

Text and styling

Typography reference 2/3

When setting text to be read (a paragraph / page / book etc), there are several considerations to take into account: POINT SIZE; KERNING & TRACKING; LEADING; ALIGNMENT; PARAGRAPH STYLING and the overall LOOK & FEEL of the text (is it too dense, or too light etc).

These decisions will be based on many factors, which the designer should always place at the core of the design process. For example: who is the target audience (who will be reading the text) and what tone of voice does the content of the text project (e.g. is it formal or in-formal).

POINT SIZE

The size requirement of type will vary between projects. The designer should question whether it 'looks right' for the application in hand, if it is easily read, or not refined enough etc.

KERNING & TRACKING

Kerning is the adjustment of space between pairs of characters, and tracking is the overall loosening or tightening of a word / sentence / body of text.

Kerning options in inDesign are metrics, optical or manually adjusted. Metric kerning observes the kerning pairs within the font, and optical kerning calculates the character spacing optically ('what looks right'). As some fonts have limited kerning pairs programmed into their files, it is always advisable to

use optical kerning with setting body text.

Tracking is employed in a body of text to adjust the density of individual lines of text, and to individual lines and words as a method of correcting some of the problems given by justified and left-aligned columns. By slightly increasing the tracking across a body of text, the designer can create an open feel to the page.

Negative tracking is rarely desirable; if the regular version of the typeface is too open at normal tracking, choose a typeface with a condensed version.

Those French Situationists going on about the Society of the Spectacle, they didn't have a clue. Shinjuku at night is one of the most beautiful places in the world.

LOOSER TRACKING

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TIGHTER TRACKING

LEADING

Leading contributes to the overall look and density of a body of text. Leading that is too tight gives an uncomfortable effect for the reader: the text is dense and un-inviting.

Leading is measured in points (pt), and expressed through stating the size of the text 'on' the size of the leading. e.g. '10 on 12pt' is used to

express a body of text where the height of the typeface is 10pt, and the leading 12pt.

The common default for leading in page layout software such as inDesign and Quark is 120% (10 on 12pt, 15 on 18pt etc). Although slightly higher than the cap height (the maximum height of a letter in the typeface) there are few instances where 120% leading results in an accurate and legible body of text.

The designer should therefore consider the value of leading for every piece of text that is set, rather than accept the default of 120%.

When setting body copy, it is commonplace for the leading to be increased beyond the default setting, rather than decreased (as when setting headline text).

Those French Situationists going on about the Society of the Spectacle, they didn't have a clue. This is it, right here, and I love it. 100% leading (8 on 8pt)

Those French Situationists going on about the Society of the Spectacle, they didn't have a clue. This is it, right here, and I love it. 120% leading (8 on 9.6pt)

Those French Situationists going on about the Society of the Spectacle, they didn't have a clue. This is it, right here, and I love it. 140% leading (8 on 11.2pt)

Those French Situationists going on about the Society of the Spectacle, they didn't have a clue. This is it, right here, and I love it. 160% leading (8 on 12.8pt)

LEADING EXAMPLES

As the leading is increased, the text appears lighter, and lines of type become independent elements of the page, rather than part of an overall dense texture.

ALIGNMENT

Alignment is the positioning of text into columns with rigid or soft edges. The three basic styles of alignment used when setting body copy are: justified; align left and align right.

Justified text leads to a clean shape on the page, but leads to ugly gaps between words if the width of the column is too small for the type to fit. Hyphenation should be used to break up long words and attempt to retain flowing text. Tracking and kerning can also be utilised to make text flow better.

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JUSTIFIED TEXT

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PROBLEMS WITH JUSTIFIED TEXT

If you use standard (inDesign) settings then hyphenation, commas, full stops etc, sit within the column, disrupting the clean edge of the

text. This is avoided by using optical margin alignment in the type>story menu.

Left aligned text respects the flow of reading and of language through consistent spacing between letters and words. Resulting in a ragged right edge, the designer has to ensure that this edge isn't unsightly, e.g. no over-short or long lines that stand out above others. Hyphenation should not be used in a left aligned text.

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BADLY SET LEFT ALIGNED TEXT

Right aligned text ignores the flow of reading and (English) language, by making the reader start at a new point at each line of text. Right aligned text can be used effectively as marginal notes or picture captions etc.

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The Situationist International (SI) was a small group of international political and artistic agitators with roots in Marxism, Lettrism and the early 20th century European artistic and political avant-gardes.

RIGHT ALIGNED MARGINAL NOTES

PARAGRAPH STYLING

There are many methods of differentiating paragraphs in bodies of text: first line indents; space before/after etc, and many graphic styles that add design value to the page and aid the reading process: drop capitals; emphasis on certain words etc.

Those French Situationists going on about the Society of the Spectacle, they didn't have a clue. Shinjuku at night is one of the most beautiful places in the world, and somehow the silliest of all beautiful places – and the combination is a sheer delight. First line indent (8pt)

Those French Situationists going on about the Society of the Spectacle, they didn't have a clue. Shinjuku at night is one of the most beautiful places in the world, and somehow the silliest of all beautiful places – and the combination is a sheer delight. Space after (3pt)

PARAGRAPH STYLES

Drop capitals typically appear in the first word of a chapter or section of a text, directing the eye to the entry point of the article / story etc.

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DROP CAPITALS

Certain words or sentences within a text may need to be emphasised, either to add visual impact to the page, or direct the reader to key areas of the text. Methods include a second typeface, bold face, italics, small capitals, or capitals (capitals are usually opened up with positive tracking to add further visual impact).

Those FRENCH SITUATIONISTS going on about the SOCIETY OF THE SPECTACLE, they didn't have a clue. Shinjuku at night is one of the most beautiful places in the world, and somehow the silliest of all beautiful places – and the combination is a sheer delight.

ADDING EMPHASIS

LOOK & FEEL

Setting text to be read is an iterative process of design, testing and refining.

Every typographic aspect on this sheet (and many more) adds or detracts quality to the overall look and feel of the designed page. The designer should make decisions based on a process of testing in situ (printing at real size) and reading the text for themselves, then refining the design based on a critical analysis.

FURTHER READING

- THINKING WITH TYPE (A CRITICAL GUIDE) Ellen Lupton
- DESIGN WRITING RESEARCH Ellen Lupton
- THE NEW TYPOGRAPHY Jan Tschichold