

Department of Multimedia Charnwood Imaging Centre

Type Adjustment

Below I have set out a variety of typographic terms that refer to methods for adjusting text as an aid to increasing its readability or creating an emphasis. Every character needs enough room on all sides to avoid clashes with its neighbours but not so much room that the relationship with its neighbour is lost.

page layout
typography &

kerning

Unightly character combinations are remedied with kerning.

To Tr Ve Wo r. y, 7. w -

BEFORE KERNING

BEFORE KERNING

To Tr Ve Wo r. y, 7. w-

AFTER KERNING

AFTER KERNING

There are sometimes unsightly gaps that occur between and around particular combinations of letters. Obvious problem letters are V,W, and Y in both capitals and lower case. Other bad gaps appear between numbers and full-stops or commas, particularly after a 7.

Once you look into the relationship of two or more characters in a word, you realise what a mess it can be. To get rid of these gaps, one simply removes the space (or maybe add to it) between the offending pair of letters. A certain number of these problem combinations are automatically adjusted by the type designer; they are known as "kerning pairs" and are included in font programs. Inconsistencies of letter spacing may go unnoticed in body text, but they are very obvious and disturbing in the display sizes.

tracking

tracking

no tracking adjustment

tracking

tracking adjustment of 20

Ars Longa Vita Brevis
normal word spacing

Ars Longa Vita Brevis
word space value of -20

Tracking controls the space between letters globally; this means that equal amounts of space can be added between every letter in your text.

Tracking should be used with care, as the space between letters increases, so does the difficulty comprehending single words, and thus the thoughts conveyed in our text. Remember, as you increase letter spacing, you may also have to increase the word spacing so words do not run into one another.

Tracking can also be applied to the spaces between words, negative word space tracking can improve the appearance of headlines and other large-sized text

Letters need to be far enough apart to be distinguished from one another, but not so far that they separate into individual, unrelated signs. Word spaces have to be gauged so the reader is able to see individual words, but also to group them together for quick comprehension

drop caps

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A drop cap at the beginning of a piece of writing can add style to a page and attract a reader's attention, especially when it is a beautifully formed letter as the example on the left, the capital G of Century Gothic. The drop cap does not need to be the same font as the body text, but if you do use a different font make sure that it is obvious to create a contrast. But because drop caps are so easy to create it is best to use them sparingly.

The example top left is a 2 line drop cap and below it is a 4 line drop cap.

leading

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8 pt Century Gothic 11pt leading

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8 pt Bell MT 10pt leading

Leading (pronounced ledding) is the distance between lines of type, and it is measured in points. In QuarkXpress, the leading defaults to auto but can be adjusted manually.

To improve the ease with which text can be read, i.e. legibility, the amount of extra space placed between each line in a setting can be varied according to the line length and character of the type face being used. For example, a light type with a small x-height, or a medium type with a large x-height, would need to be treated differently.

In the examples on the left the sans serif typeface Century Gothic benefits from spacious leading and the serif typeface Bell MT benefits from a tighter leading to enhance the readability.

italic & bold

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Avoid the temptation to use bold face text to emphasise words within a passage of text. Bold text is like a magnet to our eyes, and if used incorrectly, ruins the continuity of your text. Bold text is best used in headings, captions, logos or sometimes at the start of a paragraph as a stylistic device.

In place of bold, consider using italics for emphasis. Italics blend in more smoothly with surrounding text, yet clearly indicate emphatic stress.