

GR M10 Module 7: Understand the Typographic Rules Before You Break Them

Baskerville
Bembo
Bodoni
Caslon
Centaur
Franklin Gothic
Frutiger
Futura
Garamond
Gill Sans
Goudy Old Style
Helvetica
News Gothic
Palatino
Perpetua
Sabon
Times New Roman
Univers
(1)

“Typography is what language looks like” - Ellen Lupton (To gain a visual sense of what this means, have a look at the following video from the Vancouver Film School: <http://weblogs.elearning.ubc.ca/textologies/archives/043452.html>)

“When the type is poorly chosen, what the words say linguistically and what the letters imply visually are disharmonious, dishonest, [and] out of tune” - Robert Bringhurst (Elements of Typographic Style)

The 15 Rules of Typography

These guidelines are not absolute or definitive, but they are representative of time-tested typographic “rules.” Remember, rules must first be understood before they can be broken. Once you have a good foundation of these rules, you can freely explore ways to creatively “break the rules”.

Rule One:

For optimum legibility, choose classical, time-tested typefaces. These typefaces should be drawn and crafted with consistency among characters, and exhibit highly legible proportions. Examples include: Baskerville, Bembo, Bodoni, Caslon, Centaur, Franklin Gothic, Frutiger, Futura, Garamond, Gill Sans, Goudy Old Style, Helvetica, News Gothic, Palatino, Perpetua, Sabon, Times New Roman, and Univers.(1)

Rule Two:

Be mindful not to use too many different typefaces at any one time. The main reason for using more than one typeface is to create emphasis or to separate one part of the text from another. When too many different typefaces, and type treatments are used, the reader is unable to determine what is and what is not important. (2)

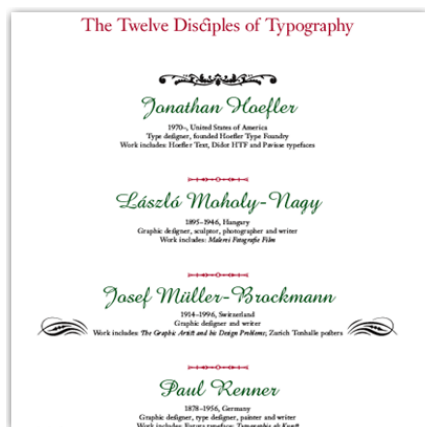
Vitamin Water label establishes a clear visual hierarchy while using a single typeface. Emphasis has been created by using different type size, and weight. (3)



(2)



(3)



a a a

(6)

a a a
(7)

Rule Three:

Avoid combining typefaces that are too similar in appearance. If the reason for combining typefaces is to create emphasis, it is important to avoid the ambiguity caused by combining types that are too similar in appearance. Use typefaces appearing very different from one another. (4)

Rule Four:

For text type use sizes that according to legibility studies prove most readable. These sizes generally range from 8 to 12 points for text that is read from an average distance of 12 to 14 inches.

Rule Five:

Avoid using too many different type sizes and weights at the same time. Some experts recommend using no more than two sizes, one for display titles and one for text type. (5)

Rule Six:

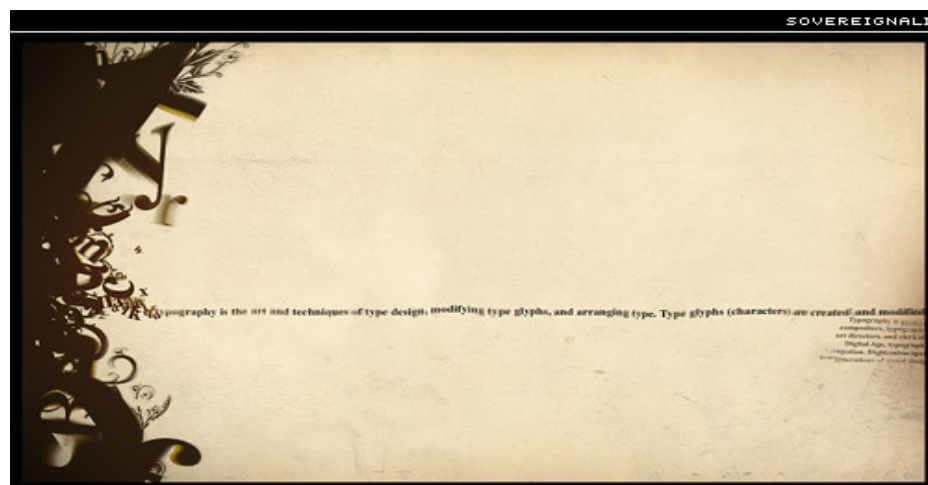
Use text types of book weight (6). Avoid typefaces appearing too heavy or too light. Text typefaces that are too light cannot easily be distinguished from their backgrounds. In typefaces that are too heavy, counterforms diminish in size, making them less legible.

Rule Seven:

Use typefaces of medium width (7). Avoid typefaces that appear extremely wide or narrow in width. Rather than distorting text by stretching or squeezing the text width, use type families that include condensed and extended faces that fall within accepted proportional norms.

Rule Eight:

Use appropriate line lengths. Lines that are too short (8) or too long disrupt the reading process. As the eye travels along overly long lines, negotiating the next line becomes difficult. Reading overly short lines creates choppy eye movements that tire and annoy the reader. “When working with text type, anything from 45 to 75 characters is widely-regarded as a satisfactory length of line for a single-column page set in a serified text face in a text size. The 66-character line (counting both letters and spaces) is widely regarded as ideal.”(Brighurst)



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iFont, iPhone

(10)

Rule Nine:

For text type, use lines spacing that easily carries the eye from one line to the next. Lines of type with too little space between them slow the reading process (9); the eye is forced to take in several lines at one. By adding one to four points of space between lines of type (depending on the specific typeface), readability can be improved.



(9)

The last lines of paragraphs are called widows if they are particularly short. Orphans are short segments of a paragraph (usually one or two lines) that are stranded at the bottom or top of a column. I am a lonely orphan.

(11)

Rule Ten:

For optimum readability, use a flush left, ragged right type alignment (10). Although in special situations, other type alignments (flush right, ragged left; centered, and justified) are acceptable, the trade off is always a loss, however slight, in readability.

Rule Eleven:

Strive for consistent, rhythmic rags (10). The purpose of effective rags is not only to achieve aesthetic beauty, but to enable readers to move gently and effortlessly down a text column. Effective rags consist of lines establishing an informal but consistent pattern of line endings.

Rule Twelve:

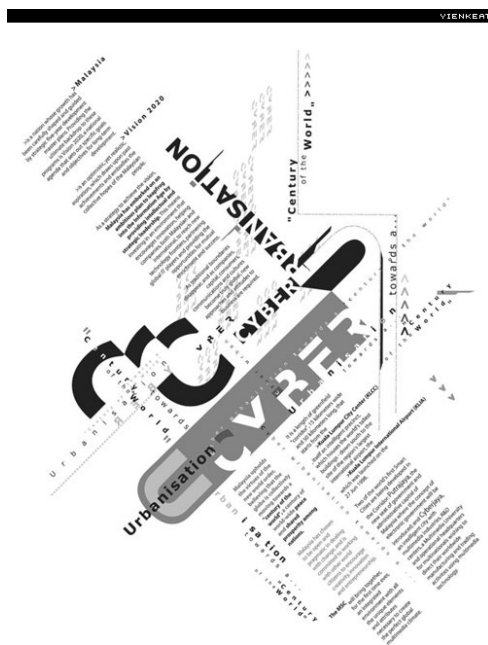
Clearly indicate paragraphs, but be careful not to upset the integrity and visual consistency of the text. The two most common ways of indicating paragraphs are by indenting and inserting additional space between paragraphs.

Rule Thirteen:

Avoid widows and orphans whenever possible. A widow is a word or very short line at either the beginning or end of a paragraph. An orphan is a single syllable at the end of a paragraph. (11)

Rule Fourteen:

Emphasize elements within text with discretion and without disturbing the flow of reading. (12) You can use italics, underlined type, color type, different typeface, small capitals, bold type within light type, light type within bold type, larger type, and outline type to emphasize elements but never overdo it. Use minimum means for maximum results.



(12)

Rule Fifteen:

When working with type and color, ensure that sufficient contrast exists between type and its background (paragraph nineteen). Too little contrast in hue, value or saturation, or a combination of these factors, can result in type that is difficult, if not impossible, to read.

Exercise:

Using the 15 rules of typography, analyse the typesetting of the “Best of the Bay Area” spread. First paragraph should discuss what is GOOD, and the second paragraph what is BAD in this typesetting example. Please explain how would you fix the BAD part.

BEST of the BAY AREA 2009

What is it about this place?

Is it the inventive people, the over-the-top views, the cutting-edge aesthetic—or the killer cocktails?

We say all of the above, and more. In our annual Best of the Bay Area issue, we declare what we love about living here right now, plus the 10 best ways to make each a part of a very good life. Here are a few of our picks. *Edited by Sarah Mueller*

what we love
That the latest boom in SoMa is in... museums

The big museum in the park got most of the press last year, but meanwhile, the Yerba Buena arts district, in SoMa between Market and Howard and Third and Fourth, is becoming a true cultural nexus. New museums have opened and established ones have relocated, institutions are renewing themselves and future ones—like the Jewish Museum—have broken ground. All this action has created a vortex that's drawing in art lovers and those in search of history.

"The new energy in the neighborhood is palpable," says Yerba Buena Center for the Arts executive director Ken Foster. "There are more tourists, more residents, new businesses, and more foot traffic. As a result, we're attracting more people, and it's an incredible time to be here."

So many museums in such a small area means more opportunity for all. "We hope that all of the organizations in the Yerba Buena area will work with one another, rather than competing," says Rene de Guzman, visual curator for YBCA. He's thinking of cooperative events, such as the recent joint ticket with the Cartoon Arts Museum and even a universal pass to all the museums. "I can't think of a better place to be in terms of collaboration and support," says Denise Bradley, executive director of the Museum of the African Diaspora, which opened in the St. Regis Hotel in December. She cites, as one example, the Yerba Buena Black Panthers exhibition, during which MoAD cohosted the book signing for ex-Panther Kathleen Cleaver, while YBCA held a progressive party with MoAD called From the West Coast to the Ivory Coast.

If you had the stamina, you could spend an entire day in this patch of concentrated culture. Imagine checking out the Music in Comics show at the Cartoon Art Museum and the exhibition of African American quilts at the Museum of Craft and Folk Art in the morning, stopping for lunch and the Matthew Barney show at SFMOMA, dropping by MoAD to take in the work of photographer Gordon Parks, and capping the whole excursion at the hip opening night party for Cosmic Wonder at Yerba Buena. (One of these days, you'll be able to take a break in a sculpture garden atop the SFMOMA parking garage. San Francisco's Jensen & Macy architects are working on it now.)

Speaking of those YBCA parties, check out this month's bash celebrating the opening of Cosmic Wonder, which exhibits the work of a new generation of artists who are using hypnotic patterns and imagery to explore the great beyond. Besides jamming out to music by Soft Circle and Feathers, the coolest kids in town will be taking part in the beloved group levitation game Light as a Feather, Stiff as a Board. July 14, \$12 in advance, \$15 at door.

YBCA, 701 Mission St., 415-978-2787
Cartoon Art Museum, 655 Mission St., 415-227-8666
MoAD, 685 Mission St., 415-358-7200
Museum of Craft and Folk Art, 51 Yerba Buena Ln., 415-227-4888
SFMOMA, 151 Third St., 415-357-4000

Contemporary Jewish Museum
Yerba Buena Gardens

Bonus Project: Helvetica

Watch the movie “Helvetica” (<http://www.helveticafilm.com>)

Write five things that you have learned from this film, and five questions for either the movie director Gary Hustwit, or any one or more designers you saw in the movie, including Erik Spiekermann, Matthew Carter, Massimo Vignelli, Wim Crouwel, Hermann Zapf, Neville Brody, Stefan Sagmeister, Michael Bierut, David Carson, Paula Scher, Jonathan Hoefler, Tobias Frere-Jones, Experimental Jetset, Michael C. Place, Norm, Alfred Hoffmann, Mike Parker, Bruno Steinert, Otmar Hofer, Leslie Savan, Rick Poynor, and Lars Müller.