

# THE TYPE CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

## THE VOX-ATYPI CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

### CLASSICAL

#### HUMANIST

Also known as: *Humanistic, Humanes, or Venetian*

Humanist typefaces represent the handwriting within renaissance manuscripts. Humanes include the first Roman typefaces created by Venetian printers (such as Nicolas Jenson) during the 15th century.

- Characteristics:**
- Low contrast between strokes
  - Heavy and short bracketed serifs
  - Slanted serifs on ascenders
  - The lowercase 'e' features a diagonal cross stroke

**Examples include:**  
Centaur, Cloister, Jenson



### CLASSICAL

#### GARALDE

Also known as: *Aldine*

The garaldes are named after typeface designer Claude Garamond and printer and publisher Aldus Manutius. In the mid 16th century, under the rein of King Francis I, garaldes were used to support the official grammar and orthography used across France.

- Characteristics:**
- Stronger contrast between strokes
  - Slanted axis
  - Finer proportions than those of the Humanist category

**Examples include:**  
Bembo, Garamond, Sabon



### CLASSICAL

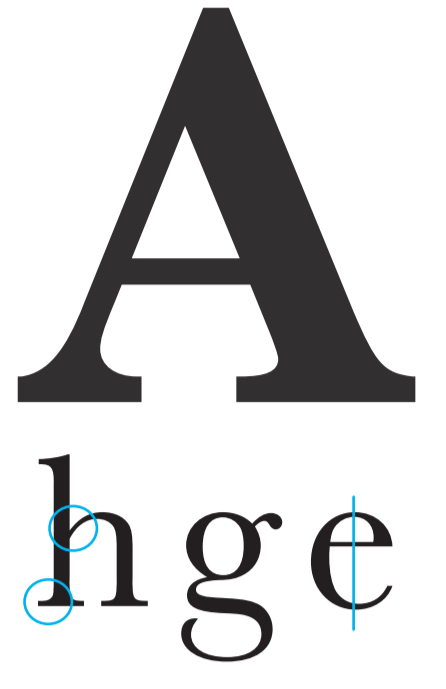
#### TRANSITIONAL

Also known as: *Realist, Réales, or Baroque*

In the mid 18th century, the printer and type designer John Baskerville established transitional typefaces. These typefaces take inspiration from both old style and neoclassical type designs, and use characteristics from both of these styles. Baskerville's developments with calendered paper and printing methods, opened up opportunities to create typefaces that maintained finer strokes and shapes.

- Characteristics:**
- Contrast is more distinctive
  - Vertical axis on the strokes and inclined axis for curved strokes
  - Bracketed serifs and slanted serifs on ascenders

**Examples include:**  
Baskerville, Perpetua, Times New Roman



### MODERN

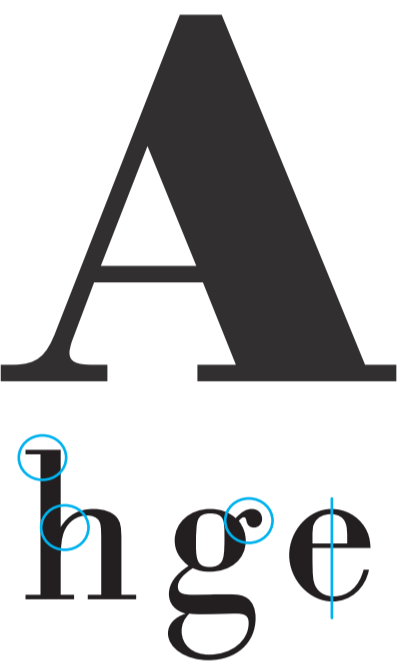
#### DIDONE

Also known as: *Modern*

First created in the late 18th century, didones are named after type-founders Didot and Bodoni, masters of this style. These typefaces provided the First French Empire with a new letterforms. The contrast between the thick and thin strokes are dramatic and the designs look completely different to any other typeface that had come before.

- Characteristics:**
- Very strong contrast between thick and thin strokes
  - Vertical axis for curved strokes
  - Very little to no bracketing on serifs
  - Terminals often have "ball" shapes

**Examples include:**  
Bodoni, Didot, Walbaum



### MODERN

#### MECHANISTIC

Also known as: *Mechanical, Slab Serif, or Mécanes*

The design of mechanistic typefaces coincides with the Industrial Revolution at the start of the 19th century. This mechanical style, with thick and rectangular serifs became very popular at the time for display advertising. In the Thibaudeau classification system these Mechanicals are named Egyptiennes.

- Characteristics:**
- Low contrast between thick and thin strokes
  - Heavy strokes with rectangular thick serifs
  - Very little or no bracketing on serifs

**Examples include:**  
Clarendon, Egyptienne, Ionic No. 5, Rockwell



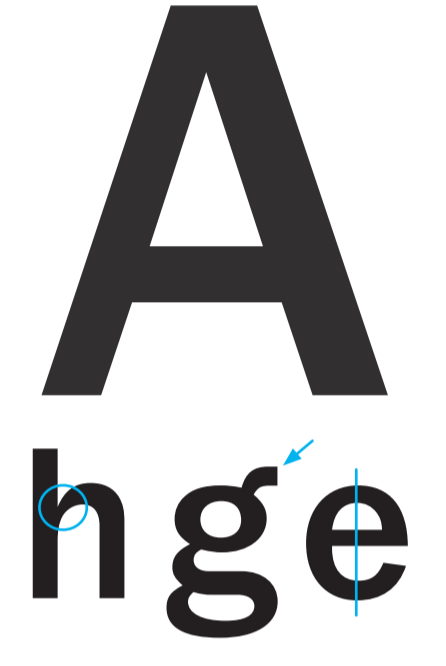
### MODERN: LINEAR

#### GROTESQUE

Originating in the 19th century, this category contains early sans serifs, many of which become commercially popular. The grotesques feature many awkward characteristics and quirks, including an odd distribution of line thicknesses on curved letterforms. A double story lowercase g, a spur on the uppercase G and a curled leg on the uppercase R are also common characteristics.

- Characteristics:**
- Noticeable contrast between thick and thin strokes
  - Vertical axis
  - The lowercase 'g' often is double story or 'bowl and loop'
  - 'R' commonly has a curled leg and the 'G' usually has a spur

**Examples include:**  
Headline, Monotype 215, Monotype Grotesque, Grot no. 6



### MODERN: LINEAR

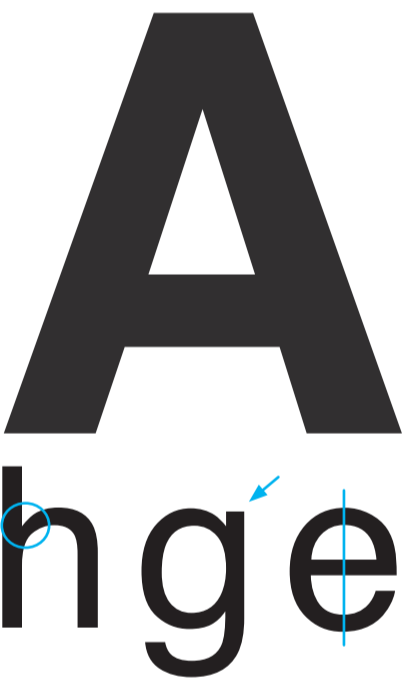
#### NEO-GROTESQUE

Also known as: *Transitionals*

Based on the earlier grotesque typefaces, the neo-grotesques category contains some of the most famous sans serif designs. Developing on the grotesque designs, the letterforms are much more refined and simplified. There is less variation in stroke weight and the lowercase g is now a single story.

- Characteristics:**
- Less variation between thick and thin strokes than in Grotesques
  - Single story lowercase g
  - No spur on the uppercase G

**Examples include:**  
Bell Gothic, DIN 1451, Helvetica, Univers



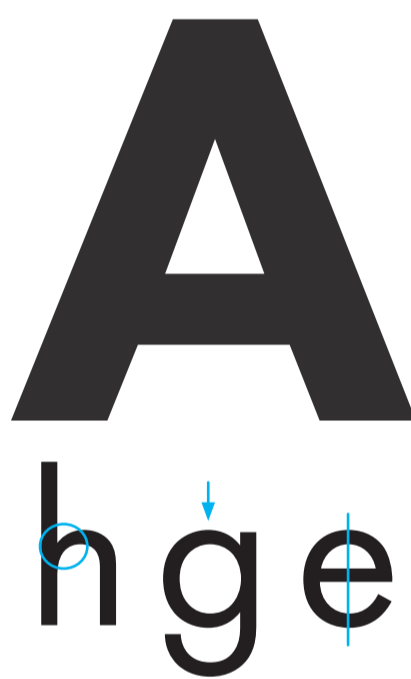
### MODERN: LINEAR

#### GEOMETRIC

Geometric typefaces are created with an equal or almost equal stroke width and are designed using simple geometric forms, which are repeated and used throughout the design. As a result, geometric typefaces are less readable and letters are harder to differentiate from one another.

- Characteristics:**
- Little to no contrast between the vertical and horizontal strokes
  - Character shapes are influenced by geometric forms

**Examples include:**  
Avenir, ITC Bauhaus, Eurostile, Futura, Harmonia Sans



### MODERN: LINEAR

#### HUMANIST

Humanist typefaces are not inspired by the Grotesque faces of the 19th Century but by earlier classical letterforms. The uppercase of humanist typefaces relate to Roman inscriptional letters and the characteristics of the lowercase are similar to those of Carolingian script. Because of this, humanist typefaces are said to be the most legible and readable of all the sans serif classifications.

- Characteristics:**
- Noticeable contrast between strokes
  - Proportions and characteristics match serif typefaces and are influenced by calligraphic forms

**Examples include:**  
Gill Sans, Optima, Tahoma



### CALLIGRAPHIC

#### GLYPHIC

Also known as: *Incised, or Incise*

Glyphic typefaces are based on engravings or chiselings of letterforms within materials such as stone or metal. Because of this, they have small triangular shaped serifs or flared terminals. These typefaces particularly focus on the uppercase characters, and many of which don't contain any lowercase letters altogether.

- Characteristics:**
- Minimal contrast between thick and thin strokes
  - Vertical axis for curved strokes
  - A tapering effect at the terminals or triangular shaped serifs

**Examples include:**  
Albertus, Copperplate Gothic, Trajan



### CALLIGRAPHIC

#### SCRIPT

Also known as: *Scriptes*

Scripts represent the formal penmanship and cursive writing, as a result they have strong sloping forms and letterforms can often be connected together. Included in this category are typefaces that imitate copperplate scripts.

- Characteristics:**
- Appear to be written with a quill
  - Strong slope
  - Letters can often be connected together

**Examples include:**  
Francesca, Mistral, Shelley



### CALLIGRAPHIC

#### GRAPHIC

Also known as: *Manual, or Manuaires*

By far the broadest type category, these typefaces are not intended to be used for body copy but for display purposes. They often reflect a particular time, period or theme but can also be based on hand-drawn designs written with a wide range of writing instruments.

**Examples include:**  
Banco, Klang



### CALLIGRAPHIC

#### BLACKLETTER

Also known as: *Gothic script, Gothic minuscule, or Textura*

Based on the medieval scribe hands written with broad-nibbed pens, blackletter types were first used by Gutenberg. They were used to print body text until eventually Humanist typefaces took over with the invention of movable type in the early 20th Century.

**Examples include:**  
Fracktur, Schwabacher, Textur



### CALLIGRAPHIC

#### GAELIC

Also known as: *Irish character, Irish type, or Gaelic script*

Used as early as the 16th Century, these typefaces originated from Irish insular scripts found on medieval manuscripts. Gaelic type was used for mainly setting body text and was used throughout Ireland before falling out of favour in the mid 20th Century. In modern times, Gaelic type is used for decorative purposes, commonly found on pub signs, greeting cards and display advertising.

**Examples include:**  
Ceanannas, Corcaigh, Doire, Duibhlinn



### OTHER

#### NON LATIN

This category includes all non-latin typefaces (regardless of style) for example: Greek, Cyrillic, Hebrew, Arabic, Chinese, etc. As the Vox type classification system is very Latin based, non-latin types are very underrepresented. As a result, it is worth taking some time to discover the other writing systems and their typographic designs and considerations.

