

# 244 HANDOUT

## COOKING WITH TYPE

### SETTING TYPE IS LIKE COOKING

All the ingredients need to be carefully balanced for a palatable outcome.

As the cook, you always need to set type to suit your audience and medium first. Personal preference or design trends are secondary considerations.

- Who are you cooking for? Children, seniors, voracious readers, grazers, etc.
- What meal will you be serving? Website, app, story book, novel, magazine, application form, etc.

#### THERE ARE FOUR BASIC “INGREDIENTS”:

- Typeface (consider style, weight, x-height);
- Type size;
- Measure (line length, or column width);
- Leading.

#### HEADINGS/DISPLAY TYPE

##### Choosing typefaces:

- In headings, you can afford to take risks and spice things up a bit. They still need to speak the same language as your audience and subject matter.
- In headings, you can introduce the personality of the writer/speaker.

##### Type size:

- Headings should generally be at least twice as large as the body copy.
- Subheadings can be the same size as the body copy with a significant style difference. More often they are at least 20% larger.

##### Leading:

- When setting headings, be careful not to use too much leading. Headings can sometimes be set solid (24/24pt), or up to about 20% more (24/29pt) for all caps.

#### BODY COPY

##### Choosing typefaces:

- Serif faces are generally more readable than sans serifs (e.g. Merriweather versus Helvetica). Therefore they are ideal for long-form copy.
- More evenly weighted faces are generally more readable than faces with more thick and thin strokes (e.g. Century Schoolbook versus Bodoni).
- Regular weights are generally more readable than light, or bold weights, which are usually reserved for smaller portions of text.

##### Type size:

- Typefaces with a larger x-height will appear bigger and are therefore generally more readable than those with a smaller x-height (e.g. Karmina versus Garamond). As text is harder to read in digital applications, a larger x-height is usually preferred.

**Leading:**

- There is no reason to set leading differently between print and digital applications.
- Body text is rarely comfortable to read when set solid (10/10pt). It makes the text look intimidating. When the leading is too tight, the reader's eye may accidentally jump between lines.
- If the leading is loose, it is hard for the eye/brain to read in a continuous flow.
- Increasing the leading by 20%-30% is generally ideal for body copy. e.g. 8/10pt, 9/11pt, 10/12pt, 10/13pt, etc.
- In special paragraphs, like introductions or sidebars, you might be more extreme. e.g. 8/9pt, 10/11pt, or 8/11pt, 10/14.5pt, etc.
- Use less leading in shorter line lengths. e.g. Use less for a multi-column layout than for a novel. This helps to keep the eye moving down the column, instead of jumping to another column.
- The longer the line length, the more extra leading needed. This helps the eye/brain keep it's focus on the text. For the same reason, condensed typefaces also need more leading. (They have more characters per line.)
- Bolder typefaces and typefaces with thicker strokes also need more leading than lighter, or more evenly stroked ones.

**GOOD COOKS MEASURE CAREFULLY**

- Robert Bringhurst suggests that a measure of 66 characters is ideal for good readability in a single column continuous text (websites, novels, etc.). 50-75 characters is acceptable, depending on the length and purpose of the text and how much the text is broken up by paragraphs, bullets, etc. (When counting characters, include spaces and punctuation.)
- The average English word has 5.5 characters. Therefore, a measure of twelve words is ideal for single column texts. 9-14 words is considered an acceptable range.
- For multiple column grids (magazines, reports, sidebars, etc.), 35-50 characters is considered ideal (6-9 words). Depending on the content, 5-7 words is also not uncommon. The more the content is intended to be read continuously, the longer the line should be.
- When setting type, make sure you check your word counts before committing to a design.