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The designer's guide to professional typography



Slene Strizver

BASIC FINE-TUNING AND TWEAKING

ecoming typography savvy is like learning to see in a new way. Details in the typography of ads, magazines, book covers, movie titles, and credits, or even bus and subway posters, are progressively more apparent to the eye. And details are key. You should never be comfortable with your type until all the details are fine-tuned and tweaked to perfection.

Setting type needs human intervention. A computer cannot evaluate and make decisions related to good taste, typographic appropriateness, and readability. Using the default settings of your design software or your font without fine-tuning the type, that is, looking it over carefully and making changes and adjustments, can lead to a very unprofessional look and also can make it difficult to read.

Prior to the current trend of having "a computer in every home" (or close to it), which has given virtually everyone the ability to set type, type was set by highly trained typographers who spent years learning the art and craft of good typography. They had very sophisticated, expensive equipment capable of performing complicated tasks on the fly. Desktop computer technology has come a long way in the last decade and is able to perform just about all the tasks that were done by typographers. But a computer can't do it on its own. It requires a human being to tell it what to do and how to do it. The computer is just a tool, and it still needs a skilled operator to bring out the best of what it can produce. It is like preparing a wonderful recipe; you can just throw ingredients together randomly and live with what you get, or you can measure, taste, and adjust until you have just the right balance and the result tastes great and excites your taste buds!

TYPE SIZE

Deciding what size to set your type is a very visual thing, but there are some guidelines that can help you make that decision.

Let's talk about text settings first. The primary consideration when setting text is usually readability. Assuming you select a font that was designed and intended for smaller settings, the average range for text settings is somewhere between 9 point and 12 point and sometimes up to 14 point. Anything smaller becomes hard to read in longer settings. Much larger than 12 to 14 point, it becomes a strain on the eyes for any length of copy.

The size you select is somewhat dependent on the typeface design, as the actual cap sizes and x-heights vary from font to font. The x-height of a font affects its readability and will make different typefaces look larger or smaller at the same point size. The length of the text should also be considered, as well as any constraints on the column width, such as a preexisting grid, for reasons mentioned below in "Line Length" and "Line Spacing."

Display, or headline, type is primarily meant to catch the eye and draw the reader into the text. For this reason, there are fewer, if any, constraints

on size. Whatever works with your layout is probably fine, meaning, try different sizes and see what looks best and what balances and complements the rest of your layout.

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Both text blocks, ITC Golden Type and Caxton respectively, are set in 12 point but look very different due to their varying x-heights.

A throng of bearded men. in sad-coloured garments and grey steeplecrowned hats, inter-mixed with women, some wearing hoods, and others bareheaded. was assembled in front of a wooden edifice.

A throng of bearded men, in sad-coloured garments and grey steeple-crowned hats, inter-mixed with women, some wearing hoods, and others bareheaded, was assembled in front of a wooden edifice, the door of which was heavily timbered with oak, and studded with iron spikes.

This line length is comfortable to read and has no hyphenations.

A very short line length can lead to too many hyphenations, making the text difficult to read. (Scarlet Letter)

A throng of bearded men, in sad-coloured garments and grey steeple-crowned hats, inter-mixed with women, some wearing hoods, and others bareheaded, was assembled in front of a wooden edifice, the door of which was heavily timbered with oak, and studded with iron spikes.

A long line length for any length of copy also becomes cumbersome to read, as our eyes struggle to find the beginning of the next line.

LINE LENGTH

Line length and point size are interrelated, as line length should be somewhat determined by the point size for maximum readability: the larger the point size, the longer the line length. We read and identify words by the shapes of the letters, not letter by letter; we also read by groups of words. If the line length is too short, there will be too many hyphenated words. These interfere with readability and force the reader to jump to new lines so often that it affects reading comprehension. On the other hand, line lengths that are too long can create confusion by making it more difficult for the eye to find the beginning of the next line in large blocks of text. A general guide is to have in the neighborhood of 50 to 70 characters per line, but there are many exceptions to this rule.

LINE SPACING (LEADING)

Line spacing refers to the vertical space between lines of type from baseline to baseline, and it is usually measured in points (except in most word processing programs, which offer a limited choice of single, one-and-a-half, or double spacing). It is also referred to as leading, which is a term from the days when type was set in metal, and slugs of lead in varying thicknesses were inserted between the lines of metal type to add space between the lines. Too-tight leading makes type harder to read, especially in small sizes. You almost cannot add too much leading, but it depends on the amount of copy and your layout. Most design programs have a default setting, called auto leading, which is around 20 percent of the point size. Although you can usually override this in your preferences settings, this is a good place to start. You can then manually make adjustments to suit your taste and work with your layout. Most applications have keyboard shortcuts to do this on the fly.

A very basic guideline for text would be a minimum of 2 points leading (such as 12/14, or 12 point type with 14 point leading) up to 5 points. Display type can have less leading in general, since as type gets larger the negative spaces associated with line spacing (and letter spacing) appear progressively too large. When setting all caps, throw these rules out the window; all caps can be set with little or no leading (also referred to as set solid) and often look best with negative leading. Without descending characters to worry about, all caps beg to be set tighter than mixed case settings.

Line spacing, to a certain degree, has been trend-related in the last few decades. When phototypesetting was first introduced in the 1970s, letter

TECHTIP

Auto leading is a feature that allows your design software to automatically assign a leading value to the text you set, based on its point size. Most design software programs use a default auto leading setting of 120 percent of the point size. (This value can be changed by the user, as can most default values.) In many cases, the use of auto leading results in a fractional value. For example, for 10 point type, the auto leading might be a nice, even 12 point; but for 11 point type, it becomes 13.2; for 12, it is 14.4; and for 14, it is 16.8. Most current design programs indicate the actual auto-leading value, usually in parentheses; others don't show it at all.

Pros and Cons

Auto leading can be a real convenience

Auto Leading

when working with text type. By using auto leading, you can change text sizes as many times as you like and the leading will adjust proportionally and automatically. This is a real time-saver when you are unsure of your final point size and want the freedom to experiment.

On the other hand, auto leading does have its pitfalls; follow these guidelines to know when to *use it* and when to *lose it*:

• When you are combining type, symbols, or dingbats of different point sizes on the same line, auto leading can wreak havoc with the line spacing in a text block, making one line jump to adjust to the larger glyph. To avoid this sometimes unexpected and usually unwanted occurrence, be sure to use a fixed leading. (Now you know why lines

of type can mysteriously "jump" when you add a differently sized element to a block of copy!)

• Converting auto leading to a fixed value also ensures that the leading won't change if the document is opened on another computer with different default settings.

• While auto leading can facilitate the setting of body text, it is not as useful for display type. Display (or headline) type in larger sizes needs a lot less leading than text (*see illustrations*). This is especially true with all-cap settings that have no descenders to fill in the space between the lines. For display type, auto-leading settings will generally be way off the mark. Use your eye, not your software, to make larger type settings visually appropriate.

FUNDAMENTAL SINCERITY IS THE ONLY PROPER BASIS FOR FORMING RELATIONSHIPS FUNDAMENTAL SINCERITY IS THE ONLY PROPER BASIS FOR FORMING RELATIONSHIPS

All caps can be set with little or no leading (also referred to as set solid) and sometimes negative leading, depending on the look you are after. The top example of Mekanik is set with auto leading (about 36/43) and is much too open. The example below it is set with negative leading (36/30) and looks much better.



Stacked caps can be a very powerful design technique, as in this annual report designed by SVP Partners. The lines have been sized so that the letter spacing isn't compromised. Courtesy of SVP Partners.

But, though the bank was almost always with him, and though the coach (in a confused way, like the presence of pain under an opiate) was always with him, there was another current of impression that never ceased to run, all through the night. He was on his way to dig someone out of a grave.

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The top setting of Expo Sans is set solid (12/12) and can be hard on the eyes for any length of copy. The middle text is set at auto leading, which is about 20 percent more than the point size, or about 14.4 point; it is comfortable to read, even for lengthy amounts of copy. The bottom text is set at 12/18. It has a nice, open look, and is often used in magazines, annual reports, and brochures. (A Tale of Two Cities) and line spacing had more flexibility than ever before. As a result, designers deliberately set type very tight as a rebellion from the not-so-distant days of hot-metal type when this was not possible. Today, line spacing leans toward a more open look, making for better readability and a cleaner appearance with more open space.

ALIGNMENT

The following styles can be used to align type:

• Flush left. Flush left is the most common setting for Latin alphabets such as ours (and usually the default setting). It is the style that is most readable and that our eyes are most used to. It aligns the text on the left margin and leaves the right margin to end wherever it may, dependent on the line width.

• Flush right. This style aligns the text on the right with a ragged left margin, but it is more difficult to read since our eyes have to follow a wavering left-hand margin when they move to the next line down the column. It should only be used when a specific design objective is desired.

• Justified, or flush left and right. In this style, space is inserted between words and individual characters to stretch a line so that both margins align. This creates a very geometric block of copy that is sometimes desirable. Although very commonly used, especially by newspapers and magazines, this is a tricky technique to apply tastefully if you do not take the time to finetune it. When lines of type are stretched in this way, the color, texture, and readability of the type can be degraded tremendously by the white space that is inserted to align both edges. In some cases (dependent on your software and the settings in your preferences), the actual characters are compressed or expanded electronically to achieve this alignment. This is the ultimate no-no! Justified settings can also create rivers of white space, which should be avoided at any cost. All of this manipulation can lead to some very poor typography.

To avoid some of the problems inherent in justified settings, try making your line length a bit longer than usual, or make your type smaller; the more words you can fit on a line, the less space you will have to add to justify it. Once you have settled on an optimum size and width, it might be necessary to edit your copy to fix lines that are too open, too tight, or that have too many hyphenated endings, particularly if there are more than two of these lines in a row. This can be a lot of work, especially if you have to go back to your copywriter to do it, but it will make for a much more professional-looking job.

It is also a good idea to become familiar with your software's settings

There were six young colts in the meadow besides me; they were older than I was; some were nearly as large as grownup horses. I used to run with them, and had great fun; we used to gallop all together round and round the field as hard as we could go.

A traditional flush-left setting using the typeface Sauna. (Black Beauty)

There were six young colts in the meadow besides me; they were older than I was; some were nearly as large as grownup horses. I used to run with them, and had great fun; we used to gallop all together round and round the field as hard as we could go.

Flush right is a little harder to read, but acceptable in short amounts where it is desired for design purposes.

There were six young colts in

There were six young colts in the meadow besides they me; were older than I was; some were nearly as large as grownup horses. I used to run with them, and had great fun; we used to gallop all together round and round the field as hard as we could go.

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Centered type adds symmetry and elegance but decreases readability when used for large amounts of copy.

When justifying type, avoid rivers of white space and lines with too much letter spacing or word spacing. Try to maintain an even color and texture as much as possible, even if it means editing the copy or altering the line length. for hyphenation and justification (H&J). You can actually tell it how much it is allowed to stretch or squeeze the spacing of a line of type, as well as your hyphenation preferences. Mastering this might seem a bit overwhelming at first, but it is well worth the time it takes to become familiar with these settings and how they affect the look of the type.

• Centered type. This style can be very effective when used for short blocks of copy, such as titles and headlines, subheads, invitations, announcements, and poetry. It centers the lines of type without adding extra space, making a ragged right and left edge. This technique adds symmetry and elegance but decreases readability when used for large amounts of copy.

• Wrap-around type (run around or text wrap). This is type that aligns around the contour of an illustration, photo, or other graphic element. It can be applied to either the right, left, or both margins.

• **Contoured type.** Contoured type is set in a particular shape for purely aesthetic reasons. It is usually justified to achieve a particular contour. If there are narrow line widths, it will probably require editing the copy and handworking the rags to avoid too-open letter and word spacing as well as rivers of white space and stretched or squeezed lines.

It did so indeed, and much sooner than she had expected: before she had drunk half the bottle, she found her head pressing



against the ceiling, and had to stoop to save her neck from being broken. She hastily put down the bottle, saying to her self 'That's quite

enough – I hope I shan't grow any more – As it is, I can't get out at the door – I do wish I hadn't drunk quite so much!'

Type can run around a pull-quote inserted in a reverse box. Align the box with the baseline and cap height of neighboring lines. (Alice in Wonderland)

'You promised to tell me your history, you know,' said Alice, 'and why it is you hate – C and D,' she added in a whisper, half afraid that it would be offended again.

'Mine is a long and a sad tale!' said the Mouse, turning to Alice, and sighing.

'It IS a long tail, certainly,' said Alice, looking down with wonder at the Mouse's tail; 'but why do you call it sad?' And she kept on puzzling about it while the Mouse was speaking, so that her idea of the tale was something like this:-

'Fury said to a mouse, That he met in the house. "Let us both go to law: I will prosecute YOU. -Come, I'll take no denial: We must have a trial: For really this morning l've nothing to do." Said the mouse to the cur, "Such a trial, dear Sir, With no jury or judge, would be wasting our breath." "I'll be judge, I'll be jury," Said cunning old Fury: "I'll try the whole cause, and condemn you to death."'

In this excerpt type set in ITC Woodland is contoured as a wonderful play on the words, "'Mine is a long and a sad tale!' said the Mouse." (Alice in Wonderland)

Abigail Anstey and Gatherine Healy are the 'dayennes des vinu creating individualistic & narrative branding, including idents for a dazen Oregon vineyards. ** MARUARET RICHARDSON



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BridgePort was then owned by the P elegant half-bon lf-bottles (or, ne, in full-size

sparkling wine, in turning strategies bottles). The designs capture the all individual wine, through meticulou subtle script, with soft colors and a tion for the Arneis rendered by A Other vi ners soon fo the design fire

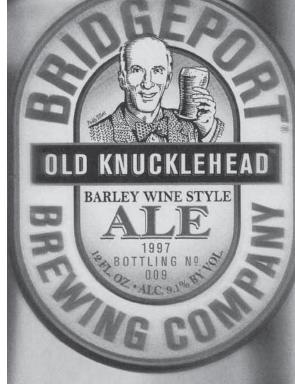
the design firm. According to Anarey. "The wine im expectably in Oregon, is such as unsually mutually as two community that there in the two properties ensure that you other products, like beer. They sell each other graps. So the Pou-menneded us to other wise maker. And we transfer getting a press—and here we are speaking as experts at national conference of the product of the sector of the

pres- and here we are positing as experts a national conference wine packaging." The feiters keep coming. The firm his been approached Ediferent viscource (they would have his or design for vineyard haved), and they are just finishing the packaging for the banch of "aread" from SR Poter Meedery. When aided with their lat of "aread" from SR Poter Meedery. When aided with their lat "aread" aread by Row Meedery. When aided with their lat "aread" from SR Poter Meedery. When aided with their lat "aread" aread by the second of the second designing theorem are configured to communicate very high-quative configuration of the second second designing and the second second second second second second comparison when the site of the second second second author configuration of the second second second author configuration of the second second with the second with the second second

MARGARET RICHARDSON IS a writer based in Portland, Oregon.

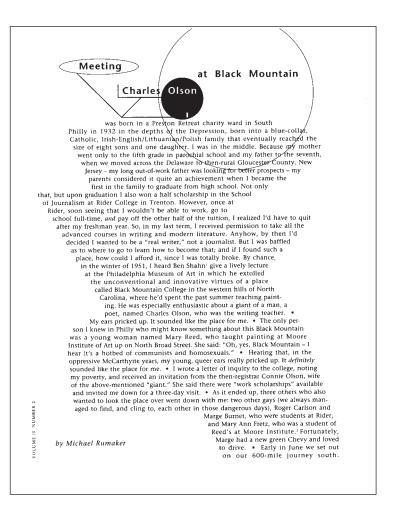


These spreads from U&lc show how Mark van Bronkhorst contoured the type to mirror shapes from the facing page. It might look easy to do, but the copy and the line breaks were edited and hand-worked to eliminate holes and rivers, keeping the texture and color of the type even. Courtesy of Mark van Bronkhorst.





The text in this smart piece by Hornall Anderson Design Works, Inc. was contoured into a triangle to complement the concentric circles in the background. Once again, it looks easy, but is difficult to do well. Courtesy of Hornall Anderson Design Works, Inc.

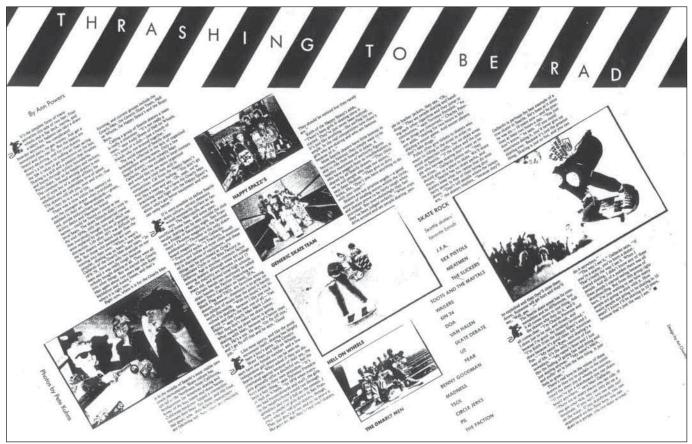


An interesting text shape, coupled with the geometric text architecture above it, make an exciting page out of text set in conservative typefaces in this catalog designed by Eva Roberts. Notice the use of bullets to separate the paragraphs. Courtesy of Eva Roberts.

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PUTS THE RESOURCES OF ARCHITECTURE IN THE SERVICE OF THE PUBLIC INTEREST. WE IDENTIFY AND SOLVE PRACTICAL PROBLEMS OF HUMAN INTERACTION IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND ACT AS A CATALYST FOR PUBLIC DISCOURSE THROUGH EDUCATION, ADVOCACY AND THE DESIGN OF PUBLIC SPACES AND AMENITIES. 1126 FOLSOM STREET, No. 3, SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94103-1397 T 415.861.8200 F 415.431.9695 WWW.PUBLICARCHITECTURE.ORG

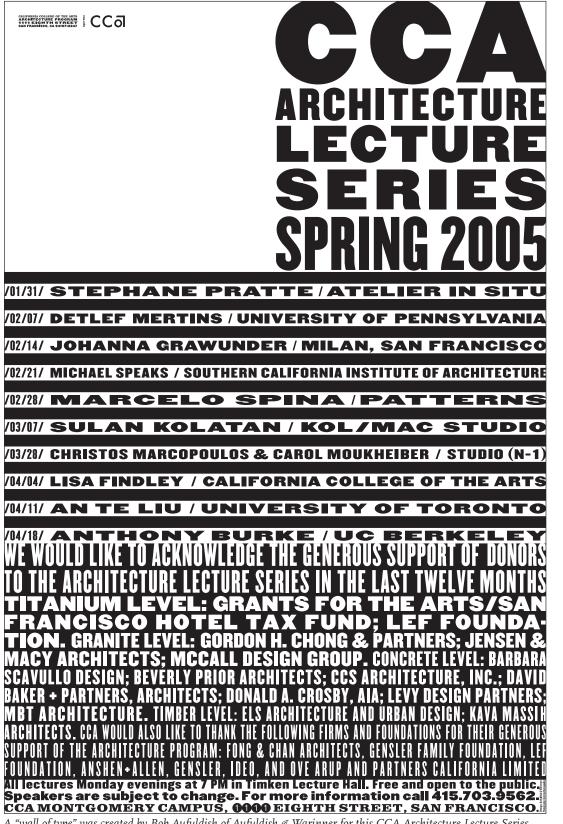
In developing an identity for Public Architecture, Jeremy Mende eschewed the traditional practice of drawing logos in favor of creating what they call a literary wordmark: the firm is described in words rather than metaphorical pictures. The strong forms of Trade Gothic and the resulting "block" reinforce the idea of clean, elegant, modernist architectural form. Courtesy of Mende Design.



The zigzag theme of this dynamic editorial spread mimics the off-kilter lifestyle of the skateboarders it talks about. The diagonal stripes on the top enclose the headline set in Futura Thin press type and represent police tape around construction sites where many skaters like to skate. Designed by Art Chantry for the alternative music magazine The Rocket. "The layout looked like the kids to me," says Art Chantry. Photo by Pete Kuhns. Courtesy of Art Chantry Design Co.



This beautifully constructed spread showcases 12 weights of the Cholla typeface family in an unexpected, yet visually exciting way. Elaborately contoured text blocks create a geometric grid that separates yet draws attention to each weight. Typeface and spread designed by Sibylle Hagmann. Courtesy of Sibylle Hagmann of Kontour Design.



A "wall of type" was created by Bob Aufuldish of Aufuldish & Warinner for this CCA Architecture Lecture Series poster. Meticulous attention was paid to typeface size, style, and alignment selection to achieve this effect without images, tints, or color. Courtesy of Aufuldish & Warinner.

This minimally designed fly leaf for a SMART Kromekote brochure makes its point simply yet effectively through the use of scale, color, negative space interrelated, and justified text blocks. Designed by Nesnadny + Schwartz. Courtesy of Nesnadny + Schwartz.

What if Picasso had comfortably painted the clowns and acrobats of his Rose period for the rest of his life? Could anyone else have created the masterwork Guernica? Artist complacency might have deprived the world of O'Keeffe's desert scenes and Capote's In Cold Blood. The distinguished portrait photographer Arnold Newman had the prescience to capture these who made their mark because they their own vision. As a salute to new Kromekoteplus and the creative professionals who use it, SMART Papers presents to you a selection

originals on film; artistic giants Consistently were relentlessly striving to create raising the bar is integral to of artists who were never satisfied. being the best. The best keep getting better.

Since 1929, Kromekote has remained one of the best printing surfaces in the world. We could have rested and watched the competition try to catch up, but being the leader means staying ahead. So we raised our own expectations. We made Kromekote brighter, glossier, stiffer, more printable and longer lasting. We made the best better.

We made Kromekoteplus.



The contoured text on the right strikingly mirrors the shape of the cornered bug on the left. Shifting baselines and erratic breaks in the title further reflect the bizarre, fantastic turn of events in this famous short story by Franz Kafka in which a man wakes up as a bug (or cockroach). Illustration and design by Gonzalo Ovejero.



A very whimsical and charming use of contoured type to create a head of hair with copy that talks about a hair care company. Designed by VSA Partners, Inc. Courtesy of VSA Partners.

A FEW WORDS ABOUT RAGS

When setting type with a ragged margin (flush left or flush right), become aware of the shape that the ragged line endings are making. A good rag goes in and out in small increments. A poor rag is one that makes unnatural shapes with the white space. When this occurs, make manual line breaks or edit your copy to improve the rag.

WIDOWS AND ORPHANS

A widow is a very short line, usually composed of one or two words or a hyphenated word, at the end of a paragraph. This is typographically undesirable, as it is disturbing to the eye and creates the appearance of too much white space between paragraphs or at the bottom of a page. It is considered very poor typography, so adjust it by manually rebreaking the rag or editing the copy.

An orphan is related to a widow (no pun intended!) in that it is a single word or very short line appearing at the beginning of a column or a page. This terminology is not as commonly used and understood as widow, but the concept is the same, and so is the solution: fix it!

TYPETIP

Adobe Text Composer

InDesign offers two methods for text composition: Adobe Paragraph Composer (the default setting) and Adobe Single-line Composer. Either method, or a combination of both, can be used for both justified and ragged copy.

Adobe Paragraph Composer attempts to minimize unattractive hyphenations by evaluating all the lines of text in a paragraph and making breaks accordingly. For justified text, it creates more even spacing with fewer hyphens.

Adobe Single-line Composer takes the traditional approach, that is, composing text one line at a time.

Paragraph Composer can be a valuable tool for text composition, particularly justified text. But when mak-

ing manual changes to line breaks or hyphenations, switch to Single-line Composer for the lines in questions; this allows you to edit rags and hyphenations manually without affecting the surrounding lines.

Adobe Paragraph and Single-line Composer can be accessed two ways:

• Go to the Paragraph Palette menu

• Select Adobe Paragraph Composer (the default) or Adobe Single-line Composer.

- Or:
- Go to the Paragraph Palette menu or the Control Palette menu
- Select Justification
- · Select an option from the Composer menu.

Not many days after we heard the church-bell tolling for a long time, and looking over the gate we saw a long, strange black coach that was covered with black cloth and was drawn by black horses; after that came another and another and another. and all were black, while the bell kept tolling. tolling. They were carrying young Gordon to the churchyard to bury him. He would never ride again. What they did with Rob Roy I never knew; but 'twas all for one little hare.

When setting type flush left, such as this text set in ITC American Typewriter, be aware of the shape that the ragged line endings are making. A good rag goes in and out in small increments. A poor rag, such as this one, makes unnatural shapes with the white space. (Black Beauty) Not many days after we heard the church-bell tolling for a long time, and looking over the gate we saw a long, strange black coach that was covered with black cloth and was drawnby black horses; after that came another and another and another, and all were black, while the bell kept tolling, tolling. They were carrying young Gordon to the churchyard to bury him. He would never ride again. What they did with Rob Roy I never knew; but 'twas all for one little hare.

The rag in the example at left can be easily corrected by making manual line breaks.

The next unpleasant business was putting on the iron shoes; that too was very hard at first. My master went with me to the smith's forge, to see that I was not hurt or got any fright. The blacksmith took my feet in his hand, one after the other, and cut away some of the hoof. The next unpleasant business was putting on the iron shoes; that too was very hard at first. My master went with me to the smith's forge, to see that I was not hurt or got any fright. The blacksmith took my feet in his hand, one after the other, and cut away some of the hoof.

This example of a horrible widow (left) can be corrected by making a minor adjustment in the line length (right). (Black Beauty)

TYPETIP

Baseline Shift

There are a number of functions built into the software we use every day that are seldom used but extremely useful. One of those functions is *baseline shift*. This feature shifts a character or group of characters up (positive numbers) or down (negative numbers) relative to the baseline, in tiny increments.

Baseline shift is a great tool for fine-tuning your typography. Try using it to:

■ Optically position symbols, such as register, copyright, and trademark (®, ©, and ™).

 Adjust the position of bullets, dashes, ornaments, and other font-based graphics.

• Tweak the position of parentheses, braces, and brackets relative to the type they enclose.

• Be expressive with type by raising and lowering individual characters to create a jumpy, jittery effect.

• Create fractions manually. Use baseline shift to raise the numerator in diagonal fractions.

It is important to note that *baseline shift* does not change the actual line spacing of a character; so when making overall changes in the leading, the baseline-shifted position will be preserved proportionally.

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l feel jittery! l feel j_it_{ter}y!

(2006) (2006)

Baseline shift can help fine-tune your typography in a variety of ways, as illustrated in these "before and afters."

TECHTIP

Baseline Shift in Adobe InDesign & QuarkXPress

To apply baseline shift in Adobe InDesign:

- Highlight text
- Go to Control Palette or Character Palette
- Locate Baseline Shift field

• Click on the Up or Down arrow key (Shift + click increases the increments)

or

• Type a numeric value in the Baseline Shift field. Positive values raise the text; negative values lower the text.

ConduitITC

T = 12 pt

ÎT ≑ 100%

Aa + 0 pt

Light

Transform Paragraph & Character

AV + Metrics + AV + 0

Language: English: USA

\$

\$

\$

٦

\$

A ≑ (14.4 pt) ‡

T ÷ 100%

T = 0°

Baseline shift can be accessed via the Character Palette in Adobe InDesign.

To apply baseline shift ir	n QuarkXPress:
 Highlight text. 	

• Select the Text Palette from the pop-up menu (click on the A) off the Measurements Tool Bar.

• Click on the up or down arrow to the right of the baseline Shift Field, or enter a value manually.

• Highlight text

or

- Use keyboard command shift / opt / com and then + to raise or to lower in one point increments.
- or
- Highlight text
- Go to Style > Baseline Shift or Character Attributes
- Palette (shift / com / D).
- Locate Baseline Shift field.
- Indicate desired value in positive (to raise) or negative (to lower), whole or fractional values.
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