⑩ Ten Rules for Office Typography

How to Use Fonts to Communicate and Convince in the Everyday Workplace

1 **Function before form**
Why are you using words? To communicate? To emphasize? To convince? If the font you have chosen doesn't meet your goals, then choose another font. **All other rules follow this one.**

2 **Serif versus sans serif**
Use serifs for longer text. It is easier to read over the long haul. 'Serif' means 'flourish,' which refers to the slight decorations on letters. Look at the capital 'T' in several fonts to see how it is done. Use sans serif for headlines, subtitles and shorter text. 'Sans serif' means 'without flourish.' We read short titles in packs, whereas we read longer text lengths word by word.
Sample serif fonts: Times New Roman, Palatino Linotype, Book Antiqua, Century
Sample sans serif fonts: Arial, Franklin Gothic, Univers

3 **Right-ragged**
Right-ragged means the left side is justified, but the right side is not. Full-justification looks clean, but it is harder to read.

> *Full-justification*
> Among the vicissitudes incident to life no event could have filled me with greater anxieties than that of which the notification was transmitted by your order, and received on the 14th day of the present month. On the one hand, I was summoned by my country, whose voice I can never hear but with veneration and love, from a retreat which I had chosen with the fondest predilection, and, in my flattering hopes, with an immutable decision, as the asylum of my declining years…

> *Right-ragged*
> At this second appearing to take the oath of the Presidential office there is less occasion for an extended address than there was at the first. Then a statement somewhat in detail of a course to be pursued seemed fitting and proper. Now, at the expiration of four years, during which public declarations have been constantly called forth on every point and phase of the great contest which still absorbs the attention and engrosses the energies of the nation, little that is new could be presented.

4 **One space between sentences**
With the advent of typographical tools and sophisticated word processors, we rarely use 'monotype' fonts like `Courier`. Those are fonts for which every letter key is the same width. In the old days, typists needed two spaces to show the difference clearly. Now, two spaces are rarely used except occasionally in legal documents and academic papers.

5 **Size matters**
Bigger is not better when it comes to ordinary body text. Choose 9-11 points. Using 12 points might seem like a good idea, but studies have shown readers remember less.
When creating a PowerPoint presentation, allow one inch (about 72 pts) for every 32 feet between the screen and your farthest audience member. If it is a small room, less than 20 feet, use 36 point text,

but nothing smaller. This is presuming you are placing the LCD device six-eight feet away from the screen.

6   **Avoid <u>underlining</u>**

Yes, the option is there, but as you can see, underlining cuts into descenders (the hangy-thingy under the 'g' and other letters. This makes reading difficult. Graphic designers underline another way which avoids this problem, but in general, it does more harm than good. To emphasis text, try *italics* or *bolding*. Use both sparingly.

7   **Avoid funky fonts**

Often called display fonts, these should be sparingly used, especially if you intend to fax the document, or use it on a screen or monitor. Display fonts are used by designers when the look of the letters matters as much as, of not more, than the words. Boring is better. It scans betters into OCR software (software which allows a fax to turn into a word processing device. Stick with the old boring fonts. Display fonts go in and out of style (for example, **Bauhaus** (think of the TV show *Roseanne*) was used heavily in the early 90s, but is passé now) and unless you're up on the hip fonts, you are in danger of looking outdated.

8   **Consistency**

If you use Times New Roman in one situation, use Times New Roman in all situations just like it. You get the idea. Don't confuse the reader.

9   **Hyphenation is bad, bad, bad (mostly)**

Not *all* hyphenation is bad. Some words require hyphenation. 'E-mail' is one example. No problem. Use hyphenation in the cases in which it is part of the spelling. However, when you are cleaning up your document (after spelling checking, of course), look at the end of lines for unnecessary hyphenations. These confuse the reader, and creates a less professional look to your work. Most often Word avoids hyphenating long words, but if you notice one, fix it. With your "SHIFT" button pressed, click "ENTER" at the place just before the hyphenated word. This is called a 'soft return,' and will drop the word to the next line, but still retain the paragraphs attributes (like styles, indenting and leading).

10   **Indenting and paragraph spacing: How much is enough.**

Indenting has its place. For those documents requiring a warmer, friendlier image, indent .3 of an inch. Use it digitally, not by pressing the tab key. Select the paragraph, go to "Format," choose "Paragraph." Find the "special" option, and pull it down to see "first line." Type in ".3," and click "OK." Presto! Your paragraph is indented. This is better than tabbing every paragraph because it saves time, avoids forgetting to tab (it automatically sets up the next paragraph to look like the previous one), and is a more professional distance than what the tab key is set at (a half on an inch). *Paragraph spacing.* Like indenting, paragraph spacing can be done digitally through the paragraph format function described above. However, the defaults Word has set up are fine by double-clicking "ENTER." It helps the reader make the jump between thought processes from paragraph to paragraph.