

ADV1160

Instructor: Genevieve Hitchings

### Anatomy of a Letter

**Baseline:** Imaginary line upon which all characters of a given line stand.

**Meanline:** Imaginary line that makes up the top of the most lowercase letters, such as *a, c, i, e,* and especially *x*.

**X-Height:** The height of the body or main element of the lowercase letterform, which falls between meanline and baseline. It is the height of the lowercase letters, such as *a, c, e, r,* and especially *x*.

**Ascender:** The part of the lowercase letter that rises about the meanline of the letter.

**Descender:** The part of the lowercase letter that falls below the baseline of the letter.

**Counter:** The enclosed portion of a letterform.

**Stem:** The main vertical or oblique stroke of a letter.

**Serif:** The stroke that projects from the top or bottom of the main stroke of the letter. Serifs originated with the Roman masons who terminated each stroke in a slab serif to enhance the appearance of the letters.

**Sans serif:** Printed letters having no serifs at all (without serif).

**Variations in Type:** The varying of width and height of the letterforms.

**Regular:** The standard weight of a typeface, also referred to as *normal*.

**Light:** A light version of the *regular* typeface. An extremely light version is referred to as *thin*.

**Bold:** A heavy version of the *regular* typeface.

**Condensed:** A narrow version of a *regular* typeface; particularly desirable if it is important to get more letters into a given space. Also referred to as *compressed* or *compact*.

**Extended:** A wider version of the *regular* typeface. Also known as *expanded*.

### Basic Measurements:

**Points:** Measures type size or point size. 12 points (pt) in one pica.

**Picas:** Measures the line length or measure. 6 picas in one inch.

*Electronic fonts range from a font size of approximately 6 to 72 points.*

### Formatting Type:

**Leading/ Line spacing:** The space between lines.

**Kerning:** The process of adjusting the space between individual letters.

**Letter spacing** and **word spacing:** refers to the general adjustment of space between words in a large piece of text.

**Five Families of Type:** (representative of a distinct stage in the evolution of typefaces)

With these five families of typefaces you will have a standard by which to categorize all typefaces.

**Old Style** – 1617

**Transitional** – 1775

**Modern** – 1788

**Egyptian/ Slab Serif** – 1895

**Contemporary/ Sans Serif** – 1957

*Typeface design typeface may vary from one manufacturer to another.*

### **Old Style**

Garamond is an old style serif typeface. Claude Garamond, who died in 1561, was originally credited with the design of this elegant French typeface; however, it has recently been discovered that the face was designed by Jean Jannon in 1615. Many present day versions of this typeface are based on Jannon's designs, although they are all called Garamond. This is a typical Old Style face, having little contrast between thick and thins, heavily bracketed serifs, and oblique stress. The letterforms are open and round, making the face extremely readable. The capital letters are shorter than the ascenders of the lowercase letters.

### **Transitional**

Baskerville, designed by the English John Baskerville in 1757, is an excellent example of a Transitional typeface. Transitional typefaces are so called because they form a bridge between the Old Style and the Modern faces. Compared to the Old Style, Baskerville shows a greater contrast between the thicks and thins, serifs are less heavily bracketed, and the stress is almost vertical. The letters are very wide for their x-height, are closely fitted, and are of excellent proportions making Baskerville one of the most pleasant and readable fonts.

### **Modern**

Bodoni is a Modern typeface, designed in the late 1700's by the Italian typographer, Giambattista Bodoni. At the end of the eighteenth century, a fashion grew for faces with a stronger contrast between thick and thins, unbracketed serifs, and strong vertical stress. These were called Modern faces. All the older faces became known as Old Style, while the more recent faces – just prior to the change – were referred to as Transitional. Although Bodoni has a small x-height, it appears very wide and black. Because of the strong vertical stress, accentuated by its heavy thicks and hairline thins, the horizontal flow necessary for comfortable reading is impaired. Bodoni, therefore, must be well-leaded.

### **Egyptian/ Slab Serifs**

Century Expanded is an excellent example of a refined Egyptian typeface. It is based on a type called Century, designed in 1894 by L.B. Benton and T.L. Devienne for the Century Magazine. After Bodoni, the type designers began to search for new forms of typographic expression. Around 1815 a type style appeared that was characterized by thick slab serifs and thick main strokes with little contrast between thicks and thins. This style was called Egyptian. Century Expanded has a large x-height and should be leaded. The large letters and simple letterforms combine to make it very legible and especially popular for children's books. Like most members of the Egyptian family of Typefaces, Century Expanded makes a good display type because of its boldness.

### **Sans Serifs**

Helvetica is a contemporary font of Swiss origin. Although typefaces without serifs were used in the nineteenth century, it was not until the twentieth century that they became widely used. Helvetica was introduced in 1957 by the Haas type foundry and was first presented in the United States in the early 1960's. Although Helvetica has a large x-height and narrow letters, its clean design makes it very readable. Sans serif types in general have relatively little stress and the strokes are optically equal. Because there is no serif to aid horizontal flow that we have seen is so necessary to comfortable reading, sans serif type should always be leaded.