

Designing With Type

A Basic Lesson in Typography

The purpose of written language is to communicate content and concepts. The typographers role is to facilitate comprehension and convey meaning.

Smart use of type communicates its message clearly. The digital age has spawned legions of new designers, but the old rules still apply.

Anatomy of a Letter

All Roman letters have certain elements in common.

In type terminology we call the large letters *caps* or *uppercase*, and the small letters *lowercase*.

UPPERCASE

lowercase

Baseline: An imaginary line upon which all characters of a given line stand.



Capline: The imaginary horizontal line resting upon the tops of the uppercase letters.



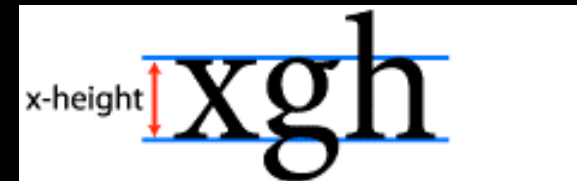
Meanline:

The imaginary horizontal line that designates the height of lowercase letters.



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*.



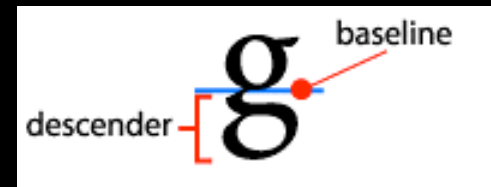
Ascender:

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.



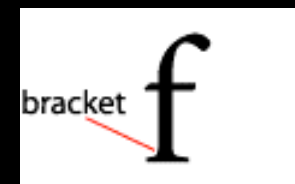
Stem:

The main vertical or oblique stroke of a letter.



Bracket:

The curve that connects the serif to the stem or stroke. May also be referred to as a fillet.



Serif: Small decorative lines added to the end of a letterform's stem and stroke. Serifs improve readability by leading the eye along a line of type.



Stroke: The main diagonal portion of a letterform, though this term is often used to refer to any of the main portions—vertical, near vertical, or diagonal—of a letterform.

