

# LINE SPACING

The distance from the baseline of one line of type to another is called *line spacing*. It is also called *leading*, in reference to the strips of lead used to separate lines of metal type. The default setting in most layout and imaging software is 120 percent of the type size. Thus 10-pt type is set with 12 pts of line spacing. Designers play with line spacing in order to create distinctive typographic arrangements. Reducing the standard distance creates a denser typographic color, while risking collisions between ascenders and descenders. Expanding the line spacing creates a lighter, more open text block. As leading increases, lines of type become independent graphic elements rather than parts of an overall visual shape and texture.

*different*  
folks  
*different*  
strokes

*different*  
folks  
*different*  
strokes

## TYPE CRIME

Here, auto spacing yields an uneven effect.

Adjusting line spacing with the baseline shift tool helps create an even appearance.

Aa  
↑

**NERD ALERT:** A *baseline shift* is a manual adjustment of the horizontal position of one or more characters. Baseline shifts are often used when mixing different sizes or styles of type. The baseline shift tool can be found in the Type tool bar of standard software applications.

## VARIATIONS IN LINE SPACING

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6/6 SCALA PRO  
(6 pt type with 6 pts line spacing, or “set solid”)

6/7.2 SCALA PRO  
(Auto spacing; 6 pt type with 7.2 pts line spacing)

6/8 SCALA PRO  
(6 pt type with 8 pts line spacing)

6/12 SCALA PRO  
(6 pt type with 12 pts line spacing)

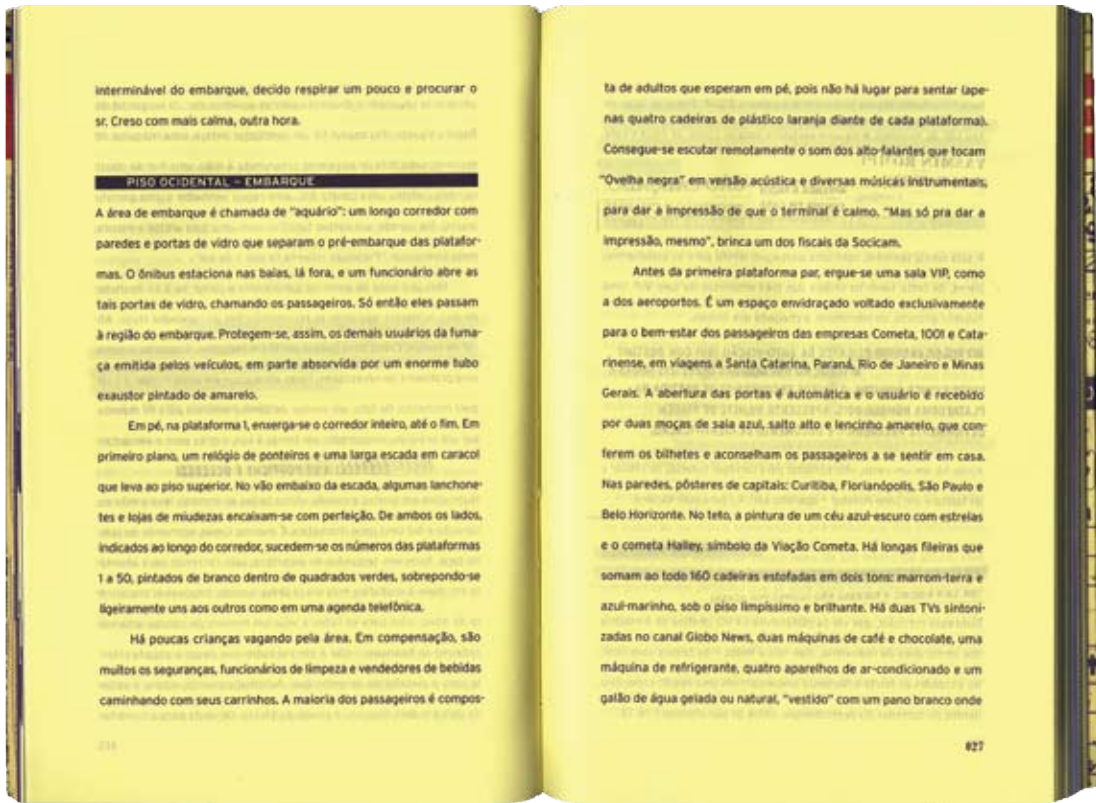
Ancient maps of the world  
**An**  
 when the world was flat  
**Avid**  
 inform us, concerning the void  
**Dream**  
 where America was waiting  
**Of**  
 to be discovered,  
**Trans-**  
 Here Be Dragons. James Baldwin  
**for-**  
 O to be a dragon. Marjane Moore  
**mation** Adrienne Kennedy, Pugh We Led to My Place

MARGO JEFFERSON

DANCE INK: AN AVID DREAM  
 OF TRANSFORMATION  
 Magazine page, 1992.  
 Designer: Abbott Miller.  
 Publisher: Patsy Tarr. *The  
 extreme line spacing allows two  
 strands of text to interweave.*

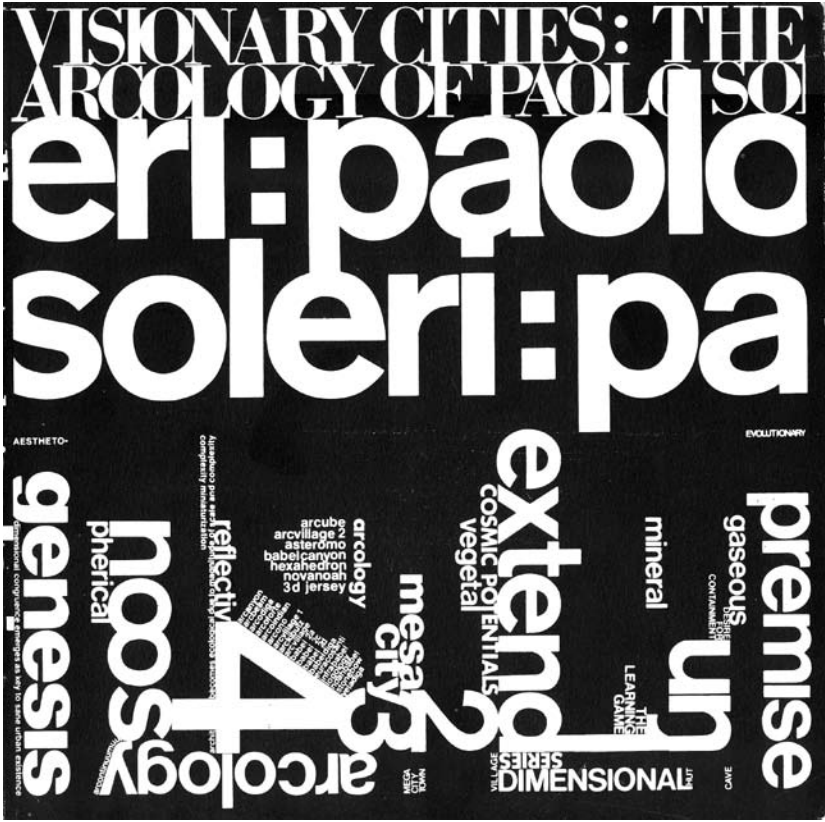
## LINE SPACING

Designers experiment with extreme line spacing to create distinctive typographic textures. Open spacing allows designers to play with the space between the lines, while tight spacing creates intriguing, sometimes uncomfortable, collisions.



O LIVRO AMARELO DO TERMINAL Book spread, 2008.  
Designer: Vanessa Barbara with Elaine Ramos and Maria Carolina Sampaio. Publisher: Cosac Naify. Here, pages of text are set with loose line spacing and printed on thin paper. The vertical placement of the text block varies from spread to spread, allowing text to show through between the lines.

VISIONARY CITIES: THE ARCOLOGY OF PAOLO SOLERI  
 Book, 1970. Design: Paolo Soleri. This classic work of postmodern design uses ultra-tight line spacing to create dramatic density on the page. Produced long before the era of digital page layout, this book exploited the possibilities of phototypesetting and dry transfer lettering.



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