

PAIRING TYPEFACES

Differences

Choose typefaces that have discernible differences, this will make your design look organized and help the viewer quickly determine the structure you've put in place. If typefaces look too similar (excluding those that are part of a collection or family) it can be distracting, or worse—look like a mistake. An example of this: choosing two serif typefaces such as Caslon and Garamond.

Similarities

While you want to select typefaces that are obviously different at first glance, they still need to have some relationship to one another. Similarities may be qualities such as distressed/rough edges or share the same overall letter shape, such as mechanistic, rectangular shapes or round, open forms.

Collections / Families

Choose typefaces from a collection that were designed to work together, or from varying weights, widths and styles within the same family.

Start with the headline

The role of a headline is to instantly convey what the design is about—to draw the viewer in and read more. As it sets the tone of the overall piece, everything else should follow and be consistent. Decorative display faces, particularly scripts, are very specific in their styling, however, text faces are more open and general.

Milieu / Era

If your design is meant to reflect upon or convey a certain time period, do some research and determine what typefaces were designed during that time. Also take a look at fashion, consumer goods, interior design, music, and, of course, what was happening in advertising and graphic design. What were the attitudes and conventions of the time period?

Mood / Tone

Write down a list of adjectives that describe the tone, mood, look and feel you wish to convey. Print it out and keep it on hand to refer to while reviewing typefaces. It will help keep you on track and make the selection process easier by forming a criteria for which to determine whether a typeface is appropriate or not. It's also useful as keywords for searching for typefaces on font distributor website!

Classification systems

Here's a guide of common pairings of serif and sans serif faces:

Serif Old Style or Transitional + Humanist Sans Serif

Modern Serif + Geometric Sans Serif

Slab Serif + Grotesque Sans Serif

Glyphic Serif + Humanist Sans Serif