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5 Basic rules for good typography

If you've commissioned a design project, you'll want to feel confident that you've been delivered a professional result. But how can you be sure, if you're not a professional designer? OK, we've just entered a world of subjectivity so here are five basic rules of good typography to guide you.

By following these rules you'll be able to spot any substandard typography in your commissioned projects. And you'll have the knowledge to finesse your own documents.

1. Hierarchy

Differentiating elements to show their order

Without hierarchy your reader won't know where to start or where to go next. The headline is usually the largest size, followed by subheads, then body copy. Reports, for example, may need more levels, such as quotes, pull-outs, boxes, charts, or data. Font size is not the only way to define hierarchy. It can also be achieved with colour, spacing, and font weights.

TIP! The key is to keep it simple. If your document difficult to navigate then think about simplifying the hierarchy.

You will read this last

**You will read
this first**

Then you will read this

Followed by this

2. Leading

The space between lines of copy

Getting it right means your text has optimum legibility. This makes it easier for the reader to follow. Your text should not be touching, but also should not be too loose.

If you're finding your content hard to read but don't know why, see if adjusting the leading helps.

- ✓ **Fivefold is a graphic design studio in Brighton founded on 20 years of experience in the creative industry.**
- ✗ **Fivefold is a graphic design studio in Brighton founded on 20 years of experience in the creative industry.**
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3. Ragged edges

The line lengths in a block of text

A balanced 'rag' goes in and out from line to line in small increments. An unbalanced 'rag' creates distracting shapes of white space in the margins and disrupts the readers flow. Other considerations include "breaking for sense" (line breaks for logical pauses) and not splitting proper nouns or hyphenations across two lines.

TIP! A hard return (the standard return key) will take on paragraph styling, ending the paragraph both visually and grammatically. A soft return (shift and return) to create a line break will not do this. Instead, it will keep all the copy as part of the same paragraph.

If your document it is difficult to follow or looks a little messy, review the line breaks.

- ✓ **Trends come and go, but thoughtful design lasts forever. We create original concepts and apply time-tested principles to each and every one of our projects.**
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4. Widows

Lone words at the end of a paragraph

Widows are considered poor typography because they create too much space between paragraphs or at the end of a page. They break the flow of reading and make text look unbalanced and messy.

TIP! If your document looks messy then look out for these poor lonely words! You can use soft returns on previous lines to remove them - see tip 3.

Widows are often miscalled 'orphans'. Orphans are similarly unwanted stragglers; only they are lone words at the top of a page that really belong on the previous page or column.

Paragraph paragraph
paragraph paragraph
paragraph paragraph
paragraph paragraph
paragraph paragraph
paragraph paragraph
paragraph paragraph
paragraph paragraph
paragraph paragraph
paragraph paragraph
widow.

Paragraph paragraph
paragraph paragraph
paragraph paragraph
paragraph paragraph

orphan.

Paragraph paragraph
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5. Baseline grid

Ensures alignment to text and objects

You don't have to fully dive into the complex world of typography grids to spot if one isn't being used. Using a grids and column guides ensures horizontal and vertical alignment to text and objects, bringing order and coherence to the layout.

When your text is aligned to a baseline grid your body text, headings, quotes, and images will line up beautifully (of course there will always some exception).

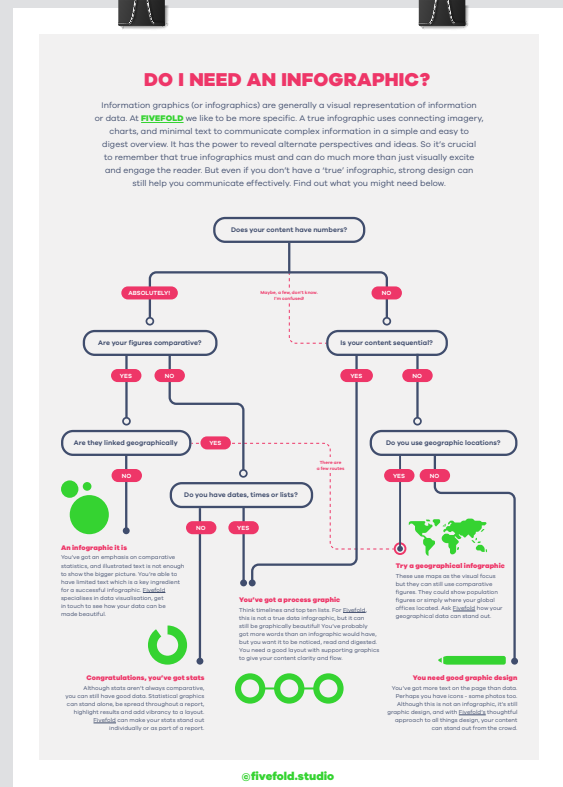
TIP! If you think your layout looks fussy, see what can be lined up. Text will line up if the spacing after or before is the same as the leading.

Heading	
Intro paragraph: parum hite dolor escium este quo blab is eos rem nat dolupis mo ommodi venimus quatus autecte pliam, ipis ent.	nost occullatur? Iquiant et etur, quo iunt perumquid ut ut eum in eosandem fuga. Xerio. Et vendi comnimp oreicitas aximodi optaerum quis utemodic.
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Using the right charts means your content can be understood better. But which chart suits your content best?

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