# **Typesetting Text: Definition & Application**

## **What is Typesetting?**

**Typesetting** can be defined as the process of preparing and arranging text and images for printing. This process determines how the content on pages will appear in a variety of publications, including books, newspapers, and magazines. It is important because it ensures that the text and images in a publication are presented in a standard form to the reader. There are several features to consider when planning the typesetting. The text has to be readable. This may seem like an arbitrary feature, but there are several things that can affect readability of text (e.g., type of font, font size). Another important feature to consider is legibility, or being able to distinguish letters from one another. The content should also flow, or it should be arranged in a logical order or structure.

## **Typesetting vs. Typography**

Before returning to the characteristics of typesetting, it is important to understand the difference between two related terms: typesetting and typography. Whereas typesetting is the process of preparing text material for printing, typography involves selecting various design elements as a means of making material more visually appealing. Typography is generally considered to involve more of an artistic element than typesetting, as it tends to focus more on the aesthetic qualities of text material. Typesetting is generally more associated with the formal process of standardizing text so that it is readable and legible.

For example, a book publisher would use typesetting to make sure that the text on each page conforms to standards regarding spacing, font size, and type of font so that the text is easy to read. On the other hand, a marketer would use elements of typography to increase the visual attractiveness of an advertisement so that it captures a reader's attention, such as using certain colors, images, or styles of font that are aesthetically interesting.

## **Characteristics of Typesetting**

A person who uses typesetting will generally focus on specific characteristics of the text and how it is arranged as a way to improve its readability and legibility.

### **Typeface and Fonts**

**Typeface** refers to a set of letters and numbers that share the same design. For example, Times New Roman is a well-known typeface that is very commonly used in professional settings. Font refers to a particular quality that all of the words and numbers within text share. For example, 10 point Times New Roman and 14 point Times New Roman are two different **fonts** even though they share the same typeface. As another example, Times New Roman Bold and Times New Roman Italic are different fonts. Another way to distinguish these two terms is that font refers to a single set of characters that share certain design features, while a typeface refers to a family of fonts.

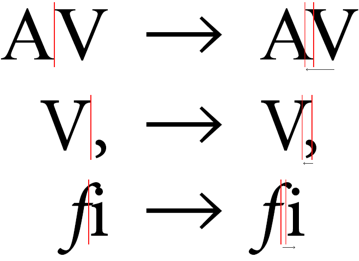
In typesetting, the general focus regarding typeface and font is to standardize across a publication. Variations in typeface or font are generally only used to either distinguish or highlight separate parts of the text (e.g., distinguishing chapter titles from the main body) or to draw attention to specific elements in the text (e.g., using bold font to emphasize key terms or definitions).

### **Spacing**

In general, spacing is a very important characteristic of typesetting. Too little spacing can make it difficult to distinguish different letters and words, reducing the legibility and readability of the text. Too much spacing can disrupt the flow of text in ways that distract the reader. Spacing is also an important tool that is used to separate different sections of text, such as including space between a header and a paragraph or including space after a paragraph to indicate the end of a chapter.

### **Kerning**

**Kerning** refers to the spacing that is used between the individual characters in text. It is typically used to make the letters look and feel evenly spaced. Consider the following example:



***The image shows text before and after kerning was used to adjust the space between the characters.***

The characters on the left side show an example of no kerning, and the right side shows an example of kerning being used to space apart the characters. The spacing is distributed in proportion to the font rather than simply making sure that an equal amount of space is placed between the letters.

Companies often use kerning to make their logos more salient or memorable, such as how the *d* and *E* in the FedEx logo are connected.



***The FedEx logo is an example of kerning used in advertising.***

Software programs are often used to implement pre-programmed spacing between letters. However, kerning is still used today as a means of changing the way words fill the line in fully justified text.

### **Leading**

Leading is described as the spacing between lines of text. Choosing to write a paper with double or single spacing is an example of how leading is used in typesetting. It gets its name from tools that were once used to adjust the space between lines when printing text. Pieces of lead called spacers were placed between the lines as a way to increase the distance between them, hence the term "leading."

### **Word Spacing**

As previously mentioned, word spacing is important for increasing the readability and legibility of text. Inadequate spacing can create something called a river, which is a noticeable white space that runs down a paragraph or page (much like the flow of a river). Sometimes, the spacing that creates these rivers does not run down the length of a paragraph or page and instead appears as smaller chunks of noticeable space. These widened spaces are referred to as puddles or lakes. Rivers and puddles are often a problem in texts that have short lines, such as newspapers. These problems can be avoided by increasing the line lengths that are used in text, or by adjusting the letter spacing so that the rivers or puddles are no longer visible.