

# FIVE GUIDELINES FOR COMBINING TYPEFACES

## BASED ON X-HEIGHT

### Harmony

Combining typefaces based on x-height is very common but it's not a definitive rule to follow. It should be seen as something that reinforces the combination of typefaces.

Abg Abg

FUTURA + BASKERVILLE

### Contrast

Combining typefaces based on contrasting x-height is tricky. It's not that common either. If you do decide for such combination, make sure that the difference in x-height from the typefaces is obvious.

Abg Abg

MERRIWEATHER SANS + ADOBE GARAMOND PRO

## BASED ON AUTHOR

### Harmony

Typeface combinations based on author only work as harmonic.

Aa

BACKGROUND: UNIVERS + FOREGROUND: APOLLO (ADRIAN FRUTIGER)

## BASED ON HISTORY

### Harmony

Finding harmonic typeface combinations based on history is tricky. To be safe, it's best to combine typefaces that were designed before the digital revolution. There are simply too many typefaces being produced ever since.

Abg Abg

DIN ALTERNATE + HELVETICA

### Contrast

Contrasting typeface combinations based on history are more common and interesting. Combining Futura with Baskerville works well because there's almost 200 years separating the two.

Abg Abg

FUTURA + BASKERVILLE

## BASED ON FOUNDRY

### Harmony

Typeface combinations based on foundry only work as harmonic.

Aa

BACKGROUND: VIATO + FOREGROUND: PLUME (DALTON MAAG)

## SUPER TYPEFACES

### Harmony

Super typefaces are typefaces that come in many styles. Combining serif, sans-serif, slab and other styles is therefore much easier. Super typefaces are all about harmonic combinations.

Abg Abg

MERRIWEATHER + MERRIWEATHER SANS

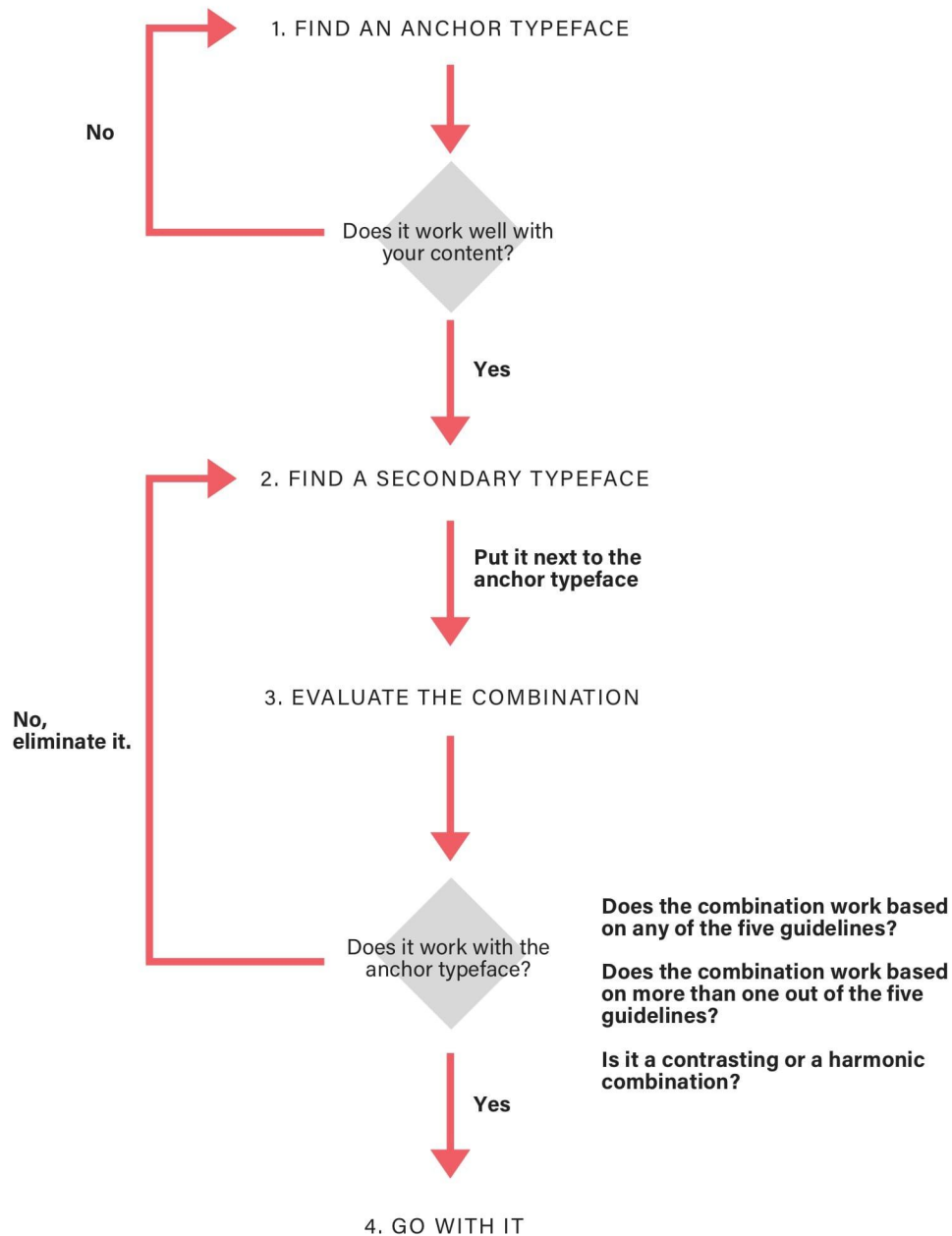
Abg Abg

ROBOTO + ROBOTO SLAB

Abg Abg

TISA PRO + TISA SANS PRO

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[betterwebtype.com](https://betterwebtype.com)



## FOUR STEPS TO COMBINING FONTS

### 1. Find an anchor typeface

At this point you should have your main body typeface—the one you want to use for your body text. So far, you read an example of content, you know what the website is about, you have a sample of the content, you tried previewing it in different web browsers and you decided that this is the typeface you want to use.

*The process can be reversed if you want to start with a typeface for your titles.*

### 2. Find a secondary typeface

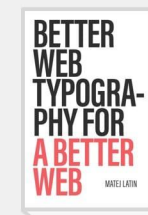
Go to your favourite web font provider and start searching. Filter the list to match what you're looking for and browse the results. Whenever you see something you like, something you think fits your grand design, add it to the list of potential candidates. Try not to spend too much time on this. Don't go too deep into exploring each typeface at this stage.

### 3. Evaluate the combination

Flip this cheat sheet around and check if your combination works out based on the five guidelines and two approaches described. How do your typefaces compare in x-height? Are they from the same author or foundry? What historical era are they from? Are they contrasting or harmonic? The best combinations comply with more than just one guideline. Do this for all the typefaces in your list of candidates.

### 4. Eliminate/choose combination

Based on the previous step, does the typeface match any of the evaluating factors? If not, you should probably eliminate the potential candidate. Repeat steps 3 and 4 until you're left with only one typeface. Does it match your grand design idea? Do you feel comfortable with it? Does it feel right? Not sure? Come back the next day. I'm not kidding. At this point you probably spent a few hours looking at typefaces and combinations of typefaces. It's time to take a break. You'll get a fresh look on your work by doing so. My personal guideline is: come back tomorrow and if it feels right, go with it; if not, change it.



This cheat sheet is based on the chapter 5 from the 'Better Web Typography for a Better Web' book by Matej Latin.

[betterwebtype.com/book](http://betterwebtype.com/book)