

Typography Guidelines For Websites, Computer Screens, and Mobile Devices

How to Balance Site Speed, Readability, Legibility, Time on Site, and Ease of Use

With the recent changes to Google, time spent on site is a significant ranking factor. If most people don't stay on your site for at least a minute, it will hurt your rankings.

The overall user experience, how aesthetically pleasing the page is, and how engaging the content is, are all important. But what if you're doing something by accident that's driving visitors away?

For example, you might be using a typeface like Arial for your text, which was designed for railway and bus station signs. The reader gets tired and clicks off. They don't know why your site made them tired, but it's because the font wasn't designed for body text.

So to improve the time spent on your website site and not drive people away by accident, I've written the Typography Guidelines For Websites to help make your type sticky and keep readers engaged longer.

Introduction to Typefaces

Typefaces come in serif, sans serif, script, ornamental, monospaced, symbols, and more. You can start your journey learning about typography by looking at Wikipedia.

[Wikipedia Typeface Terminology and History](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Typeface) <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Typeface>

[Wikipedia List of Typefaces](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_typefaces) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_typefaces

So what's the difference between a typeface and a font? A typeface includes the entire font family, consisting of different styles like italic, bold, condensed, black, light, and more. A font refers to a specific type, size, and weight. For example, 18 point Helvetica Condensed.

Traditional Font Usage

Serif fonts like Times New Roman have little extensions on the ends of their strokes. This makes them easier to read in long passages of printed text.

18 Point New Times Roman

The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dog.

Sans serif fonts - meaning without serifs - like Arial and Helvetica were designed for signage. This makes them easy to read at a distance or while traveling at high speed on a train.

18 Point Helvetica

The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dog.

Modern sans serif fonts - including Verdana, Open Sans, and Quicksand - are more legible than the old ones. They are designed for reading on the computer and mobile devices. They can be used for both headlines and text.

18 Point Open Sans

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

Script fonts like Comic Sans mimic calligraphy and handwriting. They are best suited for funny logos, sticky notes, and greeting cards.

18 Point Comic Sans

The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dog.

Ornamental fonts are highly decorative. They are usually used to create themes for posters, parties, invitations, and logos.

18 Point Impact

The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dog.

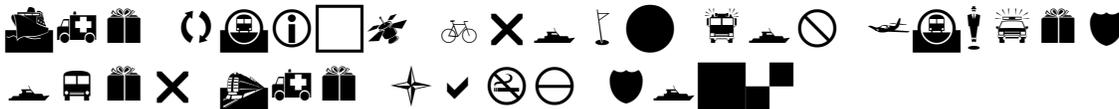
Monospaced fonts like Courier and Andale Mono mimic old typewriters. They are not widely used anymore except in programming, or coding, as they are difficult to read on the computer screen.

18 Point Andale Mono

The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dog.

Symbols like Webdings are made up of graphic symbols. They can be used to dress up a page with simple visual elements.

18 Point Webdings



Best Practices for Website & Mobile Typefaces

Traditionally serif fonts were used for lengthy text passages. Sans serif fonts were used for headlines. Many newspapers, magazines, books, and print publications are still designed this way.

Our focus, though, is on the computer screen, not print. We want people to stay on our websites as long as possible.

That means clean, straightforward design and layouts. It also means choosing fonts for readability and legibility, in addition to how they look.

Fonts like Times, Arial, Helvetica, and Courier were designed for print. They can be used for headlines but best avoided for text on the computer screen because they can tire the eyes quickly.

Fonts like Impact and Comic Sans have particular uses. For example, Impact works for slide shows when you want to make a point. Comic Sans and other cursives mimic handwriting, so they work for signatures and greeting cards.

Some fonts like Georgia, Verdana, and Trebuchet were designed specifically for the computer screen. Any of them would make an excellent choice for use on your websites. The easier it is on the reader, the longer they'll stay.

18 Point Verdana

The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dog.

The most recent sans serif fonts were designed for legibility and readability using small font sizes on mobile devices. They include Apple's San Francisco, Microsoft's Segoe UI, and Roboto, used by the Google Android operating system.

18 Point Roboto

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

Since system fonts are built into the operating systems, they are the fastest to display. They also add familiarity to text because the device owner is comfortable with it.

Readability Do's and Don'ts

Don't use more than three fonts on any one website as a general rule. Choose one font for text and links. A second for headlines, subheads, and everything else. If you need a third, use it for testimonials, pull quotes, call-outs, or captions near photos.

Your website design - as a general rule - shouldn't have more than three or four colors. It's the same with text. You want to minimize the use of colored text.

When you use colored text, make it match the color harmony of the rest of your site. For example, you could make the headlines and post titles match the background color of your site.

Some colors like red should be used sparingly or avoided altogether. If you need to draw attention to certain areas of your site, consider using bold or italic font versions instead of adding more colors.

Avoid putting light text on dark or black backgrounds. It can be used for effect, but not for any length of text, because it tends to sparkle, hurt the eyes, and tire the reader quickly.

Avoid using light-colored fonts like medium gray on a white background as it strains the eyes and makes your message hard to read. Stick with a black-colored typeface that was designed for screen reading and maximum legibility.

Keep in mind that people with glasses and older readers may have a hard time with small font sizes. Whereas 10 point type might be suitable in print, consider using 16 pixels or larger for screen text.

Avoid double spacing after periods. It's an old habit, carried over from the typewriter days and mono-spaced fonts like Courier. All digital serif and sans serif fonts are proportionally spaced and do not need a double space after the period.

Never use ALL CAPITAL letters, as it makes the text 10 times harder to read. The only time all caps should be used is in specific legal passages, where you want the reader to slow down and read every word very carefully.

Be sure to use headlines to help guide the eye. They break the text into logical chunks and act as teasers, pulling the reader into different story sections. It also helps improve your on-page SEO (search engine optimization).

Choose a text font with plenty of line spacing between the lines (aka leading). You want the reader to be comfortable, which means they'll stay on your site a lot longer.

Never justify, or hyphenate your text. It's a bad habit that's been carried over from the metal typesetting days. Always use a ragged right edge, as it's proven to help screen readability.

Best Typefaces for Website Design

* In the font list below, an asterisk indicates a core font for the web. The core fonts include Andale Mono, Arial, Arial Black, Comic Sans MS, Courier New, Georgia, Impact, Times New Roman, Trebuchet MS, Verdana, and Webdings.

These fonts are stored locally on all computers. They are called up by your web browser when viewing a web page that uses them. That means they are the second fastest when it comes to page load speed.

Indicates a Google web font. These fonts are usually stored on Google. They get sent by Google's servers when viewing a web page that uses them.

The more Google fonts you use, the more your page speed slows down. Since Google uses page speed as an essential SEO ranking factor, you may want to limit Google fonts to one or two fonts per website.

@ **Bold red type** indicates the best choice for readability. These fonts were designed for screen reading.

Serif Fonts

Cardo # - An elegant old-style text font based on classic literature.

Crimson #@ - A rounded and open serif designed for lengthy reading.

EB Garamond # - A famous design for books and readability in print.

Georgia *@ - Designed for text clarity on computer monitors.

Quattrocento #@ - Classic and elegant. It's very legible for body text.

Times New Roman * - For print newspapers and economy of space.

Sans Serif Fonts

Arial * - Very similar to Helvetica. Suitable for signage and headlines.

Arial Black * - A bold and extended version of Arial.

Cabin # - A humanist sans serif based on the Gill Sans font.

Droid Sans # - Optimized for user interfaces and mobile handsets.

Helvetica - Initially created for signage in railway stations.

Helvetica Neue - A reworking of Helvetica for better readability.

Lato #@ - A sleek and expressive sans for big monitors and mobile.

Open Sans #@ - Designed for web and mobile, it's readable at small sizes.

Oswald # - A gothic style for advertisements and newspaper headlines.

Quicksand #@ - A display sans with excellent readability at small sizes.

Roboto #@ - Used by the Android operating system, it has high readability.

System *@ - The default system font for the device, designed for mobile reading.

Trebuchet MS *@ - A humanist sans serif made for computer screens.

Ubuntu # - Designed for clarity on desktop and mobile computing screens.

Verdana *@ - Humanist sans serif designed for clarity on the computer screen.

Work Sans #@ - Optimized for on-screen and mobile text usage.

Script Fonts

Comic Sans * - A casual script made to look like comic books.

Architects Daughter # - Inspired by technical drawing and natural handwriting.

Cherry Cream Soda # - Bubbly and enthusiastic retro teen feel.

Lobster # - A thick display script for restaurant headlines.

Permanent Marker # - Fun and whimsical handwriting with a felt pen.

Schoolbell # - Playful handwriting from a 2nd Grade student.

Ornamental Fonts

Impact * - When you want to make slideshows and bold statements.

Bangers # - Inspired by comic books and superheroes.

Cabin Sketch # - Inspired by camping trips and teenage doodles.

MedievalSharp # - A gothic style inspired by stone cutting.

Bevan # - A bold slab serif display face inspired by the old west.

Corben # - Nice-looking curvy display font for bold titles.

Monospaced Fonts

Andale Mono * - Designed for software development but rarely used.

Courier New * - Made to look like an old typewriter. Often used for testimonials.

Anonymous Pro # - A fixed-width font designed with coding in mind.

Symbols

Webdings * - No letters, just decorative dingbats and symbols.

References

Core Fonts for the Web

According to Wikipedia, [Microsoft initiated core fonts for the web in 1996](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Microsoft_initiated_core_fonts_for_the_web_in_1996) to make a standard pack of fonts for the Internet. The Core fonts were designed to:

- 1) Be highly legible on screen.
- 2) Offer a wide range of "timbres" within a few typefaces.
- 3) Support extensive internationalization.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Core_fonts_for_the_Web

Google Web Fonts

Google Web Fonts are available through the Google Web Fonts API. All Google fonts in the directory are available for use on your website under an open-source license and are served by Google servers. Some WordPress themes like Focus make it easy to include Google Fonts without any code.

You can learn [how to add Google fonts to your web pages](https://code.google.com/apis/webfonts/) here:

<http://code.google.com/apis/webfonts/>

You can [view the entire Google web font library](https://fonts.google.com) here:

<https://fonts.google.com>

How to Improve Your Site Speed

Each web font called from Google can add up to half a second to your page load time. Each core web font adds a quarter second to page load time. So unless you have a compelling reason - like brand consistency - use the default system font for the fastest page speed.

[Case Study - Analyzing Web Font Performance](#)

<https://www.keycdn.com/blog/web-font-performance>

[How to Call Up Default System Fonts](#)

<https://github.com/necolas/normalize.css/issues/665>

How to Analyze Your Website Speed

[Google Page Speed Tool](#)

<https://developers.google.com/speed/pagespeed/insights/>

Conclusion

I hope Typography Guidelines For Websites will help you make better decisions when choosing type. In addition to site speed, you want to deliver maximum comfort, legibility, and readability. You want to keep people reading once they land on your site. If you follow these few simple guidelines, you'll do just that.

Wishing you all the best for success,

Michael W. Campbell

Skype: [dynamic888](#)

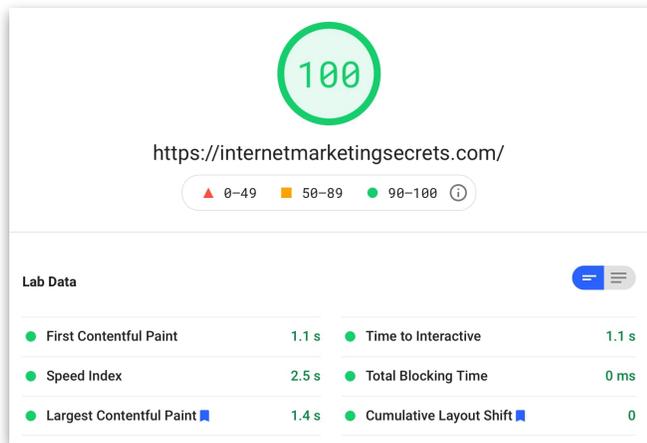
Twitter: [@dmcorp](#)

<https://InternetMarketingSecrets.com>

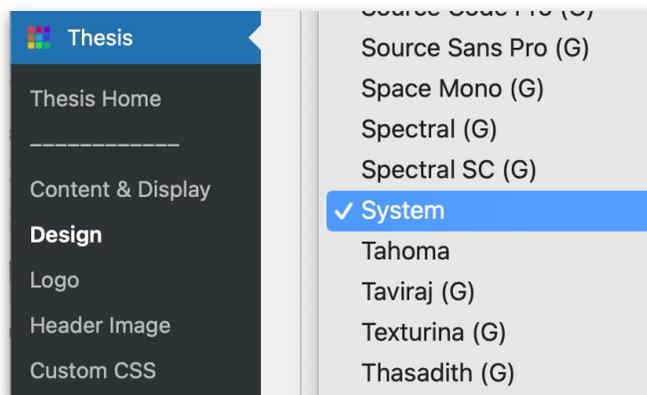
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Postscript

Last I checked, Google said my website's Page Speed was a perfect 100.



Since I do not need any specific fonts for branding purposes, I call up the default system typeface for the device. This gives my website the fastest possible load time.



Setting the System font in Thesis

I am running the [Thesis WordPress theme and Focus skin by Chris Pearson](#). It has golden ratio typography and was designed for speed. Plus, it has built-in SEO (search engine optimization), affiliate redirects, modular content, and customizable templates.

The advertisement features the word 'FOCUS' in large, bold, black letters at the top. Below it, the text reads 'Focus WordPress Theme'. A list of features follows, each preceded by a blue checkmark:

- World's fastest WordPress Theme
- Gorgeous content presentation styles
 - Golden Ratio Typography
- Easy, powerful customizations
 - Conquers responsive design
 - Visual template editor
- Optimized for SEO, conversions, and speed

At the bottom, there is a green button with the text 'Check out FOCUS →'.

It also helps to have an excellent hosting company that makes site speed a priority. I've been using [Chillidog Hosting's "All Beef" option](#) for about three years now. Their customer service is exceptional, site speed outstanding, and it includes a Cpanel with free SSL certificates.

The advertisement features a red and white icon of a piece of meat at the top. Below it, the text reads 'All Beef'. A price tag shows 'As low as \$19 per month'. A list of features follows, each preceded by a red checkmark:

- Host up to 15 sites
- 10GB disk space
- Unlimited Bandwidth

At the bottom, there is a red button with the text 'Get grillin!'.

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