



# BODY COPY

## GOOD

There are a number of factors that must be weighed when selecting body copy — the “story content” of a piece of written work.

In most instances, body copy should be set in a readable, serif typeface that is neither too condensed or expanded, and which has a regular, or “book,” weight. The goal of body copy is that it be comfortable to read over long passages, and bold or very light text does not support this, nor excessively wide or narrow typefaces. It must be noted, however, that “extreme” or “high-character” fonts have potential purpose as display typography, but that is often outside the requirements of a good readable typeface.

Size matters. For newspapers and magazines, which are experienced in the real world — that is, printed on paper and not shown on screens — the ideal body copy size is probably between 9 and 11 points. The amount of leading — the space between lines of horizontal text — varies by the width at which the column of type is set. The wider the column, the more leading is needed to help the reader move easily from line to line. Leading, like tracking, needs to be set neither too large or too small, but just right. In most cases, and especially with regard to body copy, alignment should be either left (ragged right), like the paragraphs above, or justified, as this paragraph is.

CAPITAL LETTERS CAN PROVIDE EMPHASIS, BUT MUST NOT BE USED IN LONG PASSAGES, AS THE LETTERFORMS CAN QUICKLY BECOME DIFFICULT TO DISCERN AND EASE OF COMMUNICATION CAN BECOME BADLY DAMAGED. *Bold weights and italics, too, should be used mostly to call special attention to a section of the text, but would present enormous readability issues if used for an entire story, or even a long sentence.*

Times New Roman, 9 on 10

A solid if unspectacular choice of body copy, well presented (except for the final paragraph).

## TOO SMALL

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Times New Roman, 6 on 7

Type of this size does have a role, but should be used only for less-significant detail — literally, the “small print.”

## TOO BIG

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Times New Roman, 14 on 16

Type that is set too large for its purpose tends to look “horsey.”

## TOO SANS

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***Bold weights and italics, too, should be used mostly to call special attention to a section of the text, but would present enormous readability issues if used for an entire story, or even a long sentence.***

Gill Sans, 9 on 10

Sans serif type looks more modern, and here it is sized well, but try to imagine the difficulty of reading an entire book set in this typeface.



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Didot, 9 on 10

The narrow serifs of the original Modern Serif typeface give Didot a sleek and sophisticated look, but at smaller sizes, like body copy, the letterforms begin to disappear.

## TOO HEAVY

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Baskerville Bold, 9 on 10

Baskerville itself is not a bad choice for a body copy, but it is used here to show the unsuitability of setting long passages in bold weights.

## TOO NARROW

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Birch, 11 on 12

Based on a Victorian-era Wood type, Birch can work for display in small doses, but is a disaster as body type, even if set at a larger size.