

# Oldstyle Figures

**O**LDSTYLE FIGURES are a style of numeral which approximate lowercase letter-forms by having an x-height and varying ascenders and descenders. They are considerably different from the more common “lining” (or “aligning”) figures

which are all-cap height and typically monospaced (also called tabular spacing) in text faces so that they line up vertically on charts.

Oldstyle figures have a more traditional, classic look. They are only available for certain typefaces, sometimes as the regular numerals in a font, but more often within a supplementary or expert font. They are proportionately spaced, eliminating the white spaces that result from tabular lining figures, especially around the numeral one.

Oldstyle figures are very useful and quite beautiful when set within text. Unlike lining figures, they blend in without disturbing the color of the body copy. They also work well in headlines since they’re not as intrusive as lining figures. In fact, many people prefer them overall for most uses except charts and tables. It’s well worth the extra effort to track down and obtain typefaces with oldstyle numerals; the fonts that contain them might well become some of your favorites. ■

1234567890  
1234567890

Oldstyle figures approximate lowercase by having an x-height as well as varying ascenders and descenders. Lining figures imitate caps in that they all align on the baseline and the cap height.

At the age of 11, he gave a concert in Berlin. At 17 he made his Paris debut. And in 1906, at 19 he made his first American appearance at Carnegie Hall in New York.

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Oldstyle figures work well in text and blend in beautifully by not disturbing the color and texture of the body copy.

ITC New Winchester

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxy  
ABCDEFGHIJKLMN OPQRSTUVWXYZ  
ABCDEFGHIJKLMN OPQRSTUVWXYZ  
1234567890!@#\$%&\*()

ITC New Winchester is an example of a typeface that has both oldstyle and lining figures. Small caps are available as well, making it a very versatile design.

ITC Braganza

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxy  
ABCDEFGHIJKLMN OPQRSTU  
1234567890!@#\$%&()\*

In a typeface with a very short x-height such as ITC Braganza, oldstyle figures are much more suitable than lining figures which stand out too much, disturbing the overall color.

**Newborn weighs  
in at 12 lbs 5 ozs!**

Oldstyle figures can also work well in headlines; they're not as intrusive as lining figures.