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Word Spacing

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Word Spacing

Word spacing is the single most important factor contributing to typographic readability. This seemingly small detail plays an important role in the color, texture and readability of graphic communication. Correct word spacing is something that isn't noticed: page texture is even, inviting and easy to read.

Word spacing that's too tight makes it hard for the eye to distinguish one word from the next. Words appear to run into each other. But this is almost never the problem. Open and uneven word spacing is almost always the culprit. When there is excessive word spacing, copy breaks into separate elements, forcing the reader to read individual words rather than phrases or blocks of copy. This dramatically slows down the reading process – and reduces reader comprehension.



THE MANUAL

A GUIDE TO TYPOGRAPHIC KNOWLEDGE AND SOLUTIONS

If you remember the shape of your spoon at lunch, it has to be the wrong shape. The spoon and the letter are tools; one to take food from the bowl, the other to take information off the page... When it is a good design, the reader has to feel comfortable because the letter is both banal and beautiful.

Adrian Frutiger

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Top word spacing is too open. Bottom word spacing is tight and balanced – just right for reading.

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Although assigning appropriate space between words is more of an optical determination than an exact science, some typographic factors have a direct and important influence. The best word spacing can be affected by the proportions of a typestyle, letter fit, and point size of the setting.



- A condensed type design requires less space between words than an expanded face.

A good typographer is|always
a good reader.

Stephen Coles

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Good word spacing is proportional to the width of the typeface, so less word spacing is called for when using a narrower style at the same type size.

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- A typeface with tight letter spacing needs less word space than a more openly fitting design.

She feels in **italics** and
thinks in **CAPITALS**.

Henry James

She feels in **italics** and
thinks in **CAPITALS**.

Henry James

Tight letter spacing needs less word space

Tight letter spacing needs less word space



- Larger point settings require slightly less word space than smaller sizes.

Fonts turn words into stories.

Sara Hyndman

Fonts turn words into stories.

Sara Hyndman

Large type requires less word space

Large type requires less word space

There is a quick check to determine if there is too much word space: turn the copy upside down. If one word can be easily distinguished from another, word spacing is too open.