

Tips Text

Using a powerful desktop publishing program doesn't guarantee that you'll turn out graphic works of art. Graphic is an art and a craft; mastering it requires experience and an innate visual sense. Still, learning a few basics can help you on your way.

Plan Ahead

Your progress will be smoother and your publication more polished if you plan the entire job. Use Scoop's thumbnail viewing mode and reduced magnification scales to help visualize the publication as a whole, working to achieve unity and consistency throughout.

Don't design one page at a time—design each story or article as a unit and maintain its characteristics throughout the publication.

Recurring elements such as rules or department titles (in the same type and place on their pages) can help tie a publication together and form a visual pattern.

Establish specifications not only for body text, but for headlines, subheads, bylines, and captions.

Specify the vertical space between heads and subheads, subheads and bylines, illustrations and captions.

To tie a subhead to its body text, make the space above it larger than the space below it.

True Grid

Develop a layout grid to give your publication a unified visual pattern.

The most common grid arrangements are two- and three-column designs, but a four or five column grid can provide interesting effects.

You can combine columns in a variety of ways while maintaining consistency by adhering to the basic grid.

The illustration on this page shows the visual variations that a four-column grid can provide.

White Space or Rye?

White space can be graphic element in itself.

Wide swashes of white space dramatize your layout, while small chunks scattered sparingly look like you ran out of things to say.

Another way to spice up a page is with a "pull quote," which is a key sentence or two from the text and set in a larger size.

An effective pull quote makes the reader want to explore the rest of the text, and is a great way to add interest to a page that lacks graphics.

Justify Your Actions

Flush left, ragged right body text and headlines look more lively and informal than justified text and centered headlines.

Ragged-right text also improves the appearance and legibility of type, since letter and word spacing doesn't have to be altered.

It also gives type a more airy look than do the rigid constraints of justified text, and that often translates into less eye fatigue.

Captivating Captions

The type in captions should be lighter or smaller than the body copy.

Use the body type in a smaller point size, italic, or an otherwise discreet type.

Align captions flush against the left edge of the figure or photograph.

Don't Go Font Crazy

Restrain yourself! If you follow only one of these guidelines, make it this one.

Nothing screams "amateur" louder than, say, shadowed Helvetica followed by outlined Times Roman with bold New York thrown in for emphasis.

While the judicious mixing of contrasting fonts can distinguish elements of text, many graphic designers use only one family throughout a publication.

Between roman, italic, bold, bold-italic, condensed, expanded, outlined, shadowed, there is enough variation within a type family to achieve variety and a lively look.

When printing your publication on a LaserWriter or other PostScript printer, don't use bitmapped fonts such as New York, Chicago, Geneva, Monaco, Athens, or San Francisco.

These typefaces do not have corresponding PostScript descriptions and will appear ragged when printed.

And avoid capital punishment. Use all uppercase letters only in very short lines or individual words. All-uppercase text is difficult to read, and becomes more so as the line length increases. Distinguish the type by its size and boldness. If you must emphasize a point, use italics. Better still, emphasize through your writing.

What's My Line Length?

While there are complex formulas to determine line length, a good rule of thumb states that the best readability

is obtained when there are nine to twelve words per line.

Avoid excessively long line lengths because the eye gets lost and easily fatigued moving from the right to left margin.

Make the paragraph indent bigger for longer lines.

With Scoop, you can create indents using the Indent or Interval Tabs submenus.

Use Indent when you want every paragraph—including subheads—to be indented.

Use Interval Tabs when you want to indent only those lines beginning with a tab character.

The Right Type

Learning the basics of design is important, but it isn't enough.

Knowing some of the typographic esoterica professional typesetters rely on can help your publication bridge the gap

between looking "desktop published" and "professionally typeset."

For example, it's common practice when typing to put two spaces after periods and punctuation marks such as semicolons.

In typesetting, however, only one space should be typed. And don't use a lowercase "l" as a substitute for the number "1."

They may look the same on a typewriter, but they look different in typographic fonts.

What's more, an "l" is narrower than a "1" in most fonts,

and that can cause columns of numbers in tables to not align properly.

Spacing—The Final Frontier

Use Scoop's automatic hyphenation and Fine Tune submenu to improve spacing in justified text.

(Generally, hyphenation isn't necessary in ragged right text, although with short column widths, some hyphenated words are unavoidable.) When hyphenating, avoid two lines in a row ending with hyphenated words.

Never allow three consecutive lines to end with hyphens.

Never hyphenate the last word in a paragraph, so that part of a word is alone on a line.

Scoop's automatic kerning feature improves the appearance of your text by tightening spacing between letter pairs such as To, TA, and Yo.

Automatic kerning is handy, but the eye is the final judge. Print proofs of your work and kern manually where needed, but not so tightly that letters touch. Aim for the ideal letter spacing—tight, but not touching.

Put extra space between single and double quotes used together, as in, "He asked me, 'Can I quote you?'"

An extra word space is a bit too much, however.

The best approach is to select both the single and double quote, then use the Kern submenu to add two or three points of space.

That's One Special Character

A sure-fire way to spot crummy typography in desktop publishing is to observe the quotation marks.

The quotation marks to the left of the Return key can be used for both opening and closing quotes,

but true quotation marks, which differentiate between opening and closing quotes and match the typeface, look far better.

To type single opening and closing quotes, use the Option-] and Shift-Option-] key sequences.

For double opening and closing quotes, use Option-[and Shift-Option-[.

Typists use two hyphens for an em dash—typesetters use true em dashes. To produce an em dash, press Shift-Option-hyphen (-).

Some fonts have en dashes, which are used to represent to between numbers or words, as in 1969–70 or the New York–Paris flight.

Produce an en dash by pressing Option-hyphen.

Symbolism

When using the register mark (®) and trademark symbols (™) in large headlines, format the symbols in a smaller font size to make them unobtrusive.

Select the symbol and use the Size submenu to choose a smaller size.

If the headline is in 24-point type, try a 10-point symbol.

When you've found a size that looks good, use the Baseline submenu to shift the symbol up so that its top edge aligns with the top of the headline.

A symbol that sits on the baseline or floats in the middle of the line is as distracting as a huge symbol.