

Word Spacing

WHEN SETTING TYPE, most of us are very conscious of type style, size, width and line spacing. Many of us also pay attention to letter spacing and kerning, even if we're not as confident in these areas. But word spacing – the space between words – is probably the most neglected of typographic attributes. This seemingly small detail plays an important role in the color, texture and readability of your type.

Proper word spacing is something that should not be no-ticed at all: the copy should just flow. Word spacing that's too tight makes it hard for the eye to distinguish one word from the next, so that words appear to run into each other. But word spacing that's too open creates oversized blocks of white space between the words, which makes reading groups of words more difficult.

Although assigning appropriate space between words is more of an optical determination than an exact science, certain factors have an influence. The optimal word spacing

of a typeface will be affected by the overall width of a type-style, the openness or tightness of the letterfit, and the point size of the setting. Here are some general guidelines:

- **Width.** A condensed type design requires less space between words than an expanded face.
- **Letterfit.** A tightly fit typeface needs less word space than a more openly fit design.
- **Size.** Larger point settings require slightly less word space than smaller point sizes.

Word spacing that's too tight makes words appear to run into each other. But word spacing that's too open creates oversized blocks of white space between the words, which makes reading groups of words more difficult.

Word spacing that's too tight makes words appear to run into each other. But word spacing that's too open creates oversized blocks of white space between the words, which makes reading groups of words more difficult.

Word spacing that's too tight makes words appear to run into each other. But word spacing that's too open creates oversized blocks of white space between the words, which makes reading groups of words more difficult.

The word spacing of an “out-of-the-box” font is a predetermined value and differs from font to font. This value can be modified in most design applications, often by changing the “optimum (word) space” value in the H&J (hyphenation

and justification) preferences. You might have to do a little searching to locate this feature if you’ve never used it before, but it will be well worth the effort. ■

Condensed faces require less word spacing.

Expanded faces need more word spacing.