



A Percussionist's Guide to Type Classification

By Taylor Bower

About:

Type classification is a way to divide typefaces into categories based on their characteristics. These categories are divided into subcategories. In this set of cards, each type class will be represented by a different percussion instrument that has a similar aesthetic.

Body Text

Each iteration of body text is in Gadugi 9/11 (point size 9 with leading size 11). This typeface is classified as sans serif. It was created by Microsoft.

Content:

Similar to how type is important in any document, book, or graphic, percussion is important to the world of music. Each style serves its own purpose to a particular piece of music in the same way that type affects the context it is presented in.

Categories

Old Style

Transitional

Slab Serif

Modern

Script

Sans Serif

Blackletter

Decorative

Diagonal stress

Slanted serifs

Horizontal bar

Old Style

15th Century

Extended descender

History

Old Style typefaces are based on hand lettering of scribes and they first appeared in the late 15th century. Their relation to calligraphy can be seen in the curved strokes and letters with thick to thin transitions, looking somewhat like letters drawn with a pen and ink. The thick and thin transition is moderate and not so obvious. The serifs on Old Styles are always angled and the stresses are diagonal.

Application

Old Style typefaces are considered to be the best type for large amounts of body text on paper. They can be found in newspapers, magazines and books. They can also work well on screens. Old Styles don't jump off the page with any sort of quirkiness and that's what makes them easy on the eye. You could consider using the fonts below for headings and sub-headings.

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
Altheas 10/11

Examples

Garamond, Palatino, Calisto MT

TIMPANI



First used as military ceremony drums called Arabian nakers

Also known as kettledrums

Used in orchestras, wind ensembles, symphonic bands, and marching ensembles.

They are tonal instruments; the pitch can be altered with its pedal

Most timpani parts mirror the low brass section

Found in sets of 2, 3, 4 or 5

Costs \$12,000–\$17,000 per drum

“The engine is just like the timpani, the way it drives the orchestra forward.”

— Fraiser Crane

Low-hanging hook

More vertical stress

Flatter, sharper serifs

Wide strokes

Transitional

18th Century

History

Transitional is a historical classification for typefaces that reference elements of human penmanship. But they do so in a more ordered and structured form, usually with a higher stroke contrast, a more upright axis, and more symmetry. Didone (or Modern) faces are often interchangeable with this grouping, too, although they usually exhibit an even greater stroke contrast.

Application

Similarly to Old Style, Transitional typefaces are able to be used in the same way in body text of newspapers, books, and magazines. They can also be used on screens.

Examples

PT Serif, Baskerville, Times New Roman

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
Georgia 10/11

Sound is created from a small hammer hitting a string on the inside

Invented by Bartolomeo Cristofori around the beginning of the 18th century

Created by Cristofori after being unsatisfied with how the harpsichord's volume level could not be controlled by the player

Has 88 black and white keys

Covers 7¼ octaves



“If you play a tune and a person don't tap their feet, play a different tune.”

— Count Basie

18th Century

Vertical stress

No brackets on serifs

Slab Serif

No thick-thin stroke transition

Thick, flat serifs

History

Slab serifs, which can be thought of as a subset of serifs in general, only really came into prominence in the beginning of the 19th century. The explosion of print advertising material necessitated more unique fonts that captured the attention of readers. Slabs filled this role quickly. They were first commercially made available under the name of "Antique," when they were introduced by Vincent Figgins in 1815 to 1817.

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
Clarendon Text Pro 10/11

Application

Slab serifs are often used in branding design because their thick, blocky serifs are ideal for logos. They are often chosen for their boldness and simplicity. These typefaces can be used in large print projects in order to make an impact.

Examples

Rockwell, **HWT Slab**, Courier

“If you're not having fun...
you're doing it wrong.”

— Scott "ScoJo" Johnson

Also known as quads

Evolved from horizontal bass drums

Created by Boston Crusaders Drum
and Bugle Corps in the late 1960s

Can be found in sets of 4, 5, or 6.

Heaviest drums in a drumline, ranging
from 35–40 pounds



Thick to thin strokes

Vertical stress

High contrast

Modern

Thin serifs

18th Century

History

Modern serified typefaces developed in the late 18th and early 19th century and were a radical break from the traditional typography of the time with high contrast of strokes, straight serifs and a totally vertical axis.

Application

These typefaces are used to portray elegance. They can be found in fashion magazines or on fancy packaging. Modern typefaces are made to be display type and are used heavily in branding.

Examples

Elephant, Didoni LT Pro, Century

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z

Bodoni URW 10/11

“Average band with a great drummer is great, great band with an average drummer is average.”

— Buddy Rich

Jazz drumming relied on military rudiments when it was first introduced

Became an integral part of jazz ensembles' sound in the 1940s

Originally were only used to keep the band on time

Made up of a kick drum, snare, hi-tom, floor tom, with a hi-hat, crash, and ride cymbal



DRUM KIT



1st Century

History

Inspired by traditional handwriting and calligraphy, the script font has also influenced. The modern brush script uses the original signature script form as its base. Its energetic stroke emulates handwriting with a thicker brush effect. Less technically correct to its predecessor, the modern brush font uses irregular characters. This enhances the human feel in its lettering and adds a playful twist.

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
Vladimir Script 10/11

Application

Script fonts are frequently used for invitations and other decorative announcements. They are friendly and appealing and are often used on a variety of media and part of modern brand identities.

Examples

Vivaldi, Mistral, Magneto

Harp

One of the oldest instruments in the world dating back to 15,000 BC

The name derives from German, Anglo Saxon, and Old Norse words meaning "to pluck"

Modern harps have 47 strings

Harps can cost anywhere between \$100-\$150,000

“A harp can be as dangerous as a sword in the right hands.”

— George R. R. Martin



18th Century



History

Sans serif is a style of roman letter stripped of its serif—i.e., such embellishments as the vertical line at the end of the top right and lower left curved segments of the letter “s,” the base line on which the lowercase “n,” “m,” and “l” rest, etc.

Application

Sans serif fonts are often used on the web for large groups of text because of the lower DPI (dots per inch) that screens have compared to print. They are also generally easier for children to read because they're simpler. Many companies choose sans serif typefaces when they want to be seen as young, hip, and casual.

Examples

Arial, Lucida Sans, Ebrima

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
Avenir LT Std 10/11

//...capturing every last nuance, exploiting every color,
controlling every cadenza, with both poise and passion. //

— Yoshiko Tsuruta

Originates in Africa

Tube-resonated instrument

Played with 2, 3, or 4 mallets

Price ranges from \$3,000 to \$10,000

Pitched an octave lower than a xylophone

Made of wood or synthetic materials



MARIMBA

Blackletter

Ornate styling

Calligraphic strokes

Dramatic difference
between thick and
thin strokes

Sharp, angular lines

12th Century

History

Black letter was used throughout Europe, especially in German-speaking countries. It was used from the end of the 12th century to the mid 20th century. It is distinguished by a uniform treatment of vertical strokes that end on the baseline (e.g., in b or l), the use of angular lines instead of smooth curves and circles (e.g., for b, d, o, or p), and the fusion of convex forms when they occur together (e.g., as bo, pa, and the like).

Application

These fonts are used in calligraphy, a style of alphabet that was used for manuscript books and documents throughout Europe starting in the 12th century. Black-letter type was used in the only extant work known to have been printed by Johannes Gutenberg, the 42-line Bible.

Examples

Carol Gothic, SabbathBlack OT, Baroque Text IF

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z
a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z

Amador 10/11

BASS DRUM



Shells are made of mahogany or kapur

Most heads are made of calf skin

Produces a low frequency sound

Diameter determines the pitch

Sound can be dampened with a towel, hand, or knee

«And this is our time-keeper,
with a passion for percussion.»

—Leonard Cohen

Decorative

High X-height

Open counters

Low contrast

19th Century

History

Decorative fonts are the most diverse category of typefaces. They became popular in the 19th century on posters and advertisements as a form of font design that was eye-catching and unlike any other that had been used up to that time. With the Art Nouveau movement in Europe, the use of decorative fonts soared.

Application

Throughout the 20th and into the 21st centuries, they have commonly reflected an aspect of the culture. Many times, decorative fonts quickly fall out of fashion (e.g., psychedelic or grunge designs), so it's important to use them appropriately. Their use can be powerful when used in limited amounts.

Examples

Broadway, Playbill, Carl's MT

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
Bauhaus 93 10/11

●● The heart of a music is
its rhythm. The heart of
rhythm section music is
the rhythm. ●●

—Wynton Marsalis

Instruments of the rhythm section

Tempo keepers that have more style

Can be heard in thousands of songs

Also known as Latin Percussion

LP is the leading manufacturer

100+ types of instruments

Heavily relies on improvisation

Each instrument has its own techniques



AUX PERCUSSION