



10 Type Tips

from Lynn Strause

- 1. Pair personality to purpose.** Keep in mind the message you are trying to communicate with your type. Sports, even women's sports, do not lend themselves to feminine script, for example.
- 2. When working with type, more is not better.** Limiting type to no more than three fonts for the entire book is a growing trend. When combining type for headlines, remember two's company, three's a crowd. Limit spread designs to one distinct type supported by something simple.
- 3. Serifs are more readable than sans serifs.** Use a serif font for body copy and captions, as a general rule. The more unusual the type, the lower the readability.
- 4. Sans serifs are more legible than serifs.** Use sans serif fonts for primary headlines, as a general rule.
- 5. Avoid using all capitals.** That doesn't mean you can never use all caps. Just realize that all capital letters reduces readability. Use all caps only when you have a specific design purpose in mind. Especially avoid using all capitals in a script face. Your readability drops to about zero.
- 6. Pay attention to relationships when combining type.** If elements are not the same, they should be very different. Remember that, like the perfect marriage, types need to either be very similar or fairly opposite. Contrast type in size, weight, form and structure, for example, using AHJ Chantilly Bold for heads and AHJ Garamond for text provides good contrast; AHJ Chantilly Bold for heads and AHJ Unitus for text does not provide enough contrast. The combinations you form should communicate, not confuse the reader.
- 7. Some types just don't mix.** Don't use two scripts or a script and an italic together. They usually have the same form and so they conflict with each other rather than contrast. Never use two types from the same category (for example: Script, Decorative) together.
- 8. Don't abuse type through manipulation.** Remember, your purpose is to communicate, and type can help you do that. Don't manipulate type to fit your design by adjusting leading and width. Instead, edit the copy or find a word that fits the headline space. Once established within a section, type size, leading and width should remain consistent.
- 9. Complement your knowledge of fonts with your knowledge of design.** Use of effectively planned white space and color can enhance your use of type. Place type on the page to create entry points for your reader.
- 10. Learn more from the experts.** Magazines like Before & After and Dynamic Graphics have information and advice. Check out books like The Non-Designers Design Book by design experts like Robin Williams. Many of these tips come from her. For more technical information, check out her Non-Designers Type Book. Browse the bookstores and stock up on magazines that use type effectively so you can build a library of ideas.

Lynn Strause is a Herff Jones Special Consultant and adviser at East Lansing HS, Michigan