...æœÆCE&ßfi

EXPERT PACKAGE

Small caps, old style figures, additional ligatures, fractions, superior letters, superior and inferior figures

ABC...123...ÆCE&ßfi...abd1/41/2123123
ABC...123...ÆCE&ßfi...abd1/41/2123123
123...fffi...abd1/41/23/4123123

Italic versions of above, without small caps

123...fffi...abd1/41/2123123
123...fffi...abd1/41/2123123

Swash (alternate)

ABC...&stf

Titling (display caps)

ABC...123...ÆCE&SS

Figure 3: Disposition of styles in a large family, by font package. (Adobe)

Expert fonts increase the play of harmony and counterpoint within typeface families.

Family likeness provides harmony, and counterpoint exists between the different styles. The larger the family, the more options you have. Expert fonts are neat—without changing face, size or weight, there are umpteen ways to set even a brief amount of text.

You can really pump up the contrast, without sacrificing harmony. For instance, caps with true (expert) small caps achieves contrast of size and proportion while maintaining harmony of scale and weight; this is lost in fake styling.

five truffles offer
sufficient flavour

Expert ligatures enhance lowercase settings.

*Five Truffles Offer
Sufficient Flavour*

Italic with swash capitals creates an ornate look.

FIVE TRUFFLES OFFER
SUFFICIENT FLAVOUR

Titling capitals add refinement to display size cap settings.

Five TRUFFLES offer
SUFFICIENT *flavour*

Mix and match settings come alive with expert characters.

FIVE TRUFFLES OFFER
SUFFICIENT FLAVOUR

True small caps outclass the fake.

FIVE TRUFFLES
OFFER
SUFFICIENT
FLAVOUR

FIVE TRUFFLES
OFFER
SUFFICIENT
FLAVOUR

Titling, regular, and small caps can be combined to produce distinctive *size-sensitive* effects.

Ligatures

The ‘f’ ligatures are designed for discretion, to replace ungainly couplings with smooth, composite characters.

Conversely, there are ligatures which add noticeable affectation to text.

Another class of ligatures is for tight layouts—providing flexibility with letter combinations of alternate width, or minimizing the white space between characters.

The fi (Option-Shift 5) and fl (Option-Shift 6) are included on the majority of fonts (Mac, not PC), but the location of extra ligatures varies, being either:

- on the base fonts (replacing obscure math symbols)
- on an expert font
- nowhere; many faces have but one expert font—small caps/old-style figures, with no extra ligatures.

fi fi fl fl

The f’s terminal and the i’s dot are apt to bump awkwardly.

The single-character solution has design integrity.

The f-l pairing is too heavy up top, too empty inside.

Its ligature is attractive in its own right.

ff ff ff

The extra f ligatures have a shortened first f to mitigate visual “stutter”.

fi fi

PERPETUA BOLD

Check your face
Some faces *really* need f ligatures.

ct

ONELEIGH

Gadzooks
Stylish archaism in roman text?
This ligature is it.

AVANT GARDE¹³
AVANT GARDE

Set to fit
Herb Lubalin’s nameplate (1967) for the radical magazine *Avant Garde* is an icon of its era, all supertight typography shoehorned into a rigid geometric layout. It was spun off into a typeface with plenty of custom ligatures to nail the look.

ffi ffi ffi

STRAIGHT

DOTLESS “i”

EXPERT LIGATURE

The persistence of merit
When type was metal, letters couldn’t overlap. Now f and i can be designed to fudge together nicely. Or f-i can be set with a dotless “i” (Option-Shift b). Nonetheless, a special ligature is still, well, *special*.

Display

A cure for clunkiness

Before desktop publishing, text and display type were ideally set on different equipment.

Often, the same master artwork would be good for both typesetter and text setting machines. However, serif types with sharp features required separate artwork—with the emphasis on finely drawn details for reproduction at display sizes.

This distinction is also present in the PostScript environment. Look for:

- Typeface families with expert titling fonts
- One-of-a-kind titling fonts
- Multiple Master fonts with an “optical size” axis
- Display or headline faces
- Typefaces containing size-specific fonts

II

PERPETUA TITLING

PERPETUA

A sharper impression

What works well in text will often lack subtlety at display size. For extreme finesse, consider Arepo, Artefact, HTF Didot, Eldorado, Nofret, Throhand, and in a less classic vein, Screen Matrix.

B
B
B
B

WALBURN

All in the family

A few serif typefaces have several versions of the same weight, for use at different sizes, such as ITC Bodoni, HTF Requiem, Eldorado, Village, and Walburn. Also of note: Multiple Master fonts with an optical-size axis, e.g. Adobe Jenson.

Styling
Styling

The real thing

While Bauer Bodoni (left) makes a passable display face, due to its exceptionally thin hairlines and serifs, it still lacks the refinement of ITC Bodoni 72 (below), which has:

- Alternate swash characters
- Micro-details
- Tight fit with extra kern pairs

Phatt

INDUSTRIA

Playtime

Industria has two kinds of alternate font: one with alternate letterforms; and another, Inline, that can be used with the solid font to create a two-colour effect.

Fin

CIA

Threshold effects

Ultra Light faces that are dysfunctional at text size come into their own writ large, as do certain Ultra Heavy faces, e.g. Giza.

When the moon comes out, the sea covers the earth, and the heart feels like an island in the infinite.

CASTELLAR WITH GARAMOND

Congenial mavericks

Adapted to their specialized role, many titling faces don't look like any particular family, but will complement a variety of text faces. Often available only in caps, frequently as “hand-tooled”, “open” or “inline” designs, use for titles or as initials that won't overpower text.

You are sooo busted!

KOSMIK

Fake it good

No doubt it's ironic when two characters in a supposed scrawl are absolutely identical, but it's also illogical and lazy. To get a suitably irregular effect, use a typeface with alternate character font(s), e.g. Kosmik. Also consider doing your own artwork, or hiring a lettering artist.

Small caps

Seasoning the mix

True small caps are not merely scaled down versions of full caps. They differ in weight, fit, and proportion, being designed to match the colour (tone) of the lower case.

Putting passages of text in small caps is pointless: no matter how artful the setting people will not be bothered to read it.

The real value of small caps lies in their ability to add a dash of variety to complex settings, while maintaining the aesthetic convenience of a single typeface family.

And of course, be sure to use small caps for very small cap settings, such as the smallest type on this page.



FAKE Setting
STANDARD FONT, "STYLED"
TRUE Setting
SMALL CAP FONT

Pale imitation

The Small Cap command ("κ") in the QuarkXPress style menu scales down all non-uppercase characters by 75% (default). Unlike the italic ("I") and bold ("B") commands, it never changes fonts. Fake small caps are too narrow, too light in weight, improperly kerned, and the wrong height.

Wh WH WHO WANTS TO KNOW?
REGULAR FONT SMALL CAP FONT

Fake small caps take their kerning from the lower case. True small caps have their own, which makes a huge improvement in colour.

Pas de deux from Flower Festival in Genzano

Music E. HELSTED

Choreography AUGUST BOURNONVILLE

Arranged by ERIK BRUHN

A lovely example of the Bournonville style, and the last remaining fragment of a ballet created more than a century ago by the Danish master.

PALATINO

Categorical imperative

When many classes of information have to be made distinct, small caps are invaluable.

THEY ARE FREELY USED ... not so much for the purpose of display as for the making of a change in the monotony of a text of all large capitals or all lower case.

—De Vinne, *Correct Composition* (1901)

CARTIER BOOK

Set piece

The classic small cap use: following a drop cap.

The golden rule is that there are no golden rules.

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

ELECTRA

Quotable

Upper and lower case italic with all small caps.

Sss Sss
ELECTRA ONELEIGH

Sss Sss
CARTIER BOOK SCALE SANS

LEFT TO RIGHT: CAP, SMALL CAP, LOWER CASE

How big is a small cap?

Some faces have small caps the same height as the lower-case x-height. The norm is slightly taller.

STRANGE RITUAL DAVID BYRNE (*Chronicle Books*, \$24.95) At a time when musicians from John Lennon to Bob Dylan are being unwisely repackaged as visual artists by their publish-

SCALE SANS

Virgin soil

Before PostScript, there were no bold sans serif small caps. Now there are new options to explore.

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ONELEIGH

Special treatment

For important occasions, avoid lowercase roman.

IS THAT ALL?

COPPERPLATE
GOTHIC

Small caps, period

A few faces are designed solely as cap with small cap faces.

FRENCH DRESSING

170 ml (6 fl oz) olive oil
4 tablespoons wine vinegar
1 teaspoon French mustard
1 clove garlic, crushed
1 teaspoon clear honey
salt and pepper

ITC BODONI

Put all ingredients in a screw-topped jar, adding salt and pepper to taste. Shake well to blend before serving.

MUSTARD DRESSING: Add 2 table-
spoons Meaux mustard.

GARLIC DRESSING: Crush 4 cloves
garlic and add to the ingredients.

Side order of small caps

Side headings, where bold would be too strong and italic too weak.

426. CIMABUE. *Madonna Enthroned*. c. 1280–90.
Panel, 12' 7½" × 7' 4". Uffizi Gallery, Florence.

426. Cimabue. *Madonna Enthroned*. c. 1280–90.
Panel, 12' 7½" × 7' 4". Uffizi Gallery, Florence.

ADOBE GARAMOND

Beaten by bold?

Since its introduction in the 19th century, the bold weight has taken over many of the functions previously performed by small caps, in particular sub-headings. Generally, the brashness of bold is more in keeping with modern sensibilities. But in the post-modern era...