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Run-ins & Subhead Placement

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THEMANUAL
A GUIDE TO TYPOGRAPHIC KNOWLEDGE AND SOLUTIONS

Run-ins & Subhead Placement

Run-ins, commonly used for two or three level subheads, feature a word or phrase in a contrasting typeface. They can be an important hierarchal tool in long form textual content – and help to break information into bite-size chunks.

Run-ins should be set in a contrasting font to ensure they are perceived as something different from the main content. Sans serif run-ins often precede serif text. The potential problem is that sans serif fonts typically have a larger x-height than serif fonts, even at the same point size.

If not size adjusted, they can disrupt reading and confuse the reader. To prevent overwhelming nearby text, ensure the x-height of the run-in copy is the same size as the text.

To achieve a balanced typographic appearance, reduce the font size of the sans serif typeface. Optically matching x-heights usually requires only a slight adjust-ment of a couple of points. Some experimentation is necessary to find the optimal size, but the results are worthwhile.

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Use less color rather than more: It's easy to over-use color, because it is so much fun, and it's such an engaging media for displaying creativity. Be discriminating, however, in the application of color in your projects. A simple drop initial to mark the beginning of copy or a pull-quote to break up lengthy text can benefit from the judicious use of color. A page that is awash in color, however, is just graphic noise. It is color's rarity that makes it noticeable and powerful.

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All the text in the top example is set in the same point size. The size of the run-in has been adjusted in the bottom example, so that it's x-height is the same as the text copy

X x

Both lowercase x's are set at the same point size. The x-height of ITC Avant Garde Gothic is much larger than the x-height of ITC Berkely Old Style.

MyFonts The MyFonts store from Monotype offers more than 130,000 desktop and Web font products for you to preview, purchase and download. You can also learn about new typeface releases and discover typographic tips and techniques.

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Subheads are another way to create typographic hierarchy and break lengthy text into "snackable" blocks of copy.

Use color consistently
If you use red to accomplish one goal, do not use the same red elsewhere to attempt to accomplish a different goal. Many documents are part of a series. Color is a quality that people tend to remember. And if it is coordinated with consistent typography and uniform layout, a unique color scheme can become an identifier. You can use this to your advantage in more simple or complex systems, such as a document series.

Make large areas pale
A solid page covered in a brilliant, saturated hue may be painful enough to push viewers away. Yet the identical hue may be ideal for a small, sparkling spot or typographic highlight. The rule of thumb is: the bigger the area, the paler the color should be.

Use color-friendly fonts
Regardless of its brightness, color is paler than black and contrasts less with a light background. You can compensate for this paleness with certain techniques. A page that is awash in color, however, is just graphic noise. It is its rarity that makes color

Less color is better than too much
Too much color clutters a page and makes clear communication problematic. Limit use of color to small areas and for hierarchy. Large

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for a headline. Subheads introducing less than three lines of text at the bottom of a column may be easily missed and lead to reader confusion.

Always ensure subheads are flanked by at least three lines of text for clarity. When a subhead stands alone at the top of a column, it risks being mistaken for a headline. Subheads introducing less than three lines of text at the bottom of a column may be easily missed and lead to reader confusion.

Small changes can make the difference between good typography and copy that confusing or hard to read.

Click here for more information on typographic hierarchy.

Typefaces used in this article

ITC Avant Garde Gothic®

ITC Berkeley Old Style®

Helvetica® Now Text

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