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# The Perfect Type

The Anatomy of a Book

Issue 09 . January 2016

# THE ART OF TYPE

**T**he perfect type would be invisible. While the presence of type is ubiquitous, it is a vital medium of transmission of words, feelings and ideas. There is more that goes into that striking typeface that catches your eye on a menu or a magazine, often by considerations that are in fact, intangible to a reader.

The selection of a typeface would first depend on its function. Signage systems require careful typographic consideration, whether we have to read signs on the move or while standing on a train platform. Airports use a sans serif font which is easier to read at a distance. Fonts commonly used for signages are **Helvetica** or **Frutiger** - seemingly neutral, comfortably familiar and always classic. Singapore road signs use the highly legible typeface **Rotis** .

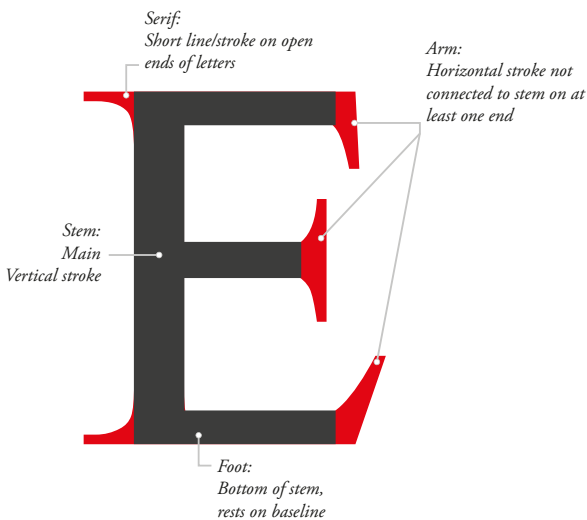
Signage systems also employ high contrast design ensuring good

readability and legibility from a distance. Light-coloured text over a dark-coloured background works best. High contrast combinations commonly used in signage systems throughout the world are white over black, and yellow over black— as seen in airports including our own Changi Airport.

Besides focusing on letterforms, a typographer constantly mulls over the negative gaps and spaces between and around them, such as the spaces between letters (kerning), words, lines of words (leading) and around the text (margins). Some letters such as V, W and Y angle outwards forming inconsistent and unsightly gaps between letters. Kerning—the expansion and compression of individual spaces between characters — is required. Kerning also helps to set the reading experience — a tighter kern will result in faster reading.

Try reading this to realise the importance of space in typography.

Functional considerations and spatial cues are some intangible factors that go into the art and design of typography. Quoting Frantisek Storm, Czech type designer – ‘Whatever it is, it must be legible. There is no type without the reader, no font without customers... Then comes art, but it always comes second.’



# USING THE SPACEBAR

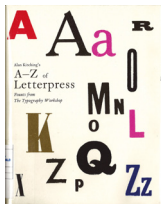
to align text

**IS A RECIPE**

*for disaster.*

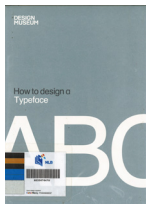
- Deke McClelland

# RECOMMENDED READS



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Alan Kitching's A-Z of Letterpress:  
Founts from the Typography Workshop  
By Alan Kitching  
Laurence King Publishing, London,  
United Kingdom, 2015  
Call number: English 686.224 KIT



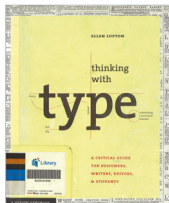
*All Rights Reserved*

How to Design a Typeface  
By Design Museum  
Conran Octopus, London,  
United Kingdom, 2010  
Call number: English 686.224 HOW



*All Rights Reserved*

Stop Stealing Sheep & Find Out How Type Works  
By Erik Spiekermann  
Adobe Press, San Francisco, USA, 2014  
Call number: English 686.22 SPI



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Thinking with Type: A Critical Guide  
for Designers, Writers, Editors & Students  
By Ellen Lupton  
Princeton Architectural Press, New York, USA, 2010  
Call number: English 686.22 LUP

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