

Fonts and the way you format your text can make a big difference to the look of your web page and how readable the content is. There are different ways to get different fonts styles for your web page content.

There are “web safe fonts”. This means that these fonts are recognized by any browser. They don’t have to be installed on the user’s computer or imported from another server to be displayed properly. Some are serif, some san-serif, some monospace, cursive and fancy. And some of them are way overused like Comic Sans and should be avoided. Many of them are a good choice as backups for imported fonts. More on using backups with font-family in a bit.

You can also use a variety of different fonts by importing or downloading them. Google fonts or Font squirrel are places with their own servers that have fonts where we can import or download them. If you choose to import the fonts, you will place embedded code into your CSS to specify a path of where those fonts are located.

To import fonts from Google Fonts you can use an @import rule to specify the pathway of where the fonts are located.

If you download an actual font file, it is important that the license for that font permits it to be used in your web page or web app. Both Google Fonts and Font Squirrel allow you to download the font files themselves (for example one type of file is the ttf file or true type font). You can reference these font files in an @font-face CSS rule and then you can use them in your CSS.

The @import you get from Google fonts and @font-face rules should always be at the very top of your CSS file before any other styles.

Once you have your fonts available you can then apply them to different parts of your page. For example, you could target the body as the selector and apply a font to all text on your entire page. If I wanted to use Arial as the text for most of my page, I could add a rule to the body declaration block of font-family: Arial; So, the value of the font-family property would be Arial. This would mean that many of the children elements of the body tag would inherit that same font such as headers like h1 and h2 and paragraphs, etc. Because Arial is a web safe font you wouldn’t need to have an @import or @font-face at all in your CSS. Browsers will recognize Arial.

But you can specify a list of fonts separated by commas so that if the user didn’t have the first choice for some reason, the browser would use an alternative font from the list. This is a good practice for the font-family property. For example, I would follow Arial with a comma and list the next best font. In this case, Verdana which is also a web safe font, then if Verdana is not available it would use a generic sans-serif font. All of these fonts are similar, and they are all sans-serif so it would keep your page looking consistent no matter which font was used. You don’t want to risk the browser coming up with its own alternative font which might be quite different from what you had in mind for your page.

You could then assign perhaps the h1 and h2 elements a different more unique font if you wanted to. This would make them stand out and give a nice look to your page. Remember only

use very readable fonts for large amounts of text like a paragraph or smaller sized text, but for your titles on your page you can use a more unique font. I wouldn't use more than two different fonts, maybe three, on my page. This example uses Rock Salt from Google Fonts for the title of "Outdoor Fire" Notice the @import making that font available. It is not a web safe font. Notice in the font-family declaration, if for some reason the Rock Salt Google font wasn't available, it would then use Bradley Hand which is a decorative web safe font. It's common to use a web safe font as the second alternative. Try and find the one that is most similar to your first choice font. Then if Bradley Hand wasn't available it would then use a generic sans-serif font. Notice how Rock Salt and Bradley Hand have quotes around them. This is necessary if the font name has a space in it. Both Rock Salt and Bradley Hand have a space in the font name so quotes would be needed around those font names. There are also other CSS properties that have to do with fonts like font-size. Font-size would enable you to specify the size for the font.

There is also letter-spacing and line height that can change the spacing of characters and lines of text. Letter spacing has been used on the title and line-height has been used on the paragraph.