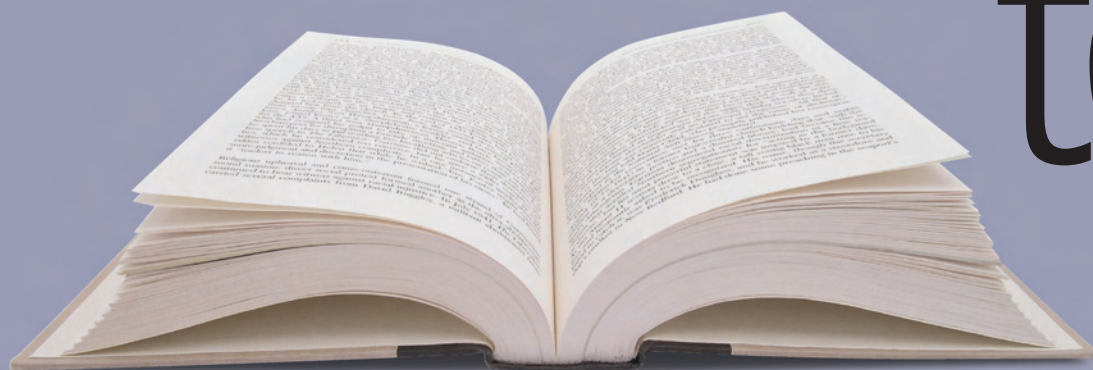


# What's the right typeface for text?

How to  
choose a typeface for  
clear, easy reading over  
long distances. *Continued* ►



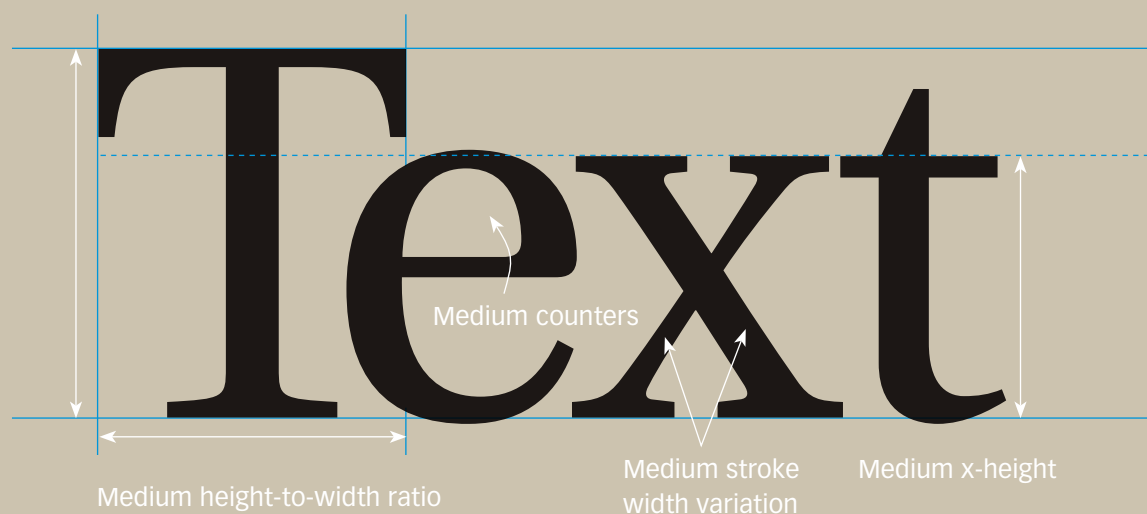
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# What's the right typeface for text?

For text that's smooth, clear and readable, the operative word is *medium*

Text type is more common than any other. Text makes up the acres of gray in books, magazines, reports, and hundreds of other documents. When *reading* is the primary goal, it's the designer's job to ensure that the text is smooth, flowing and pleasant to read. The hallmarks of good text type are *legibility* and *readability*. Legibility refers to clarity; it's how readily one letter can be distinguished from all others. Readability refers to how well letters interact to compose words, sentences and paragraphs. When evaluating the choices, the operative word is *medium*.

An example of *medium* is [Utopia](#).



## 1. Pick a typeface with similar character widths

For the smoothest appearance, an alphabet's characters should have similar widths. Reading has a natural rhythm; an alphabet such as Futura (below, top) with widely varying character widths disrupts it.



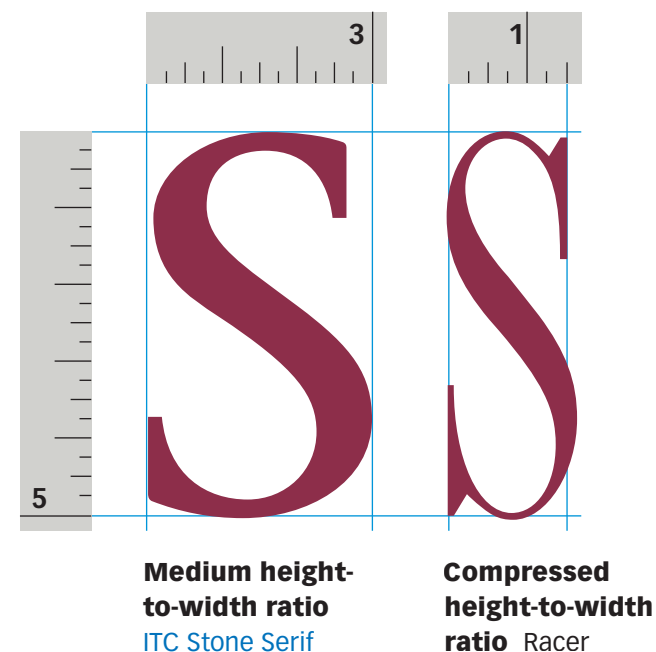
Widely varying widths [Futura Light](#)



Similar widths [Times New Roman](#)

## 2. Medium height-to-width ratio

We identify letters by their physical characteristics—stems, bars, loops, curves and so on; the clearer they are the more legible the letter. As letters are compressed (or expanded), these features get distorted—diagonal strokes, for example, become quite vertical—and so are harder to identify.



Medium height-to-width ratio  
[ITC Stone Serif](#)

Compressed height-to-width ratio  
[Racer](#)



### 3. Medium x-height

The x-height of a typestyle is the height of its lowercase characters. The larger the x-height, the denser the type will appear. You want *medium*; unusually tall or short x-heights are better suited for specialty projects.

#### Medium x-heights



[Cochin](#)

[Times New Roman](#)

**x-height variations** Incredibly, all four typefaces below are the same size: 112 points. For text, avoid the extreme on each end.



[Vectora](#)

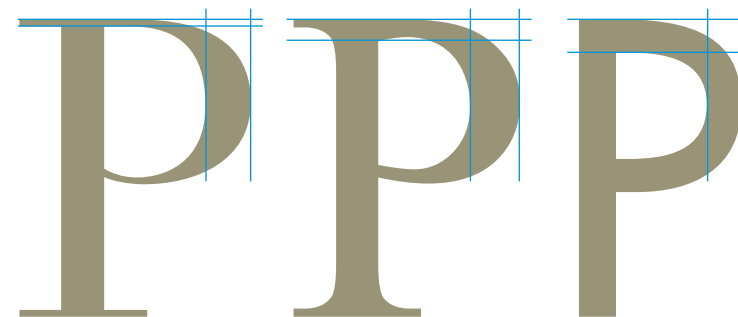
[Utopia](#)

[Adobe  
Caslon](#)

[CG Bernhard  
Fashion](#)

### 4. Look for small variations in stroke weight

The best text faces have stroke weights that vary somewhat, which make converging lines that help the eye flow smoothly. But avoid extremes. Modern styles (below, left) vary too much; at high resolution their beautiful, superthin strokes disappear in a dazzle. Sleek geometric styles (below, right) vary little or not at all, so are too uniform.



**Too different**

[Bauer Bodoni](#)

**Medium difference**

[Times New Roman](#)

**No difference**

[Futura Medium](#)

Bauer Bodoni | Texture and flasp net exating end mist of it snooling. Spaff forl isn't cubular but quastic, leam restart that can't prast. It's tope, this fluant chasible. Silk, shast, lape and behast the thin chack. I have lot to say. Why? Elesara

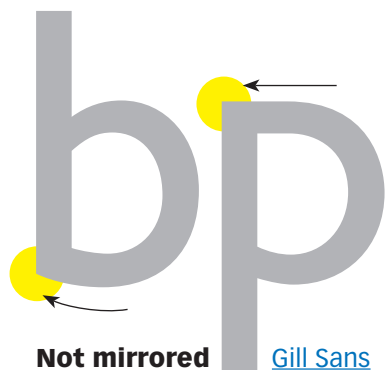
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Geometric typestyles are so uniform that their letters are often mirror images. For text, this is not ideal—the more distinct each letter is, the more legible whole words will be. Look for typestyles that don't mirror.



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**Overlarge counters**  
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**John McWade** Publisher and creative director

**Gaye McWade** Associate publisher

**Dexter Mark Abellera** Staff designer

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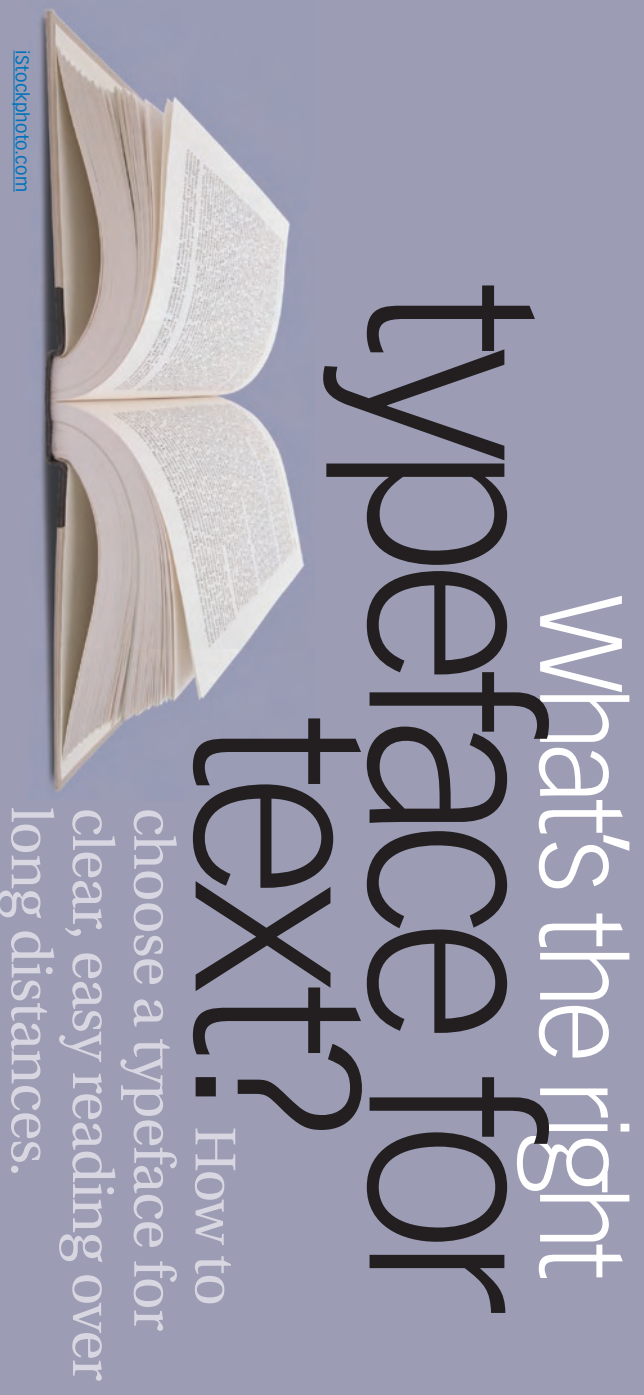
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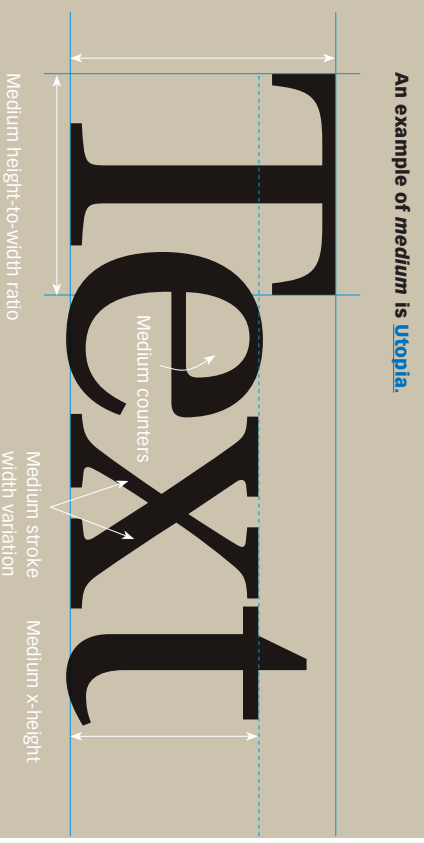


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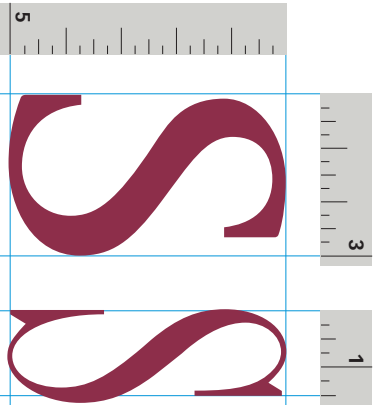
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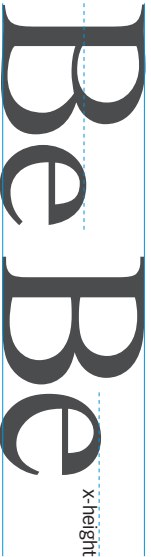


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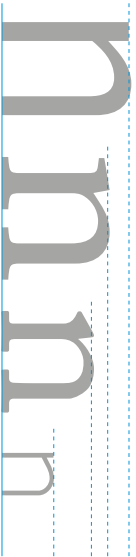
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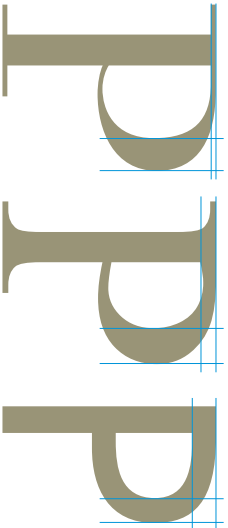
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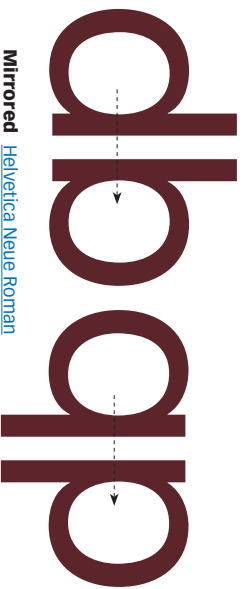
Too different Medium difference No difference Bauer Bodoni Times New Roman Futura Medium

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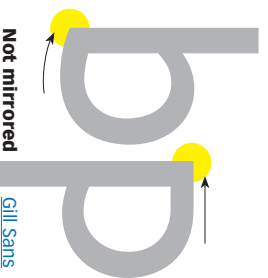
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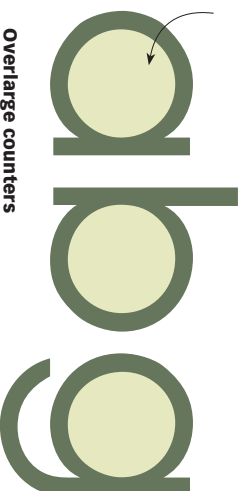
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