

Typographic Variables

THESE ARE THE INDIVIDUAL CONTROLS THAT YOU HAVE TO CHANGE WORDS, SENTENCES & PARAGRAPHS AND GIVE THEM MORE EMPHASIS OR TO ENHANCE THEIR SPECIFIC MEANING. THE AMOUNT OF ATTENTION (OR LACK OF) THAT IS PAID TO THEIR USE WILL HAVE A DIRECT EFFECT ON THE EFFICIENCY AND CREATIVITY OF YOUR DESIGN.

USE THEM TO ELIMINATE A GENERIC/DEFAULT LOOK AND CREATE SOMETHING EITHER MORE SPECIAL OR SOPHISTICATED. CERTAINLY USE THEM TO IMPROVE READABILITY & TO IMPROVE OVERALL TYPOGRAPHIC COLOR.

Use the typographic variables of:

- TYPEFACE
- SIZE
 - Display (headings and subheadings)
 - Text
- WEIGHT
 - Light
 - Book or regular
 - Bold
 - Ultra bold
- CASE
 - U & LC
 - All Caps
 - Small Caps
 - All LC
- POSTURE
 - Regular
 - Italics
 - Back slant
- STYLE
 - Historical period
 - Personality
- POSITION
 - Top
 - Bottom
 - Right
 - Left
- DIRECTION
 - Left to right
 - Top to bottom
 - Diagonal
- COLOR (Hue)
- SPACING
 - Word Spacing
 - Letter spacing (Tracking or Kerning)
 - Leading
 - Overall white space (composition)
- ALIGNMENT
 - Left
 - Right
 - Centered
 - Justified & Force Justified
 - Nested
- HORIZONTAL SCALING
 - Extended
 - Condensed

Keep in mind these general rules of thumb:

- As line length increases, so should leading
- Sans-serif type usually requires more leading
- The optimum number of characters (letters, etc.) per line is generally believed to be no more or less than 40–60 characters. The line length might also be determined as 1 1/2 to 2 times the length of the lower case alphabet of the font being used or set.
- Tight tracking (global letter spacing) is usually not helpful for type sizes less than 14 pts.

Grouping and Hierarchy

- GROUPING is based on the idea that things that look similar in some way will tend to look like they have the same or equal value of importance. Typical examples of typographic groups within a layout might be: all headings, or all sub-headings, or all captions or all pull quotes, etc. Another version of grouping on a more sophisticated level might be: all proper names, all authors names, all page numbers, etc.

One of the keys to good typographic design is how the designer treats each of these groupings. She/he needs to be consistent in how the members (words or letters or numbers) of each group are treated. It also must be clear that there are groups in the first place. Grouping is a form of emphasis and aids in clarifying reading by allowing the reader to quickly pick out smaller chunks of text and meaning.

- HIERARCHY is a further refinement of grouping. It is the technique of creating the visual perception that certain groups are more, or less, important than other groups within the same layout. One of the true arts of good typography is the balance that the designer creates between the various groupings of text by carefully considering the relative importance that the words actually mean. There is no hard and fast rule of how the various groupings should always be treated. Therefore, it is up to the designer to carefully read and understand the text first and then apply the typographic variables appropriately to visually emphasize words, and groups of words, in the most effective order and combinations.