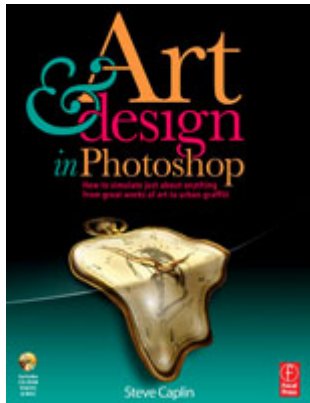


Steve Caplin on fonts - Serif



Taken from [Art & Design in Photoshop](#)

By [Steve Caplin](#)

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SERIF FONTS may have originated with ancient stonemasons (see left), but their appeal has lasted to the present day. The serifs themselves form a visual rule at the top and bottom of all the characters, making it easier for the eye to follow each line of type.

Because of their increased legibility, serif fonts are used for extended reading: novels, newspaper articles and most magazines use serif fonts for the main body of the text as they make it easier to read large chunks of text.

Serif type
Garamond (oldstyle)

All serif fonts are based, more or less, on the roman originals. so-called 'old style' serifs originated in the 15th century with designs such as Garamond: these are characterized by a variation in thickness between horizontal and vertical strokes, inspired by calligraphic writing, and usually feature an oblique stress – the letter 'o', for example, will tend to have its stress at an angle, rather than directly vertical.

Serif type
Baskerville (transitional)

'Transitional' serif fonts first made their appearance in 1757, and are characterized by strong differences in weight between the thick and thin strokes. This font was designed by John Baskerville, who had to reinvent not just the printing press but paper-making techniques in order to reproduce his fine designs.

Serif type
Egyptian (slab serif)

In around 1800, a new form of serif appeared, known as ‘slab serif’ or ‘egyptian’. These have very little variation in weight, and have thick, chunky serifs that are far bolder than had previously been seen. They’re most commonly seen in Victorian and ‘Western’ posters, and are distinctively retro in appearance.

Serif type

Times (modern)

The first truly ‘modern’ serif font was Times roman, designed for The Times newspaper in 1932 by Herbert Morrison. Intended to be the most readable font that could easily be reproduced on newsprint, Times has been a firm favorite ever since, and is the standard serif font installed on contemporary computers.

Because the serifs form horizontal lines above and below each character, serif fonts are much easier on the eye: the serifs guide the reader along each line. Text that requires sustained reading on a wide measure is almost always set in a serif font, whether it’s in a book, a magazine or a newspaper. Serif fonts also have more variations in weight than sans serif, which makes the page more ‘colorful’ and appealing.



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Serif fonts convey tradition and respectability (top), as opposed to the more modern appearance of sans serif typefaces (bottom). When this is a key requirement, only a serif font will do the job correctly.