

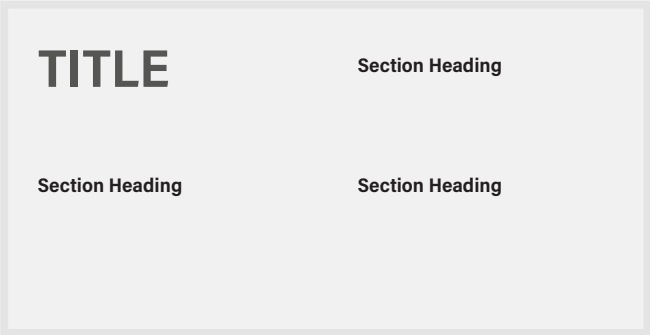
TEXT

Text is an important complement to graphical elements. This sheet covers key concepts relating to the use of text and choice of typefaces in infographics.

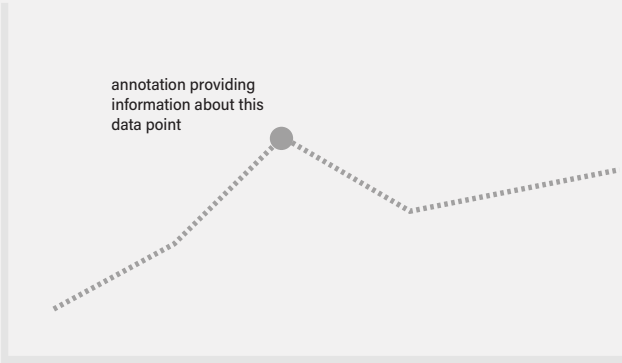
USES FOR TEXT

In an infographic, text supports and complements visual elements. The power of visuals can be greatly enhanced by the addition of words that provide clarification and guidance.

**Titles and headings** summarize or preview the content in the section they refer to. Generally, you want titles to be: visually salient (easy to spot), you want them to convey the hierarchy (e.g. the main title should be more prominent than the section titles).

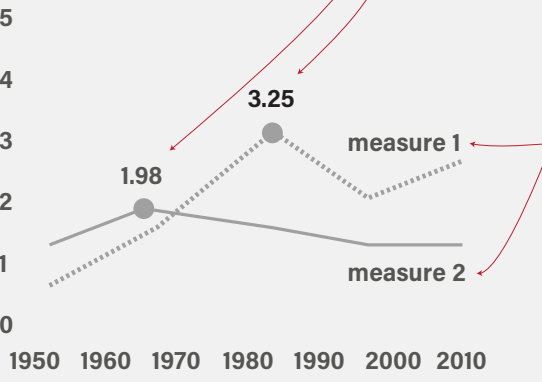


**Annotations** add information that is not conveyed by the graphic elements themselves. They are the least visually prominent elements in an infographic because they provide details that only make sense once you know the larger context.



**Labels** are associated with graphic elements and play one of 3 roles:

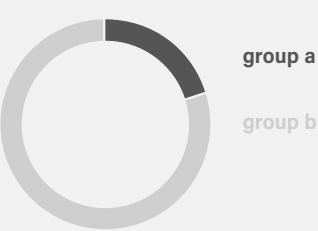
**precision labels:** Labels that tell you the precise numerical value represented by a visual elementbut the precision label tells you precisely what the value is.



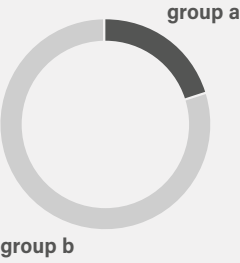
**axis labels:** Labels along one of the axes of a chart that show the scale.

ASSOCIATION STRATEGIES

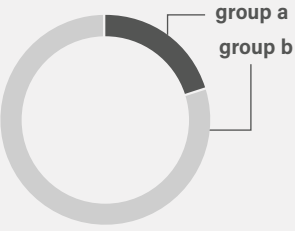
I use the term "association strategies" to refer to ways of indicating which graphical element a particular piece of text is referring to. There are three common association strategies:



**color**  
The text is the same color as the visual element it labels or refers to.



**proximity**  
Text is placed on, or very close to the visual element it labels or refers to.

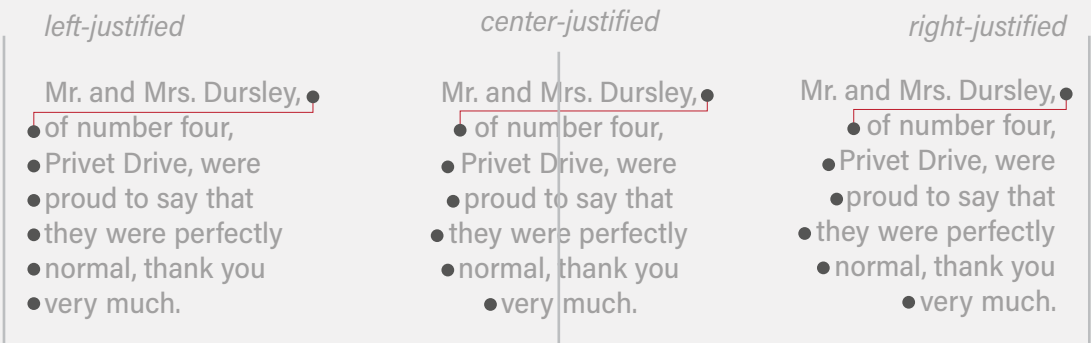


**leader lines**  
A line leads from the text to the visual element it labels or refers to.

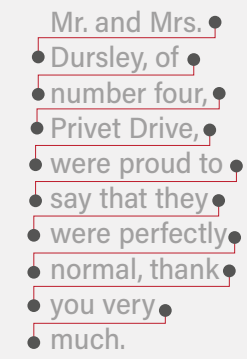
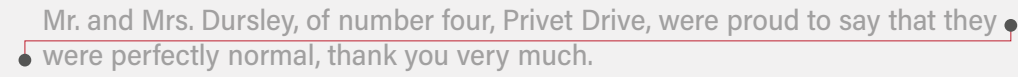
READABILITY

Legibility is about letter and word identification. Readability is about processing lines of text. One cause of poor readability is poor legibility, but readability is also influenced by justification, line length, line spacing and letter spacing.

**justification** Left-justified text is easiest to read because the line created by left-justified text helps the eye travel from the end of one line to the beginning of the next line:

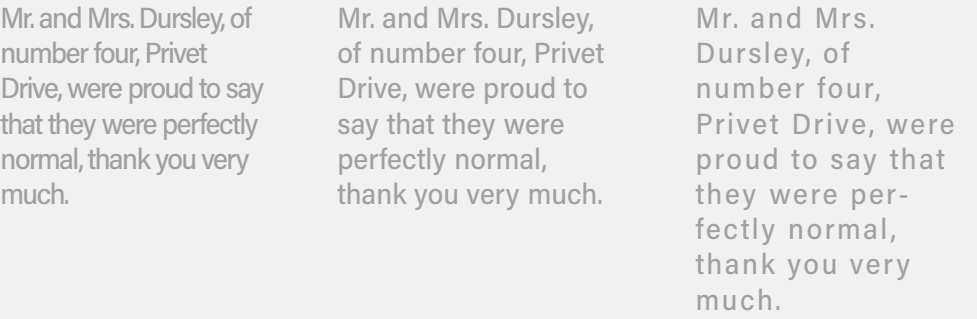


**line length** Very long lines also make this task more difficult:

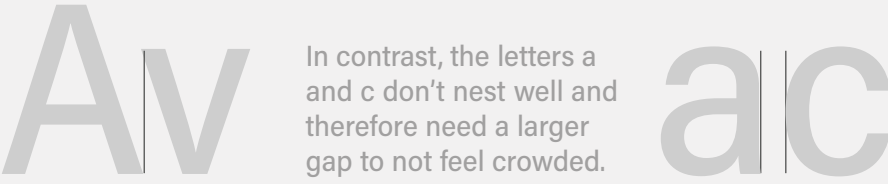


Very short lines make scanning to the next line very easy, but limits the number of words that can be processed at a glance, and makes the eye move back and forth rapidly, which feels tiring.

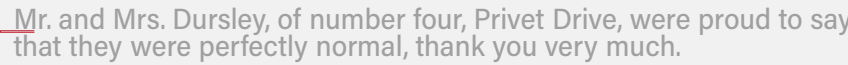
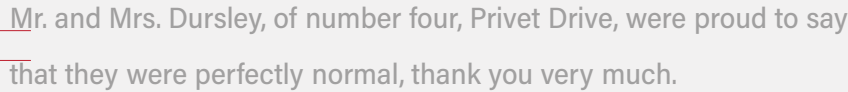
**letter spacing** Letter spacing refers to the space between letters. Too little or too much space makes the words harder to recognize.



**kerning** Kerning is also about space between letters, but it is refers to adjusting the space based upon how well each pair of letterforms fit together. A classic example of a letter pair that can be brought closer together because of their shape is a capital A next to a lowercase v:



**leading** Leading refers to the amount of space between lines. The name comes from the use of lead strips between lines of metal type used in printing presses.



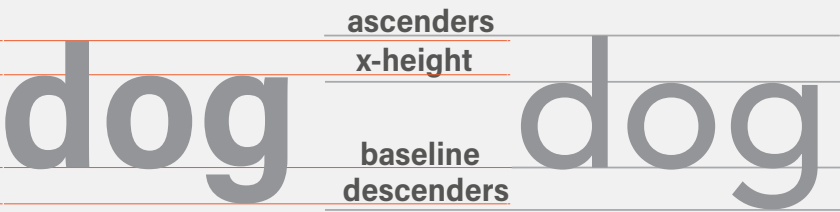
# TYPOGRAPHY

Typography refers to the style and appearance of text. Typography choices influence how easy it is to process text and how engaging the presentation is.

## TYPEFACE FEATURES

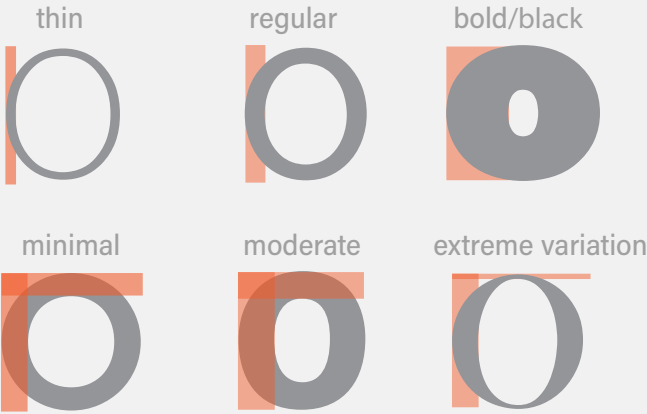
### Proportions

The two typefaces shown below differ in the size of the different components of the letters. These differences affect legibility and feel.



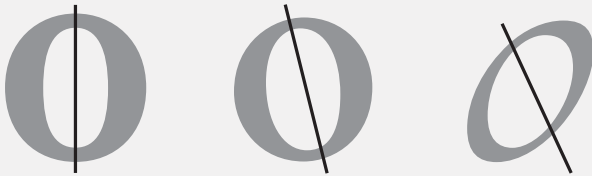
### Strokeweight

Typefaces differ in how thick the strokes are and whether the thickness varies.



### Angle of stress

For typefaces with variable stroke thickness, a line drawn through the thinnest points in the letter "o" shows the "angle of stress":



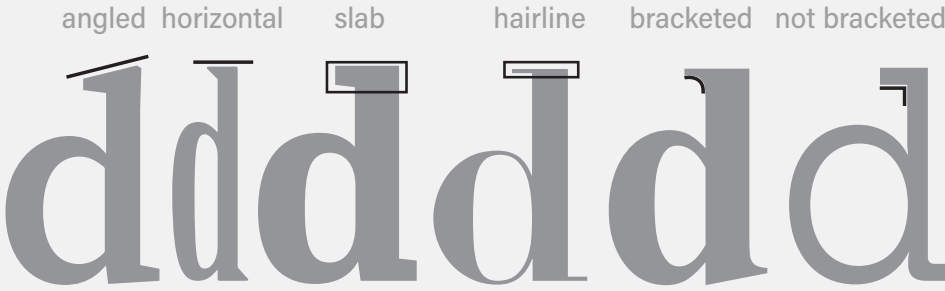
### Terminations

Terminations refers to the way strokes end, and contributes to the tone of a typeface.

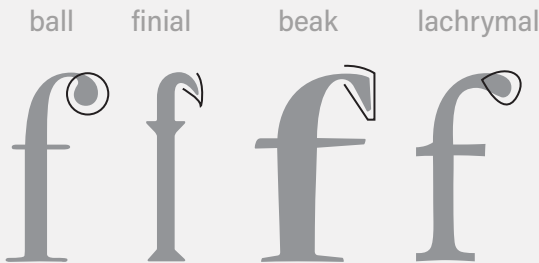
**sans serif** The end of sans serif strokes can be horizontal, vertical, or angled:



**serif** There are a 6 serif qualities:



Strokes that don't end in serifs, may have one of these styles:



### Letter shape options

Some letters have variant shapes. These include lowercase "a" and "g" which can be 1-storey or 2-storey as shown below:



## IMPACTS OF TYPEFACE CHOICE

The choice of typeface will impact legibility, tone, and prominence. It can also be used to send subtle messages about the role the text is playing (i.e. "this is a title, this is a label").

**Tone/aesthetics** Typefaces create attitude and style. For example, they can be:

- serious & formal
- PLAYFUL & FUN
- elegant & sophisticated*
- practical

**Salience/prominence** Some typefaces are more salient than others so they attract more attention.

**Bold type** is generally more salient than regular or light type.

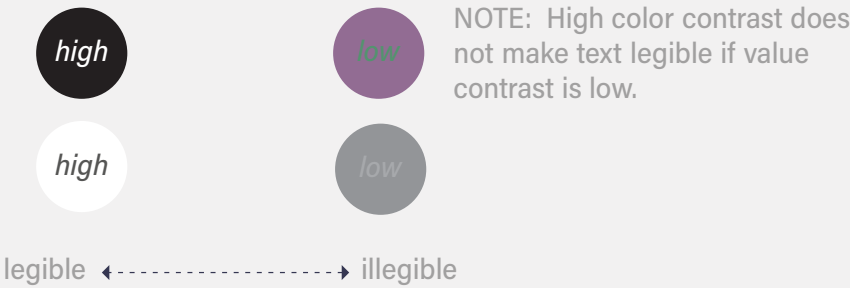
ALL CAPS tend to stand out more than mixed case.

**Contrast draws attention so context is important.**  
**Notice that** light **or** small **text can draw attention if it is the exception in a sea of heavy or large text.**

**Communicate structure** When used consistently, tpestyles (e.g. all sub-headings use bold all caps), a typestyle can signal its role to viewers.

**Legibility** Legibility refers to the ability to identify letters. Qualities that determine legibility include faintness (i.e. contrast against the background), shape of letterforms, and size.

**value contrast** (difference in brightness of text versus background)



**letterforms** The shape of letters influences how easy they are to recognize.

- ALL CAPS IS LESS LEGIBLE
- italic is less legible*
- sans serif may or may not be more legible than serif
- extreme letterforms ARE HARDER TO READ**

### size

Text that has high value contrast and clear letter forms can have poor legibility if it is too small.

Text that has low contrast and extreme letterforms can still be legible...

...IF IT IS LARGE