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Coach House Press

A guide to basic typographic style for text

Type Tips was first written over twenty-five years ago by Rod McDonald as a basic set of typographic guidelines for his students. It was intended to be an introduction to typographic style, so it does not attempt to cover all the rules of typography.

Good reference books and dictionaries are just as important for designers as books on design. *The Elements of Typographic Style* by Robert Bringhurst sits at the top of most typographers' lists. If you even understand half of what is in that book you will know much more than most people.

When working for any company or organization that has its own typographic guidelines, unless otherwise previously agreed to, their guidelines will take precedence over these.

Finally, break any rule in this booklet rather than do something that will either confuse the reader or cause misunderstanding.

References

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CARL DAIR, *Design with Type*. University of Toronto Press. 2000

CONSTANCE HALE AND JESSIE SCANLON, *Wired Style, Principles of English Usage in the Digital Age*. Broadway Books. 1999

R.M. RITTER, *New Hart's Rules: The Handbook of Style for Writers and Editors.* 1st Edition. Oxford University Press. 2005

ILENE STRIZVER, *Type Rules! : the Designer's Guide to Professional Typography*. Second Edition. John Wiley & Sons Inc. 2006

Ampersand (& *&* &) The correct use of the ampersand is between proper names in registered companies (Smith & Jones), in initialisms (Q & A), and in book and movie titles. It should not be used simply as an abbreviation for *and*—except for deliberate graphic effect (meat *&* potatoes).

Apostrophe (') Do not use to pluralize numerals or abbreviations (1960s, MDS) except where ambiguity may arise, e.g., the *a's* in a font. Some typefaces may need a thin space inserted before the *s*. Use as '20, not '20.

Never use the prime (') or foot mark as an apostrophe (nor vice versa).

At (@) The old commercial *at* sign is now largely reserved for use in email addresses. It is considered inappropriate to use it as an abbreviation for the word *at*.

Capitals Words in full capitals should not appear in text settings; small caps are preferred. CAPS and SMALL CAPS should be visually letterspaced.

Copyright (©) Precedes the date of publication, or the copyright holder's name, with a word space. It is typically the full cap height.

Diphthongs (Æ, æ, Œ, œ) Two joined vowels used in registered trade names and in Danish, French, and Norwegian. Never use as a common ligature.

Drop cap initials are measured by the number of lines of type they occupy. Drop caps work especially well in multiple column settings, such as in magazines, because the initial does not break out of the column.

Ellipsis (…) A mark of omission consisting of three dots. In English, place one word space on each side; in French, the word space is only placed after the ellipsis, with no word space before.

Hyphen (-) 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. It is also used for hyphenated compounds (mass-produced, Tremblay-Gagné). In all cases, no space is used on either side of the hyphen.

En dash (–) Represents the word *to* when used between figures, but not if the figures are preceded by the word *from,* e.g., 1926–32 or, from 1926 to 32. The en dash, with a word space on each side, is often used in place of the em dash. The en dash is not a substitute for *and*. An en is one half of an em.

Em dash (——) Indicates a suspension of sense, a sudden change in construction, or an unexpected turn of thought. Never use an em dash with either a colon or semicolon. An em is defined as the square of the type size.

Figures Old style figures (0123456789) are used in text settings and with small caps. Use lining figures (0123456789) with full capitals.

In text matter, descriptive numbers of one hundred and under should be spelled out, except when they refer to specific sequences. (The book had eighty pages, on page 62 …)

Numbers in the hundreds or thousands should be spelled out, unless they refer to dates or financial matter.

In Canada, dates can be set as July 18, 1967 or 18 July 1967, with a comma after the year if the text continues. At Coach House, the latter is preferred for clarity. Numerically, dates are listed as year-month-day (1967-03-25). In dates, use the en dash, without a space on either side. The minimum number of figures should be written for English (1455–70), and maximum for French (1455–1470). In English, do not use *st*, *nd*, *rd*, or *th* after the day. Use small caps as in 516 BCE and AD 114.

In English, when figures are preceded by the dollar sign, and there are no cents, the decimal point and zeros may be omitted ($23.00 or $23). In French, a comma is used rather than a decimal point, with the dollar sign placed at the end of the figures with a space (5,6 millions de dollars or 5 600 000 $).

Figures with decimals align on the decimal; otherwise figures should right align. Always use tabular settings for alignment.

Footnotes References in the text to footnotes should be in superior figures (note[6]). However, use full figures when numbering the footnotes themselves. Footnotes are normally set one or two points smaller than the text.

For one or two footnote entries, you can also use the asterisk (* and **).

Fractions If made from lining figures, the fraction may be confused with the full-size figure (left). Fractions produced by various design software (centre) avoid that specific confusion but are too light beside the full-size figure. If available, use properly drawn fractions (right).

1 1/4   1$^1/_4$ 1¼

Hyphenation and justification In justified settings, 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 meaning, e.g., exact-ing, not ex-acting. Leave at least two characters behind, and take at least three forward. Do not have more than three consecutive hyphenated lines.

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

Avoid hyphenation in headlines and display settings. Never hyphenate numerals, single-syllable words, or email addresses.

If possible, do not break a word at the bottom of a page, at the end of a column, or in the last full line of a paragraph.

Indents The first line of the first paragraph, or of any paragraph following a head or subhead, should not be indented. All following paragraphs should be indented at least one em of the type size.

Italics are used for references to book titles, magazines and periodicals, plays, operas, ballets, films, radio and television programs, works of art, ship names, and websites. The definite or indefinite article (*the, a*) should not be italicized within text settings (I read the *Walrus*).

Kerning The subtraction, or addition, of space between two letters. Used to fine-tune letterspacing in headlines and to adjust letter combinations that create unsightly gaps or dark spots in text matter.

Tun Wan Yon (unkerned) Tun Wan Yon (kerned)

Leading Refers to the amount of space between two or more lines of type. Legibility is increased by having more leading between lines in paragraph settings. A general rule is to have three to four more unit values of leading in relation to the size of the typeface (9/13; 9 point type on a 13 point body)

**Ligatures** (fi, fl, fj, ff, ffi, ffl) Two or more letters joined together in one glyph.
   Most OpenType fonts offer full support for ligatures, but you may have to ensure that the software you are using has the ligature feature turned on.

first first   flight flight   office office

Parentheses and brackets Parentheses are used for author's explanations, insertions, and references. Square brackets are used for references to other works, source material, or editorial comments. When parentheses occur within parentheses, the inner pair should be bracketed and the outer pair parentheses. Braces are primarily used in the setting of mathematics.

(Parentheses) [Brackets] {Braces} <less & greater than>

Parts of a letter It is helpful to have a rudimentary knowledge of the names of the parts of letters.
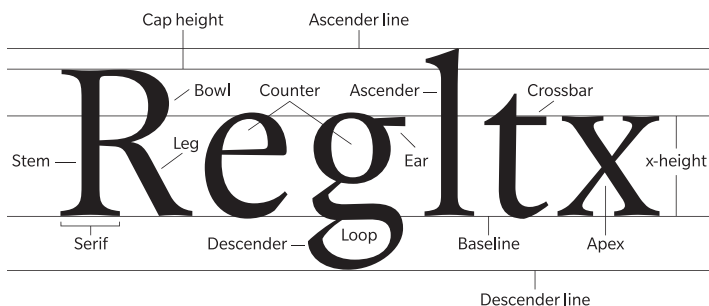
Periods (.) Never use double spaces after the period or other punctuation. In Canada, abbreviations and contractions can be written with or without the period (Mrs. Ave. vs Mrs Ave). The latter is preferred at Coach House.

Phone numbers can be set without dashes or other punctuation. The old form used the en dash – not a hyphen. The area code does not need to be in parens except where it is still reserved for long-distance use (416 647–8648).

Pull-out quotations and extracts If possible, extracts should be flush left, with subsequent paragraphs indented one em of the text size. The space 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.

Quotations In Canada, if a quotation falls within a quotation, it is acceptable to use double quotes outside and single quotes inside, as well as the opposite. At Coach House, single quotes outside and double quotes inside is preferred for better typographic texture and clarity.

Punctuation marks at the end of a quoted passage must be inside the quotation. Superior figures after a quotation are placed outside the quotes.

Never use the foot (') or inch (") prime marks as quotation marks.

‘Single opening and closing quotes.’[9]
‘A quote “within” a quote.’

Single (‹›) and double («») guillemets are used in French to perform the same function as the quotation marks in English. A space, or hair space, if possible, should be applied between the guillemets and the words inside the quotation. The punctuation mark lands inside the guillemets (below).

«Mots entre guillemets!» «Je n'en ai pas, désolé.»

Raised initials base-align on the first line of the paragraph. Avoid raised initials in multiple columns. Use a different typeface or indent the initial to add to the effect.

Small capitals These give more emphasis to a word or sentence than can be conveyed by using italics. Use small caps, without periods, for degrees (PHD), abbreviations (CBC), roman numerals (XXIII Olympiad), chapter headings, and running heads. If possible, it is best to visually space small caps with a minimal amount of tracking (25–35 units), so that the small capitals do not disrupt the texture of the paragraphs they are set within.

Small caps are designed to match the height and weight of the lowercase letters. Fake small caps, made with design software (below), are only reduced caps and are too light. If possible, use properly drawn small caps.

If available, use small caps, with old style figures, for Canadian postal codes, e.g., M6Y 5H2 or M6Y 5H2, but not M6Y 5H2 or M6Y 5H2.

SMALL CAPS (fake) SMALL CAPS (true-cut)

Type rules Avoid overusing rules; it is preferable to define areas with space.

————————————	Hairline rule 0.25 pt
————————————	Thin rule 0.5 pt
————————————	One point rule
═══════════════	Oxford rule
· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	Dotted rule

Tables Treat tables and charts as text to be read. Do not use unnecessary horizontal rules and try to avoid using vertical rules altogether.

Tracking The uniform addition or subtraction of space applied to a whole word or setting. Full caps and small caps usually benefit from open tracking. Larger size display settings may need to be tracked tighter.

TRACKING (untracked) T R A C K I N G (tracked)

Trademarks The registered symbol (®) and trademark (™) follow the word without an extra space. It is customary to reduce the size of both marks in headlines and display settings.

URLs and email addresses Both email and website addresses should be set all lowercase, without hyphenation or underlining.

In text, setting emails in italic can highlight the address and also avoid confusion with other text material.

Widows and orphans A widow results when the last word, or part of a word, appears on a line by itself at the end of a paragraph. An orphan is created when a paragraph ends on the first line of a new page or column. Although both are to be avoided, it is not always possible to avoid having a widow.

Word and letter spacing Text set in roman and italic lowercase should not be tracked open, unless the typeface is excessively tight fitting to begin with.

In both text and display settings, the space between words should never be greater than the space (leading) between lines.

In flush-left ragged-right settings, it is often better to hyphenate words rather than have overly uneven line endings.

Basic proofreading marks The final step in the production of any printed document is to check that everything in it is correct. Proofreading is the silent partner in typography; if done properly no one will notice. However, if not caught in time, a single mistake can often mean that an entire job will have to be reprinted.

There are two kinds of proofreading. The first is called 'soft' proofing and is done on-screen using a spell-check program. Soft proofing can only catch the most obvious mistakes. The second, and by far the more important, is 'hard' proofing and it is done on paper printouts. At this stage everything is checked: page sizes, folios, typefaces, and type sizes, etc.

One cardinal rule of proofreading is to never proof your own setting; ask someone to proof it for you. If that is not possible then move to a quiet area away from your desk and phone. Try to take a short break before beginning the actual proofing of the document. Guard against simply reading the text; rather, patiently go through the entire document word-for-word noting all mistakes and queries in the margins using these marks:

lc	The quick Brown Fox	Change to lowercase	The quick brown fox
ital	The quick brown fox	Change to italic	The *quick* brown fox
rom	The *quick brown fox*	Change to roman	The quick *brown fox*
bf	The quick brown fox	Change to bold face	The quick **brown fox**
Cap	The quick brown fox	Change to uppercase	The quick Brown Fox
S.C.	The quick brown fox	Change to small caps	The quick BROWN FOX
⊙	The quick brown fox	Insert indicated character	The quick brown fox.
#	The quick brownfox	Insert space	The quick brown fox
⊐	The quick brown fox	Indent amount specified	The quick brown fox
¶	The quick brown fox	New paragraph or line	The quick brown fox
run on	The quick brown fox	No new paragraph or line	The quick brown fox
trans	The brown quick fox	Transpose words or lines	The quick brown fox
delete	The quick brownn fox	Delete character(s)	The quick brown fox
stet	The quick brown fox	Ignore indicated change	The quick brown fox
⌣	The quick br own fox	Close up space	The quick brown fox
wf	The quick brown fox	Wrong font	The quick brown fox
m.c.	The quick fox	Missing copy	The quick brown fox