TENETS *of* TYPOGRAPHY © 2013 james howard miller

Stroked Text Appearance

Stroking text is problematic. Often relied upon to outline text set upon a mixed color background, it usually fails to take into account the pinching of letterforms, crowded kerning, and plugged counters caused by simply adding a stroke of contrasting color.

NOTE: Adding a stroke of the same color to make a font look heavier distorts and deforms its appearance. Choose instead a different typeface that already includes **bold** as a style.

To add strokes without distorting the characters, select the type using one of the Selection tools (not the Type tool), then use the Appearance Panel (Adobe Illustrator) to "Add New Stroke." Drag this stroke below *Characters* so the weight of the stroke is behind the letters. Set tracking values higher to accommodate spacing.

① **quintESSENT**
—**2 pt. stroke added; pinched letterforms and crowded spacing! *TYPE CRIME.***

② **quintESSENT**
—**2 pt. stroke added in Appearance Panel and dragged below *Characters*; letterforms look better, but spacing still crowded.**

③ **quintESSENT**
—**2 pt. stroke added in Appearance Panel and dragged below *Characters*, tracked to 75; spacing between letters now balanced.**

Scaling Vs. Skewing Of Letterforms

Scaling respects proportional size change; skewing does not. When changing the size of letterforms, care should be taken to keep the characters true. Avoid random stretching!

Stretching letters distorts their overall proportions and internal line weights. This typographic effrontery is committed both inadvertently (through careless use of software) and deliberately (in order to force type to fill a given space).

To change the size of letterforms without distorting the characters, hold down the Shift key to constrain height-to-width relationship, or use the Character Panel to change the point size. *Respect the font!*

① **distortWIDE**
—**Stretched horizontal. *TYPE CRIME.***

② **distortTALL**
—**Stretched vertical. *TYPE CRIME.***

③ **normalTEXT**
—**Normal text, proportion maintained.**

Mixing Typefaces Responsibly

Combining typefaces is an exercise of contrast. Every typeface has a voice—sometimes it whispers and sometimes it screams. Logical voice and category changes in a document are delineated by choosing typefaces that work together by virtue of their differences.

Mixing fonts from the same typeface family *(i.e. serif with serif, sans serif with sans serif)* creates a conflicting visual relationship as the viewer tries to unsuccessfully reconcile that which is neither the same nor exactly different; divisions in voice and category become muddied and uncertain.

Mixing fonts from different typeface families *(i.e. serif with sans serif, script with sans serif)* and the deliberate mixing of style and weight within a single typeface family, improves contrast and allows changes in voice and category to be more readily discerned..

BAD TYPE COMBOS

serif **serif**
sans serif
sans serif

novelty
novelty

script *script*

—**Fonts are too similar to provide adequate contrast; creates conflicting visual relationship! *TYPE CRIME.***

GOOD TYPE COMBOS

bold/*italic* (Cremona)
serif sans serif
bold/light (Myriad Pro)
NOVELTY sans serif
script sans serif
slab serif sans serif

—**Fonts and style/weight differences are adequately dissimilar to provide significant visual contrast.**

Vocabulary: letterform, character, font, typeface family, point size, line weight, kerning, tracking, counter, serif, sans serif, novelty, script, slab serif, type crime

Number Of Fonts Per Document

Three or less is the convention, type purists preferring to use only one, subscribing to the school of, 'less is more.' More than 3 fonts in a document is like too many voices all clamoring to be heard at the same time. No one gets through!

Convey a singular idea with just one typeface. A single font is easier to keep harmonious. It informs and gives notice in a sedate, steady voice (some say conservative) and is *not* in a hurry. Design with one font to deliver a *concordant* message—fish & chips.

To entertain and capture attention, use two or three typefaces. More than one typeface allows you to convey a message in higher contrast, selling rather than informing. Balance your font choices like voices in a chorus of practiced unison, some singing soprano, others baritone. Favor differences over likenesses for an artfully contrived harmony of *contrast*—asparagus & marshmallows.

Pro fonts offer a plethora of styles and variations enabling the establishment of clear visual hierarchy using only one font. Pro fonts come with expanded character sets as well as a broad selection of glyphs—ligatures, small capitals, old-style numerals, ornaments, fractions, accented letters, and other special characters needed for typesetting a variety of languages.

①
RULE OF THUMB
—Three or less.

—More than 3 fonts per document tends to inhibit rather than enhance the message. *TYPE CRIME.*

②
DESIGNING WITH ONE FONT
—Delivers a message using one voice; automatically *concordant*.
—Harmonious, sober, singular, conservative.
—Easier than designing with multiple fonts.
—Pro fonts offer a broad style range of styles for variation and emphasis from within a single typeface.

③
DESIGNING WITH MULTIPLE FONTS
—Delivers a message using two or three voices balanced in a chorus of deliberate *contrast*.
—Favors difference over likeness.
—Entertains and sells rather than informs.
—More difficult than designing with just one font.
—Pro fonts can be successfully combined with multiple fonts for expanded variation.

Stacking Text

Typefaces are designed with specific kerning relationships so letters sit gracefully side by side, not one on top of another. There is no accommodation for spacing between vertical letters unless the font is purposely designed to be set in that fashion. Hand drawn lettering can be wonderfully effective in this area, but most fonts support stacking poorly or not at all.

Stacks of lowercase letters are especially awkward because the ascenders and descenders make the vertical spacing appear uneven, and the varying width of each character make the stacks look like they want to topple over.

Uppercase letters form more stable stacks than lowercase, but piles more than three letters high still appear precarious, particularly the letter, "I." Centering the stack helps (as opposed to flush left) but only to a limited extent.

Better to rotate the line of text from horizontal to vertical. This preserves the natural spacing between letters sharing a baseline. If placed on the left side of a page, rotate so the text runs bottom-to-top; if on the right side of a page, rotate so the text runs top-to-bottom.

NOTE: Book spines in the USA commonly run top-to-bottom.

①

teetering TOPPLING unstable AWKWARD

—Stacked text more than 3 letters high. *TYPE CRIME.*

②

bottom-to-top . . . on the left side of a page   **ROTATE TO VERTICAL**   **preserve baseline**   **TOP-TO-BOTTOM** . . . on the right side of a page

—Better; text is rotated 90 degrees, clockwise on the right, counterclockwise on the left. Preserves kerning and baseline.

Vocabulary: upper/lower case, typesetting, ascenders/descenders, glyphs, small caps, old-style numerals, ligatures, ornaments, baseline, Pro fonts, visual hierarchy