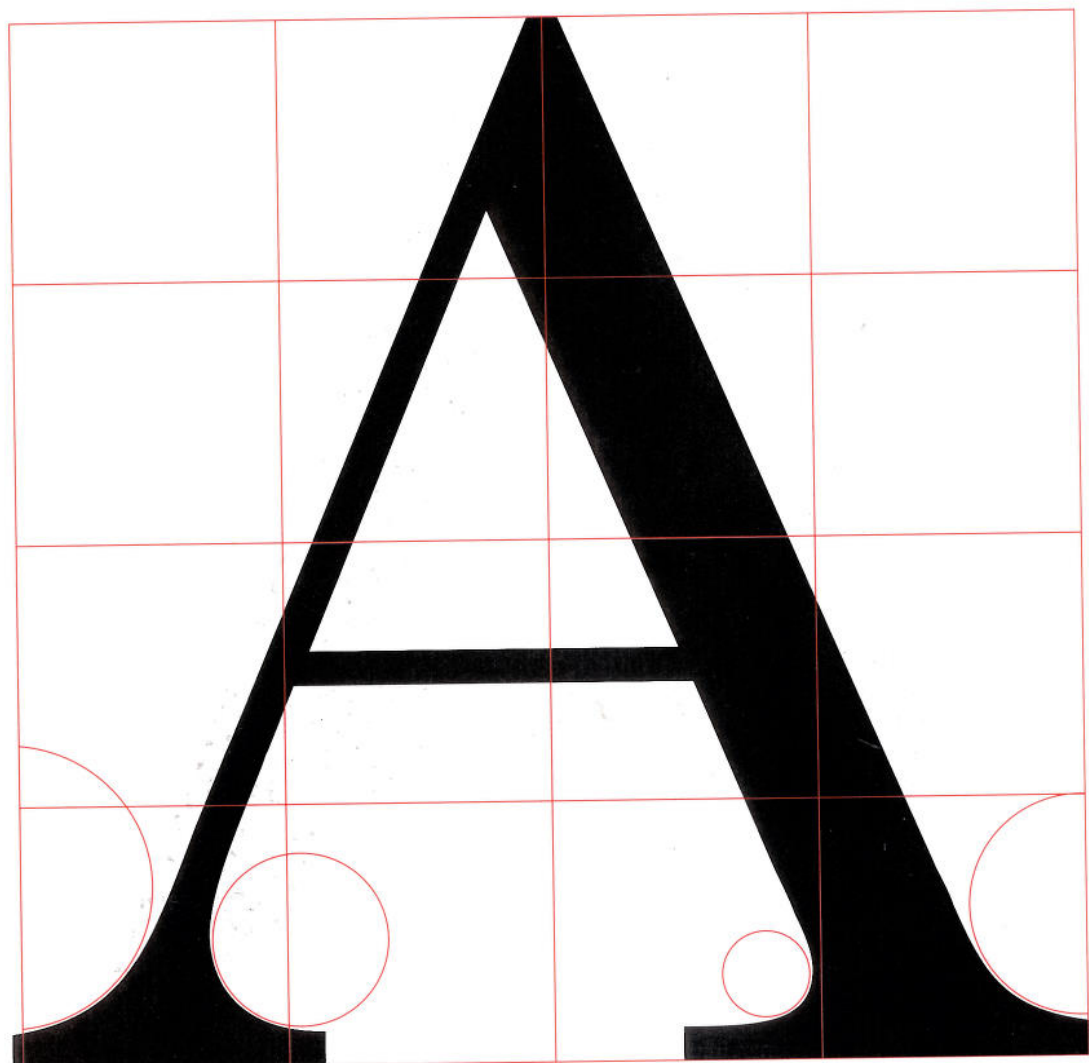


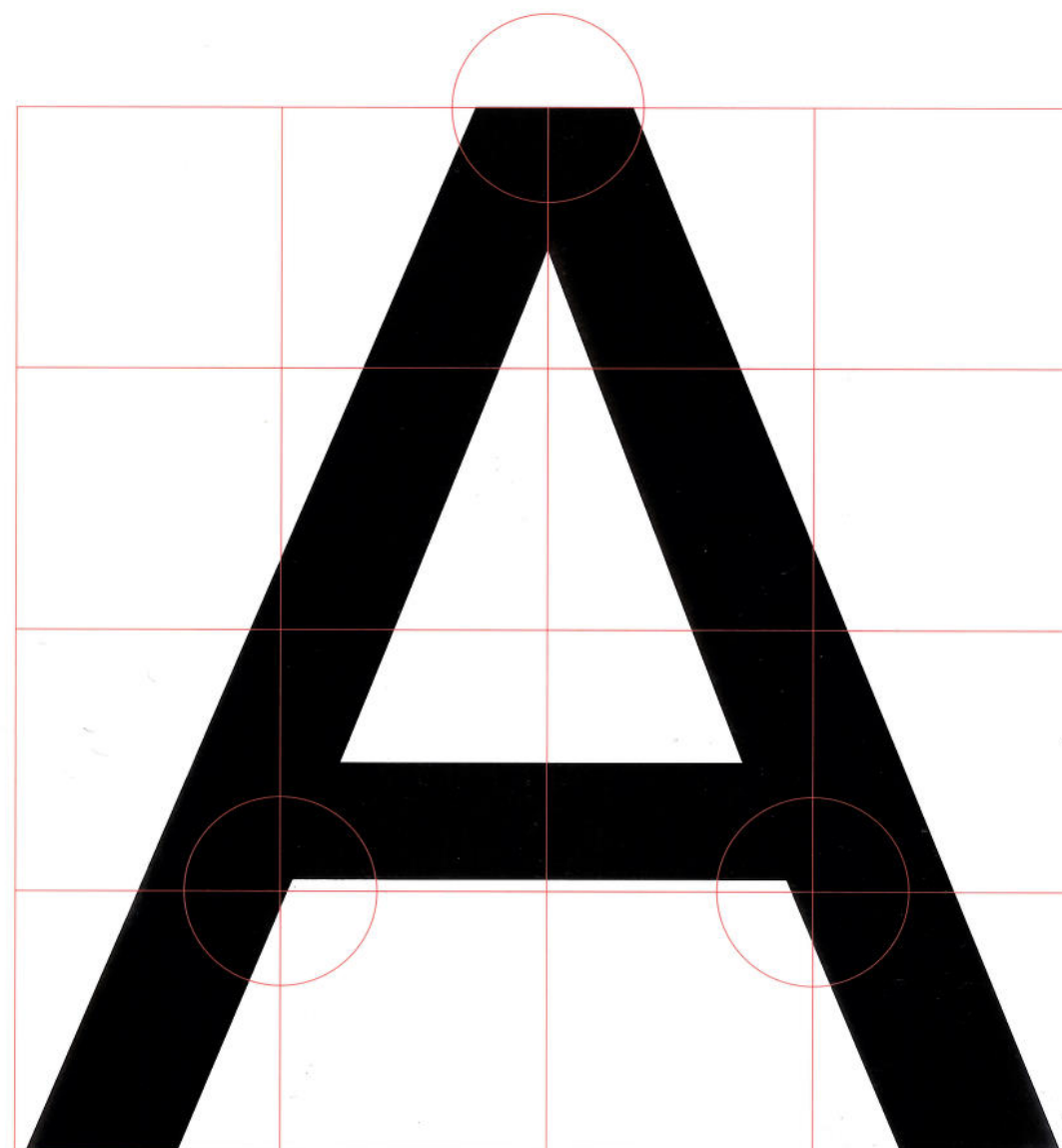
52



Here are two forms of a relatively simple letter—the uppercase 'a'. Both suggest the symmetry of the form as someone might print it, but neither is in fact symmetrical at all. It's easy to see the two different stroke weights of the Baskerville form (above); more noteworthy is the fact that each of the brackets connecting serif to stem expresses a unique arc.

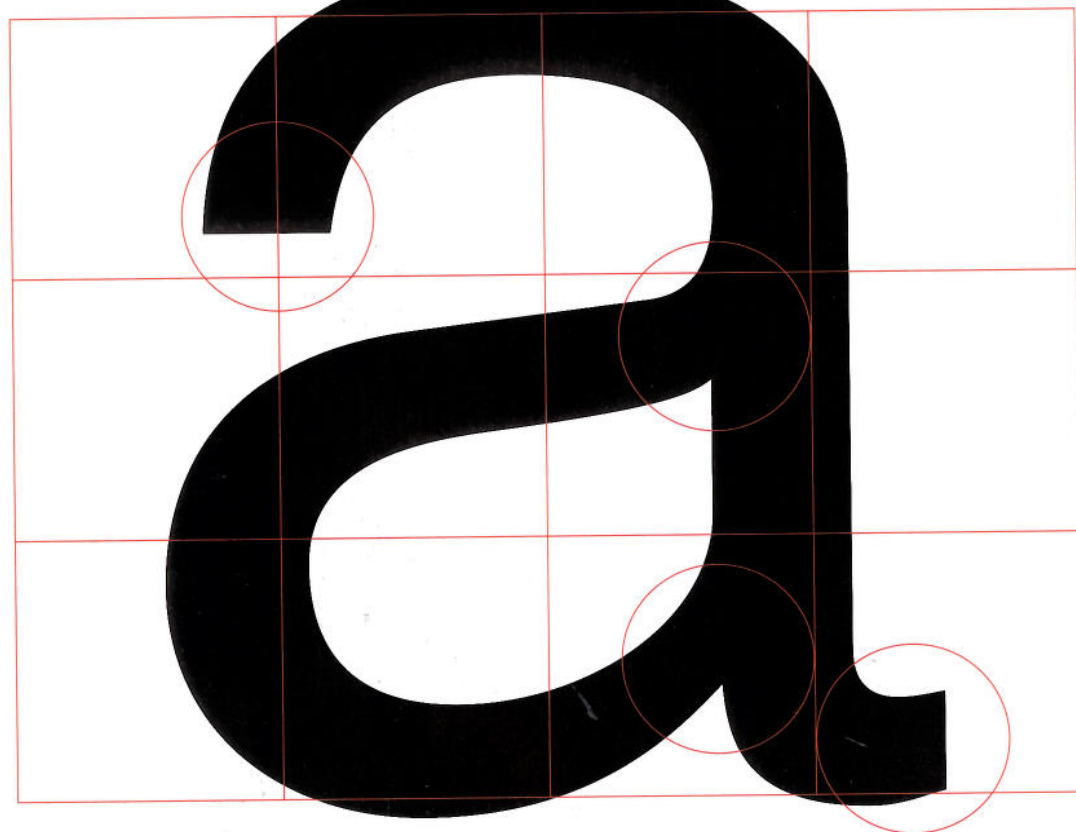
The Univers form (opposite) may appear symmetrical, but a close examination shows that the width of the left slope is thinner than that of the right stroke. Both demonstrate the meticulous care a type designer takes to create letterforms that are both internally harmonious and individually expressive.

53

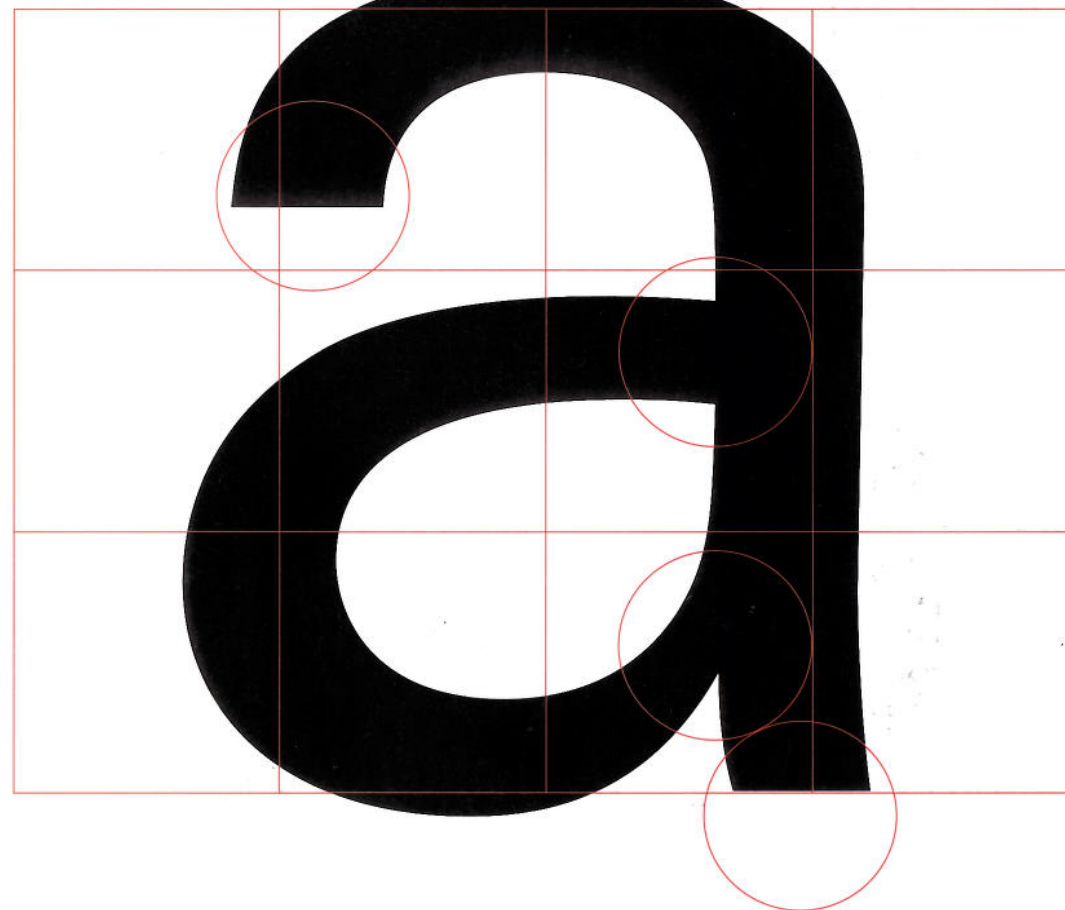


- Pick your own initials from any of the typefaces on pages 47–49 and redraw them at least 12" (300 mm) high.

Draw them as often as it takes for you to *feel* the typeface, its nuances, and unique characteristics.



The complexity of each individual letterform is neatly demonstrated by examining the lowercase 'a' of two seemingly similar sans serif typefaces—Helvetica and Univers. A comparison of how the stems of the letterforms finish and how the bowls meet the stems quickly reveals the palpable difference in character between the two.



- Overlay a lowercase letter from two typefaces and compare the similarities and differences. Use tracing paper. Two methods of comparison are shown at right.



razors

raz

median

baseline

ors

As you already know, the x-height generally describes the size of lowercase letterforms. However, you should keep in mind that curved strokes, such as in 's', must rise above the median (or sink below the baseline) in order to appear to be the same size as the vertical and horizontal strokes they adjoin.

Compare the 'a' in the large examples above with the 'o' and 's'. The latter two characters clearly seem too small, and bounce around within the perceived x-height of the typeface, because they do not extend beyond the median or baseline.

Just as important as recognizing specific letterforms is developing a sensitivity to the counterform (or counter)—the space described, and often contained, by the strokes of the form. When letters are joined to form words, the counterform includes the spaces between them. The latter is a particularly important concept when working with letterforms like the lowercase 'r' that have no counters per se. How well you handle the counters when you set type determines how well words hang together—in other words, how easily we can read what's been set.

E =

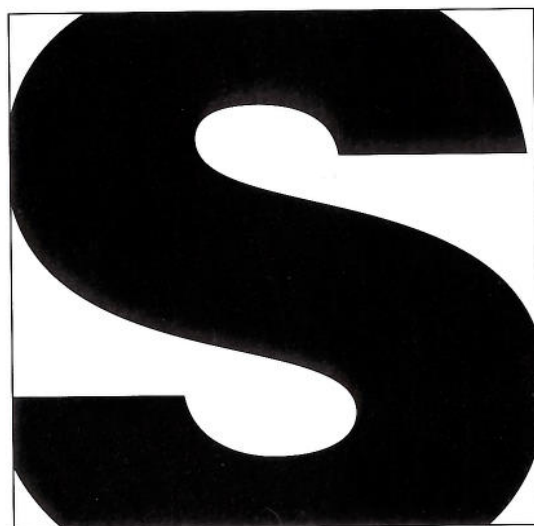
R R

G e

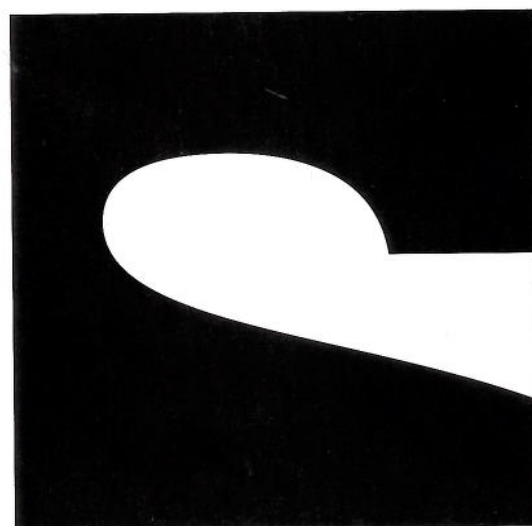
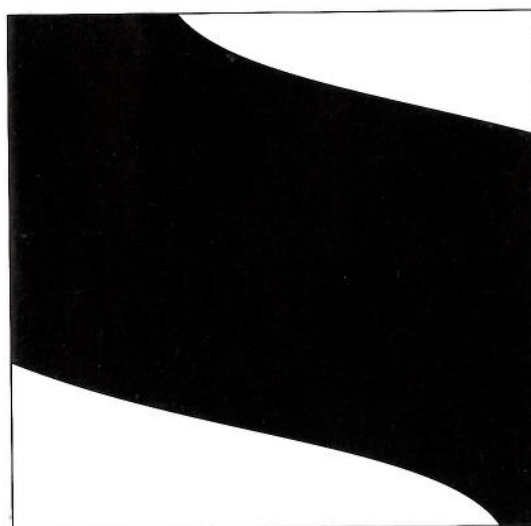
dreams



s



Helvetica Black

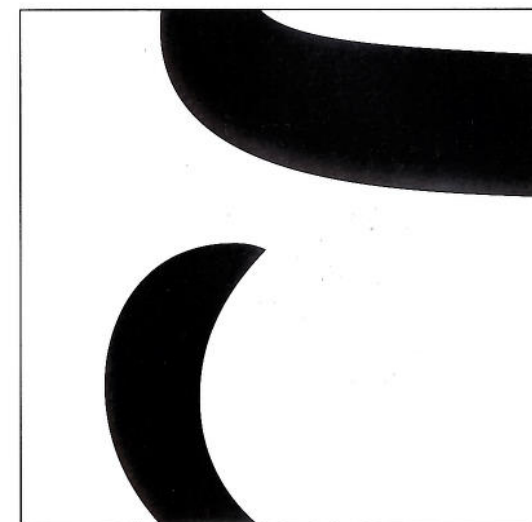


One of the most rewarding ways to understand the form and counter of a letter is to examine them in close detail. Beyond giving you an appreciation of the meticulous care that goes into each compound curve, these examinations also provide a

good feel for how the balance between form and counter is achieved and a palpable sense of a letterform's unique characteristics. It also gives you a glimpse into the process of letter-making.

It's worth noting here that the sense of the 'S' holds at each stage of enlargement, while the 'g' tends to lose its identity, as individual elements are examined without the context of the entire letterform.

g



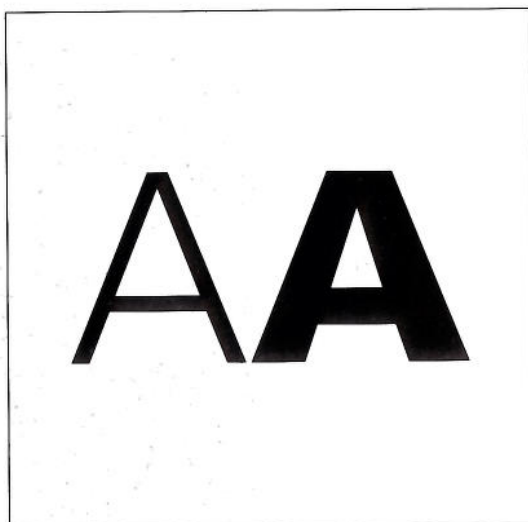
Baskerville



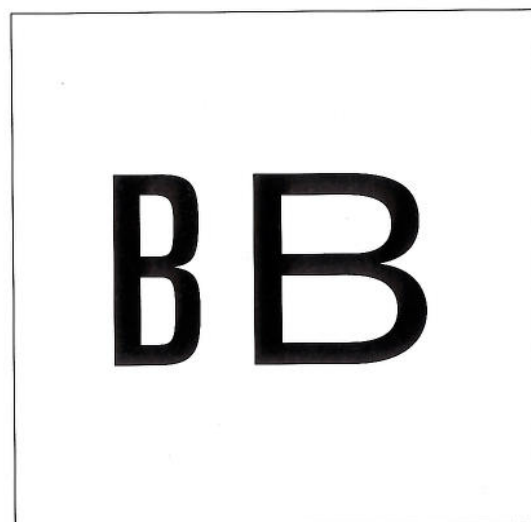
- On four 6" (152 mm) squares, present sections of a letterform that highlight its unique characteristics, keeping in mind the contrast between form and counterform. Note the point at which the letterform is no longer

recognizable. This project is most beneficial when hand-rendered. However, you can use a good copying machine with enlargement capabilities as long as you clean up your edges with each enlargement.

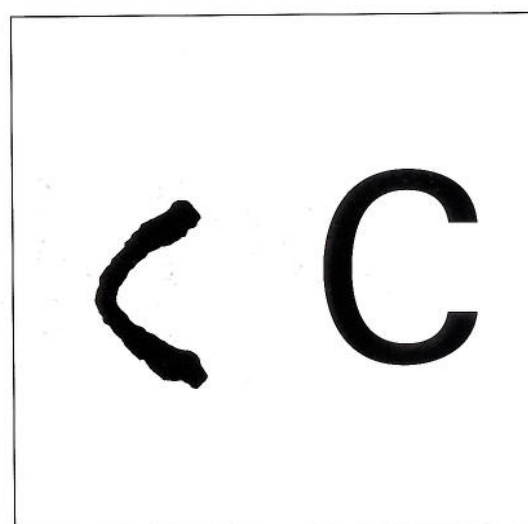
Remember, one of the discoveries of this exercise is to find that moment when the letterform no longer reads.



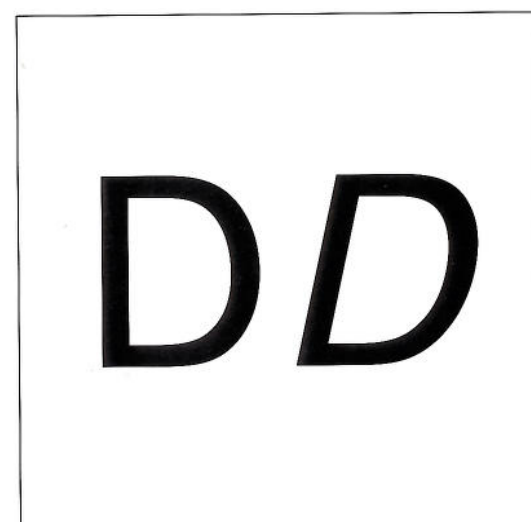
Light/bold



Condensed/extended



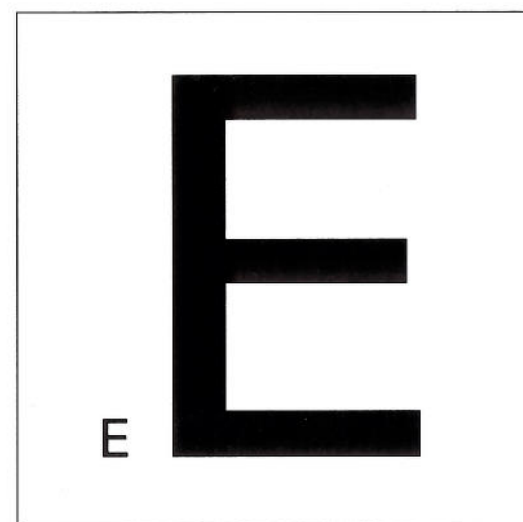
Organic/machined



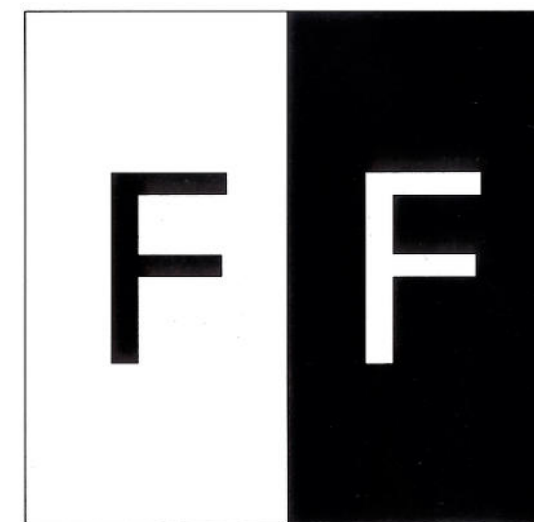
Roman/italic

The basic principles of graphic design apply directly to typography. Above are some examples of contrast—the most powerful dynamic in design—as applied to type, based on a format devised by Rudi Ruegg.

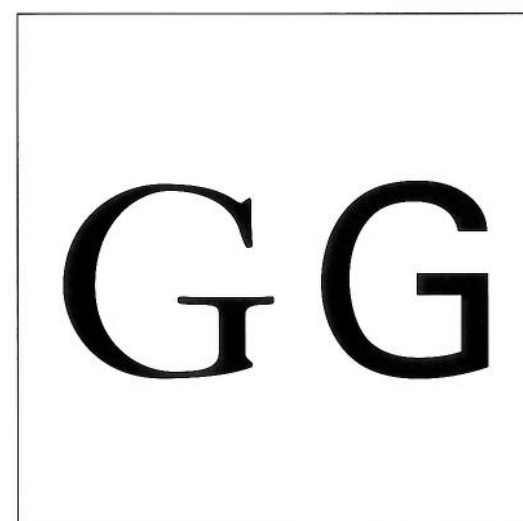
Combining these simple contrasts produces numerous variations: small+organic/large+machined; few+bold/many+light; etc. Adding color increases the possibilities even more (e.g. black/red).



Small/large



Positive/negative



Serif/sans serif



Ornate/simple

- On 6" (152 mm) squares, create six panels showing contrast in type. Combine as many features as you wish (e.g. small+dark/large+light). Restrict your solutions to black-and-white.