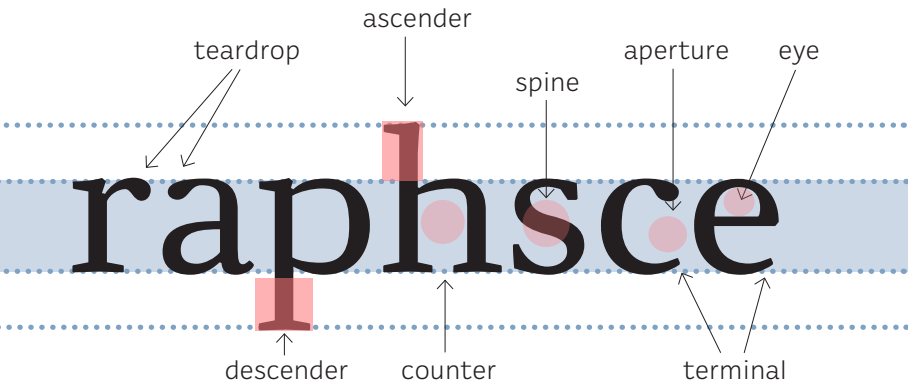
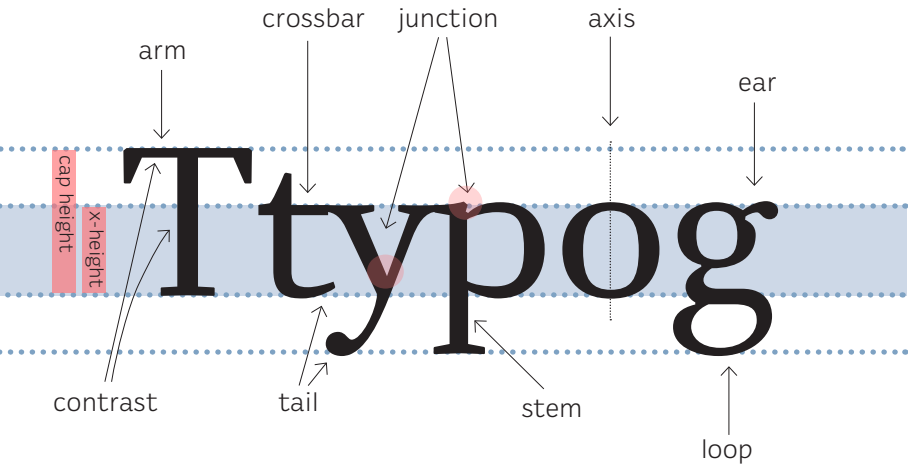


Parts of letters



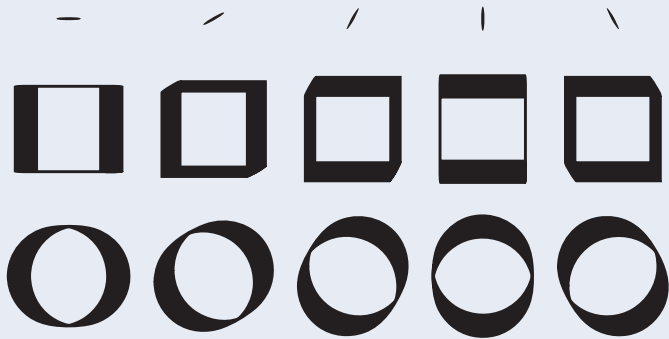
INTRODUCTION

The famous jazz musician Charlie Parker is said to have explained improvisations as follows: 'First you learn the instrument, then you learn the music, then you forget all that and just play.'

This book is a collection of the many rules that are helpful to know before taking on improvisation in type design. It shows you how to look at the positive and negative shapes, and it shows you how to adjust the shape perceptually to make them look proportionally as intended. As soon as you have learned all these little things, you can then forget about them, and go play with your designs.

Structure

When you draw with a pen, never push the pen, but always draw from top to bottom and from left to right. You can use the pen to guide you in the design of letter proportions. Varying the angle of the broad-nib pen results in varying distributions of thick and thin strokes.



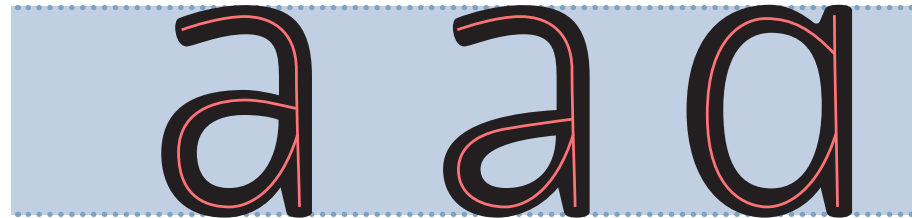
Letter skeleton

The letter skeleton is the basic structure that all other features are added on to.

Same skeleton



Different skeleton

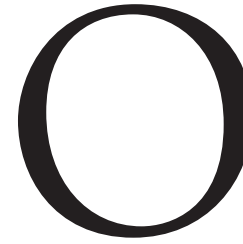
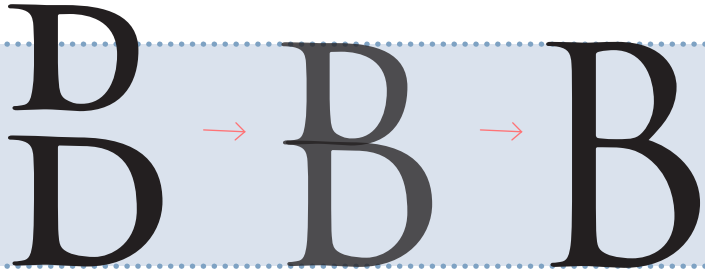


Humanist uppercase proportions

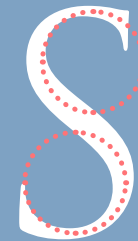
The humanist uppercase letters originated from ancient Roman inscriptions. The width of the round letters is dictated by the circle. This results in highly different letter widths.

Trajan.

The 'B' is based on two 'Ds', which are scaled down in size in order to fit on top of one another. Letters that follow from the 'B', will consequently be narrow.



The letters of two vertical strokes, generally follows the width of the 'O'.



The 'S' is created out of two circles.



Serifs and balance

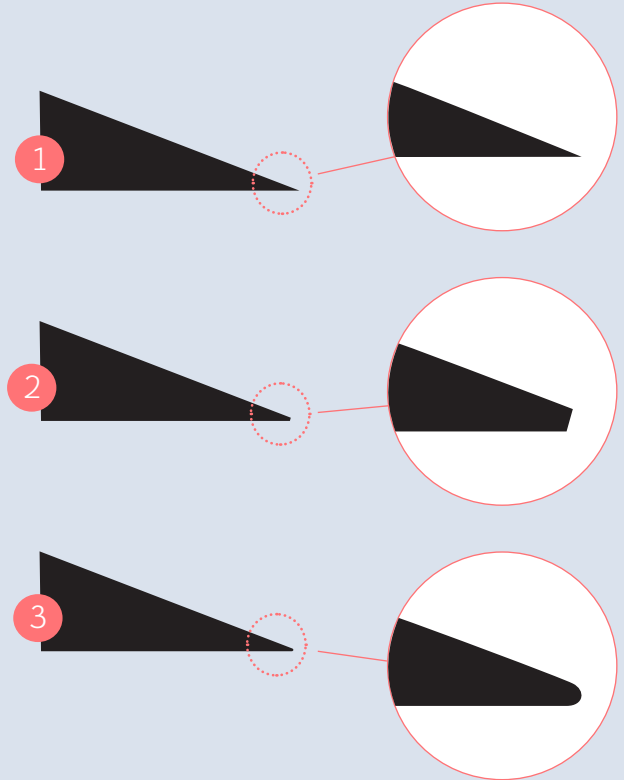
Letters such as 'f' and 'r' sometimes appear to be leaning forward. This may be alleviated by extending the baseline serif to the right.

Capsa and Mafra.



Pointy acute angles

Never create pointy digital-looking acute angles, as these are visually unappealing **1**. Your acute angles should always be slightly cut off **2** or rounded **3**.



Diacritics

For text typefaces, the diacritics should generally have the same optical weight as the letter.

Stag Sans.

Ã Ñ Ç Í Ñ Ŝ Ů
å ñ ē ě ħ à ũ

Always check your diacritics in small point sizes – they may turn out to be surprisingly illegible

Vertical alignment

To unify the vertical alignment, you may use the placement of the grave and acute accents as your guideline for centring the other diacritics.

Swift Neue and Frutiger Next.



Ogonek

The horizontal placement of the ogonek should not exceed the width of the letter. In most cases it will be placed to the horizontal right, except when used with symmetrical letters such as 'Ų' and 'Ų'. The ogonek should generally appear to be part of the letter and will therefore often have to be adjusted to fit the base glyph.

Adobe Jenson.



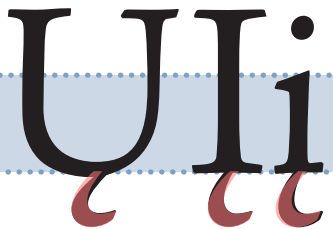
E A

The image shows the uppercase letters 'E' and 'A' in a black serif font. Below each letter is a red ogonek mark. The ogonek on 'E' is positioned to the right of the letter's base, while the ogonek on 'A' is positioned to the left of the letter's base.



e a u

The image shows the lowercase letters 'e', 'a', and 'u' in a black serif font. Below each letter is a red ogonek mark. The ogonek on 'e' is positioned to the right of the letter's base, while the ogonek on 'a' and 'u' are positioned to the left of the letter's base.



U I i

The image shows the uppercase letters 'U' and 'I' and the lowercase letter 'i' in a black serif font. Below each letter is a red ogonek mark. The ogonek on 'U' is positioned to the right of the letter's base, while the ogonek on 'I' and 'i' are positioned to the left of the letter's base.

Tilde

The tilde should be optically centred over the letter. The spine may be either horizontal or oblique. It is symmetrical in proportions, with the ends being narrower than the middle.

Didot Display, Avenir Next and Sauna.



Ã ñ õ ã

The image shows the uppercase letters 'Ã', 'ñ', 'õ', and 'ã' in a black serif font. Each letter has a red tilde mark above it. The tilde on 'ñ' is positioned to the right of the letter's base, while the tildes on 'Ã', 'õ', and 'ã' are positioned to the left of the letter's base. Red diagonal lines are drawn through the tildes on 'ñ' and 'ã' to indicate their placement.



Ñ Ñ Õ ã

The image shows the uppercase letters 'Ñ', 'Ñ', 'Õ', and 'ã' in a black serif font. Each letter has a red tilde mark above it. The tilde on the first 'Ñ' is positioned to the right of the letter's base, while the tildes on the second 'Ñ', 'Õ', and 'ã' are positioned to the left of the letter's base. Red diagonal lines are drawn through the tildes on the second 'Ñ' and 'ã' to indicate their placement.



ã ñ õ ã

The image shows the uppercase letters 'ã', 'ñ', 'õ', and 'ã' in a black serif font. Each letter has a red tilde mark above it. The tilde on 'ã' is positioned to the right of the letter's base, while the tildes on 'ñ', 'õ', and 'ã' are positioned to the left of the letter's base. Red diagonal lines are drawn through the tildes on 'ñ' and 'õ' to indicate their placement.

4. LETTERS INTO WORDS

Type design equals word design. If your letters do not function when put together, your typeface will not work at all. You need your letters to harmonise and thrive in each other's company. It has to be a joint venture, where each letter adjusts its skills and special qualities to meet the needs of the group. Adjustments to one letter will influence other letters, which in turn will also need adjustment.

You should always be prepared to 'kill your darlings' for the sake of the overall goal.

Starting letters

When initiating the design of a new typefaces, you should begin with letters that are commonly used and have recurring shapes.

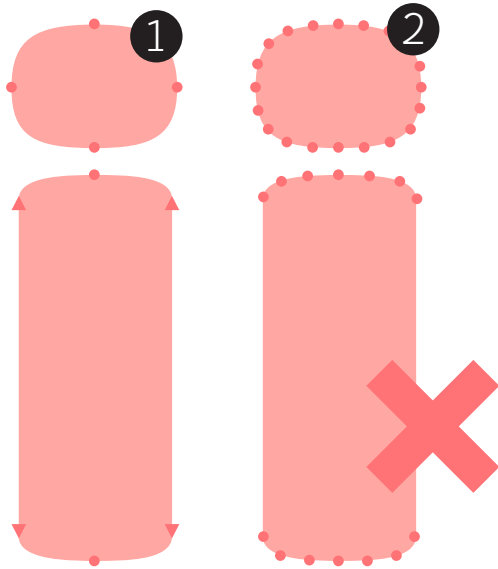
Below are a few examples.



n o a b
N O H E

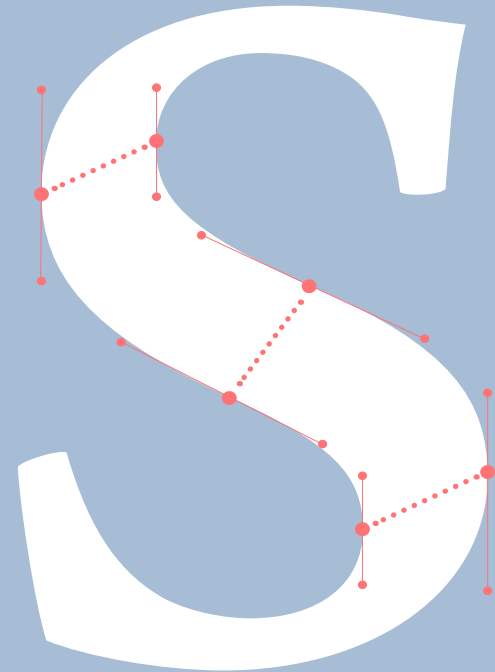
Simplicity

The fewer anchor points, the more dynamic the curves will appear. Always remember to work in PostScript curves **1**. Do not design in TrueType curves **2**.



Harmony

Anchor points on opposing sides should be placed as close together as possible. If the stroke refers to the broad-nib pen, the anchor points' placement should relate to the edges of the pen when writing the letter.





Weight and spacing

The golden rule of spacing is that the space around the letters should equal the space inside the letters.

When adding weight to the black, you change both the amount of black and the amount of white inside. Following this, bolder weights should be more narrowly spaced than lighter weights.

To maintain an even amount of space inside and around the letters, wide typefaces should be more widely spaced than narrow typefaces.



Rhythm and spacing

Rhythm and regularity is essential for a functional typeface – bad spacing interrupts the rhythm.

For a steady rhythm, aim at creating a page with an even degree of greyness in the overall colour of the type.

In his book *Letters of Credit*, typographer Walter Tracy proposed the following method of spacing upper- and lowercase letters.

Ocre Serif.

Uppercase metrics

Divide the letters into the following groups:

Straight vertical strokes:

H B D E F I J K
L M N P R U

Round strokes:

O C D G P Q

Triangular letters:

A V W X Y

The odd ones:

S T Z

Step 1

Due to their symmetrical proportions, the standard letters of the uppercase alphabet are:

O H

Step 2

Start out with a row of the letter 'H'. You should aim for a distance from the stem to the outermost point of the side bearings that is a little less than half of the width between the two stems of the letter. The space between two adjoining 'Hs' will then be slightly less than the space between the stems.

H H H H H H H H H H

H H H H H H H H H H

Since bold weights normally have smaller counters, these weights will often be more narrowly fitted than lighter weights.