HOW TO GET REALLY GOOD AT TYPOGRAPHY IN ONE MONTH

By Rob Toledo

GOOD TYPOGRAPHY IS MORE THAN JUST CHOOSING A FAVORITE FONT. It requires setting and arranging type in a way that is legible and pleasing. With web and mobile technology being the dynamic force that it is today it is becoming increasingly important for type to function in multiple platforms. If you want to be skilled in typography, without investing the time needed to become an expert web designer, there are plenty of resources to help you master the art. The following recommendations will guide you through a method designed to help you improve your typography in one month.

WEEK 1: LEARNING THE BASICS

To use type effectively, you need a firm understanding of the anatomy of letters and the way they interact with each other. This includes knowing the different parts of a letter and the way fonts are classified.

Typefaces and Fonts

First, you should understand what differentiates these two terms. A typeface is a set of characters designed with distinctive style elements in common Fonts are character variations of size weight and orientation within the same typeface family

Typefaces Styles

Typefaces are separated into different style categories the most basic being serif and sans serif. Serifs are small extensions at the terminal points of a letter, these points

are absent in fonts classified as sans serif. Sans serif fonts are usually easiest for web reading, and serifs are great for titles or making bold statements.

Structure of a Letter

The variations in the parts of letters are what make up different styles of fonts. Each font has its own set of unique shapes and sizes of parts. Some of the main pieces you should know are:

X-height: The height of a lowercase x, or the height of any lowercase letter excluding the ascender and descender.
Baseline: The imaginary line that a set of characters sits on to help create uniformity and legibility.
Ascender: The part of a letter that extends above the x-height.
Descender: The part of a letter that extends below the baseline.
Counter: The enclosed spaces within letters

WEEK 2: COMBINING A ND MODIFYING TYPEFACES

Anyone can simply choose a font that seems to suit a particular project. But if you want to really add meaning to your project and use type to optimize its effectiveness, here are some techniques to learn.

Combining Typefaces

Combining typefaces can add depth and interest to keep your viewer's attention and influence the movement of their eyes through your design.
Contrast: Your chosen typefaces need to be unique enough to be recognizably different, yet not so different that their styles clash. You can find this balance by adding variations of weight, size, structure, and color.
Heirarchy: You can also create contrast by establishing a visual hierarchy that guides the viewer's attention through different levels of emphasis.

Modifying Typefaces

Each font has a built-in space setting to establish its structure. However, sometimes the spacing isn't right for a certain layout. You can fix this by adjusting these spaces, with leading, kerning and tracking. Leading refers to the distance between baselines in a block of copy, kerning is the space between two specific letters and tracking is the uniform spacing between all letters in a text. By slightly changing these settings, you can make your layout more legible, aesthetically pleasing and meaningful.

WEEK 3: LAYOUT

Even if you're putting together a simple, text-based document, intentional layout can mean the difference between readers digesting the entire content, and moving on to something more interesting. Variations in fonts and font styles, white space and proper leading, kerning and tracking all contribute to an aesthetically pleasing project.

Grids: A helpful way to develop a solid layout is to use a grid system, which enables you to find consistency in spacing and alignment. InDesign has a great grid feature that is easy to use and prime for laying out and customizing type.

WEEK 4: GETTING CREATIVE AND USING VISUAL HIERARCHY

As you advance in your typography skills, you can begin to experiment with more unique and creative layouts, and even customize your own lettering. Once you've gotten a grasp on how to create a solid layout, you can begin to experiment with different ways to create a visual hierarchy that keeps readers' interest.
Heirarchy: Keep your target audience in mind when testing different layouts and typefaces, and consider whether your solution meets their needs and expectations. For example, it might not be effective to use a highly decorative font for a project that is meant to portray a trustworthy and professional brand. Use what you've learned about combining typefaces to create different hierarchies.
Lettering: If you're especially ambitious in your journey to be good at typography, try your hand at lettering. This is "the art of drawing letters," it can also be done on the computer (usually in Adobe Illustrator).

GRIDS
"InDesign has a great grid feature that is easy to use and prime for laying out and customizing type."

COMBINING TYPEFACES
Serif WITH **San Serif**
CHARTER &
Din Alternate

TRACKING TRACKING T R A C K I N G

VISUAL HIERARCHY
TITLE
HEADING
Sub Heading
Run in Heading
Body Text

"The height of a lowercase x, or of any lowercase letter excluding the ascender and descender."

X–Height
Apex
Ascender
ap
Descender