

# 21 perfect font pairings

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Finding font pairings that set each other off, don't fight the eye for attention, and harmonise without becoming homogenous and dull is an art. The age-old rule goes as follows: concord or contrast, but don't conflict.

But with so many professional typefaces and free fonts to choose from, how do you find two that work in harmony? Here we bring you top font pairing tips, followed by 21 examples of perfect font pairings.

## Tip 1: Use font superfamilies

The easiest way to find perfect font pairings is by using different fonts within the same overarching typeface family. Find a so-called 'superfamily' and you'll have a ready-made range of weights, styles and classifications that are specifically designed to work together.

A good superfamily will include serif and a sans-serif version of the same typeface: famous examples include Lucida/Lucida Sans and Meta/Meta Sans.

## Tip 2: Pair contrasting typefaces

Contrast, as the name implies, is about finding totally different – but still complementary – typefaces that are each fit for their intended application. Traditionally, this involves pairing a serif with a sans serif.

Typefaces will generally conflict if they are too similar: two ever-so-slightly different serifs or sans serifs rarely create nice font pairings.

As a designer, the important thing is to establish a clear hierarchy. This could be as simple as varying the size and weight of the same typeface – but where the typeface varies is where careful font pairing is crucial. If you have a display face packed with unique personality, you'll need something more neutral to do the hard work.

## Tip 3: Pair type sub-categories

Of course, 'serif' and 'sans serif' are themselves broad classifications – each split into several sub-categories. Generally speaking, Old Style serifs such as Bembo, Caslon and Garamond will combine well with Humanist sans serifs, such as Gill Sans and Lucida Grande.

Meanwhile, Transitional serifs have a stronger contrast between thick and thin strokes – examples include Bookman, Mrs. Eaves, Perpetua and Times. These pair with Geometric sans serifs such as Avant Garde, Avenir, Century Gothic, Eurostile, Futura and Univers.

Finally, Modern serifs have an often very dramatic contrast between thick and thin for a more pronounced, stylised effect, as well as a larger x-height. Included in this third sub-category are Bodoni, Didot, New Century Schoolbook and Walbaum. Again, Geometric sans serifs marry best with these.

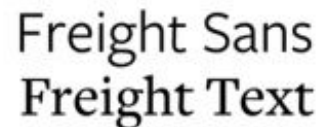
So what does all this actually look like in practice? Here's our reference list of tried-and-testing font pairings that are guaranteed to avoid conflict.

## 01. Freight Sans and Freight Text

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Freight is available in a range of weights and styles

An example of a superfamily, GarageFonts' Freight is available in a large range of weights and styles, including Sans, Text, Display and Micro versions – giving you a versatile typographic toolkit.

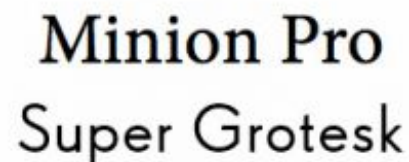
The image shows the words 'Freight Sans' and 'Freight Text' stacked vertically. 'Freight Sans' is in a clean, modern sans-serif typeface, while 'Freight Text' is in a more traditional serif typeface, both in a dark, bold weight.

## 02. Super Grotesk and Minion Pro

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This match creates a luxurious finish

The ever-popular serified Minion Pro works perfectly as a headlining font in this luxurious pairing. Coupled with the nimble sans-serif Super Grotesk, these two fonts carry a modern sense of elegance with minimal effort.

The image shows the words 'Minion Pro' and 'Super Grotesk' stacked vertically. 'Minion Pro' is a classic serif font, and 'Super Grotesk' is a clean, modern sans-serif font, both in a dark, bold weight.

## 03. Kaufmann and NeutraDemi

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At a dash of handwritten flair with this font pairing

The flowing, handwritten stylings of Kaufmann add a touch of personality to this odd couple. Offsetting the straight and angular sans-serifed NeutraDemi perfectly, these two might not make a likely match, but that doesn't stop them playing off one another beautifully.

The image shows the words 'Kaufmann BT' and 'Neutra Text' stacked vertically. 'Kaufmann BT' is in a cursive, handwritten-style script, while 'Neutra Text' is in a bold, modern sans-serif typeface.

## 04. Brandon Grotesque and Minion Pro

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Minion Pro is the perfect choice for small  
text

The reliable Minion Pro makes another appearance, this time playing second fiddle to the bold and attention-grabbing Brandon Grotesque. It's a classic serif and sans-serif font pairing, with both typefaces remaining crisp and easy to scan.

Minion Pro  
Brandon Grotesque

## 05. Helvetica Neue and Garamond

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A type match made in heaven

A famously harmonious duo, with the ubiquitous Neo-Grotesque sans serif for headlines, and the classic Old Style serif for text. Mix up weights and sizes between the two neutral families to establish hierarchy.

Helvetica Neue  
Garamond

## 06. Caslon and Myriad

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1700s meets late 20th century

Another classic font pairing, this time between an 18th century Old Style serif and a late-20th century Humanist sans serif. Myriad is famously used in Apple's corporate communication, as well as in the Rolls Royce logo.

Caslon    Myriad

## 07. Fontin and Fontin Sans

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These Dutch typefaces are ideal partners

Our second superfamily, Fontin was designed by Dutch foundry exlibris specifically to be used at small sizes, with a loose spacing and tall x-height. Fontin Sans is designed as an ideal partner for it.

Fontin  
Fontin Sans

## 08. Minion and Poppl-Laudatio

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Two typefaces with personality that bond  
perfectly

An Old Style serif typeface with personality, Minion was designed in 1990 but inspired by late Renaissance era type. Although technically a sans serif, Poppl-Laudatio's subtle flared details bring out its pronounced serifs.

Minion    Laudatio

## 09. Liberation Serif and Liberation Sans

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An open source superfamily pairing

Another superfamily, which also includes Sans Narrow and Mono variations,

Liberation was intended as an open-source substitute for many commonly used Windows fonts, such as Arial, Times New Roman and Courier New.

Liberation Liberation

## 10. Trade Gothic Bold and Sabon

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These readable typefaces combine well

This pairing is particularly effective when Trade Gothic is used in its Bold weight for headlines, to set off Jan Tschichold's classic Old Style serif face for text. Both typefaces are highly readable, with a tall x-height, and combine well.

Trade Gothic Bold  
Sabon

## 11. Gilroy and Jura

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These two fonts combine to create an industrial look

This pair of sans serifs pair nicely to create a trendy, industrial look for creative projects. Gilroy's geometric style in ExtraBold weight is ideal for headers while Jura Light has a wiry, structured shape and the combination adds a strong, technical feel.

GILROY ExtraBold  
Jura Light

## 12. Scala and Scala Sans

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A hugely versatile pairing

FontFont's superfamily began with the serif version in 1990, followed in '92 by its sans serif companion. With small caps, various ligatures and old-style figures, it's hugely versatile and widely used in publishing.

Scala Scala

## 13. Rockwell Bold and Bembo

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Bold and attention-grabbing meets calmly  
neutral

**Rockwell Bold**  
Bembo

One of the classic slab serifs, Rockwell was designed in the 1930s and has a huge amount of personality and attention-grabbing potential when used bold. The much more conservative serif Bembo is neutral but versatile.

#### 14. Myriad Black and Minion

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A great combination for clear hierarchy

Myriad and Minion have already cropped up in different font pairings earlier in the list, but this combination of the shouty ultra-bold Black version of the former and the text weight of the latter achieves clear hierarchy.

**Myriad Black**  
Minion

#### 15. Souvenir and Futura Bold

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Two strong type personalities that work  
well together

Mixing two strong typographic personalities rarely works, as they end up fighting. Souvenir is softer and more playful than many of its Old Style serif counterparts, while Futura Bold is quirky without being too dominant.

**Souvenir**  
**Futura Bold**

#### 16. Dax Bold and Caslon

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Caslon's second entry on this list

One of the most versatile Old Style serifs, Caslon also appeared earlier on this list. Its neutrality lets the informal, modern Dax Bold deliver strong personality for a headline without competing for attention.

**Dax Bold**  
Caslon

#### 17. Aviano and Aviano Sans

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Two tilting typefaces working in harmony

Only available in all-caps varieties, Aviano has sharp, edgy serifs that give it a distinctive personality – while its sans serif version is smoother. They combine well to create hierarchy between two titling faces.

AVIANO  
AVIANO SANS

## 18. Antique Olive Bold and Chaparral

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A quite distinctive font pairing

Initially designed as an alternative to Helvetica and Univers, Antique Olive has a very tall x-height with short ascenders and descenders that make it highly distinctive in display form. Chaparral has a modern feeling but is a much more neutral slab serif.

Antique Olive Bold  
Chaparral

## 19. TheSerif and TheSans

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These typefaces were made to work together

The rather straightforward naming strategy within LucasFonts' Thesis typeface superfamily makes the foundry's intentions pretty clear: these are totally complementary, and each comes with its own sub-varieties.

TheSerif TheSans

## 20. Renault Light and Apex-New

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Contemporary sans serif meets authoritative serif

An ideal combination for formal corporate use: both Renault and Apex-New have a very similar ratio of x-height to body height for an effortless partnership between contemporary sans serif and authoritative serif.

Renault Light  
Apex New

## 21. Calluna and Calluna Sans

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Calluna was born from experimentation

Another exljbris creation, Calluna was born out of an experiment with adding slab serifs to Museo, giving designer Jos Buivenga the idea of 'serifs with direction'. The result is a highly distinctive text face that later spawned a sans-serif companion.

Calluna Calluna