The Typographic Tools

Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign

Each letter is a piece of art

- we don't think of it as such

- the letterforms get lost in the communication

- if you want to dig deeper - Look.

[SLIDE 1]

To master any skill, you frst need to learn to speak its language.

- why is vocabulary important

- gives your brain a handy set of labels

- gives a shared language for points of interest

Typeface is the umbrella term for an overall typographic design—including each of its light, medium, or heavy weights, its italicized versions, and its condensed or extended alternatives.

A font is a specific incarnation of a typeface. So, for example, Garamond is typeface and Garamond Bold Italic is a font.

[SLIDE 2]

Types of Fonts

Serif

Sans serif

Script

Blackletter

Monospace

Display

Novelty

Dingbat

[SLIDE 3]

most of the words used to describe the details of letterforms—and the invisible guidelines within which they appear—are self-explanatory and intuitive.

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Knowing these terms help you discern differences between similar fonts by pointing you toward the details that are most likely to vary between them. These differences may be dif cult to spot at rst, but they should become increasingly apparent the more time you spend looking closely at typefaces.

[SLIDE 5]

Heights

A font’s appearance and functionality are greatly affected by the way its inner guidelines are distributed between its upper and lower extremes.

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Measuring Type

Fonts are measured in points, and there are 72 points in an inch. But it’s a little more complicated than that. Typeset letters were originally cast on small blocks of metal, and a font’s point size was determined by the height of the metal block needed to contain any of the font’s characters—including those that had ascenders or descenders. That being the case, the measurement of a font was established as the distance from its descender line to its cap-height line.

Typefaces are similarly measured today—from descender line to cap-height line—and, as you can see above, this means that fonts of a specified point size might appear notably larger or smaller than other fonts of the same size.

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Upright, leaning

Complete serif and sans serif type families usually include alphabets based on both upright and leaning letterforms. Upright letters are referred to as roman characters, and leaning letters are referred to as italic (with serif fonts) or oblique (in the case

of sans serif).

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It’s important to know that a font’s cap-height, x-height, baseline, and descender line are meant to be used as optical guides for the letters they support. This means that curved letterforms will generally extend slightly past these lines to compensate for the eye’s tendency to view curved shapes as being a little smaller than they really are.

When you look very closely at the letters of many fonts, you’ll find that other details take eyeball perception into account as well. The lower inner spaces of the capital M shown above, for example, may appear to be composed of straight lines, but closer inspection reveals that the outer lines of these inner spaces actually bend slightly outward. This is because true vertical lines would create the impression that the character’s interior spaces were closing off too abruptly at their peaks. These are just two illustrations of the many perception-related subtleties typeface designers have learned to take into account when developing letterforms.

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Serif typefaces are usually broken down into the four categories featured above.

Old-style serif typefaces are distinguished by rounded serifs, lesser contrast between their thick and thin strokes, and a generally softer feel than that imparted by other kinds of serif faces.

Transitional serif typefaces have sharp-edged serifs that taper into their strokes and a moderate amount of contrast between their thicks and thins. Serif typefaces of this kind convey little or no suggestions of the hand- drawn heritage conveyed

by old-style serif fonts.

Modern serif typefaces feature serifs that are straight and thin, an absence of tapering details between their serifs and strokes, and sharply contrasting weights. The visual inferences of this family of serif fonts lean far more toward the mechanical than the organic.

Egyptian serif typefaces have thick, slab-like serifs that are usually tapered where they meet the rest of the letterform. Serif fonts of this class also exhibit a low level of contrast between the weights of their strokes.

Shown above: Garamond

Shown above: Baskerville

Shown above: Bodoni

Shown above: Clarendon

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Where to look when assessing differences between serif faces? Try focusing on these features of interest: the contrast between stroke weights;the apex of the capital A; the terminal of the lowercase f and r; and the leg of the capital R.

[SLIDE 11]

Trying to spot unique structural details within a sans serif font? See whether the stroke of its S ends on a horizontal, vertical, or angled axis; determine where the leg of its R begins, where it ends, and whether or not it curves along the way; note what style of lowercase a it employs; nd out if its o is a circle, an ellipse, or some other shape; and assess the overall aesthetic nature of its curves.

[SLIDE 12]

Naturally, script fonts are well worth considering whenever you’re working on projects that call for typography with a true pedigree of nery, elegance, and formality. Which isn’t to say that script fonts should be ruled out for projects with grittier thematic projections in mind: Intriguing implications of rebellion, humor, sarcasm, and tension can be generated through offbeat juxtapositions of highly re ned typefaces and imagery with those of a grungier and more urban demeanor.

Offshoots of script typefaces include those that have been designed to look like modern cursive writing done with a felt or a ballpoint pen, calligraphically inspired alphabets (both neatly and crudely inscribed), and fonts that have been casually brush-rendered using a style of lettering that was popular

in the early- and mid-twentieth century.

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Smart Scripts

A smart script face like Bickham Script Pro offers alternatives for most of its letters. The font automatically inserts what it thinks is the best letterform option for a given word. You can also choose speci c characters through its Glyphs menu.

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Some typefaces, like P22 Dearest, are capable of fooling people into believing the letters were spontaneously drawn by hand. Sharp-eyed and knowledgeable viewers, however, will notice that certain letters of words set using a face like this are identical, and will then also realize that the apparently custom and hand-crafted letters they’re looking at are, in fact, typeset characters. There are a couple ways of avoiding the appearance of identical characters when using typefaces like this for logos and headlines and thereby projecting a more authentically hand-rendered feel. For one thing, you can make use of alternate characters such as the two versions of the lowercase y that are offered through P22 Dearest, and you can also convert your letters to outlines in Illustrator and make manual alterations to characters that appear more than once.

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BLACK LETTER

The Gutenberg Bible of the 1400s was printed using blackletter fonts whose characters were based on a heavy, condensed, angular style of calligraphy that arose during prior centuries.

These days, unless you happen to be working on something like a label for an authentic old-style European beer, a logo for a hard-edged goth or metal band, or a redesign of the masthead for the New York Times, then, chances are, a blackletter font won’t be a perfect t for your project. Still, it can be a fun (and sometimes strangely appropriate) style of lettering to consider, so keep a few typefaces of this kind in your font menu...just in case.

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Monospace

The defining peculiarity of a monospace font is that each of its letters is the same width. The need for this kind of font came about with the invention of typewriters that mechanically advanced a speci c amount of space after each keystroke. This means that a naturally narrow character within a monospace font, like an i, is given serif-like appendages to widen it, and an inherently extra-wide character, like an m, is squeezed horizontally. Early computers also used monospace fonts because of restrictions in on-screen resolution. There’s something intriguing and attractive about monospace fonts that keeps them alive and well in the typographic scene of today, even though their time of true functionality has passed.

Bitmap and dot matrix

Typefaces that were designed for use on old-style, low- resolution computer monitors, and ones that were designed to adapt well to printing on dot matrix printers, rose in pop- ularity from the 1960s through the 1980s. Bitmap and dot matrix fonts are rarely used for their original purposes these days, but these typefaces—as well as those that have been more recently created to mimic them—are perfectly viable for design projects that call for either literal or tongue-in-cheek inferences of technology and era (this is especially true of bitmap-style fonts whose heritage is more obvious than that of dot-matrix style fonts).

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Display typefaces—as their name implies—are designed to show off. Typefaces of this kind can shine when used for eye- catching, thematically avored logos and headlines. But they can quickly become irritating when used for text. Readability is a real problem when typefaces of this sort are used at smaller sizes and for larger quantities of words.

Novelty fonts could be considered a subcategory of display typefaces, but many designers regard them as being in a class of their own simply because they appear just that much more quirky, silly, ultra modern, or deranged than a truly classic display font. If you asked ten designers which of the letters shown above are especially quirky, silly, ultra modern, or deranged, you’d probably get at least nine different answers, so it should come as no surprise that distinguishing a display font from a novelty font is anything but crisp and clear.

Display and novelty fonts are often priced very low compared to traditional serif, sans serif, or script fonts (and some are even available for free). So why not load up your computer with a nice variety of these kinds of typefaces? They might come in handy for a number of special uses including expressively designed headlines, logos, drop caps (see page 193), and word graphics.

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A dingbat font is usually described as one that primarily holds symbols and shapes, but many people extend the de nition to include fonts that contain ornamental designs and pictorial imagery as well.

A standard dingbat font (Zapf Dingbats being the most commonly known and used) holds a useful and versatile all-around collection of stars, starbursts, asterisks, owers, snow akes, hands, pencils, and such. Other non-letter-based fonts focus more heavily on things like decorative designs, arrows, or illustrations of one style or another.

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A reminder, here, that a typeface holds within it all the specific fonts of a particular typographic family, including versions that might be italic, oblique, extra light, light, medium, bold, heavy, black, condensed, extended, and more.\* This page shows examples of various fonts of the Univers typeface. (Rare is the designer who consistently uses the words font and typeface with absolute accuracy, and even rarer—hopefully—are designers who are willing to pick a fight over the matter, so don’t beat yourself up if you find yourself using the words inaccurately from time to time.)

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You might be surprised to find that some of your typefaces have whole sets of ligatures, special characters, symbols, and glyphs that you’ve never seen before. Check out the Type>Glyphs panel in InDesign or Illustrator and nd out what you’ve been missing.

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As you ponder presentation choices for headlines, logos, and type-based graphics, don’t forget the important options for case applied to the word(s) you’re using. Most fonts offer both uppercase and lowercase letters, some feature small-caps letterforms, and some even provide alphabets built from a mix of uppercase and lowercase characters.

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Embrace these five type-related habits and watch your typographic awareness grow.

Don’t just look, see

As a designer, it’s important to augment everyday routines by looking at advertisements, signage, and magazine/website features to intentionally note (and possibly identify) the speci c fonts-of-interest you come across. If you see a particularly interesting printed example of type but don’t have time to analyze it on the spot, snap a photo with your cell phone camera and investigate it later on.

Keep an eye on the best

As mentioned throughout this book, keep tabs on the work of great designers by looking at books, magazines, and websites that feature their work. Put this on your must-do list regularly and often.

Visit sites

There are many websites where you can purchase fonts, and many others that you can access to learn about, chat over, and admire all kinds of different fonts. Use search engines to help you find especially relevant and interesting online sources of typographic material and know-how. Bookmark these sites for repeated visits.

Know where the best stuff lives

Companies that aim to keep popular culture alive and thriving through their goods (movies, music, autos, clothing, and such) make especially determined efforts to ride the foremost edges of visual and communicative trends. This includes trends that affect design and typography, so pay special attention to— and gather design cues from—the typefaces that have been chosen to fuel our pop-culture cravings.

Geek out with other designers

This almost happens automatically in design classes and studios—the thing where students and creative professionals compare notes, exchange ideas, rant, rave, and obsess over all aspects of type. Do this. Geek out. Absorb. Learn.

<http://crispme.com/30-great-typography-artworks-you-must-check/>

[SLIDE 23]

The same aesthetic and thematic characteristics that de ne a typeface’s letters are almost always apparent in its numerals, though sometimes with a slight twist, as in the case of most old- style serif numerals—characters that irt with baseline positions in ways that ordinary letters would rarely dream of doing.

If you’re working on a logo or a headline that includes numerals, be sure to look at a variety of typeface options; sometimes two or three fonts will seem like potential winners, but only one will contain numbers that present themselves with just that something extra you’re looking for—whether it be in terms of their looks or their practicality.

Some typefaces feature numbers that are designed to align themselves vertically (these are called lining numerals), and some offer numbers that prioritize letterspacing over vertical alignment (known as non-lining numerals). The strengths and weakness of both kinds of numerals are illustrated above.

Note also that some typefaces offer both lining and non-lining versions of their numbers through their glyphs menu. This is a potentially handy feature, and especially worth looking into if the font you’re using for a project isn’t giving you the kind of numerals you want as its default.

Are you working on a logo or a headline that includes a number? If so, stop everything and take a moment to remind yourself that there are two main ways of presenting numbers: as numerals and as words. Seems obvious, right? So obvious, in fact, that it’s one of those things that can be all-too-easily overlooked in the hustle and bustle of a busy design project. Be sure to consider your options in cases like these and nd out if one approach offers especially compelling creative and/or aesthetic opportunities.

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InDesign’s Optical Margin Alignment option (available within the Type>Story

menu) can be applied to paragraphs to force initial pairs of quotation marks to hang outside margins and thereby allow the left edge of the quoted text to vertically align. Most designers prefer this look over that produced by non-hanging quotes marks.

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TYPE’S VOICE

Letters as art media? Why not? You can use typographic characters to make beautiful and expressive patterns, designs, and works of art.

Working on a letterhead, brochure, or booklet for a client? What about covering the back of the piece—or an interior panel or page—with a pattern built from their initial(s)?

Got some time on your hands on a weekend afternoon

or a weekday evening? How about producing an eye- catching composition from the initials of a friend or a family member and framing it as a present for a special occasion?

Or what if you create a large-scale pattern using an assortment of typographic components and use it to

print your own sheets of custom-made wrapping paper for gifts to like-minded creative pros?

Projects like this could be the perfect creative counterpoint to the usual client-based and deadline-driven work you do as

a designer—and could be just the kind of thing you need to do once in a while to remind yourself of the funner aspects of design that drew you to your profession in the rst place.

[SLIDE 27]

Search hard enough and you can almost always nd a typeface capable of expressing exactly the aesthetic and thematic qualities you’re aiming for in the logo or layout you’re working on. And not only that, but once you’ve zeroed in on particular stylistic and conceptual goals for your design, it’s very likely you’ll be able to round up a selection of fonts that lend themselves to these objectives in a variety of ways and to differing degrees.

[SLIDE 28]

SOMETIMES IT’s NOT ENOUGH… YOU HAVE TO MODIFY

You can quickly and easily make significant changes to a letter’s stylistic and thematic qualities using Illustrator’s versatile set of tools and form-altering operations. With a modest amount of know-how, you can convert characters to outlines, then cut, slice, and modify their forms to match just about any outcome you can envision. Digital tools allow today’s designers to deftly pull off all kinds of typographic modi cations in a fraction of the time it took our predecessors to handle them using knives, pens, rulers, and ink. And not only that, designers of the digital era can also explore alternatives to any visual solution they’re working toward with incredible variety and perfection. Take full advantage of the perks of digital media whenever you’re working on aesthetic and structural changes to letters.

On a related note, visual elements can be added to typographic characters in in nite ways to generate notes of expressive and/ or visual interest.

Photoshop, too, can be used to add interesting visual effects to letterforms. The lower character in this column was blurred using Photoshop’s Gaussian Blur filter, and then treated to the Enlarged Halftone effect. Are you familiar with Photoshop’s huge array of filters, treatments, and special effects? If not, how about spending some time getting to know them? These days, it’s almost mandatory that designers be competent users of Photoshop, Illustrator, and InDesign.

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Each of these single-letter examples has something to say about the thinking that can go into the creation of a monogram to help it deliver its aesthetic content and thematic feel.

Among other things, a monogram can be: assembled by integrating a letter with imagery; created using an existing typeface and a simple backdrop; built to resemble a dimensional form; constructed by extending an ornamental image or two from a typographic character; illustrated to include something like a hard-spiked Mohawk to playfully connote feelings of menace; enhanced using Photoshop effects; rendered in a way that depicts real-word interactions between objects; crafted to resemble an in-perspective 3D structure; devised by combining a letterform with a symbol; fabricated using a grid of shapes (see also page 63), fashioned entirely from straight and/or curved lines; or drawn from scratch using a visual vocabulary of either simple or complex forms.

You can use these aesthetic, conceptual, and structural approaches to create monograms as well as multi-letter headlines and logos.

[SLIDE 31]

You can apply the same single-letter design ideas demonstrated on the previous page to multi-character monograms.

Monograms made from multiple letters also offer added opportunities for aesthetic and thematic expression because of the potential for interaction between their two or more typographic characters.

Though monograms may not always be the best or only solution for logo projects, designers often include one or two when presenting branding ideas to clients—especially if a company’s initials present unique visual and conceptual design opportunities.

Legibility is important with monograms, just as it is with words. That said, a monogram can gain a certain amount of leeway in this regard when you’re planning to always—or almost always—present it in conjunction with the fully spelled-out words its initials represent. For example, if the U, V, and W in the monogram above were always presented in clear association with words that begin with these three letters, it’s central character would likely be understood to represent both a V and a pair of scissors (an understanding that might be lost if the monogram were not shown with words with corresponding initials).

[SLIDE 32]

Working on a logo for a company with a name that’s two words with an and between them? Think a monogram might suit the project? If so, then spend time and effort thinking about and thumbnailing different ways of presenting the idea of and within your design.

Sometimes, the way and is conceptually and/or aesthetically handled within a monogram is precisely the thing that gives the design its extra measure of interest and appeal.

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[SLIDE 34]

[SLIDE 35]

Font, case, and space

Once you’ve narrowed your search for just the right font for the logo, headline, or word graphic you’re working on, and before you really get into the development of how that word will be presented (whether it’ll include letter modi cations and/ or imagery, and how it might sit among other graphic elements if it’s part of a page layout, for instance), take the time to look at your word in various con gurations of case: uppercase, lowercase, and initial cap. And also see how the word comes across when it’s letterspaced both loosely and tightly.

Why do this? It’s because (surprisingly often, in fact) you’ll discover aesthetic and structural opportunities that reveal themselves only when you apply certain case con gurations and/ or letterspacing solutions.

For example, you might notice an all-caps presentation of your word provides opportunities for interesting and attractive ligatures that don’t come up when the word is set in lowercase; you might realize that presenting the word with an initial cap creates a unique structural opportunity for the placement of a piece of decor or imagery; or you might nd that the dif cult letterspacing issues that occurred when a word was set in caps disappear when its letters are presented in lowercase.

[SLIDE 36]

Expand on the post font-selection considerations of case mentioned on the previous page by including options involving weight, baseline behavior (straight, tilted, or curved), letter sizing, gesture (roman vs. italic or oblique), and the use of more than one font. All are worth deliberating for at least a moment or two as you decide on the best possible way of presenting the word you’re featuring in a logo, headline, or page graphic.

Use mixes of typographic speci cations to generate connotations of energy, change, moder- nity, quirkiness, and more. If conveyances like these seem like a good t for your project, start penning some thumbnail sketches, and maybe do a few quick trial runs on the computer. It won’t take long to gure out if you’re onto something, or if you should return to more standard modes of typographic presentation.

[SLIDE 37]

Font ligatures

Unsightly things can happen when certain letters appear sequentially within a word. For example, the terminal of a lowercase f can collide—or nearly collide—with the title of a lowercase i when the former precedes the latter. When this occurs, and when a font has been programmed to automatically handle situations like these, a specially designed glyph that features a graceful connection between the two letters is inserted in place of the two individual characters. Glyphs like these are called standard ligatures, and, as long as a typeface contains them, programs like InDesign and Illustrator usually put them in place automatically.

Some fonts, like Adobe Garamond Pro (used for the samples above), also include discretionary ligatures. These ligatures are designed to add notes of style to a word, and their use is optional. Fonts that include discretionary ligatures offer them through the Glyphs panel in Illustrator and InDesign. You can take a full look at all the glyphs offered through a particular font (if it has any) by opening this panel.

Custom ligatures

And then there are the kinds of ligatures that need to be custom-created. Could a treatment of this sort improve the visual and conceptual impact of something you’re working on?

[SLIDE 38]

Letterspacing strategies

In music, wrong notes bring jarring interruptions to the ears

of listeners, disrupting their enjoyment and perception of a song’s melody and message. Poor letterspacing does a similar thing to viewers by sending tiny—and sometimes large— impulses of discomfort and/or confusion through their

eyes and into their brains.

Artistic unpleasantries like these need not be clearly noticed— nor do their causes need to be fully understood—in order for them to perturb and annoy through the channels of human per- ception. Therefore, it’s important that artists of any medium take care to avoid gaffes that will negatively affect their audiences’ experiences—designers who work with type included.

What makes letterspacing good or bad? Consistency, or a lack thereof. Good letterspacing (or kerning) appears uniform throughout a word, and therefore keeps the eye from being drawn to areas that are either too loosely, or too tightly, spaced. Good letterspacing also keeps the brain from wondering about the craftsmanship that went into a word’s presentation. At its worst, poor letterspacing can even make the viewer wonder about what they’re reading—as when an overly large gap between letters makes it appear as though a new word has begun.

Letterspacing is a vital subcomponent of any designer’s job: Take a good look at the tips featured opposite if you have any doubts about your letterspacing capabilities.

[SLIDE 39]

Quality typefaces offer good letterspacing by default. But even good letterspacing doesn’t always work out great- expecially

When certain sets of letters are used at larter sizes (as is usually the case with logos and headlines). And this is where the designer needs to intervene and x things up.

How can you evaluate the letterspacing of the words you’re

using? Here are some tips. First of all, know that letterspacing is not an issue of mathematics: It’s a matter of instinctual aesthetic judgment. Look at the spacing between each of your word’s pairs of letters and ask yourself, Do these spaces appear consistent throughout, or do certain letters need to be shifted left or right? Look at each trio of letters within your word, too.

Aim for absolute kerning consistency between each of these sets of characters: None should appear tighter or looser than any of the others. Try squinting your eyes tightly as you evaluate a word’s letterspacing. Squinting can bring to your attention darker or lighter masses among the word’s characters— indicating pairs or groups that are either too tightly or too loosely kerned. Print your word backwards and at a large size on a sheet of paper, stick it up on a wall, step back, and evaluate from there. Assessing a word in this way will give your eyes a Completely fresh way of seeing how its letters are spaced.

Learn to see the negative spaces between, and inside, letterforms when evaluating letterspaicing in the ways talked about above. After all, letterspacing is about the spaces within a word as much as it is about the letters that make up the word.

Good letterspacing allows a word to speak for itself through both its literal meaning and the conveyances of its aesthetics and style—and without the distractions that occur when certain characters are either clumped or too far apart.

[SLIDE 40 -- Make Slide]

As most of us have learned—both by having it told to us and by experiencing it rsthand—it’s not so much a matter of what we say as how we say it.

This adage holds for words we set in type, too. In fact, it may be even more of a truism when it comes to words that communicate visually—as opposed to those that are delivered verbally—since typeset words offer themselves to viewers without the additional meaning-enhancing cues given through tone of voice, facial expressions, and body language.

Spend the time and effort necessary to gure out just who it is you’ll be trying to reach with the typographic elements of your piece before going too far with its development. This may mean doing some research about the people you’re targeting with your design;

it might mean talking to your client about their hopes and expectations in regards to reaching their customers or clientele; and it might mean spending time looking at the media your target audience favors in search of clues (often a very helpful thing to do). And while this advice may seem somewhat disconnected to the subject of typography, it’s advice that applies in nearly absolute terms to virtually all works of commercial design—the vast majority of which depend heavily on typefaces to deliver their message.

[SLIDE 41]

Word legibility

Legibility is in the eye of the beholder, and different beholders have different opinions about what kinds of lettering can be easily read. Still, one thing is certain: Every logo and layout you produce needs to be created with legibility as a priority— legibility as determined by the tastes of your target audience.

Classic serif and sans serif fonts are usually a safe bet when it comes to readability. Same for monotype fonts. As for black- letter, display, novelty, and some script fonts, that’s where your designer’s instinct and judgment come into the picture—as well as your knowledge of the likes and dislikes of the people who will be looking at your work—as you decide whether or not the fonts you’re using are appropriately legible.

Text legibility

Readability is one thing when typefaces are used at large sizes—as in the case of headlines and most logos—and quite another thing when it comes to blocks of text.

Text is generally best served by clean-looking serif or sans serif typefaces (more on this on page 185). Display and novelty fonts, on the other hand, are generally out of the question when it comes to text because of their inherent illegibility when presented en masse at smaller sizes.

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Font persona

Great typeface designers go to significant pains to infuse their creations with speci c notes of expression, so pay sharp attention to these abstract inferences of personality. In your designs, always search for fonts that convey themselves in the best possible way for the logos, headlines, word graphics, and layouts you’re working on.

[SLIDE 43]

When a project involves looking for ways of altering letters for the purposes of attracting, amusing, intriguing, and/or informing viewers, this is where design can become especially interesting and enjoyable for both experienced and newer professionals.

Letter alterations need not be glaringly obvious in order to convey an idea or a theme.

Sometimes subtle is best.

Of the four examples presented on this page, three involve visual treatments applied to only one letter. This sample features a meaning-echoing effect that’s been used on each of the word’s characters. Consider both approaches—and all strategies in between— whenever brainstorming word-altering ideas.

Are numerals in any way involved in the logo, headline, or word graphic you’re working on? If so, is there an intriguing and eye-catching way of combining your number and letters?

And what about color? Could a splash of color be used to direct attention to whatever alterations you’ve made to a word?

[SLIDE 44]

Here’s a modi cation that adds a note of happening to a word. Consider visual approaches along these lines when working with words that deliver implications of motion, changing, doing, or being.

Sometimes a deftly handled change of font can infuse a word with just the touch of elegance, formality, rebelliousness, or dismay you’re looking for.

Replacing letters with images is a visual tactic well worth considering whenever you’re looking for ways of echoing or enhancing a word’s meaning.

Consider effects like gradients, transparency treatments, special applications of color, and

the utilization of appearance- altering effects (like those offered through Photoshop’s Filters menu) when searching for ways of presenting words.

[SLIDE 45]

Certain letters feature elements that can be replaced with shapes

or imagery without a serious affect on legibility. Treatments like these can be understated or obvious.

It’s fascinating how the eye and brain can work together to read words that contain few, if any, actual letters.

What about employing non- traditional ligatures between your word’s letters to deliver thematic expressions like connectivity and how?

This word was imported into Photoshop where an image of crackled paint was superimposed over top, and

a Blur lter was applied to its lower half. Illustrator is the usual working environment for most designers who are dealing with appearance- altering changes to words, but there are some treatments that Photoshop can handle with greater exibility and ease.

[SLIDE 46]

Using interiors

Keep in mind, too, that with words, not only can the insides of letters be lled with colors, patterns, decor, illustrations, and photographic images, but the spaces between letters can be as well.

[SLIDE 46]

[SLIDE 48]

Dimension

Dimensional effects are another realm worth exploring for certain design projects involving words. But at the same time, be a bit wary of dimension-implying treatments as they are susceptible to the same whims of fad, fashion, and favoritism that affect all visual contrivances; looks that are highly popular one year might be the bane of public opinion the next (at least in the minds of people who are highly aware of such things— as a surprising number of people seem to be).

Each of the samples shown above were created in either Illustrator, InDesign, or Photoshop.

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[SLIDE 49]

Simple extensions and replacements

Extending components of letters into swashing, swirling, and bordering forms—or removing bits from certain letters and replacing them with owing alternative elements—can be very effective ways of turning a typeset word into an attractive custom logotype or word graphic.

Modify cations like these can be performed relatively easily and quickly if you know even the basic workings of a program like Illustrator. The possibilities presented through these kinds of treatments are extensive, and any letter of the alphabet can provide at least a few look-enhancing opportunities involving either letterform extensions or component replacements.

That said, there are certain characters that seem more open to these kinds of modi cations than others. The legs of the letters R and K, for example, and the tail of the Q, provide excellent opportunities for curving and swashing extensions; A, E, F, and H feature a crossbar and/or a stroke that can be removed and replaced with decorative or geometric alter- natives; A, M, N, V, W, and X each include angled strokes that can be extended above and/or below their natural forms as graceful swashes, as can the ascenders and descenders

of the lowercase characters like b, d, h, k, l, p, q, and y.

[SLIDE 50]

Backdrops

How about adding a backdrop to the word you’re working with? The backdrop might be ornately drawn (or scanned from a copyright-free source, as in the case of the uppermost sample in this column). The backdrop could be a simple shape, and

it could be given a color that contrasts nicely with the hue of the type it holds. And what about creating a contemporary backdrop from a grid of basic geometric forms?

Backdrops can be employed to establish a protective visual barrier around the word(s) they contain; add thematic notes missing from the type they hold; amplify the conceptual feel arising from their type; or contradict their type’s thematic tone (more on this at far right).

Enclosures

Among many other possibilities, enclosures can be designed to embrace typographic elements from above and below (or from either side, for that matter); they can be employed to do exactly what their name implies: enclose, fully; and they can be designed as decorative extensions that ow naturally from one or more of the letters they surround. (More about enclosures and typographic assemblages can be found on pages 116 and 177–179).

[SLIDE 51]

Ornamental add-ons

Each of the samples above are made from standard type- faces that have been adorned with simple visual ornaments borrowed from typographic families of decorative designs.

In the end, you might decide to go with a more complex solution than those seen here for the type-plus-image creation you’re working on (solutions like those seen on pages 110–115, for example), but always keep in mind that the shortest route

to effective design is sometimes the best route of all (which isn’t to say that straightforward design entities of this kind are necessarily produced with minimal brainstorming—only that they may take a lot less time to produce than more intricate and involved word-plus-image visuals).

Correlation

These two examples contrast with the others on this spread in a signi cant—though subtle—way. Know what it is?

Here, the typographically rendered words and their accompanying imagery differ notably in theme: Crisp is combined with crude, and urban is paired with ornate. The rest of the spread’s samples feature imagery and type that thematically agree with each other.

Remember: Thematic harmony is ne and good, but so is thematic dissent. What’s right for any given project is for you to decide based on the kinds of expressions you’re hoping to generate.

Here are a few tips to help you develop ideas for your word- plus-image creations.

Brainstorm, of course (no need to cover that here since it was addressed on the previous spread).

Write out your word in lowercase, all caps, and with an initial cap, using a pen, on paper, and keep these hand-drawn words in front of you as you ponder ideas mentally, through sketches, and on-screen (being able to glance at these different ways of exhibiting your letters might be just what’s needed to help you figure out how to adapt a certain image to a particular typographic presentation of your word).

Avoid the temptation to think of good ideas as being good too soon during the creative process—think of them instead as ideas that might end up being good as long as they aren’t eclipsed by even better ideas that come up as you explore variations of each of your ideas (looking at variations of potential solutions is something you should always do when time permits).

Always consider alternate font choices for your creation as you develop your idea—it’s so easy to do when using the computer that there’s really no excuse to lock yourself into a font choice until you’re absolutely certain it’s the right one.

Look to outside sources for additional ideas and inspiration.

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