

Font Alternatives

This document will compare various fonts and their potential replacements. I have included also links for each of these. This present version (v1.00) may not be current later than 26 October 2020. This document was written in LibreOffice, as it is intended to be a quick and easy reference for students, etc., and part of that is making the transition as painless as possible. The actual font this document is written is *FreeSerif*—a font produced directly as part of the GNU project.

This document is hosted on my [Github](#), where it will be updated. It is, however, highly likely that future versions of this document may branch off into a reference manual for *free software* in general (that is *free* as in *freedom*.) That said, it goes without saying, but I say it anyway, that this document shall focus on *free fonts* in particular, though it does not limit itself to them, chiefly in rarer cases, like dealing with the Traditional Mongolian script.

Before beginning, it is good to be familiar with the term *metrical compatibility*. This refers to a font that, when substituting another, very little to no changes in text should occur. For the purposes of this work, the term *visual compatibility* has been adopted to refer to fonts that look similar, so much so that differences may not be noticeable, but kerning and glyph metrics may vary drastically. *Kerning* refers to the spaces between letters, relative to other letters.

Serif Fonts

Serif fonts, such as this one you read, are fonts that are designed to ideally be easier to read, by adding serifs (edges and points) to letters. They are also called *Roman* fonts.

Times New Roman (TNR) (Times)

Times New Roman (TNR), or Adobe's Times, has become a de-facto-standard in type-setting, and is an absolute must in both Primary and Secondary educations (K–12, for the U.S.) However, since the take-off of Google Docs, which only recently obtained a license for TNR, the usage of Times has fallen significantly in favour of using *Tinos*, a fork of *Liberation Serif*. However, now, it is on-the-rise-again.

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm
Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

THE QUICK BROWN FOX JUMPS OVER THE LAZY DOG.

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Mauris nec tempor urna. Nunc feugiat congue pretium. Donec faucibus laoreet arcu sed convallis. Sed consectetur elit nec diam fringilla, sit amet facilisis nisl semper. Pellentesque habitant morbi tristique senectus et netus et malesuada fames ac turpis egestas. Curabitur at sagittis tortor. Ut bibendum elementum massa ut facilisis. Suspendisse nisl lectus, aliquam eget ornare in, cursus non sapien. Sed sodales interdum orci, et aliquam ex varius eget. Vestibulum sit amet rutrum quam. Phasellus ut sagittis risus.

Metrically Compatible Fonts

Liberaton Sierif ([Tinos](#).) was originally licensed by Red Hat and is under the GPL v2.0.

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm
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FreeSerif, is a part of the *GNU FreeFont* family, licensed under the GPL v3. It is also visually similar to TNR.

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Visually Similar

[Gentium](#), is a family of open fonts, seeking to cover many languages; they are released under the Open Font License (OFL.)

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[Linux Libertine](#), is based upon older book fonts and bears a similar resemblance to both TNR and Gentium book, but bearing more so to TNR. It is under the GPL

and OFL fonts. The following example uses *Linux Libertine O*, which has slightly different kerning from *Linux Libertine G*.

Though it is not technically metrically compatible with TNR, the differences are very minimal. In fact, after hundreds of lines of text, the difference may only be about 17 to 20 lines—this is anecdotal, but I find it easier to read and track than TNR.

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Sans-Serif Fonts

Sans-serif fonts, also called *sans*, *grotesque*, or even *Germanic* fonts, are ones that do not have serifs on the letters. Three of the most notable sans fonts are *Arial*, *Comic Sans*, *Verdana*, and *Helvetica*. Among users of Mac OS X or iOS, you may also be familiar with *San Francisco*.

Helvetica

Helvetica, the most popular sans font, is owned by Monotype, though not originally designed by them. Perhaps one of the biggest reasons it is so popular, is that it is a Postscript font, meaning that it is built into Postscript-compatible printers. This, along with Steve Job's choice to adopt it. The most commonly-known copycat, and also the most hated, is IBM's *Arial*, which was adopted by Microsoft.

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm
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Metrically Compatible Fonts:

[Nimbus Sans](#), is a cousin to FreeSerif and directly descended from Helvetica.

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm
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[Swansea](#), is a public domain font.

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm
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[FreeSans](#), is part of the GNU Free Fonts and is descended directly from Helvetica, cousins with *Nimbus Sans*. An original font, called Nimbus Sans L, was broken off of a fork of Helvetica and made metrically compatible with the Postscript version of Helvetica. Nimbus was forked given to the GhostScript project, who continues to update it. Early on afterwards, it FreeSans broke off from this original as well.

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm
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netus et malesuada fames ac turpis egestas. Curabitur at sagittis tortor. Ut bibendum elementum massa ut facilisis. Suspendisse nisl lectus, aliquam eget ornare in, cursus non sapien. Sed sodales interdum orci, et aliquam ex varius eget. Vestibulum sit amet rutrum quam. Phasellus ut sagittis risus.

San Francisco

San Francisco, is Apple's proprietary and very-much-loved font family. It is easy-to-read and a bit more modern than even Helvetica. One thing you may notice, is its similarity (visually) to Helvetica.

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm
Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz

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Visually Similar

Fira Sans, Fira is a family of fonts that were adopted by, but not created for, Firefox. There are many weights of the fonts, and the Sans fonts are visually similar to San Francisco, albeit, not metrically compatible. The below example is my favourite of the lot, *Fira Sans Condensed Light*. It may appear metrically compatible, but I have resized it to 13pt. Therefore, without modification, it is not metrically compatible with San Francisco.

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm
Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz

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Roboto, is part a font of Google and bears a resemblance to San Francisco; but it is rather far removed. This example is using the light-weight version.

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm
Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

THE QUICK BROWN FOX JUMPS OVER THE LAZY DOG.

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Suspendisse nisl lectus, aliquam eget ornare in, cursus non sapien. Sed sodales interdum orci, et aliquam ex varius eget. Vestibulum sit amet rutrum quam. Phasellus ut sagittis risus.

Monospace Fonts

Mono-space fonts are fonts that have an equal distance between all letters, not having a varying distance. Monospace fonts can exist as both serif and sans-serif. By far, though, the most common variants of Monospace fonts are either sans or a special type of serif-fonts called 'courier' fonts. Courier fonts, *courier* meaning *messenger*, are the serif-faces that were used on typewriters.

Courier FinalDraft

Courier FinalDraft is the official font used in FinalDraft, proprietary; PoS; hard-to-use; 'industry standard', screenwriting software. Suffice-it-to say, it is the number-one font in screenwriting. You can use many fonts, but it is designed to meet the standards, when it comes to characters per line and lines per page. The following example may or may not be accurate to FinalDraft, as I have no idea if it actually is the official font or not—I found it on someone's Github, called *Courier Final Draft Powerline*. It certainly looks like Courier FinalDraft, based upon my brief experience, having used the program before.

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm
Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz

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Metrically Compatible

In screenwriting, metrical compatibility is drastically important. If fonts do not match the requirements properly, it may make a screenplay too long or too short, thus making it harder to estimate run-time. But, we must never forget! *Cleopatra enters Rome.*

Courier Prime, Courier Prime was developed by Alan Dague-Greene for John August and is released under the OFL. It blends a few sans features, while keeping the primary serifs of courier fonts. It is designed to be a drop-in-replacement for Courier FinalDraft. It has gained a massive following in the screenwriting community, and is even being extended, supporting most European languages. There is even a fork made for Cyrillic.

It is worth noting, though, that this document is imperfect, seeing that it does not have an accurate representation of Courier Final Draft available. These two do not quite match in vertical line spacing, though the standard number of lines per screenplay page is about 55–57, double-spaced, of which I know it fits.

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm
Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

THE QUICK BROWN FOX JUMPS OVER THE LAZY DOG.

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Mauris nec tempor urna. Nunc feugiat congue pretium. Donec faucibus laoreet arcu sed convallis. Sed consectetur elit nec diam fringilla, sit amet facilisis nisl semper. Pellentesque habitant morbi tristique senectus et netus et malesuada fames ac turpis egestas. Curabitur at sagittis tortor. Ut bibendum elementum massa ut facilisis. Suspendisse nisl lectus, aliquam eget ornare in, cursus non sapien. Sed sodales interdum orci, et aliquam ex varius eget. Vestibulum sit amet rutrum quam. Phasellus ut sagittis risus.

FreeMono, from the Free Font family again. It is a little smaller. It carries a much more traditional courier-look, than even FinalDraft. FreeMono is my personal

choice, it supports well above 10,000 glyphs, supporting most of the European writing systems.

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm
Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz

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Visually Similar Fonts

[Courier Screenplay](#), it looks almost exactly the same as Courier FinalDraft and is promoted by FadeIn (what you should be using, if you are going to be paying for screenwriting software.) It is based on *Bitscream Courier*, and is under a permissive license. You are free to modify and distribute it as you will, just be sure to mention Bitstream Incorporated.

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm
Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz

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[Courier 10 Pitch](#), looks most similar to Courier Screenplay, and is metrically compatible with it, but not Courier FinalDraft. I prefer its shapes of all this lot, but it is very limited in the amount of character sets supported. It also is based on the Bitstream font, and it was chosen by the defunct *Trelby* project.

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm
Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz

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sit amet rutrum quam. Phasellus ut sagittis risus.

Obscure Language Fonts

It can be rather hard to find a font that supports a particular language, or even a font that matches the traditional style(s) used by that language. This section is dedicated to those fonts.

Anglo-Saxon

Old English, or the languages of the Anglo-Saxons, used a few different spins on, then, common Latin scripts for writing. Any modern font can fully support the full alphabet (though maybe not Yogh 'ȝ',) but few match the specific shapes used, properly. Thankfully, a man named Peter S. Baker took the time to make fonts that match the most common scripts from literature; they are public domain.

There are many scripts, but I will just demonstrate my favourite (and probably the most well-known:) *Beowulf1 Style* (14.6 pt. size.)

Aa Ææ Bb Cc Dð Ðð Ee Ff Eƿ Hh Ii Ll Mm

Nn Oo Pp Rr Sƿ Tt Þþ Uu Vv Xx Yy Zz

The quick bƿopn fox iumpƿ over the lazy dōƿ.

The quick bƿopn fox iumpƿ over the lazy dōƿ.

The quick bƿopn fox iumpƿ over the lazy dōƿ.

THE QUICK BROPN FOX IUMPS OVER THE LAZY DOE.

Lopem ipſum doloſi ſit amet, conſectetur adipiſcintſ elit. Mauſiſ nec tempore
urna. Nunc ſeuſiat conſue pſetium. Donec ſaucibuſ laopieet apcu ſed conuallſ.

Sed conſectetur elit nec diam ſſunſilla, ſit amet ſaciliſiſ niſl ſemperi.

Pellenteſque habitant morbi tuſſiſque ſenectur et netur et maleſuada ſameſ ac
tuſſiſ ezeſtaſ. Cuſabitur at ſaſſitſiſ torſtor. Ut bibendum elementum maſſa
ut ſaciliſiſ. Suſpendiſſe niſl lectur, aliquam ezeſ opnaſe in, cuſur non ſapien.

Sed ſodaleſ interdum opci, et aliquam ex variuſ ezeſ. Veſtibulum ſit amet
muſſum quam. Phaſelluſ ut ſaſſitſiſ iuſur.

Mongolian

The traditional Mongolian script (which is being adopted again, in the actual Country,) has been used primarily by the people of Inner-Mongolia, in China. A Chinese company, called *Menksoft*, has done much to make their own proprietary office software for traditional Mongolian, and they have a *whole-slew* of quality fonts for the script. But these are proprietary. You have to download the fonts individually, but this is the link to their website: <<http://www.menksoft.com/>>. Google Translate works quite well for entire pages, and it helped me to navigate the website.

This is an example of a few of the fonts, called: *Amglang*, *Mundun Tig*, *Hawang Tig*, *Lhudb Tig*, and *Qagan Tig*.

