

# Character substitution

(mPDF >= 5.0)

**Note:** Prior to mPDF 5.0 there were 2 configurable variables, `$this->useSubstitutions` and `$this->useSubstitutionsMB`, controlling behaviour of core fonts and unicode fonts respectively. From mPDF 5.0, character substitution using core fonts is always ON and cannot be disabled by configurable variables. `$this->useSubstitutionsMB` is deprecated but it is recognised as an alias for `$this->useSubstitutions`. `$this->useSubstitutions` controls behaviour in Unicode font documents.

## Core fonts

In documents using core fonts only, only characters included in the win-1252 codepage are available in the Arial/Helvetica, Times or Courier fonts. If the document includes characters which are included in the other core Adobe fonts - Symbols, or Dingbats - these will be substituted. Because they are displayed using a different font they may appear 'odd'.

## Unicode fonts

In Unicode Truetype files, the limitation is whether the font file contains a "glyph" for each character in the document. Character substitution (i.e. substituting a different font solely to display that character) can be enabled by setting the configuration variable in `config.php`:

```
$this->useSubstitutions = true;
```

mPDF will try to find substitutions for any missing characters:

1. if the character is in Unicode Plane 2 (SIP) i.e. Unicode value > U+20000:
  1. looks in the sip-ext font file (see Fonts in mPDF 5.x);
  2. looks in the font defined by `$this->backupSIPFont` in the `config_fonts.php` file
2. looks to see if the character is available in the core fonts: Arial/Helvetica, Times, Courier, Symbols or ZapfDingbats
3. looks in each of the the font(s) set by `$this->backupSubsFont` array in the `config_fonts.php` file

It is not recommended to enable this for regular use, as it will add to the processing time.

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