

# Preface

How many of these letters do you recognize?  
Courtesy Kit Hinrichs  
@issue:magazine

## Typography Influences Us Everyday

We are affected by typography during almost every waking hour. Early in the morning type greets us from the packaging of the food we eat for breakfast. Throughout the day, it beckons from just about every can, bottle, or box we see. Type calls to us from newspapers, calendars, magazines, books, and other printed materials; from billboards, buildings, and signs on the streets and highways; from the television, movies, and computer screens—even from t-shirts and other clothing. We are a culture of information junkies, and type has proven to be the most adaptable, economical, and effective way to convey information.

But, verbal messages—the words that the type spells out—are only part of the story. To see what I mean, try to imagine a world where all type looks the same. It would look monotonous and sterile—like an aisle of generic products at a discount grocery. On the other hand, if you take the time to look at and think about the type all around you, you'll discover that well-designed type adds personality, feeling, and some measure of beauty to printed messages.

Most people are influenced by typography without giving it much thought. But, you are now on the point of entering the small elite company of those who understand how type can be used to communicate in vivid, rich, and subtle ways.

A world where all type looks the same would look like an aisle of generic products at a discount grocery.



## Typographic Skills Needed by Designers

All of the many kinds of communication that were mentioned on the previous page were created by graphic designers. As you can see, this field covers a broad range of endeavors. These include many kinds of publications, advertising, and promotional display; packaging, signage, and environmental design; logo design and related graphic expressions of corporate and brand identity; as well as motion graphics and interactive media. The mission that underlies all of these enterprises is the need for engaging communication. It should be clear that knowing how to use type is essential to this mission.

To succeed as a graphic designer, you need to develop competence in both typographic design and execution. Competence in typographic design begins with observing how type is used and analyzing how well it works—or doesn't work. This investigation can be helped by learning the concepts, terminology, and "rules of thumb" that professionals use to get desirable results.

Competence in execution means learning to use the tools that are needed to get professional results. The methods of typographic execution have changed a great deal since the start of desktop publishing twenty-odd years ago. Before that time, designers didn't set type. Most headlines in ads and magazines were lettered by hand. All typesetting had




Corporate identity from A to Z; Corporations use distinctive typography to create easily recognizable logos that instantly communicate ideas about who they are. How many of these letters do you recognize? Courtesy Kit Hinrichs, @issue:magazine

to be sent out to experts who used expensive equipment—so the job was slow and costly. It wasn't practical to have this work done until the designers could be sure of just how they wanted their final layout to look. To make this judgment, they had to test trial layouts by accurately sketching in the type by hand. Therefore, type rendering was an essential entry-level skill for the design profession. Thankfully, the substantial time and effort that students devoted to mastering this manual skill also brought important side benefits: Drawing was (and always will be) an excellent way to make observations and literally "get the feel" of letterforms. By the time students became fluent in drawing many styles and sizes of letters, they possessed a great deal of background and sensitivity that could be applied to problems of design.

Nowadays, type rendering is no longer a key survival skill. Instead, a relatively small investment can buy a digital studio with a vast assortment of beautiful type. With digital applications, designers can easily set their own type and experiment with endless variations of layout ideas. Of course, even today, most students are still encouraged to at least try their hand at type rendering. Some choose to develop talents in calligraphy, custom lettering, or typeface design. But relatively few students approach type rendering with the kind of commitment that used to be commonplace.

However, now that designers set their own type instead of having it done by experts, skills in the fine points of typography have never been more important. Without the rigorous apprenticeship of the past, students need better guidance than ever to gain competence in typographic design and execution. The ease of digital tools is deceptive; they don't guarantee good design any more than a shop full of power tools can guarantee fine woodworking (but, of course, they are safer for your fingers).

This textbook is designed to teach today's students with today's digital tools. These tools have unprecedented ease, speed, and precision. They will be used to guide you in observing the characteristics of type, choosing the type that's appropriate for a given job, and placing the type in attractive and effective ways.



# The Voice of Type

This chapter begins by asking you to consider how you are influenced by the emotional expression of type. Then, it introduces technical information that will help you work with type more mindfully.

## OBJECTIVES

- To observe how type can express ideas and feelings
- To identify basic parts of letter characters
- To describe how type families work
- To learn about faux type styles and other distortions
- To introduce basic considerations when placing type over pictures

## Can You Hear the Type?

Spoken language doesn't express ideas and feelings with words alone; an important impact is also made by tone of the voice, volume, and the speed of delivery. Written communication, of course, can't use these means of expression, but typographic design can give voice to words.

Consider the classic ad that George Lois created for Allerest allergy remedy shown in Figure 2-1. The contrast between two typefaces makes it easy to imagine two different voices. The first voice is clear and authoritative—it may be the voice of a doctor. The responding voice is given graphic expression through the use of bloated letters and phonetic spelling. It conveys a wretched “stuffed-up” feeling. Can't you “hear” it?

“Anyone looking at a printed message will be influenced, within a split second of making eye contact, by everything on the page: the arrangement of various elements as well as the individual look of each one. In other words, overall impression is created in our minds before we even start reading the first word.”

—Erik Spikermann

Figure 2-1 George Lois, 1961  
(Courtesy Papert Koenig Lois)

*Danger!*  
**DANGER!**

Figure 2-2 Two typeface settings of  
the same word

**Dr. John Smith, MD**  
**Neural Surgeon**

Figure 2-3 Does this type inspire  
confidence?

Didot

Culz

DESDEMONA

*Edwardian Script JTC*

*Lucida Blackletter*

MESQUITE

Figure 2-4 A variety of typefaces

**You don't have a cold!  
I dode hab a code?  
You have an allergy!  
I hab an allergee?**



It can sneeze like a cold, tear like a cold, sniff like a cold, cough like a cold, blow like a cold, feel like a cold—and still be an allergy. One way to tell: if you have 3 or more colds a year, the chances are good your cold is an allergy. Take Allerest.

This new tablet cures the cough, the sneeze, the tears, the runny nose, the itchy eye of allergic colds. No cold tablet can work as well.

If you wake up sneezing, take Allerest. If you have 3 or more colds a year, take Allerest. If you... ah-ah-ah-choo! Take Allerest. (When you have a cold, you usually develop resistance that should protect you for some time. So if you have repeated colds, 3 or more a year, take Allerest. Your druggist has Allerest and will tell you about it.) 24 tablets for \$1.25.

**ALLEREST FOR ALLERGY**

In Figure 2-2 you can see two different settings of the same word. Which conveys a stronger warning?

Take a look at Figure 2-3. Do you think that the look of the type would inspire confidence in the doctor's professionalism?

Type can also convey a sense of context. See, for example, the typefaces listed in Figure 2-4. Which typeface would work best for a Western-themed steakhouse? Which for a wedding invitation? Which might work well in a button-down corporate environment? Which might be good for a party invitation? Which could be used in a Medieval theme park? Which calls to mind the Jazz Age of the 1920s?

Type also can express emotions. Consider the very emotional pictures shown in Figure 2-5. Below these pictures are four distinctly different type settings of a single word. Which typeface do you think would best match the feeling expressed by each picture? Of course, there isn't an absolutely right or wrong answer for such a question. But, as you look at

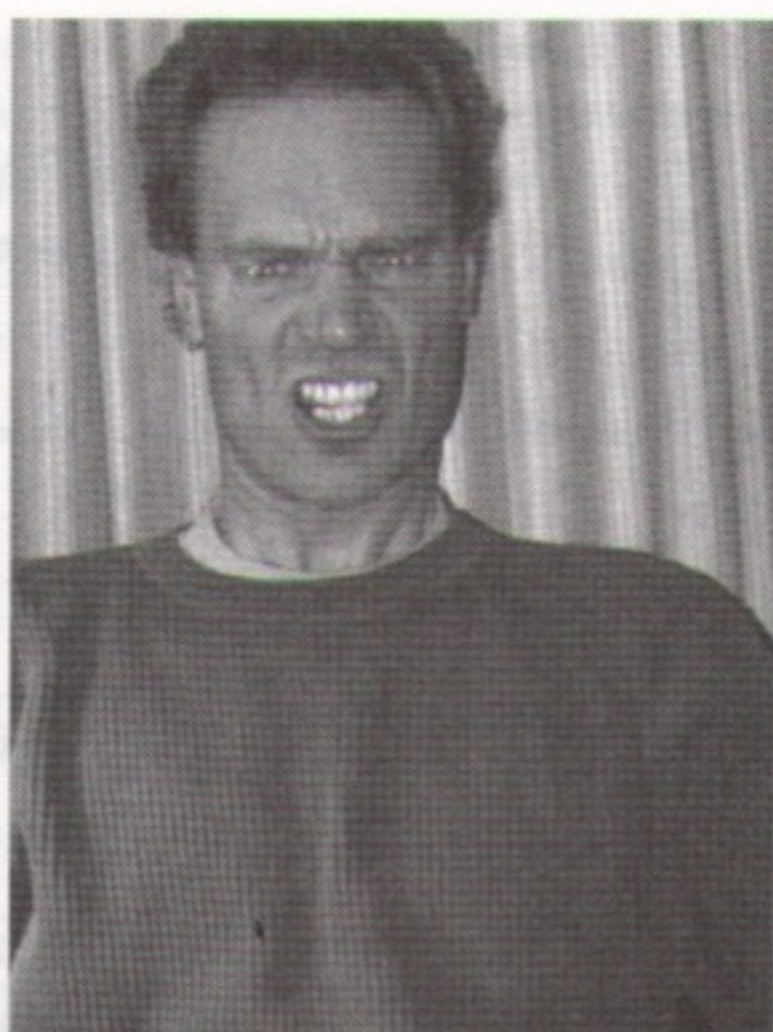
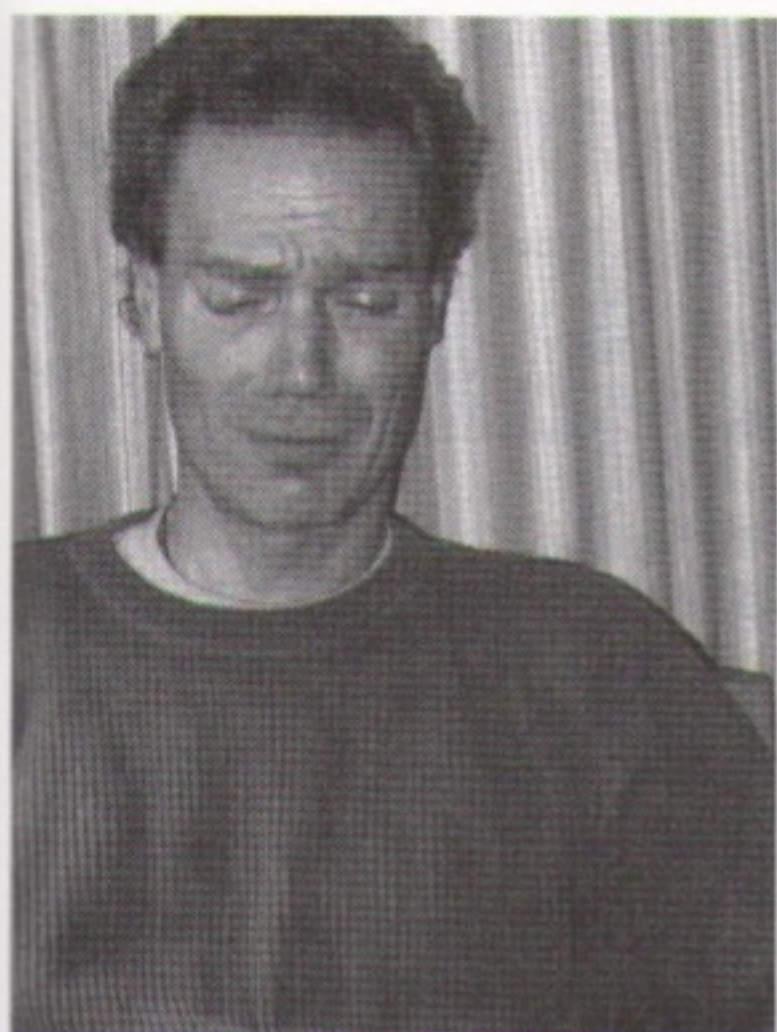


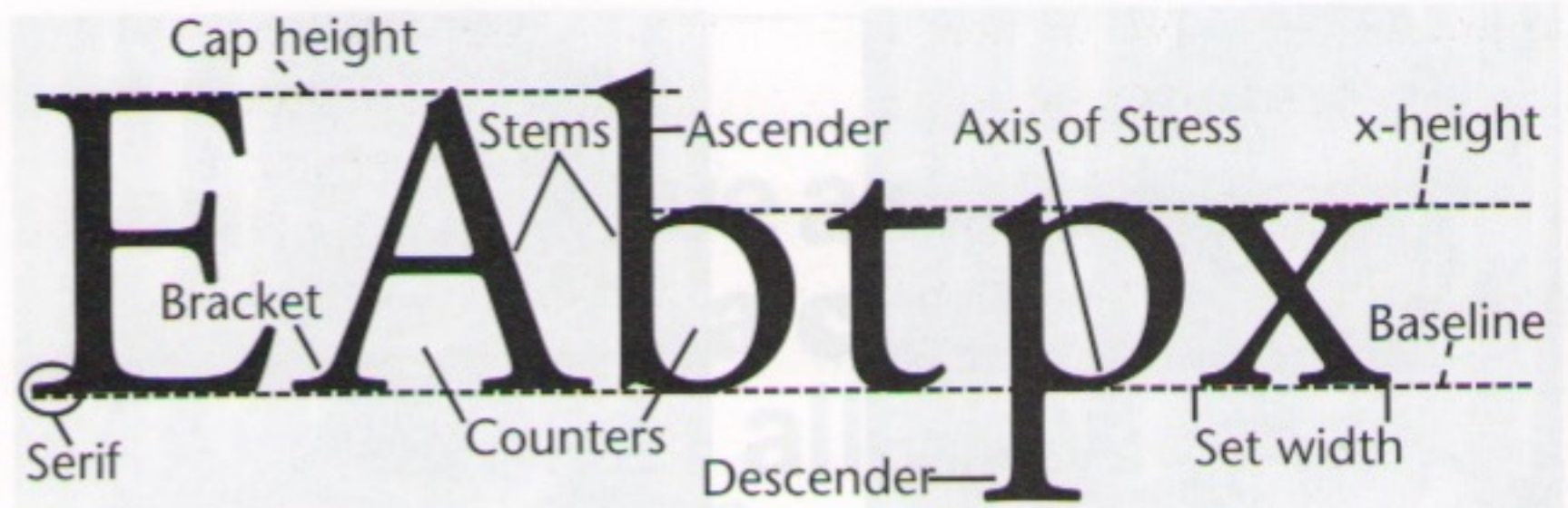
Figure 2  
think wo  
expresse

**OH!** Oh! *Oh!* **OH!**

and think about the pictures, you will develop a logic for your choices—and chances are that your choices will be similar other people's. After you've made your choices, you can compare them to mine in the exercise section at the end of the chapter.

As you look at typefaces, analyze their forms, learn about their history, and learn how to use them in layouts, you will expand your ability to make type "speak" in expressive ways.

**Figure 2-6** The basic elements of letter characters. More features are presented in Chapter 12.



## Introduction to the Anatomy of Letter Characters

Knowing the names of these character parts will help you to recognize characteristics of type that express ideas and feelings. Figure 2-6 shows some of the key features of letter characters. Other terms will be considered later.

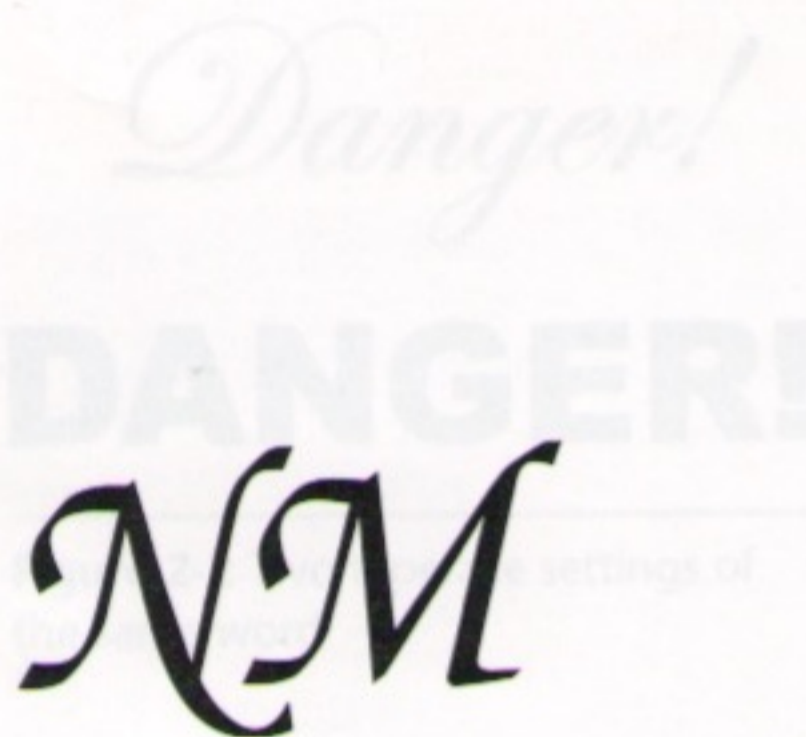
Learn to identify these features:

<b>Stem</b>	The main stroke of a letter
<b>Baseline</b>	The implied line on which most the characters rest
<b>Descender</b>	The part of a lowercase letter that extends below the baseline on letters like <i>p</i> or <i>q</i>
<b>Ascender</b>	The tall stem that reaches upward on lowercase letters such as <i>b</i> , <i>d</i> , or <i>l</i>
<b>Cap height</b>	The height of capital letters in a particular typeface; note that this may be different than the height of the ascenders.
<b>x-height</b>	The height of most of the lowercase letters in a particular typeface (excluding the height of the ascenders); the line of the top of the x-height is called the mean line or waist line.

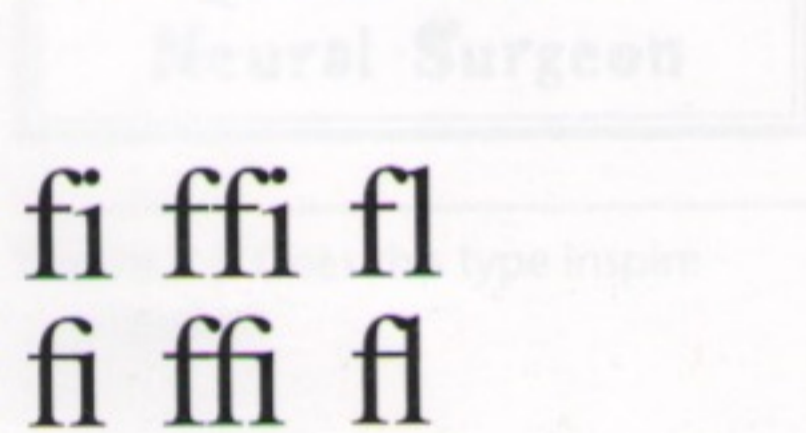
<b>Counter</b>	A shape inside of a letter
<b>Set width</b>	The width of a character

The following are elements of some typefaces only:

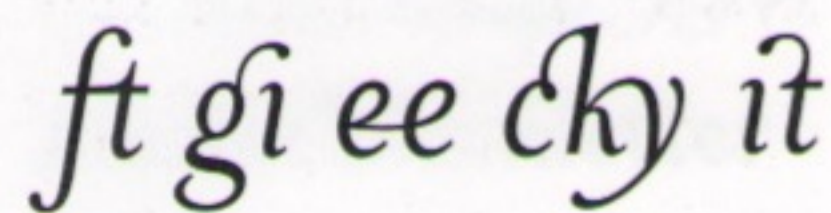
<b>Serif</b>	small cross-stroke at the end of a main stroke
<b>Bracket</b>	A curve from the serif to the main stroke
<b>Axis of stress</b>	The direction of an implied line that passes through the thin parts of the round shapes in letters
<b>Swash</b>	A decorative extension at the beginning or end of a letter. Swashes on capital letters are designed to begin words; therefore, it usually looks clumsy to use two swashed capitals in a row. (See Figure 2-7.)



**Figure 2-7** It usually looks clumsy to use two swashed capitals in a row.



**Figure 2-8** A few difficult letter combinations are shown on the top row. The second row shows the replacement ligatures.



**Figure 2-9** Zuzana Licko designed some unusual ligatures for her elegant typeface Mrs Eaves Italic. (Courtesy Emigre)

**Ligature** Two or more letters that have been redesigned to join together into a compound character; this usually is done to avoid clumsy fitting between characters. (See Figure 2-8 and Figure 2-9.) Many applications can automatically substitute ligatures for certain letter combinations.

## Type Family: Variations on the Theme

If you have any previous experience using type on computers, you've probably discovered that most kinds of type have alternative styles available, such as Bold or Italic. A set of related typefaces that share a common name is called a **type family**. Times and Helvetica are names of popular type families. Each alternative style within a family is referred to as a separate **typeface**. Both of these terms are often used interchangeably with the word "font." But these three terms have distinct meanings that must be understood to avoid confusion.

The meanings of technical terms often change as technology changes. In the days of metal type, the term "font" meant the complete set of all the cast pieces that made up a typeface (including all numerals, punctuation marks, and any other symbols) *at one particular size*. Today, the term **font** now refers to the encoded information that describes the entire typeface and the digital file that contains this information. Most of today's digital fonts can be scaled to any size, so size is no longer seen as a characteristic of those fonts.

So, to summarize, the font tells the computer how to draw the typeface. Several related typefaces comprise a type family. In practical terms, the only time most people actually deal with a font is when they load it into a computer system or when they collect the elements used in a layout so it can be prepared for publishing (*see side note*). When designing layouts, we generally choose one or two type families. We can create some variety in our design by choosing different typefaces within the same family.

For the most part, the typefaces in a family will contrast in three ways: weight, proportion, and structure.

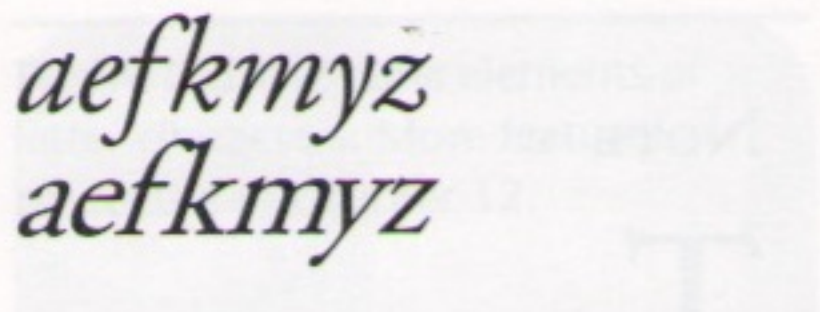
In terms of weight, *regular*, *roman*, or *book* faces are designed for long runs of body text. In addition, a type family usually includes a contrasting *bold* face and often a *light* one. Finer variations may include *demibold* or *semibold*, which aren't as heavy as *bold*. *Extrabold* and *black* are more extreme. The lightest weight may be called *ultra light*. Variations in proportion can be more *condensed* (narrow—see Figure 2-10) or, on the other hand, more *extended* or *expanded* (wider).

### NOTE

**T**he professional agencies that RIP a designer's layout documents and prepare them for printing are called service bureaus or prepress houses.

Helvetica Neue 25 Ultra Light  
Helvetica Neue UltraLight Italic  
Helvetica Neue 45 Light  
Helvetica Neue 46 Light Italic  
Helvetica Neue Regular  
Helvetica Neue 56 Italic  
**Helvetica Neue 75 Bold**  
**Helvetica Neue 76 Bold Italic**  
Helvetica Neue Condensed Bold  
**Helvetica Neue Condensed Black**

Figure 2-10 Some examples from the Helvetica Neue family



aefkmyz  
aefkmyz

**Figure 2-11** The first line is a true italic, whereas the lower line is regular type that has been made oblique on the computer. The italic is more condensed and its calligraphic qualities give it a feeling of speed. (Adobe Garamond)

*ITALIC CAPITAL LETTERS*  
REGULAR CAPITAL LETTERS

**Figure 2-12** Italic and regular capitals have much less structural difference than lowercase letters do. Actually, most italic capitals are simply oblique. (Adobe Garamond)

**Oblique** typefaces are slanted. This creates a structural contrast with the regular style and usually is used to emphasize certain words. **Italic** faces, which have calligraphic qualities of cursive writing, are a much more radical structural variation. (See Figure 2-11 and Figure 2-12.) For the most part, Oblique typefaces don't have serifs, and italic styles have been designed for most serif families.

Another fundamental structural contrast is the difference between roman (serif) type and type without a serif (known as **sans-serif**). Although it isn't common, some designers have recently created type families that include both. (See Figure 6-97.)

All of the stylistic variations I've just described can be compounded so that, for instance, you may use an *ultra light condensed italic* font. A single type family may have more than 50 members. The terms that describe these variations are not standardized so that, for instance, one family's *bold* face may be lighter than another family's *book*.

An important factor to consider in a type family is how well the different style typefaces work together. You'll find that some type families are better coordinated than others. To understand the reason why, it helps to consider how a type family is created. Sometimes the process is very piecemeal. Consider this scenario: First, letters are commissioned for a particular project such as a magazine nameplate. If the design is distinctive yet flexible enough to create sufficient demand, the designer may be contracted to complete the rest of the alphabet. Later, the other characters are developed to complete the font. Perhaps years later this font has proved popular enough to warrant the design of a bold version, and, still later, other members are added to the family. Sometimes, the later designs are executed by different designers. It is difficult to maintain a consistent look, and often the sizes of x-heights, cap heights, ascenders, and descenders vary. The original version of the immensely popular Helvetica type family was the product of many different hands; as a result, it suffered from the sorts of problems I've just described. The Linotype foundry addressed these problems by commissioning the systematically coordinated revision called Neue Helvetica in 1983 ("neue" means "new" in German).

Occasionally, finding fonts can be tricky because they are named in an unexpected way. Although the family name usually comes first, sometimes it is preceded by the initial of its style, so that "Times Bold" may be listed as "B Times Bold." While some computer applications list members of the same family together, in others you have to look for *bold* typefaces in the *Bs* and *Italics* in the *Is*.

## Don't Faux It

**Faux** (pronounced "foe") is a French word that means "false" or "fake." Many applications offer you the option of styling a regular font into a faux bold or italic. I strongly recommend that you resist this option for two reasons. The first is technical; many times the faux styles will not print out properly. Moreover, if you bring a document containing faux styles to a prepress house to prepare for professional printing, chances are that it won't process properly; correcting this problem will cost time and money.

The second reason is aesthetic. Type designers are very talented and dedicated artists that take great pains to design beautiful typefaces. How could you expect a dumb computer to replicate this effort with the push of a button? See for yourself: Figure 2-13 compares a faux bold with a real one. A lowercase serif faux italic will look like the oblique sample in Figure 2-11.

Most applications will also let you scale (or stretch) type. But be careful: most typefaces won't suffer too much when scaled from 97% to 103%, but if you go far beyond this range the distortion might get obnoxious. (See Figure 2-14 and Figure 2-15.)

**Clarendon**  
**Clarendon**  
**Clarendon**

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Figure 2-13 Clarendon Regular is on top, below it is a computer-generated faux bold, and the last line is Clarendon Bold. The faux bold has crude details: the counters on the *a* and the *n* are too closed, the *a* has a stubby tail, the *r* has a bloated arm, and *n* and *d* have swollen joints. (Aspirin won't help: Choose a real font!)

**AaBbCc**  
**AaBbCc**

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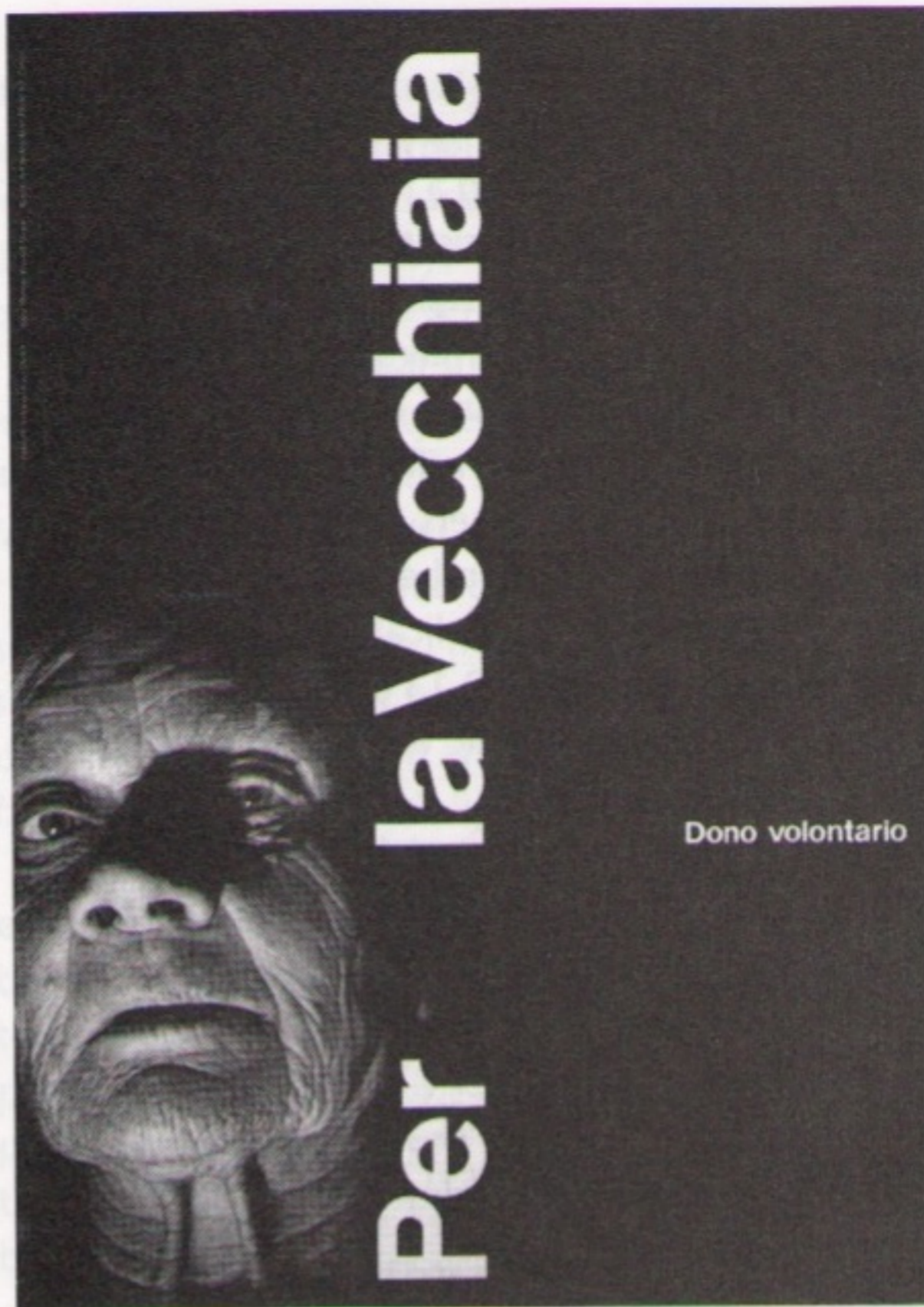
Figure 2-14 On top is Univers 63 Bold Extended. Below, Univers 65 Bold has been scaled horizontally about 160% to match. If you compare them carefully, you'll see that the balance of characters on the second line is destroyed by extra-fat vertical stems and curved strokes.

**AaBbCcDdEeFfGg**  
**AaBbCcDdEeFfGg**

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Figure 2-15 On top is Univers Ultra Condensed. Below, Univers Roman has been scaled horizontally to about 50% and faux bold has been applied so the proportions and weights roughly match. However, once again, the balance of the characters on the second line is upset, but this time, it is the vertical strokes that are too light and the horizontals too heavy.

**Figure 2-16** This public awareness poster, created by Swiss designer Carlo L. Vivarelli in 1949, promoted care for the elderly. It features strong contrasts of light and dark, between form and space, and between smooth geometric letterforms and the heavily textured photograph. *Courtesy Art Resource*



## Placing Type Over Pictures

The exercise at the end of this chapter involves placing type over a photographic image. Whenever you do this, care must be taken to make sure the type remains clear and has enough visual impact. Type easily can get lost when it is placed over rugged textures, strong lines, or highly contrasting shapes. It's most legible when it's placed over relatively smooth areas. Of course, bolder, simpler, and larger type can put up with more competition than type with more delicate shapes.

It is important to consider the color of type in relation to the background. Of course, black type is most effective when it is set over as light an area as possible. Conversely, the color of type can be switched to white when it is set over a dark area. On the other hand, sometimes you may want a more subtle relationship that makes the type "sink in" to the image somewhat. (See Figure 2-16 and Figure 2-17.)

The best advice in these matters, as in all areas of visual design, is simply to *look*. Put yourself in the place of a viewer who doesn't have any particular interest in seeing your message. Try looking at the layout at a small magnification. Or, better yet, print it out and look at it from across the room. Then, see if it grabs you. If you cannot *not* see it, then it's working.



**Figure 2-17** Another classic Swiss public awareness poster, this time created by Josef Müller-Brockmann in 1960. In the original, the type shouted out its message “Less Noise” in bright red. The type was placed so that it seems to squeeze the poor woman’s head like a vice. Printed in black and white, the type is not nearly as bold. See how the final “r” at the end of the first word almost gets lost into the dark shadow under the women’s chin? On the other hand, the “a” in the second word fairs better; it’s bold enough to survive the strong contrast beneath it. *Courtesy Art Resource/Artists Rights Society*

## CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter introduced the idea that type expresses feelings. It gave you a basic vocabulary to describe parts of letter characters. You have learned how type families work and the problems with faux type styles and other distortions.

Basic considerations concerning the placement of type over pictures were also introduced, so that you are prepared for the exercise, which involves matching the emotional expression of type and pictures. The related application Skills Module will get you started placing pictures and setting type in your chosen application.