


JM JM JM



Design a
Logo
of letters!



Continued ▶

How to design a logo of letters

Are you known by your initials? Turn those letters into a terrific signature!



Jack in the Box
www.jackinthebox.com

Companies of every kind sign their names with linked letters called *ligatures*. Ligature means *to tie*. Ligatures make excellent business signatures. They're handsome, simple and compact. And they're fun, too—we all have initials! Some letters link in one typeface but not another. Others link in lowercase but not in upper. What follows are a variety of ways to get your letter pairs beautifully *together*.



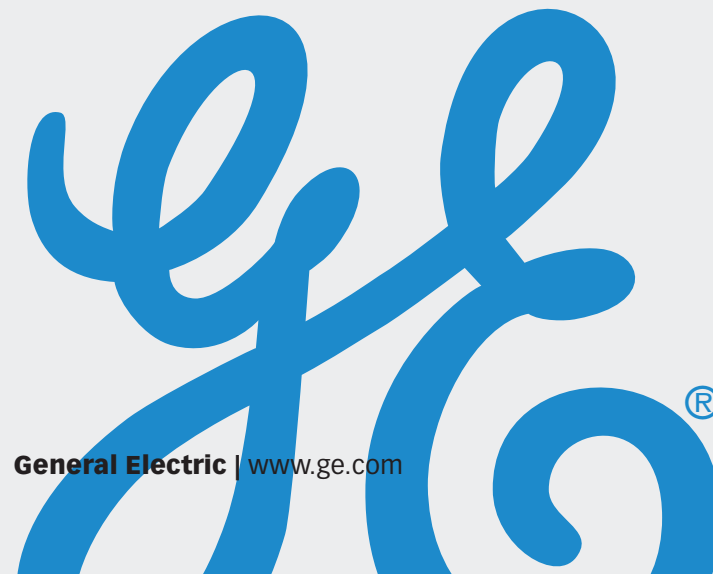
Cotton Incorporated
www.cottoninc.com



American Dental Association
www.ada.org



Cable News Network
www.cnn.com



General Electric | www.ge.com



Use shared strokes

Many letter pairs form natural links; they have identical parts or complementary shapes that fit like hand in glove. Let's begin with the easiest letters to link—those that have identical adjacent strokes.



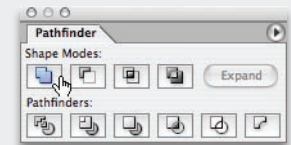
HK are an ideal pair; each letter is distinct from the other, but their adjacent stems are identical. Link by removing either stem and abutting the letters. Two colors put the emphasis on one letter or the other. This is a good way to handle an acronym in which the second letter is the more important.

Almost-identical strokes

Pairs like UR share not-quite-identical strokes, yet often flow naturally together. To link neatly, you must usually sacrifice some parts; here, the R gave up a foot, the U a serif.



In Illustrator, set the letters, *Create Outlines*, and move together. Cut away the unneeded pieces, leaving the remainders overlapped, then in the Pathfinder dialog, select *Add to shape area* (below).





Angled to vertical

Angled strokes often link well to vertical strokes. The easiest technique is simply to cut the angled letter in half.



Halving the **A** joined it neatly to the **B**, but the crossbars did not align. Borrowing the flourish from atop the **A** was an easy and artful solution.

If your letterstrokes don't quite match . . .



Try changing case

The lowercase alphabet is much different from uppercase, and many letters that do not link in one will link in the other. As a rule, lowercase imparts a less formal, more casual image.



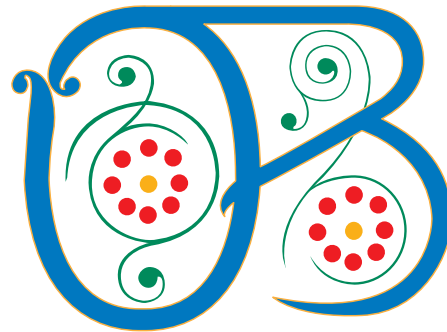
Try a different font

Similarly, letters that don't link in one typeface may link in another. Try many! Typefaces that would be too stylized for everyday use often make excellent ligatures.



Curved to vertical

The more decorative the typeface, the more easily dissimilar strokes can be linked. Even a curving stroke can replace a vertical. You need gentle curves, though, circles won't do (far right).



Many letter pairs can be made to link but shouldn't be; for example, this odd assembly looks like we've invented a new character! A key attribute of a good ligature is that its letters read as individuals even after being joined.

Uppercase-lowercase

Uppercase letters can often link to lowercase with excellent results. An uppercase I, though, won't link to anything—its body just disappears! But a lowercase i has the advantage of its distinctive dot and can link with many letters.



Distance

Color

Style

How far apart? . . .

Here, a lowercase **i** has been doctored to link with an uppercase **M**. Letters can be separated by distance, color, typestyle or any combination.



Horizontal crossbars

A few letter pairs share top crossbars, which are easy to link. Similarly, some typefaces have exaggerated serifs that can be linked.



Crossbars link so obviously that in sans-serif typefaces they can appear to be merely tightly kerned. To avoid this impression, add a pattern (above) or an outline (left). Better is to use a serif typeface and share the serif (left).

Mid-letter crossbars

Many letters, such as ABE-FHPR, have mid-letter crossbars that can be connected with a little help—just cut the letter apart and s-t-r-e-t-c-h the bar!



Key to this technique is to keep the letterforms distinct. You can do this by separating the letters with two colors (above) or for a one-color ligature by making a gap in the intersecting stroke (left).



Remove a stroke

Here, a phantom stroke hints at what's not there! This is particularly effective with Modern typestyles such as Bodoni and Didi that have extremely thin strokes.



Remove one leg and move the letters together.

Remove part of a stroke

Letters with angled and overhanging arms—FKTVWXYZ—benefit from this technique, which is especially attractive in serif typestyles. The illusion is that of a stencil; the line is interrupted, yet our eyes “fill in” the missing part!



What's in the negative space?

Negative space is the area in and around your letters; it has shape and volume and always affects the viewer's perception. *Negative space is always present.* In the best design it plays an active role, as it does in the TP above. Watch your negative space!



Reverse the field

Put negative space to positive use! Add a same-color field behind your letter, then reverse the second letter out of the field. Especially effective with three-character acronyms.



Set tightly . . .



. . . add a field . . .



. . . color.

(Colors added for clarity)

Crop!

Your intrigued reader will linger for valuable moments on this design! Crop away the bottoms of your letters, and the viewer's eye must complete the image. Add a company name or other horizontal graphic to span the gap (far right).

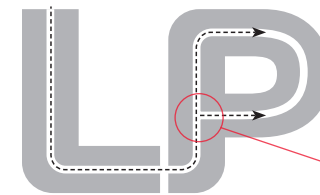


Reversing the field (light on dark) modifies the look and often improves it. Always check!



Follow the white line

Create the *illusion* of attachment! Rather than abut letters, leave a gap, then make a flowing centerline that draws the eye smoothly around.



Don't close it! Doing so breaks the flow.

Disconnect and attach

An entertaining ligature unique to the T, disconnect one arm and attach it to its neighbor!



To maintain the form of both letters, keep the stroke widths the same.



Interlock

Circular letters flow most naturally into other circular letters. Interlocked here like wedding bands or Olympic rings, two complete letters function as one.



Set

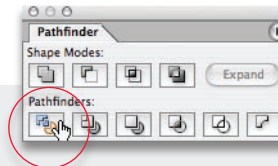
In Illustrator, set the letters, *Create Outlines*, and move together.

Divide

Select both letters, then in the Pathfinder dialog, click *Divide* (below).

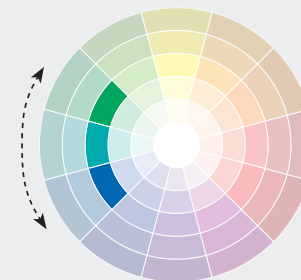
Cut

Use the Direct Selection Tool to click an intersection, then *Cut*.



Overlay

A simple alternative to interlocking is to lay one letter atop the other, then “link” with a common fill or stroke. Here, a colorful gradient turns two letters into one object.



What colors?

Easily create a pleasing gradient by using *analogous* colors (colors adjacent on the wheel), in this case green to blue. Analogous colors *always* work well together.



Build bridges

This technique works when nothing else will! Abut your letters, then conceal the junction with a decorative graphic, line or a series of lines and shapes. Easy, fun and always engaging.



Lay on top

Evenly spaced dots just lie on top.



Paste into

Diagonal lines are “pasted into” (InDesign).



Replace letter parts

Barely touching letters are brought together by playful shapes and colors.



Fill a space

The diamond does double duty—it links the letters and helps form the shape of the R!

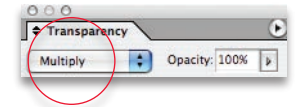


Use transparency

Transparency *softens*. Create a gossamer effect on even the boldest ligature by lowering the opacity of one or more characters. Here, all three letters are set at 50%.



Do you like the overlap effect but need strong colors? Keep your colors at 100% opacity, but in the Blending mode dialog select Multiply, which adds the colors of an object to the ones beneath it.



Color the negative spaces

Finally, some stubborn letters just won't link physically. So try linking the background! Put the letters in a box, and color the negatives spaces; you can get all kinds of energetic results!



No software stunts here. Just draw and color funny shapes behind the letters, then paste everything into a box.

How to design cool stuff.

Simplify.

Cut the chatter and connect with your audience. A simple message is easy to see, easy to love, easy to act on. It's easy to design, too, thanks to Before & After's crystal-clear instructions.

Beautify.

Beautiful things get more looks. More touches. More responses. Whether it's a Web page, a sales pitch or a new logo, Before & After will help get your image together with elegance and style.

Clarify.

Get out of the mud and your message will sparkle. With Before & After, you'll design like a communicator, not a decorator, which means your readers will get it the way you mean it, first time. You'll see.

Mix and match.

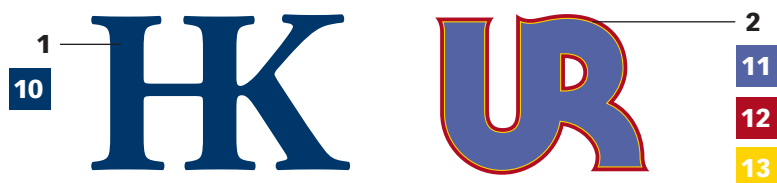
With two formats, you can have Before & After the way you want it. Need it now? Get the PDF. Love print? We'll mail it to you. Either way, you win. The skills you learn in Before & After will last your whole career!

Get more out of your design time, every time. Get Before & After.

Subscribe



Article resources



Typefaces

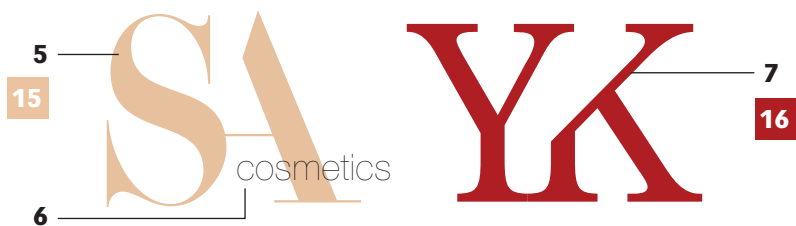
- 1 [Adobe Garamond Bold](#)
- 2 [ITC Serif Gothic Heavy](#)
- 3 [ITC Goudy Sans Book](#)
- 4 [Futura Medium](#)
- 5 [Helvetica Neue Std Roman](#)
- 6 [Russell Square Roman](#)
- 7 [Spring](#)
- 8 [Avenir 55 Roman](#)
- 9 [Bodoni Roman](#)

Colors

- 10** C100 M60 Y0 K50
- 11** C70 M60 Y0 K10
- 12** C0 M100 Y85 K30
- 13** C0 M15 Y100 K0
- 14** C0 M70 Y0 K30
- 15** C26 M7 Y24 K3
- 16** C73 M15 Y38 K6
- 17** C37 M66 Y6 K3



Article resources



Typefaces

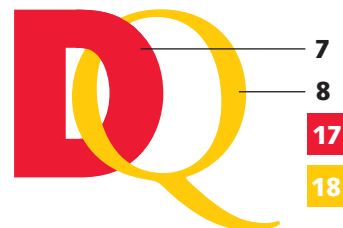
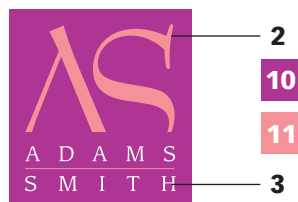
- 1 [Clarendon Roman](#)
- 2 [Helvetica Neue Std Heavy Italic](#)
- 3 [Gill Sans Bold](#)
- 4 [Eurostile Extended #2](#) (Modified)
- 5 Didi
- 6 [Helvetica Neue Std Ultra Light](#)
- 7 [Century Old Style Std Regular](#)

Colors

- 8 C26 M91 Y100 K35
- 9 C46 M27 Y100 K35
- 10 C43 M68 Y51 K70
- 11 C40 M35 Y65 K25
- 12 C89 M25 Y87 K23
- 13 C0 M91 Y91 K0
- 14 C20 M100 Y0 K0
- 15 C7 M24 Y37 K0
- 16 C20 M100 Y100 K15
- 17 C100 M0 Y30 K5



Article resources



Typefaces

- 1 [Futura Extra Bold](#)
- 2 [Bernhard Modern Roman](#)
- 3 [ITC Leawood Book](#)
- 4 [Helvetica Neue Std Black](#) (Modified)
- 5 [ITC Goudy Sans Bold Italic](#)
- 6 [Futura Bold Oblique](#)
- 7 [ITC Franklin Gothic Std Heavy](#)
- 8 [Adobe Garamond Regular](#)

Colors

- 9** C0 M50 Y100 K0
- 10** C33 M93 Y0 K0
- 11** C0 M53 Y26 K0
- 12** C72 M22 Y42 K0
- 13** C100 M60 Y0 K10
- 14** C100 M90 Y0 K0
- 15** C29 M63 Y53 K8
- 16** C11 M43 Y67 K8
- 17** C0 M100 Y85 K0
- 18** C0 M20 Y100 K0



Article resources



Typefaces

- 1 [Futura Book](#)
- 2 [ITC Kabel Std Demi](#)
- 3 [ITC Goudy Sans Bold](#)
- 4 [Bauer Bodoni Roman](#)
- 5 [Gill Sans Ultra Bold](#)

Colors

- 6** C100 M0 Y90 K30
- 7** C100 M0 Y40 K0
- 8** C100 M60 Y0 K0
- 9** C0 M30 Y100 K0
- 10** C40 M80 Y0 K0
- 11** C60 M100 Y0 K0
- 12** C80 M0 Y100 K0



Article resources



Typefaces

- 1 [Vectora 95 Black](#)
- 2 [Sloop Script One](#)
- 3 [ITC Goudy Sans Bold](#)

Colors

- 4 C0 M100 Y100 K40
- 5 C40 M35 Y65 K25
- 6 C60 M30 Y10 K15
- 7 C19 M37 Y59 K0
- 8 C4 M6 Y4 K0
- 9 C20 M0 Y100 K19
- 10 C0 M53 Y100 K0
- 11 C40 M45 Y0 K0



Subscribe to Before & After

Subscribe to Before & After, and become a more capable, confident designer for pennies per article. To learn more, go to

<http://www.bamagazine.com/Subscribe>

E-mail this article

To pass along a free copy of this article to others, [click here](#).

Join our e-list

To be notified by e-mail of new articles as they become available, go to

<http://www.bamagazine.com/email>

Before & After magazine

Before & After has been sharing its practical approach to graphic design since 1990. Because our modern world has made designers of us all (ready or not), Before & After is dedicated to making graphic design understandable, useful and even fun for everyone.

John McWade Publisher and creative director

Gaye McWade Associate publisher

Dexter Mark Abellera Staff designer

Before & After magazine

323 Lincoln Street, Roseville, CA 95678

Telephone 916-784-3880

Fax 916-784-3995

E-mail mailbox@bamagazine.com

www <http://www.bamagazine.com>

Copyright ©2009 Before & After magazine

ISSN 1049-0035. All rights reserved

You may pass along a free copy of this article to others by clicking [here](#). You may not alter this article, and you may not charge for it. You may quote brief sections for review; please credit Before & After magazine, and [let us know](#). To link Before & After magazine to your Web site, use this URL: <http://www.bamagazine.com>. For all other permissions, [please contact us](#).

Before & After is made to fit your binder

Before & After articles are intended for permanent reference. All are titled and numbered.

For the current table of contents, [click here](#). To save time and paper, a paper-saver format of this article, suitable for one- or two-sided printing, is provided on the following pages.

For presentation format

[Print: \(Specify pages 1–18\)](#)



Print

Format: Landscape
Page Size: Fit to Page

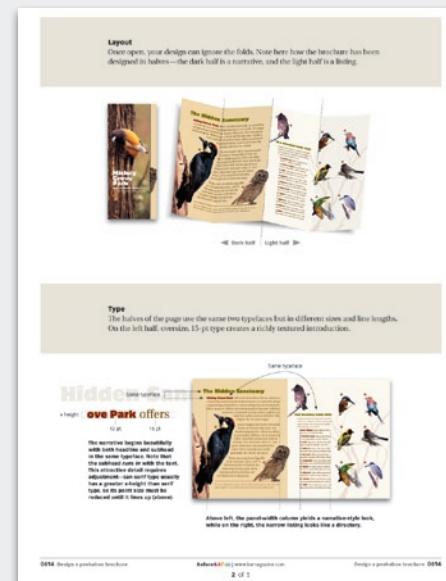


Save

Presentation format or
Paper-saver format

For paper-saver format

[Print: \(Specify pages 21–29\)](#)



JM JM JM

Design a Logo of letters!



Jack in the Box
www.jackinthebox.com

Companies of every kind sign their names with linked letters called *ligatures*. Ligature means *to tie*. Ligatures make excellent business signatures. They're handsome, simple and compact. And they're fun, too—we all have initials! Some letters link in one typeface but not another. Others link in lowercase but not in upper. What follows are a variety of ways to get your letter pairs beautifully *together*.



Cotton
Incorporated
www.cottoninc.com



American Dental Association
www.ada.org



Cable News Network
www.cnn.com



General Electric | www.ge.com

Use shared strokes

Many letter pairs form natural links; they have identical parts or complementary shapes that fit like hand in glove. Let's begin with the easiest letters to link—those that have identical adjacent strokes.



HK are an ideal pair; each letter is distinct from the other, but their adjacent stems are identical. Link by removing either stem and abutting the letters. Two colors put the emphasis on one letter or the other. This is a good way to handle an acronym in which the second letter is the more important.

Almost-identical strokes

Pairs like UR share not-quite-identical strokes, yet often flow naturally together. To link neatly, you must usually sacrifice some parts; here, the R gave up a foot, the U a serif.



In Illustrator, set the letters, *Create Outlines*, and move together. Cut away the unneeded pieces, leaving the remainders overlapped, then in the Pathfinder dialog, select *Add to shape area* (below).



Angled to vertical

Angled strokes often link well to vertical strokes. The easiest technique is simply to cut the angled letter in half.



Halving the **A** joined it neatly to the **B**, but the crossbars did not align. Borrowing the flourish from atop the **A** was an easy and artful solution.

If your letterstrokes don't quite match . . .



Try changing case

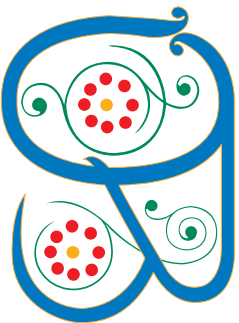
The lowercase alphabet is much different from uppercase, and many letters that do not link in one will link in the other. As a rule, lowercase imparts a less formal, more casual image.

Try a different font

Similarly, letters that don't link in one typeface may link in another. Try many! Typefaces that would be too stylized for everyday use often make excellent ligatures.

Curved to vertical

The more decorative the typeface, the more easily dissimilar strokes can be linked. Even a curving stroke can replace a vertical. You need gentle curves, though, circles won't do (far right).



Many letter pairs can be made to link but shouldn't be; for example, this odd assembly looks like we've invented a new character! A key attribute of a good ligature is that its letters read as individuals even after being joined.

Uppercase-lowercase

Uppercase letters can often link to lowercase with excellent results. An uppercase *I*, though, won't link to anything—its body just disappears! But a lowercase *i* has the advantage of its distinctive dot and can link with many letters.



Distance

Color

Style

How far apart? . . .

Here, a lowercase *i* has been doctored to link with an uppercase *M*. Letters can be separated by distance, color, typestyle or any combination.

Horizontal crossbars

A few letter pairs share top crossbars, which are easy to link. Similarly, some typefaces have exaggerated serifs that can be linked.



Crossbars link so obviously that in sans-serif typefaces they can appear to be merely tightly kerned. To avoid this impression, add a pattern (above) or an outline (left). Better is to use a serif typeface and share the serif (left!).

Mid-letter crossbars

Many letters, such as *ABE*–*FHPR*, have mid-letter crossbars that can be connected with a little help—just cut the letter apart and s-t-r-e-t-c-h the bar!



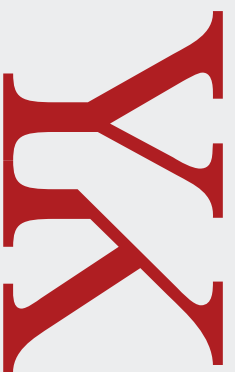
Key to this technique is to keep the letterforms distinct. You can do this by separating the letters with two colors (above) or for a one-color ligature by making a gap in the intersecting stroke (left).

Remove a stroke
Here, a phantom stroke hints at what's not there! This is particularly effective with Modern typestyles such as Bodoni and DidI that have extremely thin strokes.



Remove one leg and move the letters together.

Remove part of a stroke
Letters with angled and overhanging arms—FKTVMXYZ—benefit from this technique, which is especially attractive in serif typestyles. The illusion is that of a stencil; the line is interrupted, yet our eyes “fill in” the missing part!



What's in the negative space?
Negative space is the area in and around your letters; it has shape and volume and always affects the viewer's perception. *Negative space is always present.* In the best design it plays an active role, as it does in the 'TP' above. Watch your negative space!

Reverse the field

Put negative space to positive use! Add a same-color field behind your letter, then reverse the second letter out of the field. Especially effective with three-character acronyms.



Set tightly . . .



. . . add a field . . .

(Colors added for clarity)

. . . color:

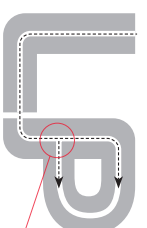
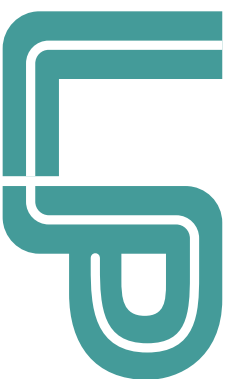
Crop!

Your intrigued reader will linger for valuable moments on this design! Crop away the bottoms of your letters, and the viewer's eye must complete the image. Add a company name or other horizontal graphic to span the gap (far right).



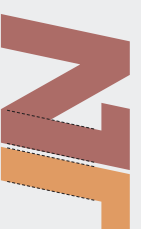
Reversing the field (light on dark) modifies the look and often improves it. Always check!

Follow the white line
Create the *illusion* of attachment! Rather than abut letters, leave a gap, then make a flowing centerline that draws the eye smoothly around.



Don't close it! Doing so breaks the flow.

Disconnect and attach
An entertaining ligature unique to the T, disconnect one arm and attach it to its neighbor!



To maintain the form of both letters, keep the stroke widths the same.

Interlock

Circular letters flow most naturally into other circular letters. Interlocked here like wedding bands or Olympic rings, two complete letters function as one.



Set
In Illustrator, set the letters. *Create Outlines*, and move together.



Divide
Select both letters, then in the Path-finder dialog, click *Divide* (below).



Cut
Use the Direct Selection Tool to click an intersection, then *Cut*.



Overlay
A simple alternative to interlocking is to lay one letter atop the other, then “link” with a common fill or stroke. Here, a colorful gradient turns two letters into one object.



What colors?
Easily create a pleasing gradient by using *analogous* colors (colors adjacent on the wheel), in this case green to blue. Analogous colors *always* work well together.

Build bridges

This technique works when nothing else will! About your letters, then conceal the junction with a decorative graphic, line or a series of lines and shapes. Easy, fun and always engaging.



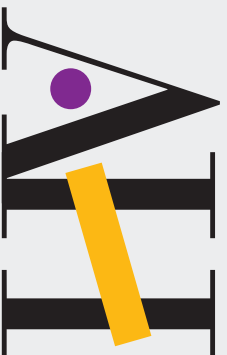
Lay on top

Evenly spaced dots just lie on top.



Paste into

Diagonal lines are “pasted into” (inDesign).



Replace letter parts

Barely touching letters are brought together by playful shapes and colors.



Fill a space

The diamond helps double duty—it links the letters and helps form the shape of the R!

Use transparency

Transparency *softens*. Create a gossamer effect on even the boldest ligature by lowering the opacity of one or more characters. Here, all three letters are set at 50%.



Do you like the overlap effect but need strong colors? Keep your colors at 100% opacity, but in the Blending mode dialog select Multiply, which adds the colors of an object to the ones beneath it.



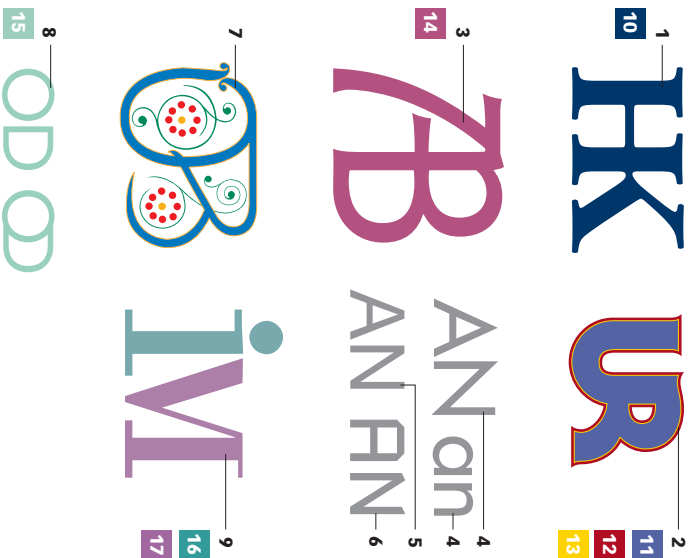
Color the negative spaces

Finally, some stubborn letters just won't link physically. So try linking the background! Put the letters in a box, and color the negatives spaces; you can get all kinds of energetic results!



No software stunts here. Just draw and color funny shapes behind the letters, then paste everything into a box.

Article resources



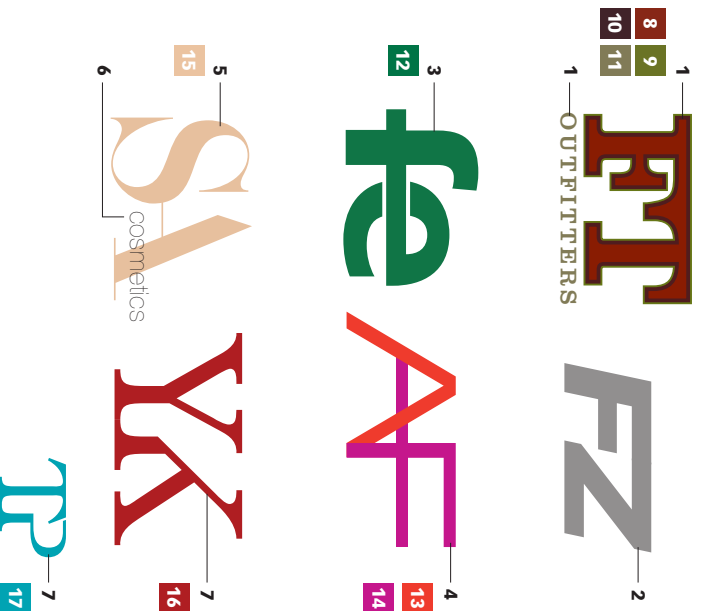
Typefaces

- 1 Adobe Garamond Bold
- 2 ITC Serif Gothic Heavy
- 3 ITC Goudy Sans Book
- 4 Futura Medium
- 5 Helvetica Neue Std Roman
- 6 Russell Square Roman
- 7 Spring
- 8 Avenir 55 Roman
- 9 Bodoni Roman

Colors

- 10 C100 M/60 Y0 K/50
- 11 C70 M/60 Y0 K/10
- 12 C0 M/100 Y85 K/30
- 13 C0 M/15 Y/100 K/0
- 14 C0 M/70 Y/0 K/30
- 15 C26 M/7 Y24 K/3
- 16 C73 M/15 Y38 K/6
- 17 C37 M/66 Y6 K/3

Article resources



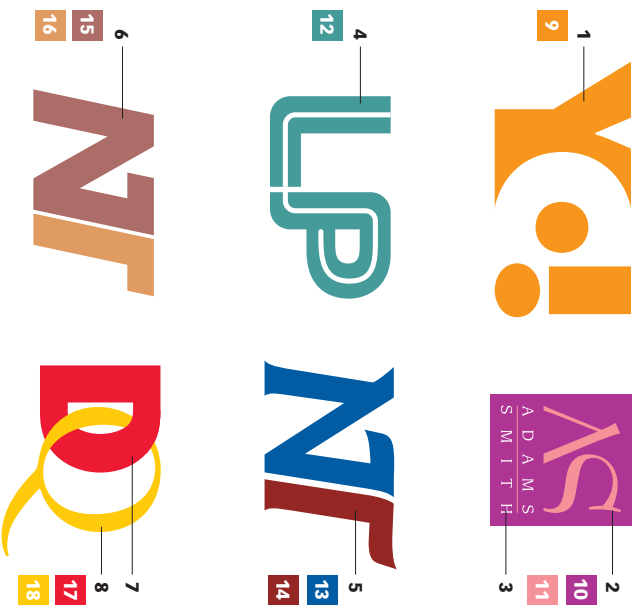
Typefaces

- 1 Clarendon Roman
- 2 Helvetica Neue Std Heavy Italic
- 3 Gill Sans Bold
- 4 Eurostile Extended #2 (Modified)
- 5 Didi
- 6 Helvetica Neue Std Ultra Light
- 7 Century Old Style Std Regular

Colors

- 8 C26 M/91 Y100 K/35
- 9 C46 M/27 Y100 K/35
- 10 C43 M/68 Y51 K/70
- 11 C40 M/35 Y65 K/25
- 12 C89 M/25 Y87 K/23
- 13 C0 M/91 Y91 K/0
- 14 C20 M/100 Y0 K/0
- 15 C7 M/24 Y37 K/0
- 16 C20 M/100 Y/100 K/15
- 17 C100 M/0 Y30 K/5

Article resources



Typefaces

- 1 Futura Extra Bold
- 2 Bernhard Modern Roman
- 3 ITC Leawood Book
- 4 Helvetica Neue Std Black (Modified)
- 5 ITC Goudy Sans Bold Italic
- 6 Futura Bold Oblique
- 7 ITC Franklin Gothic Std Heavy
- 8 Adobe Garamond Regular

Colors

- 9 C0 M50 Y100 K0
- 10 C33 M93 Y0 K0
- 11 C0 M53 Y26 K0
- 12 C72 M22 Y42 K0
- 13 C100 M60 Y0 K10
- 14 C100 M90 Y0 K0
- 15 C29 M63 Y53 K8
- 16 C11 M43 Y67 K8
- 17 C0 M100 Y85 K0
- 18 C0 M20 Y100 K0

Article resources



Typefaces

- 1 Futura Book
- 2 ITC Kabel Std Demi
- 3 ITC Goudy Sans Bold
- 4 Bauer Bodoni Roman
- 5 Gill Sans Ultra Bold

Colors

- 6 C100 M0 Y90 K30
- 7 C100 M0 Y40 K0
- 8 C100 M60 Y0 K0
- 9 C0 M30 Y100 K0
- 10 C40 M80 Y0 K0
- 11 C60 M100 Y0 K0
- 12 C80 M0 Y100 K0





Typefaces

- 1 [Vectora 95 Black](#)
- 2 [Sloop Script One](#)
- 3 [ITC Goudy Sans Bold](#)



Colors

- 4 C0 M100 Y100 K40
- 5 C40 M35 Y65 K25
- 6 C60 M30 Y10 K15
- 7 C19 M37 Y59 K0
- 8 C4 M6 Y4 K0
- 9 C20 M0 Y100 K19
- 10 C0 M53 Y100 K0
- 11 C40 M45 Y0 K0

Subscribe to Before & After

Subscribe to Before & After and become a more capable, confident designer for pennies per article. To learn more, go to

<http://www.bamagazine.com/Subscribe>

E-mail this article

To pass along a free copy of this article to others, [click here](#).

Join our e-list

To be notified by e-mail of new articles as they become available, go to <http://www.bamagazine.com/email>

Before & After magazine

Before & After has been sharing its practical approach to graphic design since 1990. Because our modern world has made designers of us all (ready or not), Before & After is dedicated to making graphic design understandable, useful and even fun for everyone.

John McWade Publisher and creative director

Gaye McWade Associate publisher

Dexter Mark Abellera Staff designer

Before & After magazine

323 Lincoln Street, Roseville, CA 95678

Telephone 916-784-3880

Fax 916-784-3995

E-mail mailbox@bamagazine.com

www <http://www.bamagazine.com>

Copyright ©2009 Before & After magazine

ISSN 1049-0035. All rights reserved

You may pass along a free copy of this article to others by clicking [here](#). You may not alter this article, and you may not charge for it. You may quote brief sections for review, please credit Before & After magazine, and [let us know](#). To link Before & After magazine to your web site, use this URL: <http://www.bamagazine.com>. For all other permissions, [please contact us](#).