

DESKTOP PUBLISHING RULES

While there are no fast and hard rules, there are guidelines, best practices, and tried and true methods of arranging a page and doing desktop publishing that result in attractive pages that effectively communicate the intended message.

Rules Of Desktop Publishing

Use Only One Space After Punctuation

Should you put one space or two spaces after a period? The debate over how much space to put between sentences (whether they end with a period or other punctuation) may seem petty, but often it's the little details that make or break a design.

It is generally accepted that the practice of putting two spaces at the end of a sentence is a carry-over from the days of typewriters with monospaced typefaces. Two spaces, it was believed, made it easier to see where one sentence ended and the next began. Most typeset text, both before and after the typewriter, used a single space.

Today, with the prevalence of proportionally spaced fonts, some believe that the practice is no longer necessary and even detrimental to the appearance of text.

With monospaced typefaces every character takes up the same amount of space on the page. M uses the same amount of space as i. With proportionally spaced fonts, the characters take up an amount of space relative to their actual width - the i needs less space than the M.

The use of proportionally spaced type makes two spaces at the end of a sentence unnecessary. The extra spacing is often distracting and unattractive. It creates 'holes' in the middle of a block of text—trapped white space on a smaller scale.

Professional typesetters, designers, and desktop publishers should use one space only. Save the double spaces for typewriting, e-mail, term papers, or personal correspondence. For everyone else, do whatever makes you feel good.

Don't Use Double-Hard Returns After Paragraphs

With today's word processors and page layout applications it is possible to precisely control the amount of space between paragraphs. There is no longer a need for the old typewriter style of putting double hard returns to separate paragraphs (in computer terms that would be the equivalent of using the enter key to add space between lines).

Desktop publishing software and modern word processors use paragraph formatting to more precisely control spacing between paragraphs. One sign of a beginner in desktop publishing is the use of hard returns between paragraphs.

Paragraph formatting allows the user to specify an amount of space to be placed before or after a paragraph. With paragraph formatting, spacing can be controlled in smaller increments in order to achieve the best appearance based on the font, leading, and other elements of design.

Although readability and appearance should be your overriding concerns, using paragraph formatting instead of hard returns can help you fit more text on the page. It's one way to cheat at copyfitting, if applied consistently throughout a document.

Use Proper Typographical Punctuation

How To Create An Ellipsis

Elliptical periods, more commonly called ellipsis indicate the omission of text

or an interruption or hesitation. While it is quite common to use three periods, the more typographically desirable way to insert an ellipsis is to use the ellipsis character available in most fonts or create a custom ellipsis. In both cases, some finetuning of your ellipsis is often necessary.

1. Most fonts have a built-in ellipsis character. (**Option-semicolon** for Mac/**ALT 0133** for Windows) However, it generally will need adjusting for best appearance.
2. Some designers prefer to create their own ellipses in order to more fully control the spacing. Use periods with thin spaces between the periods. No space is too little, a full space is too much for typeset text.
3. Use period with full spaces but use kerning or tracking to reduce the spacing. Use the non-breaking space feature of your software to keep from having these custom ellipses break mid-character at the end of lines.
4. Because the ellipsis character in a front spaces out the periods more than using three individual periods, if the elliptical periods are followed by another period it may be necessary in some fonts to kern the ellipsis and the period or other punctuation to achieve uniform spacing.
5. If necessary, kern the ellipsis (from the front or custom-created) and the characters preceding and following it to add small amount of space. Don't use the space bar, that is usually too much space.

Pointers:

1. For best appearance always use carefully crafted ellipsis within display size text such as headlines and pull-quotes.
2. Refer to the instructions for your specific software on how to insert thin spaces and non-breaking spaces.
3. Some believe an ellipsis is actually four periods. That fourth period is not part of the ellipsis. It's a separate punctuation mark, sometimes called for, sometimes not.
4. The classic ellipsis is actually four spaces separated by three periods. The space at the beginning or end provides spacing between the ellipsis

character and preceding or following text, including punctuation.

How To Create And Use Dashes And Hyphens

One mark of professionally set type is the proper use of hyphens, en dashes, and em dashes. Each is a different size and has its own usage.

1. The size of the en and em dashes is roughly equivalent to the width of the lowercase n and m, respectively, for the typeface in which they are used.
2. En dashes (–) are primarily for showing duration or range as in 9:00–5:00 or 112–500 or Marh 15–31.
3. Em dashes (—) are the proper dashes to use in places of single or double hyphens (--) as punctuation. Similar to a parenthetical phrase (like this) the em dash sets apart clauses in a sentence.
4. Hyphens are for hyphenating words and to separate characters in a phone number (123-800-0123).
5. Create en dashes with **Option-hyphen** for Mac or **ALT 0150** for Windows.
6. Create em dashes with **Shift-Option-hyphen** for Mac or **ALT 0151** for Windows.

Pointers:

1. Sometimes en dashes and em dashes for a typeface are too small, too large, or too poorly spaced to be visually pleasing. Manually reducing or kerning them can improve their appearance.
2. Hyphens are usually shorter and thicker than the en dashes although it can vary by font and the difference may be very hard to discern, depending on the font.

How To Type Quotes, Apostrophes And Primes

Avoid the look of an amateur by properly using typographer's quotation marks (curly quotes) and apostrophes and primes in your desktop published documents.

1. Don't use the ' and " (**Shift + '**) marks on your keyboard for proper quotation marks and apostrophes.
2. On a Mac , use **Option+]** and **Shift+Option+]** for left (open) and right (closed) single quotes. For Windows, use **ALT 0145** and **ALT 0146** for left and right single quotes.
3. On a Mac , use **Option+[** and **Shift+Option+[** for left and right double quotes. For Windows, use **ALT 0147** and **ALT 0148** for left and right double quotation marks (curly quotes).
4. Called primes, use the upright tick mark ' for feet and minutes and " for inches and seconds as in 1'6" (1 foot, 6 inches) or 30'15" (30 minutes, 15 seconds).

Pointers:

1. Many programs offer an option to automatically (as you type or on demand) convert all ' and " marks to typographer's quotation marks. Use it to speed up the task but be careful about converting primes used to designate measurements.
2. Oversized curly quotes can add interest to pull quotes in your design.

How To Use and Design Hanging Punctuation

Attention to typographic detail is one aspect of design that separates the amateurs from the pros. Hanging punctuation, commonly used for pull-quotes, creates the illusion of a uniform edge for the text, with the punctuation outside the margins. It's also called optical alignment. Beyond punctuation, optical margin adjustments may be used to make subtle shifts to allow for shapes of letters and serifs, such as extending the edge of initial caps outside the outer margin.

Designing with Hanging Punctuation

The eye craves order and alignment. However, technically aligned text doesn't always look as if perfectly aligned because of the shape and size of characters

in text, especially punctuation. Optical alignment makes text edges look more orderly and balanced.

At typical body copy sizes, optical misalignment is rarely noticeable. However, at the larger text sizes used for pull-quotes and headlines the use of hanging punctuation adds a touch of refinement to the layout. It may take extra time to hang your punctuation, especially if your software has no automatic alignment options, but the results are noticeable.

Creating Hanging Punctuation

In some programs, hanging punctuation is an automated function. For other programs it requires some manual manipulation on the text.

For programs that don't have automatic options to hang punctuation you can use kerning or invisible characters to create the hanging punctuation effect.

Use Fewer Fonts

How many fonts are too many for one project and how do you know where to draw the line? A generally accepted practice is to limit the number of different typefaces to three or four. That doesn't mean you can't use more but be sure you have a good reason to do so.

Be consistent in the use of fonts. A different font for every headline, for instance, is confusing and can give your design a cluttered look. You can usually get away with more fonts in longer documents with many different design elements where only two to three different font appear on any one page spread.

Select a font for body copy and another for headlines. Use bold, italics, and different sizes of those fonts for captions, subheadings, decks, and other design elements. Depending on the design you might use a third font for initial caps, pull-quotes, or other selected items. You might add a fourth font for page

numbers or as a secondary body font for sidebars, but usually two or three are sufficient.

It is also wise to not make sudden typeface changes within a paragraph. Use the same typeface for body copy, using bold or italics to add small amounts of emphasis, if necessary. If greater emphasis is required—create a pull quote, set that copy in the margin, or create a sidebar using a different font to really set the information apart.

Bottomline is, there is no hard and fast rule says you can't use five, six, or even twenty different fonts in one document. However, consistency and readability are important to good design and too many font changes can distract and confuse the reader. Make your font choices carefully and consider how many typefaces will be seen together—longer, multi-page publications, such as magazines, can often tolerate a greater variety of typefaces. For brochures, ads, and other short documents, limit typefaces to one, two, or three.

Use More White Space

White space provides visual breathing room for the eye. It breaks up text and graphics. Add white space to make a page less cramped, confusing, or overwhelming.

White space can also be used to set a mood, convey a specific image. If you want a design to say “wealth, upscale, prestigious, or elegant” then use lots of white space. If you want a more down-to-earth, ordinary folks appeal, bring it down a notch or two. If you want to look cheap, mass-produced, or amateurish then fill the page to overflowing.

There are instances when trimming white space to the bare bones can and does work. However, in most cases, more of nothing is better.

However, there is no proper percentage of white space. If a page looks or feels crowded, it probably needs more white space. In general, more white space lends an upscale feel to a piece. More utilitarian documents use less white space.

Use All Caps with the Right Fonts

Acronyms and abbreviations within paragraphs are just a few letters set in all caps and are easy to read. Long headlines and especially paragraphs set with all caps are much more difficult to read and usually don't look as good as mixed case. Decorative fonts draw the eye and provide emphasis. All caps do the same thing. Combining the two techniques can overpower a page and overpower the reader.

- Avoid setting almost any Script typeface in all caps.
- Avoid using fonts with extreme serifs, swashes, or other decorative elements for all caps.
- Short headlines in all caps are better than long headlines in all caps.
- Fonts that are suitable for body text (serif or sans serif) are generally a better choice for all caps headlines than more decorative fonts.
- Nameplates and other text that serves as graphic embellishment can often be successful set with all capitals that are slightly more decorative than typical body text.
- For an elegant and more readable look than all caps, set headlines or short phrases in small caps or specially drawn all caps Titling fonts designed to be readable in all capitals.
- Pay careful attention to kerning (space between letters) when setting any headlines, including those in all caps, to avoid unsightly gaps between pairs of letters.

Readability is the guiding factor when using all caps. Use all caps in moderation. Stick primarily with plain sans serif or basic serif typefaces or specially designed Small caps and all caps Titling fonts for text in all capitals. Short headlines and other large type, such as newsletter nameplates, can take somewhat more decorative fonts in all caps.

Balance Line Length with Type Size

Line of type that are too long or too short slow down reading and comprehension. Combine the wrong line length with the wrong type size and the problem is magnified. The shorter the line length, the smaller the font should be—allowing more words to the line. The longer the line, the larger the font can be.

If the desired size of type and the line length used in the page layout are incompatible, one of them needs to change. Typically it is the font size that gets adjusted but don't be afraid to re-evaluate your page layout to accommodate wider or narrower text columns.

The line length rule applies primarily to body copy. Headlines, subheadings, and other small bits of text have more flexibility. Almost any reasonable line length will work in a design if combined with the right size font. The longer the line, the larger the font can be. The shorter the line, the smaller the font can be.