

## Type Letter Terms

Type, like anything with physical form, has a particular anatomy, each letter having similar and different parts and strokes. Type size is measured in points, a system standardized by Pierre Fournier in the 1700s. The pica-point system as compared to the inch allows 6 points to an inch, 12 points to a pica, and 72 points to an inch. Type is measured from the top of the ascender to the bottom of the descender. A line of type with both Capitals, ascenders and descenders of 72 point would measure close to an inch high. A capital letter, however, is about 2/3rds as high as the total point size. Therefore, a 72 point size capital 'A' would measure about 48 points in height.

The term TYPE FACE, which comes from lead type terminology where the "face" of the type received the ink and made the impression, means the specific design of a set of letters, numbers and symbols. A typeface family is comprised of various weights and styles of a similar typeface.

## Font

The complete set of characters of a single typestyle, including upper and lowercase characters, numerals, punctuation, pi characters, etc.

## Kerning

Deleting space between certain letter pairs with parallel diagonal strokes, such as As, Vs and Ws, or between characters such as T and o; to create a more even letter spacing.

## Type Size

Type is measured in point size. Line length is measured in picas. There are 6 picas per inch, 12 points per pica, and 72 points per inch.

## Leading

A term that comes from hot type where actual strips of lead were put between the lines of cast type to increase the space between them; usually one or two extra points plus the actual point size of the type used.

## Justification

The manner in which lines of type align to left or right margins.

## Tracking

Selectively adding or subtracting spaces between all the letters on a line to lessen the impact of spaces between words (rivers of white.)

## Capital

The uppercase of the letters of the alphabet which sit on the baseline and extend to the height of the ascenders.

## X-Height

The body height of letters from the baseline without the ascender.

## Ascender

The part of a letter which extends above the x-height or x-line.

## Descender

The part of the letter that extends below the baseline.

### Counter

The space within convex letters.

### Apex

The points on some letters where strokes angle together.

### Arm

Horizontal or diagonal extensions on some letters.

### Bar

A horizontal line which crosses some letters at the midline.

### Baseline

The implied line that letters align themselves on horizontally

### Picas

There are 12 points in a pica. If you divide the point size of a headline by 12, you get the number of picas.

There are roughly 6 picas to an inch.

### Old Face

Influenced by the classical Roman letterforms with little difference between thick and thin strokes; often on an angled axis.

ABCDEFGHIJK  
LMNOPQRSTU  
VWXYZ  
abcdefghijklmnop  
qrstuvwxyz12345

### Gothic or Black Letter

Calligraphy style script derived from the manuscript writing of the Middle Ages.

A B C D E F G H I J  
K L M N O P Q R S  
T U V W X Y Z  
abcdefghijklmnop  
qrstuvwxyz12345

### Transitional

Sandwiched between Old Face and Modern, this style shows a greater difference between the thick and thin stroke weights.

ABCDEFGHIJKL  
MNOPQRSTUVW  
XYZ  
abcdefghijklmnop  
qrstuvwxyz12345

### Egyptian or Slab Serif

All strokes, even serifs have same thickness, giving a uniform weight typical of sans serif.

ABCDEFGHIJKL  
MNOPQRSTUV  
WXYZ  
abcdefghijklmnop  
nopqrstuvwxyz

### Sans Serif or Grotesque

A type style created in the early 1900s which had no serifs and a uniform stroke weight throughout.

ABCDEFGHIJK  
LMNOPQRSTU  
WXYZ  
abcdefghijklmnop  
opqrstuvwxyz