

A S P E C I M E

By WILLIAM CASLON, Letter-Founder, in Chiswell-Street,

ABCD
ABCDE
ABCDEF
ABCDEFHI
ABCDEFHIJK
ABCDEFHIJKL
ABCDEF

DOUBLE PICA ROMAN.

Quousque tandem abutere, Catilina, patientia nostra? quamdiu nos etiam furor iste tuus eludet? quem ad finem sese effrenata jac-

ABCDEFHJIKLMNOP

GREAT PRIMER ROMAN.

Quousque tandem abutere, Catilina, patientia nostra? quamdiu nos etiam furor iste tuus eludet? quem ad finem sese effrenata jactabit audacia? nihil te nocturnum praesidium palatii, nihil urbis vigiliae, nihil timor populi, nihil con-

ABCDEFHJIKLMNOPQRS

Double Pica Italick.

Quousque tandem abutere, Catilina, patientia nostra? quamdiu nos etiam furor iste tuus eludet? quem ad finem sese effrenata jac-

ABCDEFHJIKLMNO

Great Primer Italick.

Quousque tandem abutere, Catilina, patientia nostra? quamdiu nos etiam furor iste tuus eludet? quem ad finem sese effrenata jactabit audacia? nihil te nocturnum praesidium palatii, nihil urbis vigiliae, nihil timor populi, nihil con-

ABCDEFHJIKLMNOPQR

And be it further enacted, That the chequer Bills to be issued by this Act, or so

ABCDEF

And be it further enacted, That the said Exchequer Bills to be issued by this Act, or so

ABCDEF

ΛΤΤΑ ΠΝΣΑΚ
ΝΛΜΩ ΦΕΙΝ Ο
ΥΛΙΚΦΛΙ ΥΙΑΩ

Ђен отархи
доги- пикси
пакофт отх
отиле птефт

antia no-
eludet?
audacia?
nihil ur-
ensus bo-
bendi se-
STVU

occidit.
s, ut viri
quam a-

لهم انت
عولم، لـ
لـ

A brief history of typography

The printing press changed history and was the true beginning of graphic design as we know it today. We no longer had to write everything with pen and ink; we now had a way to use movable metal letters to print ink onto paper so we could replicate the same words over and over again.

In the same way the printing press changed the world, in our age the digital computer transformed how we can see and read language.

French
Quousque
dem a
Catilina



Typeface Classifications

Serif

ABC
abc

Old Style (Minion)
Transitional (Baskerville)
Didone (Didot)
Slab Serif (Archer)

Slab-Serif

ABC
abc

Slab-Serifs are a special type of serif typeface that has thick consistent chunky serifs like the example below.

ABC

Museo Slab 1000

Sans-Serif

ABC
abc

Grotesque (Helvetica)
Square Sans (Eurostile)
Geometric (futura)

Decorative

ABC
ABC

All Rights Reserved (top)
Monoton (bottom)

Script

abc
abc

Formal - Bickham Script
Calligraphic - lucky turns
Blackletter - FF Brokenscript
Casual Scripts - BrotherFree

Hand Lettering

ABC
abc

Amatic SC (above)
Homemade Apple Pro (Below)

A special subset of script hand lettering takes on a more custom authentic feeling.

Old Style

The first printed typeface was a serif: Oldtype.

The thicker appearance of each letter ensured that the ink could properly adhere to the paper and remain legible. This was out of necessity.

As printing presses became more widespread, Italian book printers were looking for a typeface that could be very legible for printed books. They were looking for something that could be printed at a much smaller size. This typeface style became known as Old Style Typefaces, also known as Humanist typefaces.

Garamond
Minion
Calson
Goudy Old Style

They have these little accents at the end of some of their strokes which enables and enhances reading from a distance. Readers are able to establish the main letterform by getting cues from these little accents.



A page from the original Gutenberg Bible, one of the first books printed using a printing press.



Calson

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z
a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 ? ! # \$ % & + - < >

Transitional

As print quality increased so did the demand for more detailed, stylized typefaces.

So along came transitional typefaces. These started to appear in the mid-18th century. They tended to have more contrast between the stroke thickness, giving them a more dramatic appearance. Instead of more harsh, sharper serifs at the end of the strokes, transitional typefaces tended to have more rounded caps called ball terminals. Transitional typefaces were less influenced by handwritten type and therefore had less calligraphic flow.



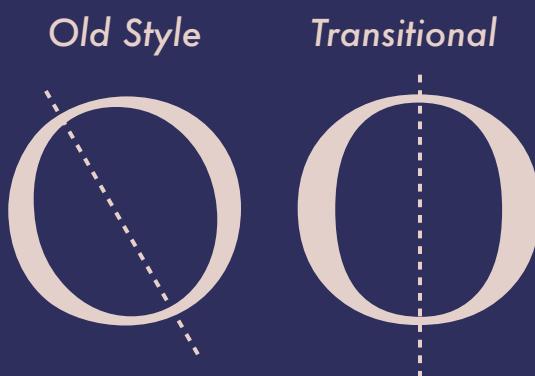
Old Style fonts were inspired by hand drawn strokes while transitional were more calculated and precise with sharper edges more reminiscent of modern fonts we see today.

Baskerville

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z
a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 ? ! # \$ % & + - < >



Notice the transition from sharper, handwritten endings to more rounded softer endings.



The vertical stress in the bowls tend to be on an axis that is closer to 12 o' clock rather than tilted like in the old style typefaces.

Other Popular Transitional Typefaces

Bookman
Times New Roman
Georgia

Modern or Didone

More expressive stylized typefaces were developed.

As we move forward in time, typefaces continue to become more dramatic with even greater contrast between the thickness and thinness of their strokes.

Modern typefaces are very elegant and delicate because of this quality. They tend to work better as large headlines because they become harder to read when they are book type size.

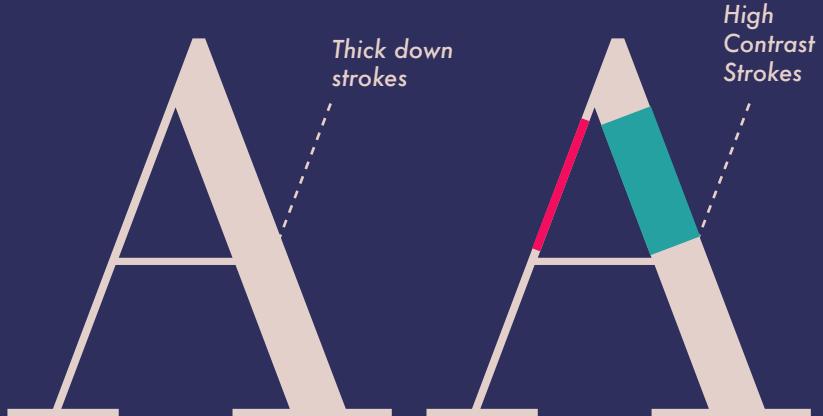
f f

Ball terminals on Didone typefaces are even more pronounced and round, forming a teardrop shape.

Bodoni
Big Calson
Monotype
Abril



High fashion magazines like Vogue use a modern typeface called Didot.



They feature heavy down strokes and have a huge contrast between the thickness of their strokes.

Didot

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z
a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z
! ? & % + - < >

Slab Serifs

Readable bold headline fonts.

As we will study a little bit later, display fonts are fonts intended for larger sized headlines and for displaying urgent messages. One type of display fonts are Slab Serifs. The best example of the first uses of Slabs are 19th century wanted posters from the Wild West.

Slabs feature unbracketed, thick, chunky serifs and have very low contrast between the thickness of the strokes. This was a huge deviation from the Didone style from before.

Because of their attention-grabbing, bold characteristics they started to be used heavily for print advertising.

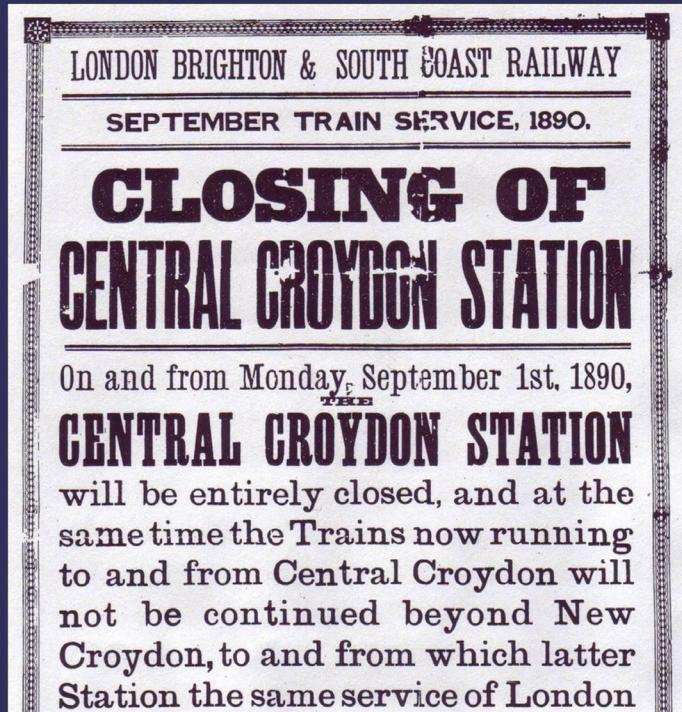
Rockwell
Arvo
Josefin Slab
Museo Slab

Rockwell

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 ? ! # \$ % & + - < >



R W

The serifs on slab serifs tend to be more prominent features and are less detailed and intricate.

**bold
headlines**

Sans-Serif

Minimalistic letterforms take over.

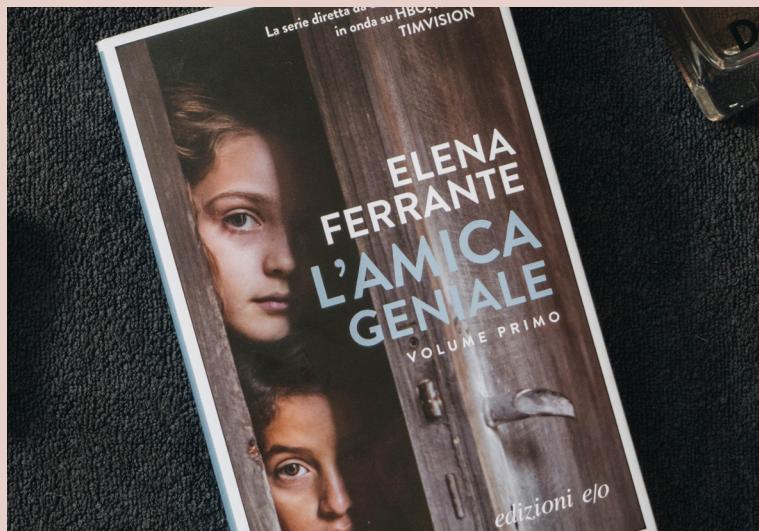
The popularity of the Sans-Serif exploded in the mid-20th century as a desire for a more geometric grid-based letterform took center stage.

The advent of digital computers continued to speed up the adoption of Sans-Serifs as a usable typeface for all applications. This is because San-Serifs are easier to read and reproduce on a digital screen than its Serif counterparts.

They started to be seen as the new modern typeface choice because it has modular construction using basic shapes like squares, triangles and circles, giving it an orderly appearance.

This was appealing to those wanting to emulate popular art and design trends like Art Deco, Mid-Century Modern and Minimalism with its clean simple lines.

Just like with Serif typefaces, Sans-Serifs went through a period of transformation from its humble beginnings.



Grotesque

An ugly start?

There was a reason why some of the first Sans-Serif typefaces were put in a group called Grotesque. People had a hard time accepting Sans-Serif typefaces and considered them hideous and hard to look at.

The early Grotesque Sans-Serif typefaces were more crude than their modern counterparts and featured imperfect geometric features and strokes. Some designers like to think these imperfect strokes give it a dose of personality unlike the perfect geometric Sans-Serif history will study later.



Roc Grotesk

Monotype Grotesque

Franklin Gothic

12
34

G

The upper case G's have something called a spur at the bottom which give it a distinct character.

b u

Uneven Weight

Grotesque Sans-Serifs had uneven weight distribution. You can see that here in the bowl of this lowercase B. It has a thinner presentation as you move toward the leg of the b, yet thicker as you move away. Some would consider this a negative attribution, while others like to think of it as unique.

Monotype Grotesque

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 ? ! # \$ % & + - < >

Neo-Grotesque

The rise of Helvetica.

Neo-Grotesque, sometimes called Transitional Sans-Serifs, are some of the most commonly used San-Serifs today.

They started to lose the odd weight distribution characteristics. They started to become standard typefaces used in operating systems like Windows and the Mac OS.

No more awkward space distribution

A comparison of letter spacing between two Neo-Grotesque typefaces. On the left, the lowercase 'a' from 'Monotype Grotesk' is shown with a dashed green line indicating a wider space between the vertical strokes. On the right, the lowercase 'a' from 'Helvetica' is shown with a dashed green line indicating a much narrower space, demonstrating the 'smooth appearance with more precise calculated movements' mentioned in the text below.

a a

Monotype Grotesk

Helvetica

Neo-Grotesque typefaces have a smooth appearance with more precise calculated movements.

A comparison of letter spacing between two Neo-Grotesque typefaces. On the left, the lowercase 'r' from 'Monotype Grotesk' is shown with a dashed green line indicating a very tight aperture. On the right, the lowercase 'r' from 'Helvetica' is shown with a dashed green line indicating a slightly larger aperture, demonstrating the 'tight apertures giving them a more sleek, simple appearance' mentioned in the text below.

r rce

Monotype
Grotesk

Helvetica

They featured very tight apertures giving them a more sleek, simple appearance.



Helvetica became popular in the mid-20th century. It was heavily used in wayfinding signage. In the example above, it is still used today as the typeface of choice for the New York City subway system.

Arial

Aa Ee Rr
Aa Ee Rr a

Deliverable

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
0123456789

Arial is another hugely popular Neo-Grotesque typeface, perhaps the most widely used.

Helvetica

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z
a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 ? ! # \$ % & + - < >

Geometric

Just Google it.

As with its Serif cousins, Sans-Serif went through a similar transformation as it continued to evolve toward a specific direction.

In this case, it kept moving more toward perfection and grids with geometric typefaces.

Geometric typefaces adhere to elemental style of design in which basic shapes like triangles and circles become the core shapes of the characters.

These typefaces came out of the Bauhaus Movement; an early 20th century shift in how we view art and its importance on society. It focused on combining simple forms together that challenged traditional design.

Neo-Grotesque



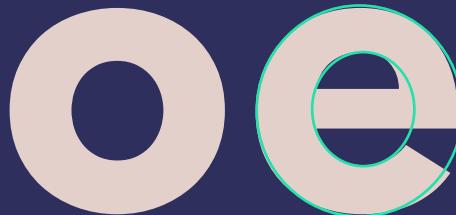
In geometric typefaces you can really see the basic element shape of the circle begin to be applied here. The capital G almost fully adheres to a perfect circle shape.

Geometric



The Google logo features a geometric typeface. It seems as though a lot of companies that switch from a traditional Serif typeface to a Sans-Serif typeface, to help modernize the brand, pick a geometric typeface.

Avenir



In Avenir, another very popular geometric typeface, you can see almost zero contrast in the stroke width throughout the characters.

Avenir

LOVE

This simplicity makes geometric typefaces great choices for logo design.

Futura

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 ? ! # \$ % & + - < >

Scripts

Expressive typography
at its finest.





Formal Scripts

Inspired by written scripts from historic calligraphers, these typefaces seek to emulate the personality of calligraphy without the use of ink and a pen nib (the sharp metal tip used in formal pen and ink letter writing).

Snell Roundhand

They feature continuous strokes like you would see in the handwritten versions.

formal

Decorative typefaces

Used mostly for ornamental purposes, these typefaces become the design themselves with their unique textures, shapes and curves. Great for headlines but horrible for smaller readable body copy text.

CHEAP PINE

BATTERY PARK

Modak

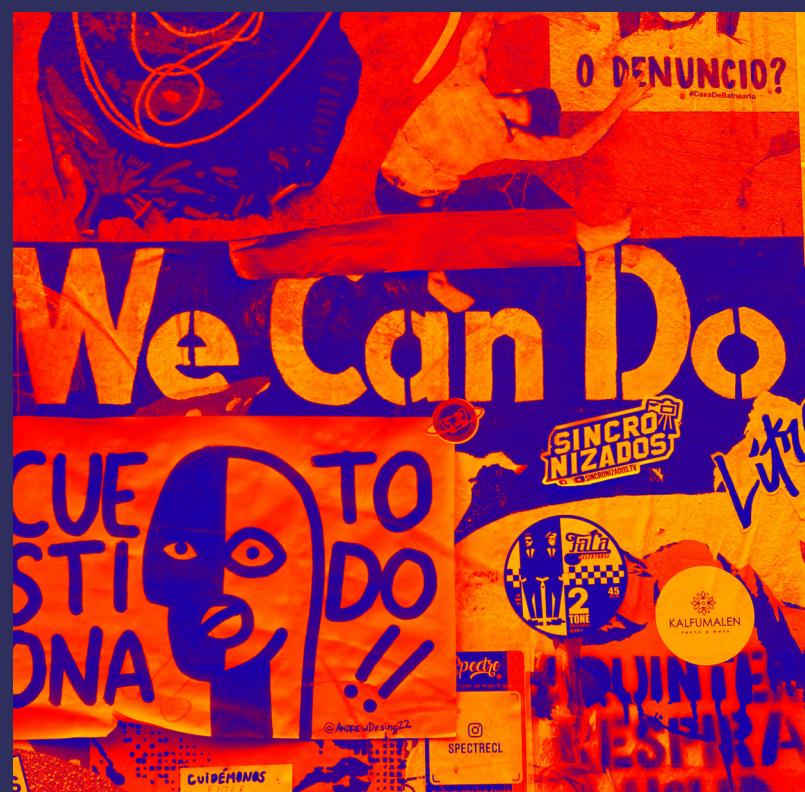
Casual Scripts

Casual scripts vary more in their stroke thickness and have less traditional letter endings or terminals. They tend to emulate brush strokes as opposed to pen nibs and ink.

SignPainter

Not really suitable for larger blocks of text, they make for great accents and small short headlines.

casual



The future of typography

Variable Fonts

The history of typefaces is an interesting one. There are constant changes that happen throughout time and we need to expect similar changes to typography in the future. The emergence of handwritten typography was a surprising one, but more are to come.

The future of typography is a digital one. With everything shifting to digital and away from analog, new fonts have to be developed that are better suited for many different screen sizes, operating systems and digital displays.

Fonts traditionally come with a wide variety of font weight options that give us choices between thinner or thicker presentations.

This makes things a bit difficult for coding websites and mobile apps. Now we are required to have several fonts loaded to display a wider variety of font weights.

The way variable fonts function is to contain all of the font weight options in a single file, reducing the overall load time and data required to display the font.

Variable fonts have an axis on which you can change the thickness of said axis. This allows the designer to change the thickness quickly and on the fly.

This means there are now thousands of different varieties of font weights instead of just the ones that were part of the original font family.

BEFORE

Roboto



AFTER

Variable font Roboto Flex

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAA

identify typefaces in the wild.

Knowing your typeface history can go a long way in establishing yourself as an educated designer.

Every poster, flyer, billboard and sign will now be opportunities to test your typeface knowledge.

Which classification is it? Which subcategory does it belong to? Which typeface family is it in? What weight? The game is endless.



A

A

New York
NEW YORK