

Chapter Title: TYPE

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TYPE

The principle of focus leads me to urge you to put *less* on your slides—less text, less clutter—all with the goal of helping you guide your audience’s attention to what is actually important. Text is another aspect of design that presenters don’t always consider, and yet it can make an enormous difference for your audience. When text is used, it should be used with purpose. As with color, the choices you make regarding the look of your text affect what your audience sees and their overall perception of your presentation. The importance of the design of your text is aptly summarized by authors Erik Speikermann and E. M. Ginger: “Anyone looking at a printed message will be influenced, within a split second of making eye contact, by everything on the page: the arrangement of various elements as well as the individual look of each one. In other words, an overall impression is created in our minds before we even read the first word” (39). So before you begin putting text on your slides, take some time to think about how the text will eventually look.

This chapter focuses on using multiple fonts in better ways. However, as emphasized above, putting *less* text on each slide is an important strategy in drawing your audience’s focus toward you rather than merely reading the slide. See the next page: the typical text-heavy slide on the left has far too many words, the text is too small, and it uses the black (default) Calibri font on a white background. The revised slide on the right uses the Cabin font (which I think works well in presentations because it has nice spacing between the letters and there is a big difference between the regular font and the bold font) and reduces the number of words (which allows the size to be increased significantly). I’ve also used color to distinguish the title from the body of the text, and switched to a

Mortality Trends in U.S. Adults

- Since 1999, mortality among middle-aged (45–54) white Americans has increased
- Increase is most likely due to problems with legal and illegal drugs, alcohol, and suicide.
 - Accidental poisonings increased more than all other causes combined
 - Obesity- and smoking-related diseases also contributed to observed patterns
- 2013 mortality rate in U.S. is about 1.25x rate in France
- Long-term improvements in mortality rates largely due to better medical treatment, preventative measures, lifestyle changes, and decline in smoking.
- Increase is especially pronounced among women
- Between 1992–1996 and 2002–2006, female mortality rates increased in 43% of U.S. counties
- Women's health, especially, has profound implications for the health and well-being of children and families

Mortality Increased among Middle-Aged White Americans

Between 1999 and 2013, mortality rate increased by 0.5% per year

Most likely due to drugs, alcohol, and suicide

Increase among women larger than among men

Reducing text and increasing font size

(Source: Aron et al, 2015; Bernstein and Achenbach, 2015; and Case and Deaton, 2015)

gray background to ensure that the background isn't too bright. Further reducing the text or using visuals will focus the audience's attention on the content (an approach discussed in later chapters).

MAKE YOUR TEXT BIGGER

My first piece of advice is simple but crucial for your audience: Make your text bigger.

When inserting text into your slides, design for the person at the back of the room. Your slides should look more like a billboard—large type, simple, direct, and memorable—than like a printed page of your report. Don't be limited by the default sizes of 12 pt, 14 pt, 16 pt, and 18 pt; maximize the text size to fit the available space. You should usually be going to 28 pt, 36 pt, 48 pt, or higher. Some authors recommend a minimum font size of 28 pt; this is a reasonable rule of thumb, but be aware that some fonts can appear smaller than others due to letter thickness or letter spacing. Text is rarely too big, but it is very often too small. For slides with a single headline and few details, I try to use font sizes that are at least 45 points. Not only will increasing your font size help you to design for the back of the room, space limitations will force you to put less text on each slide.

Overview of Social Security

- About 39 million people received retirement benefits in 2014
- Nearly 3 million people received benefits as spouses or children of retired workers in 2014
- About 11 million people received disability benefits in 2014
 - Most disabled beneficiaries between ages 55 and 65

Overview of Social Security, 2014

About **39 million** people received retirement benefits

Nearly **3 million** people received benefits as spouses or children of retired workers

About **11 million** people received disability benefits (most ages 55 to 65)

Text for the back of the room

(Source: Data from Social Security Administration, 2016)

To test whether your type is sufficiently large for your audience, zoom out your slides to 50 or 60 percent (in PowerPoint, you can do this using the slider at the bottom right) or simply walk to the other side of your workspace. If possible, test your slides in the room where you are going to present. If you can't test your slides in the exact room you are going to use, using an actual projector instead of your computer's monitor will help you get a sense of

Lato Black at 72 pt

Lato Black at 60 pt

Lato Black at 48 pt

Lato Black at 36 pt

Lato Black at 28 pt

Lato Black at 18 pt

Lato Black at 14 pt

Lato Black at 12 pt

Make your text bigger

whether the size of your text will work. If you can read the slides easily, then your audience should be able to as well.

UNDERSTANDING AND CHOOSING A TYPEFACE

In addition to size, another major text design decision is the font or typeface (the two terms have different meanings, but are often used interchangeably). Fonts can be categorized into three general groups: serif, sans serif, and script. Serif fonts are those with extending “feet” at the end of each character, while sans serif fonts do not. Script typefaces use curly letterforms and may drop below the baseline on which the serif and sans serif typefaces typically sit.

In the following three slides you can clearly see the difference. The first slide uses the sans serif font **Aller**. The second uses the serif font Times New Roman, a font most people are probably familiar with from word processing programs. The last slide uses the *Apple Chancery* script font. You can see the differences in the letterforms in the three slides; for example, examine the letter “k” in the word “stroke” and notice how it differs across the three font types.

Sans serif fonts are best for presentations. The letterforms are usually thicker than serif fonts; furthermore, the feet on serif fonts can sometimes get lost in projectors with low resolution levels. In one study by Jo Mackiewicz from the Illinois Institute of Technology, respondents reported that sans serif fonts appeared more professional and were more comfortable to read than serif fonts. In another study, Hyunjin Song and Norbert Schwarz from the University of Michigan found that fonts that were harder to read led respondents to judge a task as harder and less likely to be undertaken. I typically reserve my use of serif fonts for when the text is going to be very large or when my slides are going to be used as a printed document and not shown on a screen.

The font you choose for your slides can shape the tone and feel of your presentation and affect your audience’s perception of your content, so spend some time exploring the default font library on your computer or find other fonts to use (I’ll show you how later). A true font *family* will consist of a group of fonts with different sizes and weights. For example, the standard **Arial** font family includes the usual Arial font, but also **Arial Bold** (notice how it differs from the boldfaced version of **Arial**) and Arial Narrow. You can mix different fonts within the same font family to add diversity to your slides, to generate hierarchy between

3 Things You Can Do to Avoid a Stroke

1

Control Your Risk Factors

Diabetes; lower
blood pressure

2

Eat Better

More plants;
better quality

3

Exercise More

Moderate intensity
for 5+ days/week

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Sans serif, serif, and script fonts

the different elements on your slide (more on hierarchy in chapter 4), and to help focus your audience's attention.

You can also pair completely different fonts within your slides, which can help distinguish different elements of your slide. For example, a heavy block text like **NEUTRA DISPLAY TITLING** (a free font available from the resources listed below) can be used for titles, but is less appropriate for text, graphs, or tables in the body of your slide.

If you decide to use multiple font types, use them consistently and limit yourself to two or three—combining too many font types can be distracting and disorienting for your audience. Also, if you are going to pair multiple fonts, they need to be recognizably different; if your fonts are too similar, your audience may not realize that the change in font is intentional.

As with colors, moving away from default fonts will make your presentation more memorable. It's not that default fonts like Calibri (on Windows) and Cambria (on Mac OS) are necessarily bad fonts, it's just that *everyone* uses them. Using other fonts, even other default fonts, can give your presentation a more custom feel. As examples, default fonts such as Century Gothic, Tahoma, Trebuchet MS, and Verdana are effective for presentations and can be shared across platforms. On the Mac OS, Lucida Grande and Gill Sans MT



Pairing fonts (large, serif font in title and sans serif font in body)



Other default fonts

(which are often available on the Windows operating system) are additional good choices. If you are going to present data in tables and graphs, be sure to review how the numbers will appear in your slides. There is little choice when it comes to the fonts for equations in the Microsoft Office package; symbols are typically fixed in the Cambria Math font. Other presentation tools, such as the LaTeX-based program Beamer, offer more flexibility for mathematical equations.

What constitutes a good typeface? For me, it's text that clearly shows letters and numbers, and contains visible distinctions between family types (such as regular, bold, and thin). If you want to move beyond the default fonts installed on your computer, there are many free fonts available that can be easily downloaded and installed. The slide on the next page shows some examples of free fonts that I have seen work well in presentations.

FINDING NEW FONTS

There are a number of online resources you can use to find more options. I list a few here with more available on the book's website:



Free custom fonts

GOOGLE FONTS. This no-frills site from Google has hundreds of free fonts, which you can browse with simple search and dropdown menus. Google Fonts may be your best bet when looking for free fonts. Google also allows you to enter your own text to test how it will appear in a presentation.

FONT SQUIRREL. This is a great resource with a wide array of fonts. Some are free, and some are available for purchase. The site shows you all of the different fonts within a font family (e.g. regular, bold, and thin), is clear about the licensing, and explains how to download the file(s). As with Google Fonts, you can take the font for a spin by using their “Test Drive” feature. It allows you to try out some of your text to see how it will appear in the chosen font.

MY FONT. This site provides another good font library, with fonts mainly available for purchase. My Font also has a tool called “What The Font” that you can use to figure out which font is being used in an image or on a website—just upload an image, answer some questions to help identify the specific characters, and it will try to identify the font.

TYPE GENIUS. Type Genius is a great resource if you want to use multiple fonts. You can select a variety of fonts and see real examples of these different fonts paired with other fonts. The site also allows you to see what font pairs others are using.

As you consider whether to use non-standard fonts in your presentation, be forewarned that even if you insert them into your presentation they may not appear as intended on someone else's computer. The reason you can share and edit your document with a Times New Roman font on your colleague's computer is because that font is installed on both computers. Font compatibility is made even more difficult with different operating systems (Windows vs. Mac OS) and with different versions of the software.

INSTALLING FONTS

Installing fonts on your computer is fairly straightforward. Usually, you download a font family with multiple font types (for example, Avenir, Avenir Light, and **Avenir Bold**) in a compressed “zip” file format. You then need to unzip the file; double- or right-clicking on the folder should do this automatically.

On computers running Windows operating systems, double-clicking the typeface itself will launch a new window with an *Install* button at the top. Clicking that button will automatically move the files to the *Font* folder. Alternatively, you can drag-and-drop the font files to the *Font* folder; in recent versions of the Windows OS, the *Font* folder can be found via the *Control Panel*, and on the Mac OS, the *Font* folder can be located in the *Library* directory. When you download a font or a font family to your computer, you may find different file extensions in the compressed folder such as .ttf (“TrueType”) and .otf (“OpenType”). You don’t need to worry too much about this, as the computer’s operating system will tell you which files you can use. You may need to restart your slide software tool to use the recently installed font(s). Once restarted, your new font(s) will appear in the regular *Font* menu.

In either operating system, you can uninstall the font(s) by simply deleting it from the *Font* folder.

If you are presenting using someone else's computer, or if you are trying to share your slide deck, there are a few ways to address the font compatibility problem:

1. Perhaps the easiest strategy is to save your presentation as a PDF file; PDFs usually maintain your fonts' appearance and won't vary with changing computers or operating systems. To save a PowerPoint file as a PDF, select the *Save As* option from the *File* menu and change the filename extension to PDF.
2. Another option is to provide the actual fonts in your presentation along with your slide deck to the person whose computer you will be using. The recipient can install the fonts on his or her machine, and then things should work smoothly.
3. Finally, you can try embedding the fonts in your presentation. This save option—not available on all presentation software programs—means the appearance of your fonts should be maintained on another computer. You will not be able to edit the slides on the other computer because it may not have the font. Recent versions of PowerPoint on the Windows operating system will allow you to embed the fonts by modifying the *Save* options in the *File Options* menu (PowerPoint 2011 on the Mac OS does not allow you to embed fonts in your file).

As with color, the fonts you choose can influence how your audience views and responds to your presentation, and how you direct their attention to specific elements on your slides. Choosing a nonstandard font isn't difficult—your computer likely comes with a full library of font choices that can be used effectively to give your slides a new, fresh look, and the Internet provides many more.



Now that you've chosen your colors and fonts, it's time to decide what you are going to put on your slides—text, graphs and tables, and images. The next several chapters explore each of these slide elements and demonstrate ways to communicate your content using the most effective methods possible.

THREE THINGS TO REMEMBER ABOUT TYPE

1. **Visualize.** Your audience will immediately be influenced by the text on your slides. Consider your choices carefully.
2. **Unify.** Be consistent with your use of type. Select one to two fonts to use throughout your presentation.
3. **Focus.** Use larger text to allow your audience to see the items quickly and easily, so they can return to the job of paying attention to you. A minimum font size of 28 points is a good rule to follow but the specific size may vary depending on the font used.