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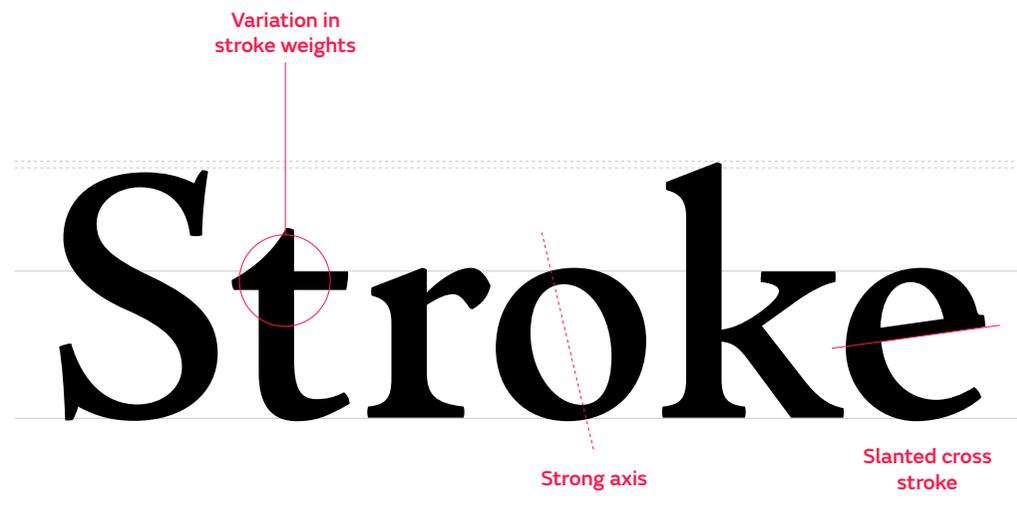
A guide to  
type styles

A B C D E

**Humanist Serif**\_\_\_\_\_ The first roman type was derived from calligraphy, so the shape of letterforms is based on formal writing with a flat brush or a broad nib pen. The term Humanist has traditionally been used for serif typefaces, but nowadays there is also Humanist Sans.

### Features

*Illustrative example drawn by Alessia Mazzarella*



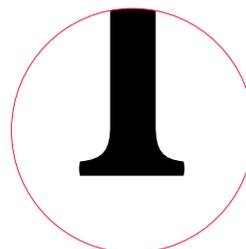
### Characteristics

- Axis is at a strong angle
- Small x-height
- Interrupted construction
- Variation in the stroke weights
- Short bracketed serifs
- Serifs at an angle
- Slanted cross stroke on the “e”
- Lower contrast between thick and thin

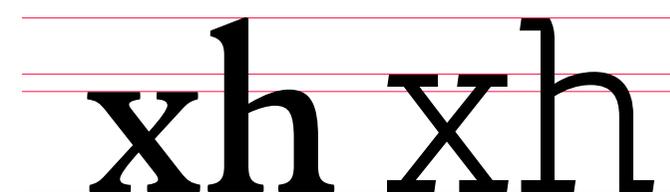
### Examples

- Adobe Jenson
- Centaur
- Cloister
- Guardi
- Lutetia
- Lynton
- Stempel Schneidler

### Serif style



### x-height

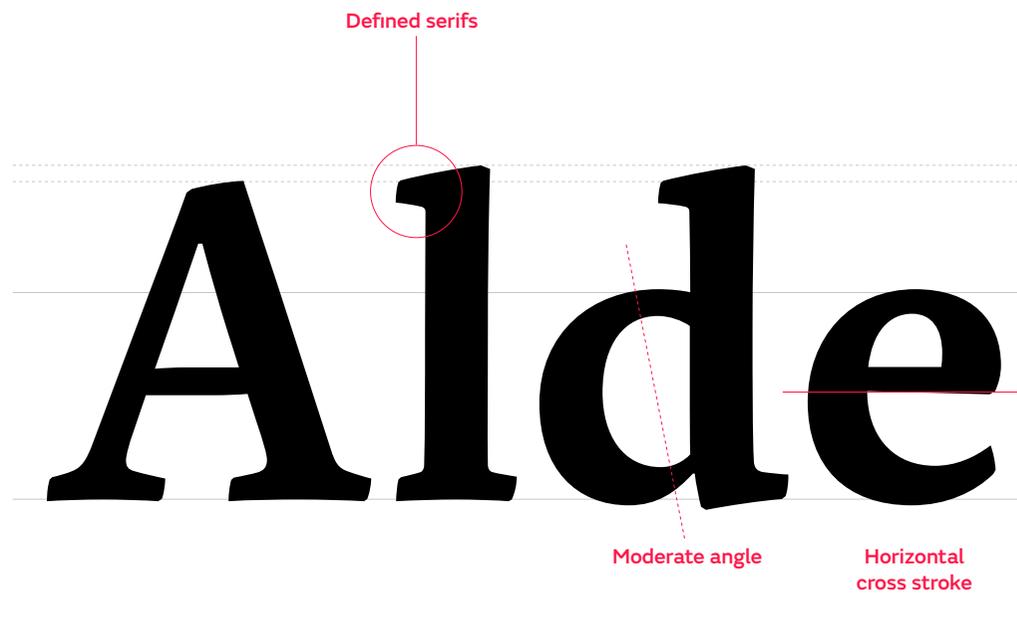


Humanist serifs have a small x-height, especially when compared to slab serifs

**Garalde** \_\_\_\_\_ Named after the two most notable type designers of the period between the late 1400s until the 1700s, French punchcutter Claude Garamond and Venetian printer Aldus Manutius. Garaldes are a step forward from Humanist, and are still influenced by formal calligraphy. Many technical improvements in printing and punchcutting during that period gave opportunities for refinement and production of many typefaces, revivals of which are still widely used for setting books or long texts. Also known as Aldine after Aldus Manutius; and sometimes Old-style, but this term is occasionally used for all Humanist, Garalde and Transitional typefaces.

### Features

Example set in FS Brabo



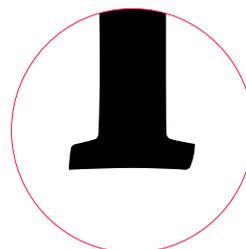
### Characteristics

- Refined proportions
- Axis is at a moderate angle
- Serifs have better defined shape
- Middle stroke of lowercase “e” is horizontal

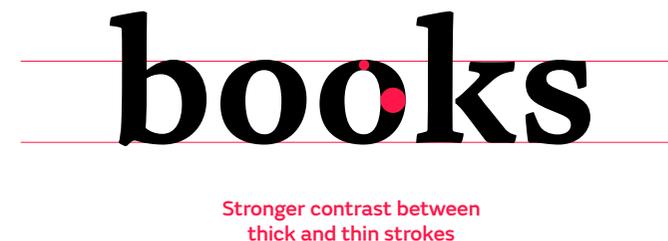
### Examples

- Bembo
- Caslon
- FS Brabo
- Galliard
- Garamond
- Janson
- Palatino

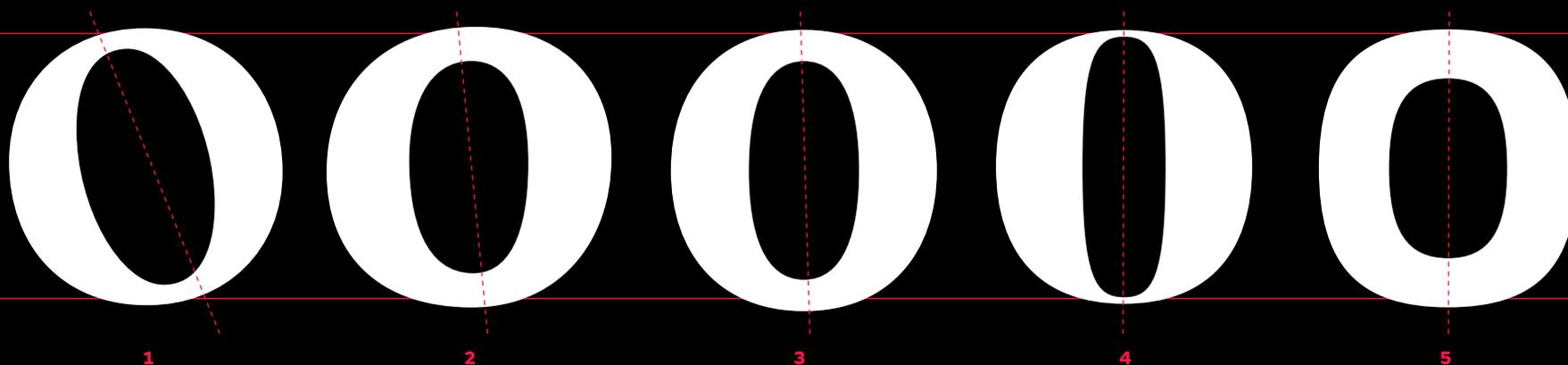
### Serif style



### Contrast



- 1\_Humanist Serif
- 2\_Garalde
- 3\_Transitional
- 4\_Didone
- 5\_Slab



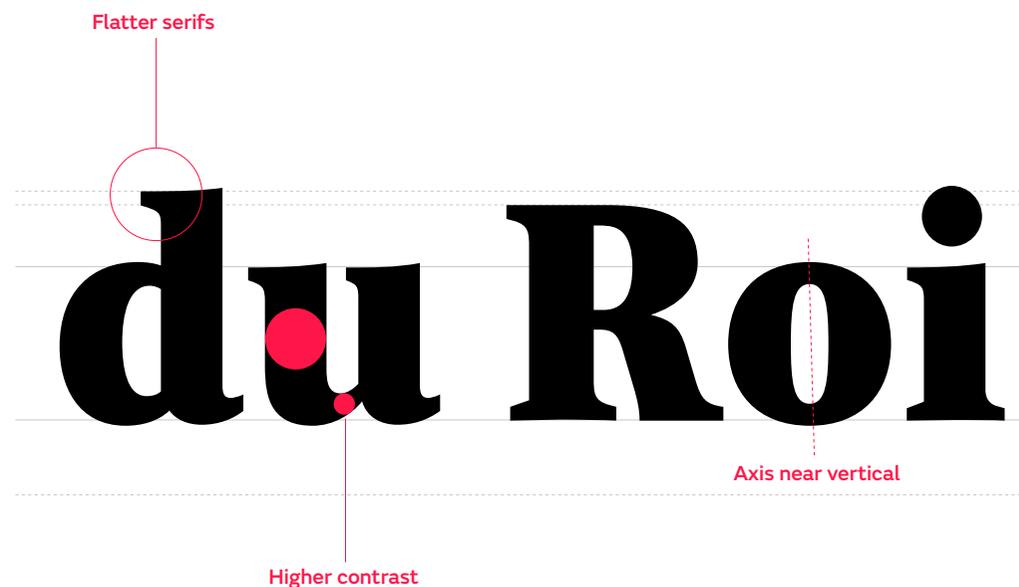
## On an axis

Since more serif typefaces are influenced by writing with calligraphic tools, they have inherited an axis. This is the angle where the thinnest part of the letter is.

**Transitional**\_\_\_\_\_ At the end of 17th century, Louis XIV wanted to renovate the French government's printing press (the Imprimerie Royale) to find a replacement for Garamond type styles and to compete with the development and quality of printing everywhere in Europe at that time. He commissioned the French Academy of Sciences to create a new typeface for him, and the result was the Roman du Roi – 86 typefaces designed on a strict system of grids, mathematics and engineering. Notable type designers from this period are John Baskerville, Simon Fournier and Christophe Plantin. Another name for Transitional is “realist”, which comes from the Spanish term for “royal” (it has nothing to do with realism), thanks to the typeface made for the Spanish King Phillip II by Plantin.

### Features

Example set in FS Sally



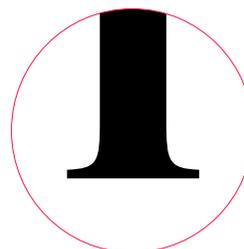
### Characteristics

- Contrast is even stronger than in the first two groups
- Axis is nearly vertical
- Serifs are flatter, and details are very refined
- It's easy to recognise Transitional typefaces if you think of them as the “transition” between Garalde and Didones

### Examples

- Baskerville
- Fournier
- FS Neruda
- FS Sally
- Joanna
- Melior
- Times

### Serif style



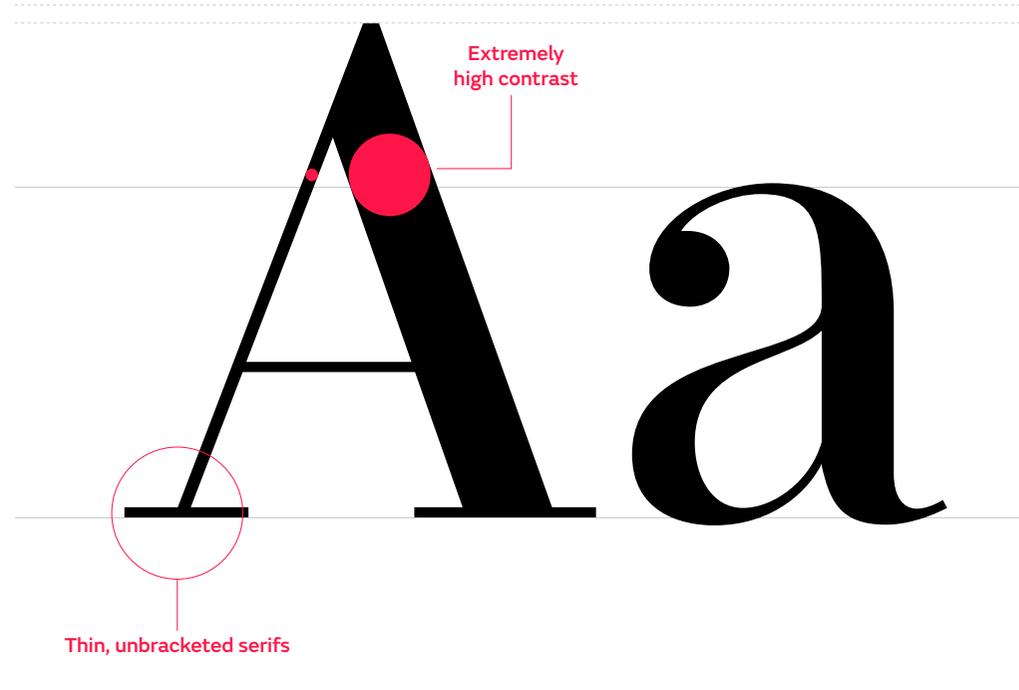
### Serif transition



**Didone**\_\_\_\_\_The term Didone is derived from the names of type founders Firmin Didot and Giambattista Bodoni. They were both incredible craftsmen, and through their professional rivalry pushed the limits of type design, punchcutting and printing. Also known as “Modern” – not a hugely helpful name, thanks to the confusion with adjectives like “modern” and “contemporary.”

### Features

*Illustrative example drawn by Alessia Mazzarella*



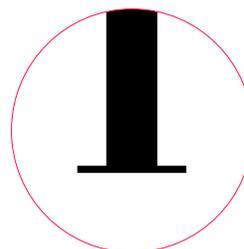
### Characteristics

- Extremely high stroke contrasts
- Influenced by writing with a pointed nib held at a 90°, which produces very thin horizontal strokes
- Axis is completely vertical
- Thin unbracketed serifs

### Examples

- Ambroise
- Arepo
- Bodoni
- Didot
- FS Ostro
- Scotch Roman
- Walbaum

### Serif style



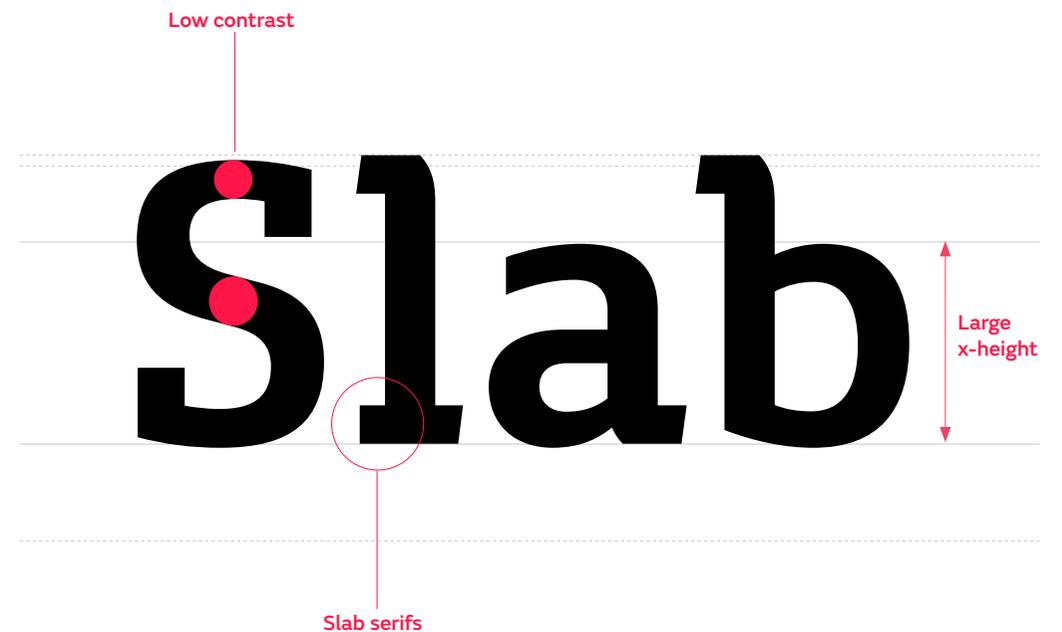
### 90° pen angle



**Slab**\_\_\_\_\_ There are many different terms for Slab: Mechanical / Mechanistic, Antique or Egyptian. Associated with blocky thick rectangular serifs, they were originally created to attract attention in advertising, posters and large-scale media. They embody the spirit of the Industrial Revolution at the beginning of the 19th century, and were specifically designed for large display use. This category includes the typefaces with square unbracketed serifs (often called Egyptians) as well as bracketed ones (called Clarendons or Ionics).

### Features

Example set in FS Silas Slab



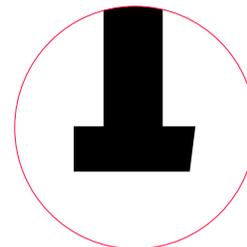
### Characteristics

- Very large x-height
- Low stroke contrast
- Egyptians: unbracketed, squarish, mechanical
- Clarendons: bracketed, more subtle and gentle

### Examples

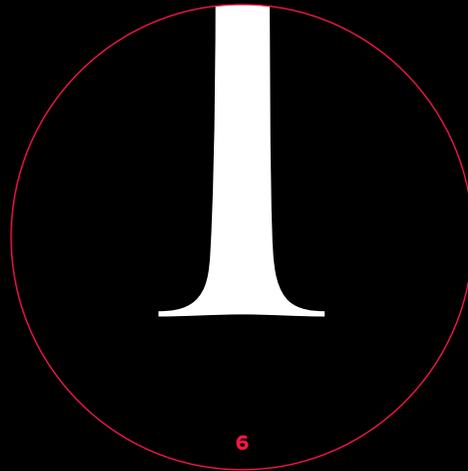
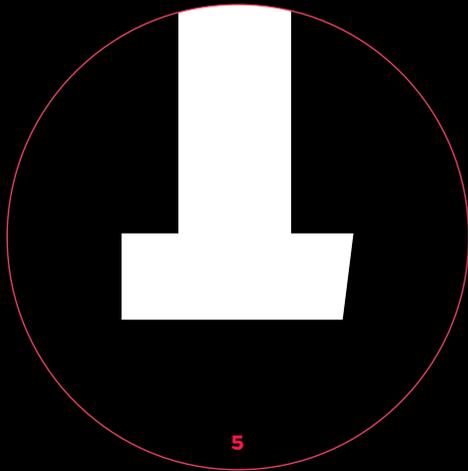
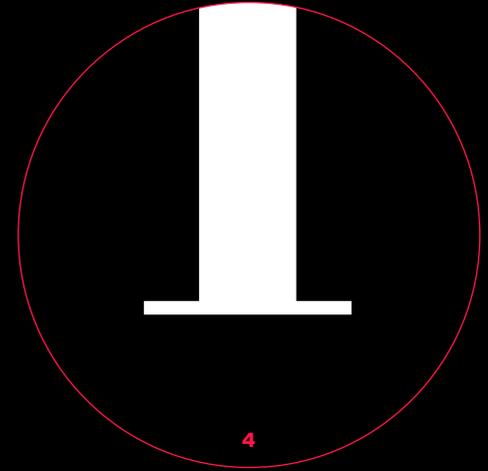
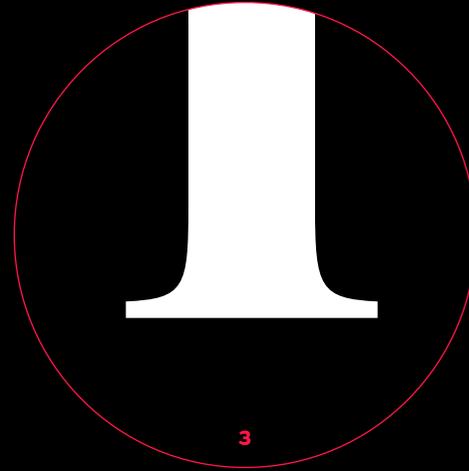
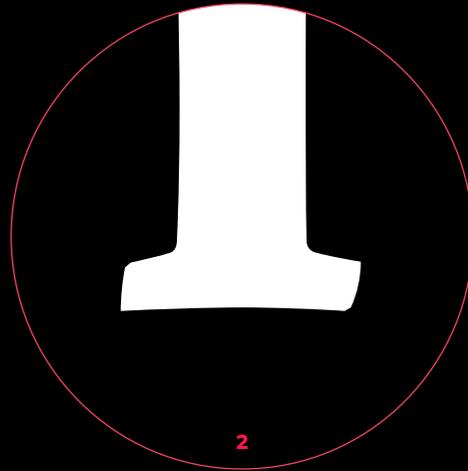
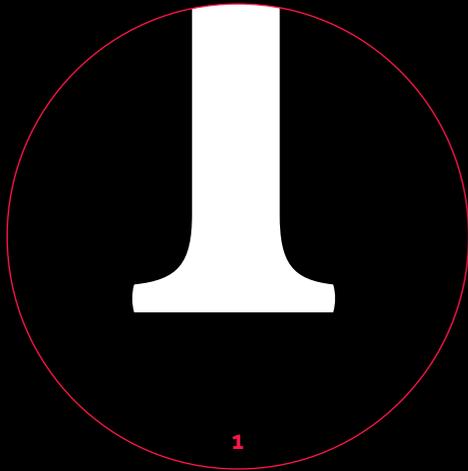
- Clarendon
- FS Clerkenwell
- FS Rufus
- FS Silas Slab
- Memphis
- Rockwell
- Sentinel

### Serif style



### Slab styles





## Serif styles

The serifs can be the most noticeable way to differentiate between different type styles, by looking at the shape, contrast, angle, and bracketing. Their shape is also influenced by the writing tool or production method.

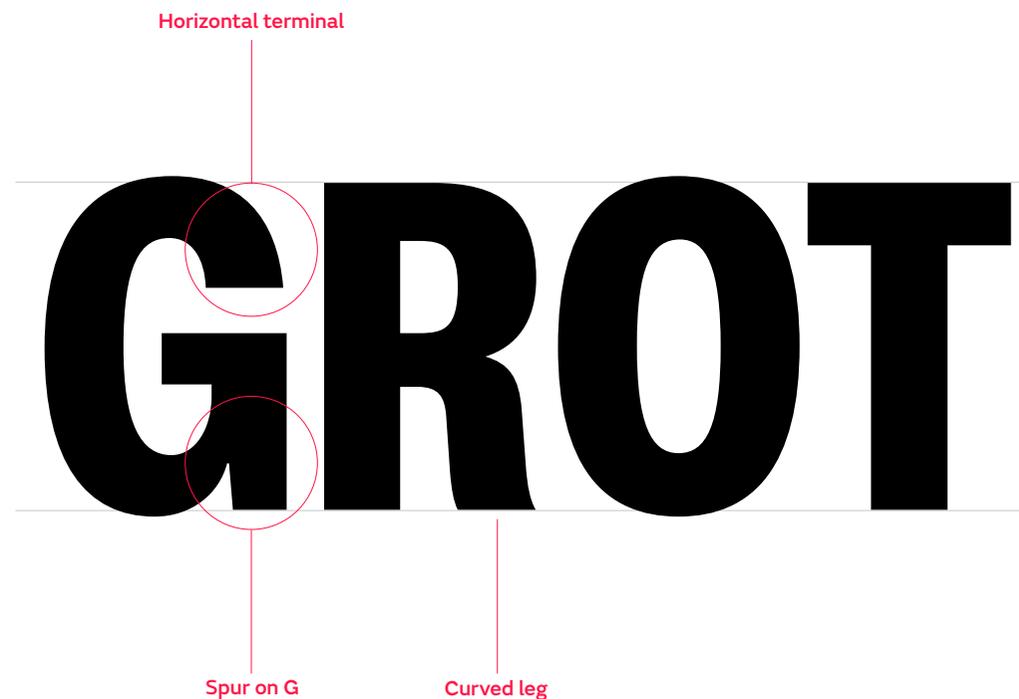
- 1\_Humanist Serif
- 2\_Garamond
- 3\_Transitional
- 4\_Didone
- 5\_Slab
- 6\_Incised

**Grotesque** \_\_\_\_\_ A form of sans serifs that originated in the 19th century. Since they are essentially among the early developments of the sans serif they tend to have a lot of peculiar characteristics. They were influenced by the Didone serif typefaces, so the first examples are attempts to draw a bolder Didone without serifs, and lower contrast to use in headlines and advertising.

Many of the examples only used capital letters, but in the development of the Grotesque style we see sans serif lowercase for the first time.

### Features

*Illustrative example drawn by Fernando Mello*



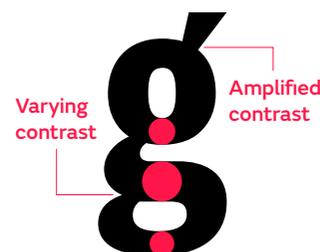
### Characteristics

- Varying contrasts between thick and thin, often applied or exaggerated in weird places and unrelated to calligraphic contrast logic
- Round shapes and curves are squarish
- Terminals are often horizontal or curling in
- “G” often has a spur, and sometimes the “R” has a curved leg.

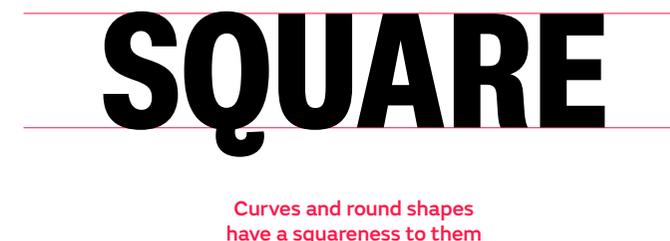
### Examples

- Bureau Grot
- Franklin Gothic
- FS Meridian
- Ideal Grotesk
- Knockout
- Schelter Grotesk
- Venus

### Stroke contrast



### Curves

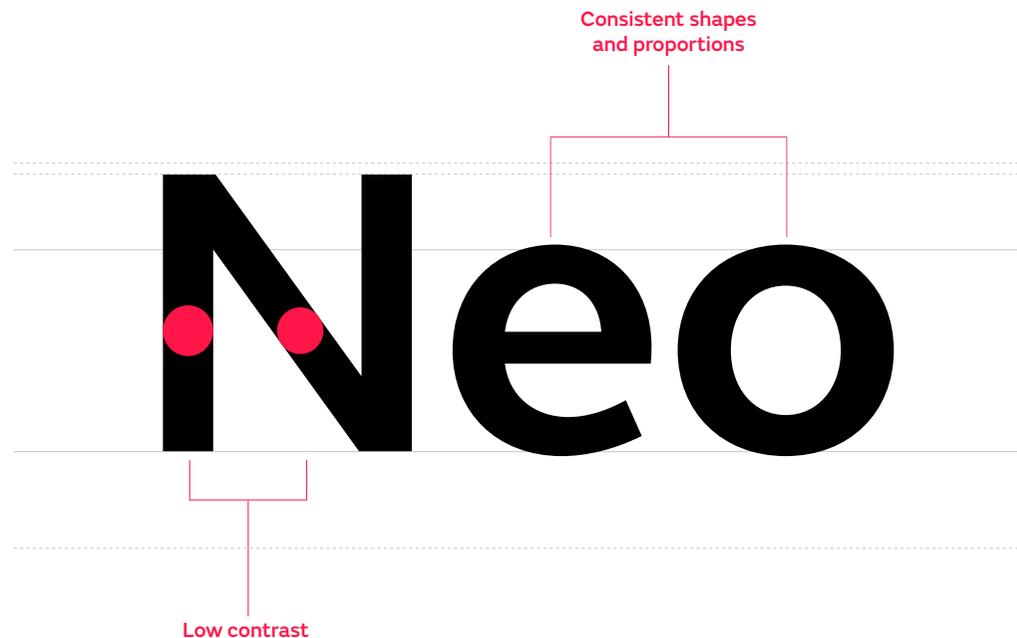


**Neo-Grotesque**\_\_\_\_\_ The successors of later Grotesque typefaces, this category includes some of the most popular sans serifs to date: Helvetica and Univers – though the many different digital versions might not be as close to the originals as you might think.

Whereas Grotesques were only ever intended for bold headlines and advertising, Neo-Grotesques were developed with simplicity, legibility and a wider range of uses in mind. They were the first typeface families to include multiple variations of weight and width, designed to be used in any application and at all sizes.

### Features

Example set in FS Elliot



### Characteristics

- Less contrast than Grotesques
- More regularity and consistency in proportions and shapes
- Unlike Grotesques, there is no spurred “G”
- Lowercase “g” is often single-storey

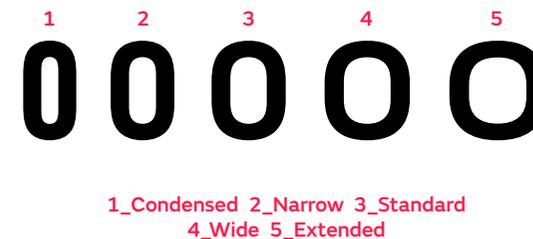
### Examples

- Bell Centennial
- DIN
- Folio
- FS Elliot
- FS Industrie
- Helvetica
- Univers

### Design details



### Width variation



**Small x-height**  
Humanist Serif

x h h

**Large x-height**  
Slab Serif

x h h

## x-heighting

The height of the lowercase “x” is used as a guideline for the height of unextended lowercase letters. Humanist typefaces tend to have a smaller x-height and longer ascenders and descenders. Slab serifs on the other hand have a very large x-height.

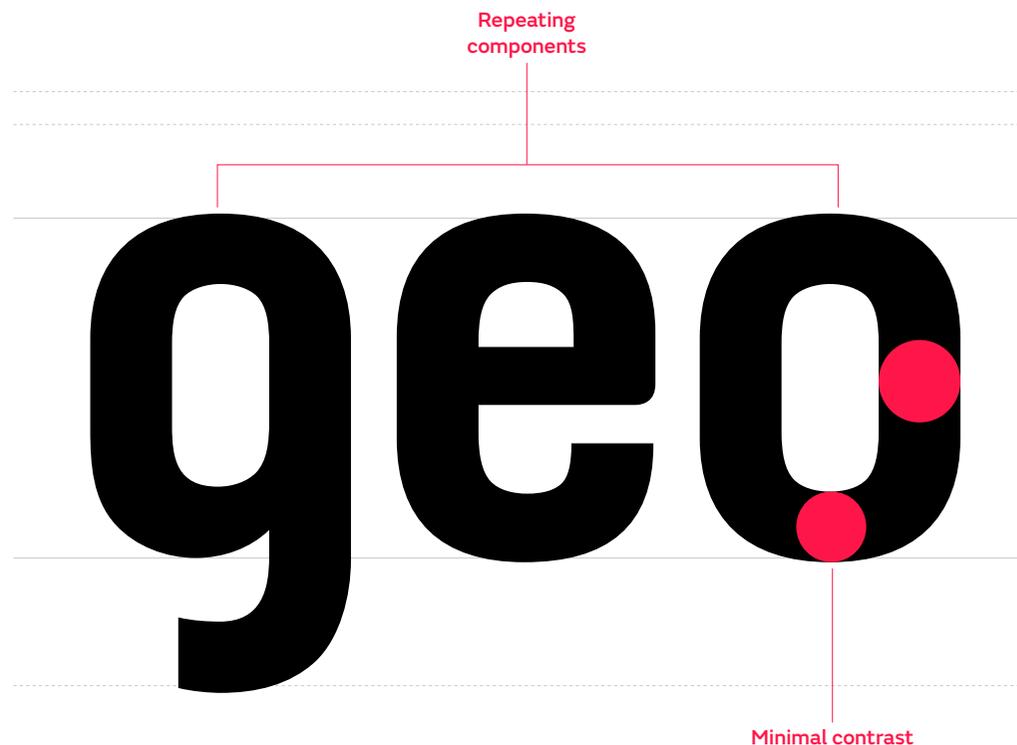
**Geometric** \_\_\_\_\_ As the name suggests, these are sans serifs constructed from simple geometric shapes. Geometric fonts might seem simple and easy to design, but in reality there are lots of subtle optical adjustments to make the shapes look pure and monolinear.

One approach to Geometric typeface design follows the first examples from the 1920s and 1930s, which have variation in the proportions, like the classical Roman types, and use a range of geometric shapes to achieve the variation (e.g. *FS Lucas*).

The other approach – inspired by simplified industrial letterforms usually cut in stencil, metal or plastic – takes the idea of using repetitive, geometric elements to construct each letter, giving less variation in proportion and a more uniform appearance. (e.g. *FS Dillon*).

#### Features

Example set in *FS Dillon*



#### Characteristics

- Usually have minimal contrast and their construction is based on repeating components, such as circles, squares and triangles
- Most commonly, they have a single storey “a” and “g” to complement the geometric simplicity

#### Examples

- Bank Gothic
- Erbar
- Eurostyle
- FS Dillon
- FS Lucas
- Futura
- Kabel

#### Construction



Geometric construction with optical adjustments

#### Design details

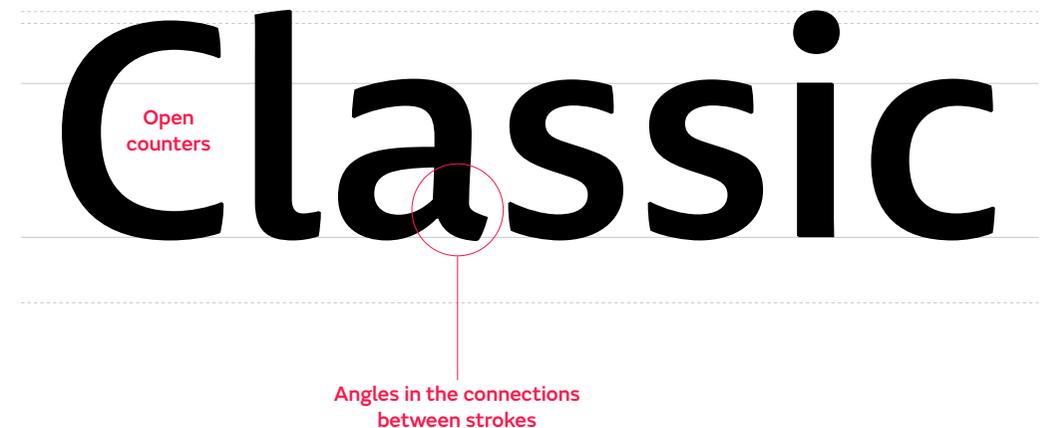


Single storey characters

**Humanist Sans** \_\_\_\_\_ Just as Humanist Serif typefaces are strongly influenced by broad nib calligraphy, Humanist Sans are similar in many ways. The calligraphic influence is visible in the construction of letterforms. Their proportions are often based on the classical roman model. This makes the Humanist sans a better choice for continuous reading than the Grotesques and Geometric sans serifs.

### Features

Example set in FS Irwin



### Characteristics

- Contrast is often much lower than Humanist Serifs but it is still visible and often at an angle
- Open counters
- Angles in the connections between strokes
- Often a double storey lowercase “a” and “g”
- Often have a true cursive italic, instead of just a slanted roman

### Examples

- FS Irwin
- FS Millbank
- FS Siena
- Gill Sans
- Johnston
- Optima
- Scala Sans

### Cursive italic vs slanted roman

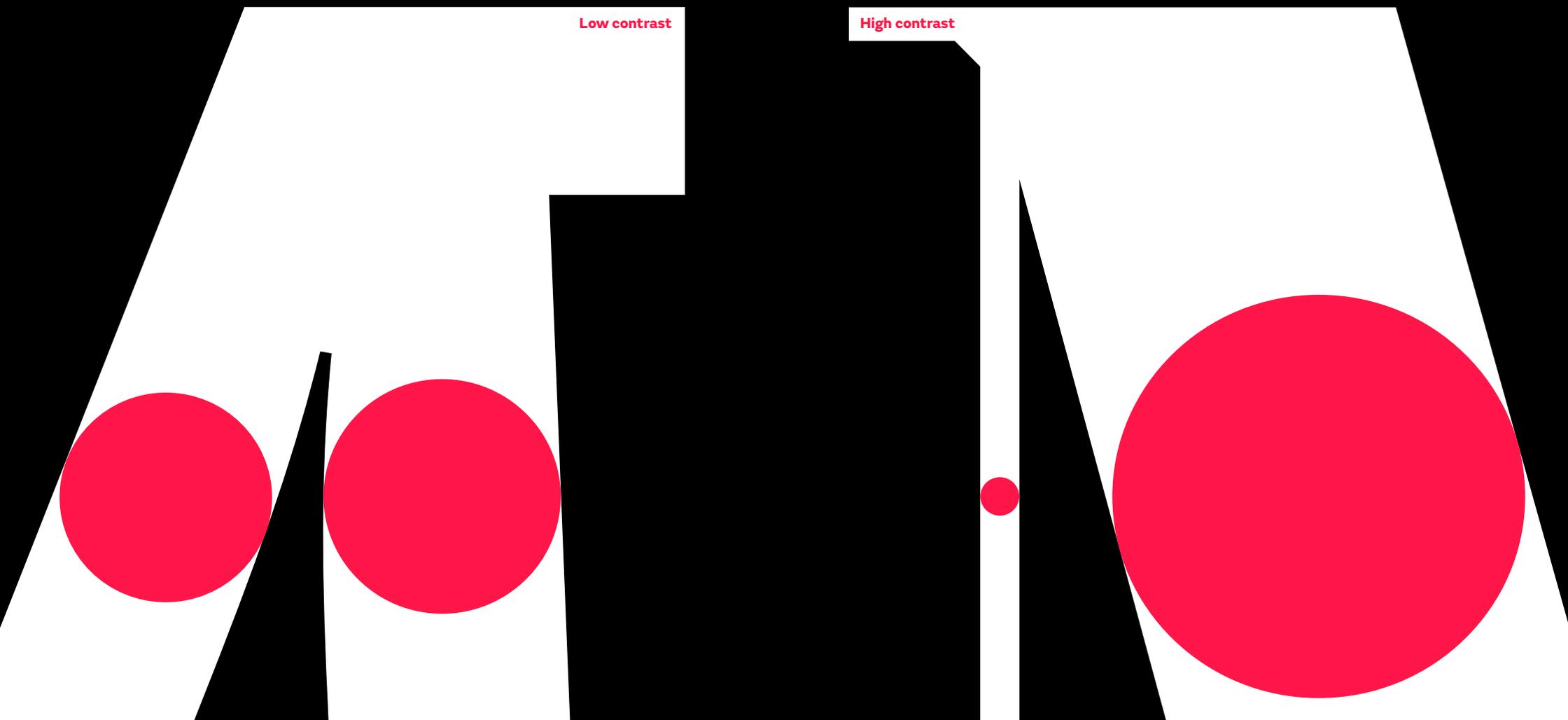


### Humanist Sans vs Humanist Serif



# Contrasting contrast

The amount of contrast (from high to low) is defined by the difference between the thickest and thinnest strokes of letters.



**Script**\_\_\_\_\_ Inspired by handwriting styles, scripts can often be differentiated by the different tools used to create them, such as brushes, markers or pointed nibs. They can be very formal – often based on classical penmanship – or very casual.

#### Features

Illustrative example drawn by Andy Lethbridge



#### Characteristics

- Letters are often connected to each other and slanted, like in cursive writing
- A lot of script typefaces have several versions of each letter in order to replicate the dynamic and versatile look of handwriting or hand-lettering

#### Examples

- Bello
- Bickham Script
- FS Sammy
- FS Shepton
- Mistral
- Snell Roundhand
- Zapfino

#### Script style

*By hand* | *By hand*

Formal script

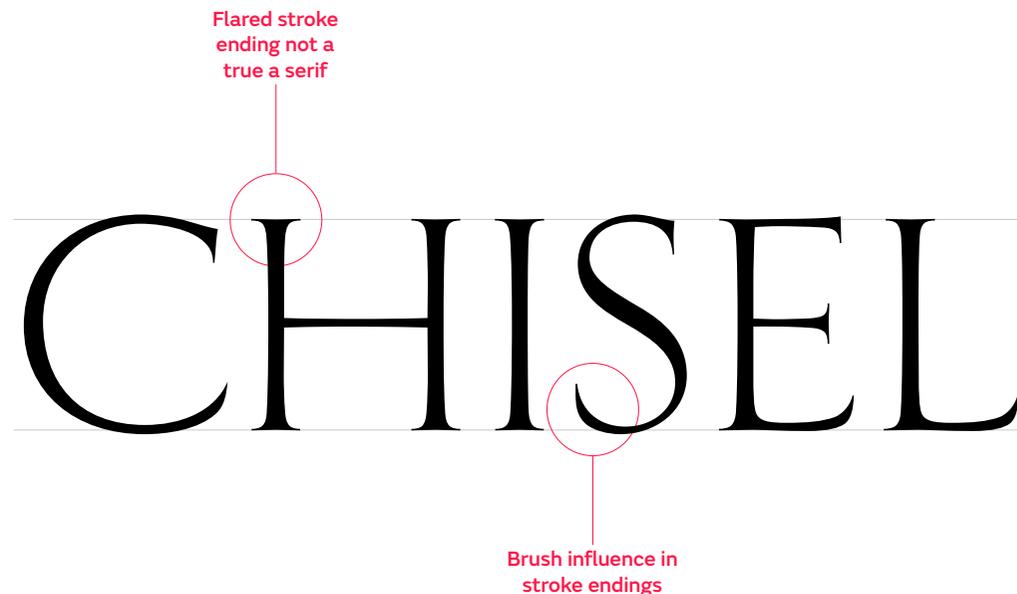
Casual script

**Incised** \_\_\_\_\_ Also called Glyphic, these are typefaces which are influenced by the engraving or chiseling of characters in stone, as opposed to calligraphic handwriting. A lot of Incised types are based on Roman inscriptions and might only contain capitals, such as Trajan – based on the lettering from the Trajan column. Other examples, which are not a strict revival of the classical forms, manage to incorporate the incised characteristics into lowercase letters too, using the flared stroke endings and calligraphic construction.

They might be confused with some of the calligraphic based serif fonts, but the shapes of the Incised typefaces are derived from using a chisel to cut the letterforms into stone. In this case, the serifs are a result of the production process, not a design feature.

#### Features

Example set in FS Rome



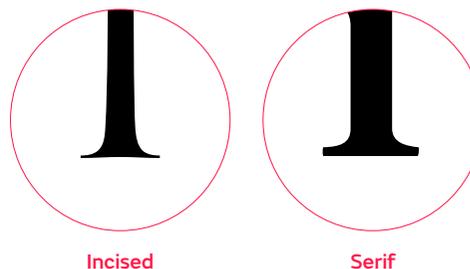
#### Characteristics

- Small serifs, often just flares at stroke endings
- Characters follow proportions of classical Roman capitals
- Visible influence of calligraphy with flat brush

#### Examples

- Albertus
- Copperplate Gothic
- Exocet
- Fritz Quadrata
- FS Benjamin
- FS Rome
- Lithos

#### Stroke ending



#### Design details

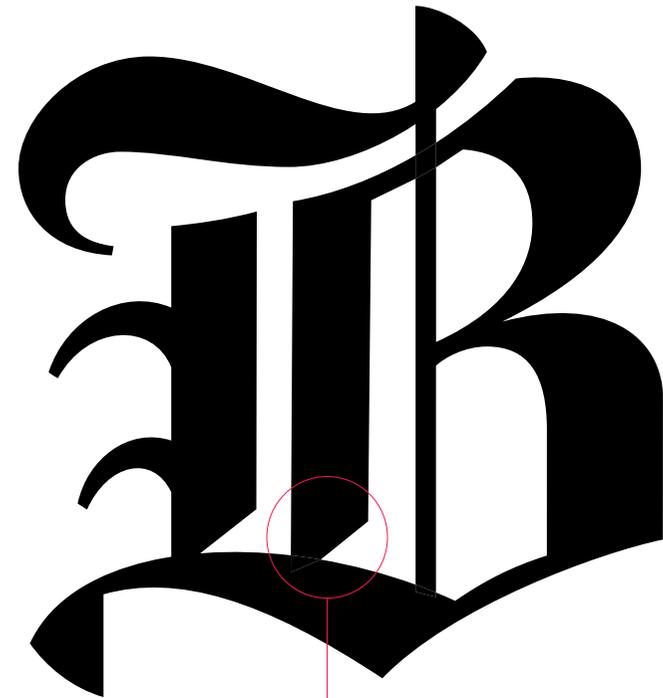


**Blackletter** \_\_\_\_\_ This style originated with 15th century German printer Johannes Gutenberg, and the first Blackletter type styles are directly based on these manuscript forms. Gutenberg's printing success increased the popularity and usage of Blackletter, but eventually it was replaced by more readable serif types. Nowadays, you might only ever see it in use on beer labels, or on metal and hip hop music ephemera. Also sometimes known as Gothic or Textura.

You may think that the distinct characteristics of Blackletter belong to the Graphic or Script category. However, Blackletter is also based on writing with a broad nib pen, but with a very different technique: the pen was held at a steep 45° angle.

#### Features

*Illustrative example drawn by Fernando Mello*



Design based on a pen held at a 45° angle

#### Characteristics

- Mostly constructed of thick straight lines with some thick and thin diagonals
- Proportions are very narrow, making the text appear very dense and sharp

#### Examples

- Canterbury
- Fette Fraktur
- Fraktur
- Goudy Text
- Linotype Textur
- Notre Dame
- Old English

#### Design details

Gutenberg

Narrow proportions and heavy strokes gives text a dense appearance

**Graphic**\_\_\_\_\_ Pretty much everything else that doesn't fit any other label: display, ornamented, decorative, layered, textured, stencil, shadow...

If you're not sure what it is, or it doesn't look like it's based on any writing tool or geometric principle, but it looks drawn or constructed from arbitrary shapes or with applied effects, then it's a Graphic typeface.

**Characteristics**

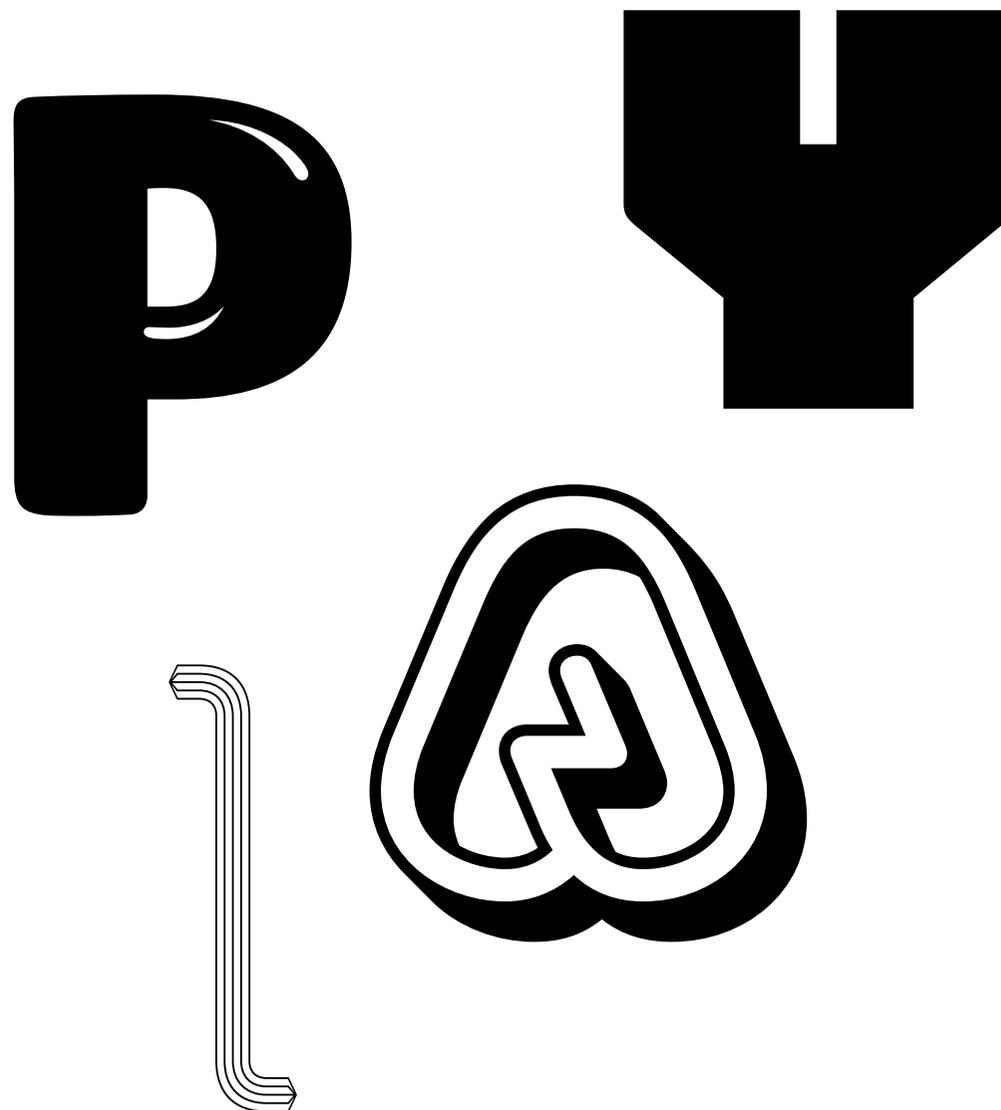
- Generally designed for use for display purposes and in large sizes for emphasis

**Examples**

- Banco
- Calypso
- Fournier Le Jeune
- FS Conrad
- FS Kitty
- FS Pele
- FS Pimlico Glow

**Features**

Example set in FS Pimlico, FS Conrad, FS Kitty, FS Pele



# Constructed types

Interrupted construction has sharp corners where two parts of the letter meet, whereas running construction has smooth, curved connections. It's often more noticeable in typefaces that have a calligraphic influence.

**Interrupted  
construction**



**Running  
construction**

