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PRINTtips

Fonts: Don't Let Your Files Leave Home Without Them



MacMillan Graphics, Ltd.

Park 50 TechCenter
2002 Ford Circle
Milford, OH 45150
(513) 248-2121
Fax (513) 248-5141

Web site:
www.macgra.com

FTP site:
[ftp.macgra.com](ftp://ftp.macgra.com)

Email:
info@macgra.com

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Ask us or any other printer to name the top five reasons why customer-provided document files fail preflight, and you'll always have "missing or unusable fonts" on the list. The problem is so common that we're devoting this issue of *Printips* to the topic.

Digital font technology

Let's start with a brief overview of digital font technology. You probably know there are two standards for fonts: PostScript and TrueType. PostScript was originally developed by Adobe and was engineered with two parts to each font – a *screen font* for rendering characters on a computer monitor and a *printer font* to direct a PostScript printer how to render the font on paper. In the early days, PostScript fonts gained wide acceptance in the graphic arts community because of superior resolution on output.

The TrueType font format, developed by Apple Computer and later adopted by Microsoft, was designed with the printer font and screen font created from the same information. The font technology also includes a rasterizer; it is the interaction between the font and rasterizer that determines the appearance of the font on paper. Whereas PostScript fonts required a PostScript printer to render correctly, TrueType fonts could be used on any printer. TrueType fonts have been more popular than PostScript in the corporate environment.

The evolution of font technology as well as the adoption of PDF (portable document format) file workflow has significantly reduced the



conflict between PostScript and TrueType. There remains, however, one important rule – do not mix PostScript and TrueType in a single document.

Free fonts

Just like clip art, the Worldwide Web is full of free fonts. Many are unusual and may even be desirable for a specific application. However, we would like to insert a word of caution about using free fonts when you are creating documents for us to print or copy.

- *Restrictions on commercial use.* Free fonts, like free stock photography, are often restricted to personal use. If you are designing a brochure for your company, this could be considered commercial use. Also please be aware that as graphic arts professionals, we are committed to adhering strictly to restrictions and licensing requirements.
- *Legibility.* To perform well in a document, a font must be legible, meaning that it is well drawn and has restrained design features. A legible font doesn't call attention to itself, for that

would distract the reader from comprehending the words.

- *Windows-only format.* The most common format for free fonts is Windows TrueType which may introduce problems during output if we are using a PostScript device such as an imagesetter for making press plates.

Font style

Bold face and *italics* are two of the most common techniques of styling fonts. Both are used for emphasis in text. But did you know that there is a difference between a font that has been drawn in bold or italic style versus a font to which a computer-generated style has been added?

True-drawn italics are slanted fonts designed to accompany a roman (straight up and down) typeface. True-drawn italics are very distinct, with different proportions, character widths, and design features. They often remind a reader of script or calligraphy.

Here is an example of a roman type and its italic counterpart:

Typography Typography

Italics are effective for emphasis because they draw attention without creating a major change in the color of the text. As such, they create subtle emphasis.

Italics are also used grammatically for titles (books, films, newspapers, periodicals); for foreign words or phrases; or for indicating a word used as an example rather than for its meaning.

Like italics, a true-drawn bold face has different proportions, character widths, and design features. Bold face creates noticeable emphasis by providing a contrast from light to dark in the text.

Bold face is found in captions and subheads. It may also be used to draw attention to words or

phrases. In general, bold face must be used sparingly in text because it creates a jarring visual distinction.

Here is an example of bold face compared to its roman counterpart:

Typography Typography

Use true-drawn fonts

For the best results in your documents, always use the true-drawn fonts. If you are working on a Macintosh, access bold and italics from the font menu, not the style bar. Some fonts link true-drawn italics and bold to their roman counterparts; others do not. If fonts aren't linked, or if true-drawn fonts aren't available, computer-generated styles will be created on the fly. This may cause a marked difference in how the fonts are rendered which in turn may affect line or page endings. For bold face, it may render at a different weight than your original design.

Since bold face and italics can only be accessed through the style bar, always be sure that the true-drawn fonts are available and loaded in your application.

Scripts

When you want to draw attention to text while simultaneously introducing a design element, a script font will do the job. Scripts add drama to copy by providing contrast, variety, and impact.

Scripts can be categorized as calligraphic, casual, black letter, or formal. Each category has a remarkably different look and is used in different ways. Calligraphic scripts resemble calligraphy; casual scripts are informal looking, as if drawn by a brush or pen; black letter scripts are derived from medieval forms of manuscript letter; while formal scripts resemble eighteenth-century handwriting.

As powerful as scripts are, they must be used with caution, especially in business documents. Script

“The most common format for free fonts is Windows TrueType which may introduce problems...”

“Scripts can be categorized as calligraphic, casual, black letter, or formal.”

Fonts: Don't Let Your Files Leave Home Without Them (continued)

faces are often hard to read, which slows reader speed and comprehension. Setting large blocks of type in script creates visual “noise” that is undesirable.

Script faces should never be used in all capital letters. Script capitals are designed to be used in

conjunction with lower case letters and therefore are extremely difficult to read next to each other. Scripts should also be set in large point sizes because the height of the lower case letters in proportion to the capital letters is small. Use a minimum of 14-point type for any script face.

“Script faces should never be used in all capital letters.”

Designing With Type

Have you ever considered designing with type? We don't mean designing an entire font; rather, we mean using letters or characters from a font as a design element. After all, the word *logo* is a shortened form of *logotype*, meaning two or more type characters that are combined as a sign or trademark.

You're holding an example of designing with type in your hand. Look at the front page. We've used an oversized capital letter to begin the first paragraph and wrapped the text around the letter. Later, we've used an oversized ampersand to create interest in our *Tricks & Tips* section. These are simple yet effective ways to add sparkle to your documents.



Looking For A Font?

Have you ever had to match a typeface and wondered which letters to study? Here are some characteristics to help you distinguish fonts:

- Letter *Q*: does the tail of the *Q* cross or touch the circle or is it below and separated from the circle? Does the tail extend or lie inside circle? Is the circle open with the tail part of same stroke?
- Figure 4: is it open or closed?
- Individual characters: do individual characters have serifs? (The best letters to look at are *H*, *L* or *T*.)
Do they look handwritten? If so, are the character outlines drawn with geometric precision, or do they look as if formed by a pen or brush?
- Letter *J*: does the upper case *J* extend below the baseline?
- Letter *U*: does the upper case *U* have a stem?
- Letter *P*: is the shape of the *P* closed? Is there a gap where the bowl meets the vertical? Does the bowl cross the vertical?
- Letter *E*: is the upper case *E* formed normally? Is it drawn as a single stroke, either with or without a loop? Is it drawn as a *C* with a bar? Is it like a lower case *e*?
- Letter *A*: is the lower case *a* a single- or double-storey?
- Letter *L*: does the *L* have two loops visible, an upper loop only, a lower loop only, or no loops at all?
- Numeral 3: is the join at the top of the figure angular or rounded?
- Dot on *i* or *j*: is the shape of the dot round, square or rectangular, a diamond, or triangular? Or is there no dot?

Characteristics from www.identifont.com



“...characteristics to help you distinguish fonts:”

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info@macgra.com

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“...the ampersand is often a good character to compare in typefaces you are trying to identify.”

Q. *What is the origin of the ampersand?*

A. The ampersand – a character sometimes referred to as the *and* sign – is the Latin symbol for the word *et* (meaning *and* in Latin) which derived from a *ligature* (a combination of two letters into one continuous character) of the letters *E* and *T*. In fact, & was considered the 27th letter of the Latin alphabet. The word *ampersand* is said to be derived from the phrase *and per se and*.

The ampersands shown represent the alternative forms – roman and italic. To find the *E* and *T*, examine the ampersand closely.



The left portion can be either a lowercase *e* or a capital *E* composed of two semicircles. The *T* is represented by a diagonal upstroke. Roman style ampersands tend to be more straightforward, while italic ampersands tend to be influenced by calligraphy.

Design of the ampersand is where typeface creators show drama and flair. Because of this, the ampersand is often a good character to compare in typefaces you are trying to identify.

The rules for how to use an ampersand vary from language to language. In English text, the ampersand may be substituted for the word *and* and both mixed in the same text.