THIS RAN IN JANUARY OF 2011 AND SINCE SUMMER IS THE TIME FOR RE-RUNS, I THOUGHT YOU COULD USE A REFRESHER ON THE TERMS OF ONE OF OUR TOOLS…

Characters

Choosing a typeface is just as important as choosing the right graphic for your message.

Size of the ad can affect the typeface… just because an ad is small doesn't mean you have to choose a condensed typeface. As a matter of fact, in some cases a smaller point size is more effective than a condensed typeface.

In our industry, type becomes a visual element and needs to be treated as part of the design process.

Type is the most under-used element in a majority of the ads, flyers, booklets, etc., that I see and yet it is *the* most powerful tool in our "arsenal." It is often overlooked as an element, perhaps because art or photos are more "exciting." Nonetheless, used properly, type provides that "visible voice" that *John McWade* (*Before&After*, bamagazine.com. He is still one of the best to explain design.), author of many books and articles refers to, and can provide a compelling focal point in any ad.

Type (and human) families are comprised of related characters, each one different than the other but, nonetheless, sharing certain similarities, such as height, weight and a distinctive look (without the sibling rivalry). So let me introduce you to a little background information regarding our cast of characters…
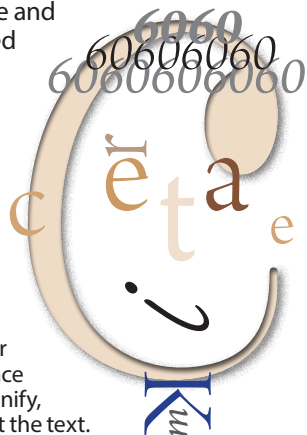
CHARACTER An individual letter, number, punctuation mark or auxiliary character.

TYPEFACE A particular style of type design, including the full range of characters in all sizes (upper and lower case, numbers, punctuation and auxiliary characters). Identified by such family monikers as *Helvetica, Times, Century, Utopia, etc.*

FONT A full range of type of one face and size. Some fonts are comprised just of ornamental devices, symbols or decorative figures that can be used like artwork, but treated as type. The term typeface and font are often used interchangeably.

Each character has a unique personality. It is up to the designer to match the typeface to the message to unify, clarify and augment the text.

TYPE FAMILY This encompasses all the typefaces that exist in a variety of closely related forms—italic, book, bold, etc.

Each typeface has its own variations—some in weight, such as: Utopia, **Utopia Semibold, Utopia Black.** Some occur in style: *Utopia Italic,* ᴜᴛᴏᴘɪᴀ ᴇxᴘᴇʀᴛ, TITLING CAPITALS, and Utopia ✄☙❧ (ornaments).

Some type families are very large and offer a variety of weights and styles… a good choice to add variety, yet still retain a unified look to your ad or document.

Coming to Terms

The following are standard terms used when discussing type and design devices…

AMPERSAND This character was originally a ligature of et, Latin for "and." It later became corrupted as "and per se, and."

ASCENDER The stroke on a letter which extends above the height of the lowercase "x." Ascenders are found on b, d, f, h, k, l & t.

BASELINE An imaginary line on which the upper and lowercase letters appear to rest or align themselves.

CAPITALS Upper case letters of the alphabet. Cap height is about 2/3 of the point size.

CONDENSED The characters in a condensed typeface appear more narrow than usual. Condensed type is designed to maintain the integrity/readability of the characters. If we condense and extend (scale) on the computer, these traits may be compromised.

COUNTER Space within a character that is enclosed or partially enclosed…o, g, p, etc.

DESCENDER Characters where the stroke descends below the x-height (and baseline). Check out g, j, p, q, and y (sometimes f in italic faces).

DINGBAT Special or ornamental font.

EXTENDED Characters that appear to be elongated or "stretched out." **Extended**

INDENT A technique used to break up text intensive copy for greater readability. This is a hanging indent.

ITALIC Refers to the slant of a character and varies with the typeface… used for emphasis, quotes and/or special effects. *Italic*

KERN Use minus letterspace or subtract space between certain letter pairs for optical spacing. Common pairs include the letters W, A, T, V.

LEGIBILITY The clarity and characteristics of the individual characters.

LETTERSPACE Add additional space between individual letters. L E T T E R S P A C E

LIGATURE Two or more individual letters designed to join together to form a distinct unit.

LINE LENGTH The length of a line of copy. A general rule is to have line length be about 1/2 to 2 times the point size of the typeface.

LINESPACE The space between lines of type, referred to as leading (ledding).

LOWERCASE Small letters of the alphabet. The term comes from the fact that in the age of metal type, the printer stored these letters in the "lower case."

ORPHANS One or a couple of words that end up on a line by themselves at the end of a paragraph. (See widow)

PICA A basic unit of type measurement with approximately 6 picas in an inch (.9962). Typography is based on picas and points.

POINT A smaller unit in type measurement with twelve points in a pica.

READABILITY The comfort level that is achieved in the ease of reading text.

SCRIPT Typefaces designed to approximate fine handwriting… this is not the same as italic. *Script*

SERIF & SANS SERIF A serif character has a line or stroke crossing the ends of the main strokes. Sans serifs have no strokes (*sans* is French for "without").

STROKE A straight or curved line.

SWASH A character with an exaggerated flourish that replaces a serif or terminal.

TERMINAL In serif faces, this is the free end of the stroke that doesn't have a serif.

UPPERCASE The capital letters.

WIDOW A single word that appears at the top of a page and is the ending of the previous paragraph.

X-HEIGHT Height of the *lowercase x* and the basis of measurement for the height of the main element in all lowercase letters.

Until next month!