

font-style: italic vs oblique in CSS

Asked 15 years, 1 month ago Modified 3 years, 6 months ago Viewed 123k times



256



What is the difference between these two:

```
font-style:italic  
font-style:oblique
```

I tried using the [W3Schools editor](#) but was unable to tell the difference.

What am I missing?

css

fonts

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edited May 22, 2014 at 15:13



BoltClock

722k ● 165 ● 1.4k ● 1.4k

asked Nov 5, 2009 at 13:34



rajakvk

10.1k ● 17 ● 49 ● 51

34 Message from the future: [Wikipedia](#) has a very nice example showing the difference between [italic](#) and [oblique](#). – Cornstalks Jul 4, 2013 at 22:29

Late follow-up question (or maybe this should go into UX?): What would be a real-world use case for specifically choosing the oblique variant? Isn't the italic variant "always" preferable? – KlaymenDK Nov 16, 2016 at 9:58

1 @KlaymenDK: Admittedly, this is a narrow use case, but I can envision preferring an oblique font for legibility in certain small font sizes on pixelated outputs: Example: using a 6pt to 8pt font on a small form-factor screen; some italic forms have thinner strokes and more ornaments that may decrease legibility compared to a simple "slant". – Dan H Aug 30, 2017 at 12:40

5 Answers

Sorted by: Highest score (default)



318



In the purest (type designer) sense, an oblique is a roman font that has been skewed a certain number of degrees (8-12 degrees, usually). An italic is created by the type designer with specific characters (notably lowercase a) drawn differently to create a more calligraphic, as well as slanted version.

Some type foundries have arbitrarily created obliques that aren't necessarily approved by the designers themselves... some fonts were meant not to be italicized or obliques... but people did anyway. And as you may know, some operating systems



will, upon clicking the 'italic' icon, skew the font and create an oblique on the fly. Not a pleasant sight.



It's best to specify an italic only when you're sure that font has been designed with one.

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edited May 22, 2014 at 15:10



BoltClock

722k ● 165 ● 1.4k ● 1.4k

answered Nov 5, 2009 at 13:42



jcburns

3,409 ● 1 ● 17 ● 5

-
- 53 It may be helpful to note that almost no font families in the wild specify both Italic and Oblique faces, and most rendering engines will supply the other face if the specified face is unavailable for that font. – [SingleNegationElimination](#) Nov 6, 2010 at 3:16
-
- 9 This answer doesn't address the functional differences, the mutual exclusivity, or semantic differences. – [ahnbizcad](#) Oct 23, 2014 at 16:41 ✎
-
- 4 With Cyrillic fonts for example, the italic characters will often be very different, much more like the cursive form, the oblique form will just be oblique. – [moodymudskipper](#) Apr 3, 2016 at 15:39
-
- 1 What is a rendering engine supposed to do if I say "italic" but there is only an "oblique" version of the font available? Or vice versa? – [Michael](#) Feb 11, 2018 at 10:27
-
- 2 @SingleNegationElimination Your comment should've been the answer because it addresses the real technicality at place when it comes to CSS in particular. The "answer" chosen here is more on typography. – [Vun-Hugh Vaw](#) Sep 26, 2018 at 7:23
-



88

Generally, an italic is a special version of the font, whereas an oblique version is just the regular version inclined a bit. So both are slanted and related to the regular font, but an italic will have special letterforms made especially for it.



Most fonts have either an italic or an oblique version; I've never seen one that has both. (If you have an italic version, why bother with an oblique version?)



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answered Nov 5, 2009 at 13:38



Anthony Mills

8,774 ● 4 ● 35 ● 51

-
- 1 Latin Modern is a well-known example of a font that has distinct oblique and italic styles. [In this tex.stackexchange question](#), the styles are demonstrated. – [Bolpat](#) Dec 1, 2023 at 13:52 ✎
-



As with **italic** and **oblique**, the same difference is visible when comparing **italic** with **faux italic**.

31

You will see **faux-italics** wherever a **normal** font is skewed with `font-style: italic;` whereas a true italic font is designed to be slanted.



Hello Normal

Hello Faux Italic

Hello Italic

The bottom of the two *ll*s shows the difference clearly.

[See Example](#)

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edited Feb 19, 2017 at 13:11

answered Feb 19, 2017 at 10:50

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[robstarbuck](#)

8,001 ● 2 ● 46 ● 44

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9 Do you mean oblique equals faux-italic? – [zwcloud](#) Jun 26, 2018 at 14:13 ✎

1 Yes, if neither an oblique nor a italic font are available the results will appear the same (at least in chrome for this example) [next.plnkr.co/edit/SpaDzXmSb1oADxUfKVg1?preview](#) – [robstarbuck](#) Aug 12, 2018 at 16:17

1 could NOT have done this answer without a visual aid, thanks – [Max Alexander Hanna](#) Dec 10, 2019 at 15:55



25

Oblique type (or slanted, sloped) is a form of type that slants slightly to the right, used in the same manner as italic type. Unlike italic type, however, it does not use different glyph shapes; it uses the same glyphs as roman type, except distorted.

Futher Reading: [css font style oblique vs italic](#)



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edited Jun 1, 2021 at 6:59

answered Nov 6, 2010 at 3:10



Zubair1

2,780 ● 3 ● 32 ● 40



According to [mozilla developer CSS tutorial](#) :

4



- italic: Sets the text to **use the italic version of the font if available**; if not available, it will simulate italics with oblique instead.
- oblique: Sets the text to use a simulated version of an italic font, created by slanting the normal version.

From here, we deduce that **if an italic version of the font is not available**, both *italic* and *oblique* behave the same way. Since the W3Schools code snippet does not specify any particular `font-family`, I believe a default font is used; a default font which probably does not have an italic version.

But how to make an italic version of the font available?

This means that we have at least two versions of the same font, a "regular" one, and an italic one. These can be specified in the `<style>` section with the `@font-face` rule. Please read briefly : [developer.mozilla](#), [w3schools](#), [tympanus.net](#). As you can see, the font is loaded as a file, which can have the following extensions: `eot`, `otf`, `woff`, `truetype`.

So far, i found two ways of linking the font file

- absolute URL of the font file: (code snippet from [tympanus.net](#))

```
`@font-face {
  font-family: 'Open Sans';
  font-style: normal;
  font-weight: 400;
  src: local('Open Sans'), local('OpenSans'),
  url
  (http://themes.googleusercontent.com/static/fonts/opensans/v8/cJZKe0uBrn4kERxqta
  EPnyo3HZu7kw.woff) format('woff');
}

@font-face {
  font-family: 'Open Sans';
  font-style: italic;
  font-weight: 400;
  src: local('Open Sans Italic'), local('OpenSans-Italic'),
  url
  (http://themes.googleusercontent.com/static/fonts/opensans/v8/
  xjAJXh38I15wypJXxuGMBobN6UDyHWBl620a-IRfuBk.woff)
```

```
format('woff');
}`
```

Please notice that in both cases we have `font-family: 'Open Sans'`, which basically defines the same font; but in the first case we have `font-style: normal;`, while in the second case we have `font-style: italic;`. Also note that the URLs point to different files. **Now, going back to the w3schools code snippet, that's how the browser can distinguish between `font-style: normal` and `font-style: italic`**

- using the relative path to the font file : (code snippet from metaltoad.com)

Instead of defining separate font-family values for each font, You can use same font-family name for each font, and define the matching styles, like so:

```
`@font-face {
font-family: 'Ubuntu';
src: url('Ubuntu-R-webfont.eot');
font-weight: normal;
font-style: normal;
}
@font-face {
font-family: 'Ubuntu';
src: url('Ubuntu-I-webfont.eot');
font-weight: normal;
font-style: italic;
}`
```

In this case, the `.eot` files must be stored in the same folder as the html page. Again, notice that the `font-family` is the same, the `font-style` is different, and also the urls are different: Ubuntu-**R**-webfont vs Ubuntu-**I**-webfont.

Example of an italic version of the font:

ctan.org :this is an example of how there are provided different files for different styles/weights of the same font. Neither bold or italic are computed on the spot, they are retrieved from their specific file.

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answered Nov 5, 2019 at 15:56



wile the coyote

61 ● 6

-
- 1 my answer addresses the second part of the question: "... but was unable to tell the difference. What am I missing?" – [wile the coyote](#) Nov 5, 2019 at 16:48
-