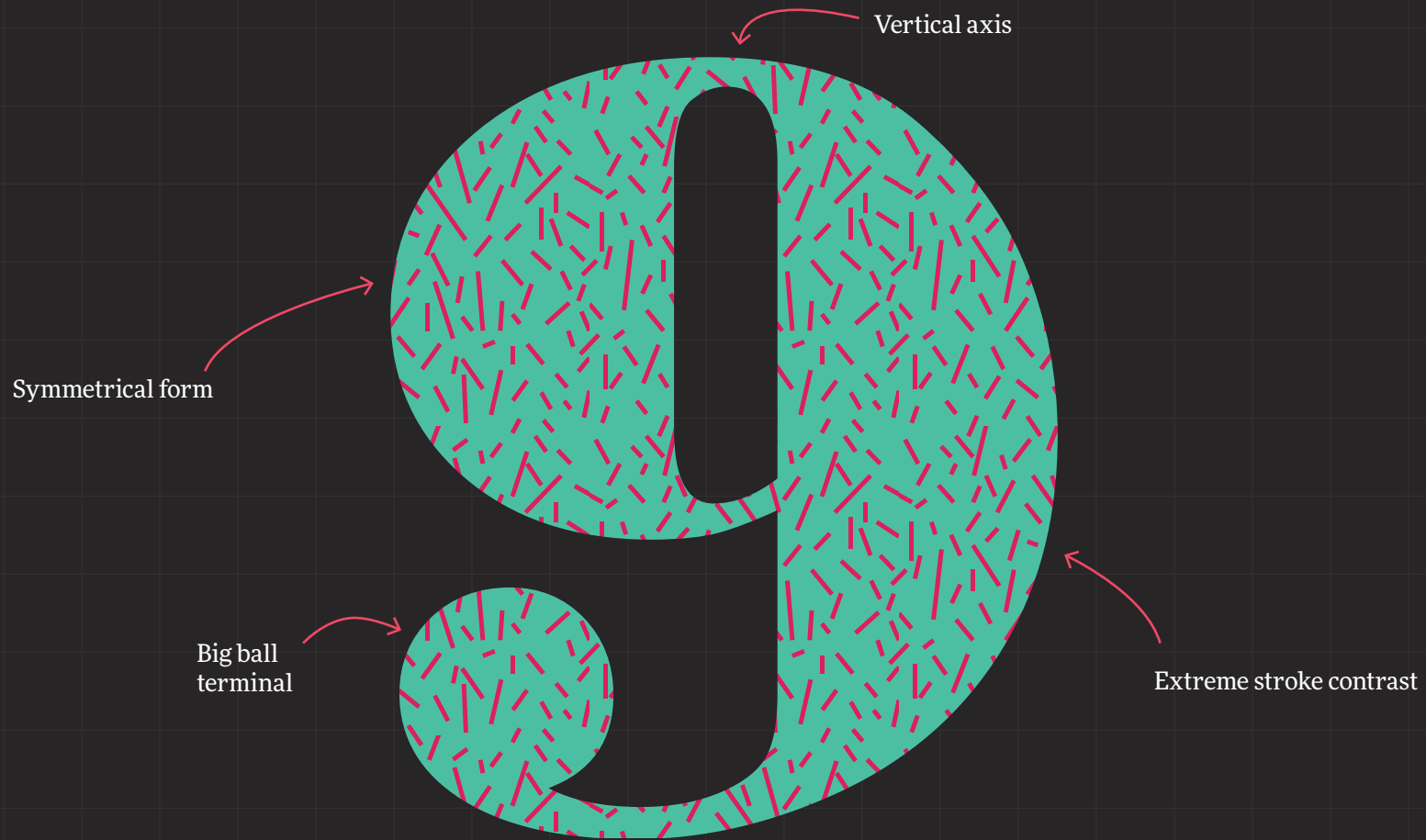




**of the best fonts  
you already have**

# Contents

|    |                               |
|----|-------------------------------|
| i  | Contents                      |
| 1  | Introduction                  |
| 2  | How to tell if a font is good |
|    | Features                      |
|    | Even Spacing                  |
|    | Consistent Color              |
|    | Consistent Design             |
| 7  | Georgia                       |
| 8  | Palatino                      |
| 9  | Baskerville                   |
| 10 | Didot                         |
| 11 | Verdana                       |
| 12 | Gill Sans                     |
| 13 | Century Gothic                |
| 14 | Futura                        |
| 15 | Rockwell                      |
| 16 | Conclusion                    |

## 9 of the best fonts you already have.

Having thousands of fonts can be nice, but you really need only a handful of really good ones to get you by. That's the secret most font-hoarders and type-designers aren't sharing: you already have a number of completely solid, reliable fonts built-into your computer.

We're going to look at what makes a good font, then we'll walk through some of the best pre-installed fonts on Windows 10 and MacOS. If you have an older version of either of these operating systems, you'll still probably have a majority of these fonts, but maybe not all of them.

Also note that your computer may have a different publication of the typeface. That means that it was slightly redesigned and republished by two or more companies with different versions. I'm using the base (generic) names for these fonts. Don't worry—they're more-or-less the same.



Fonts with the Windows 10 symbol are included on Windows 10; those with the macOS X symbol are included on MacOS X. If both symbols are present, that means the font is included on both operating systems.

# How to tell if a font is *good*

Picking the right font for a project is honestly difficult. Where do you even start? You have dozens or hundreds of fonts installed on your computer... And scrolling through them feels like a never-ending task that usually leads nowhere. So you go back to the same ones you've used before: probably Helvetica, Arial, Cambria, and Times.

Some will probably hear this and say that goodness is subjective—that there are as many opinions about goodness as there are people. Let's dispel that myth right now. People may have different tastes and personal preferences—my favorite typeface, for example, is Akzidenz-Grotesk—but I still recognize all the other good fonts out there.

People can differ on preference, but there are fundamental characteristics that distinguish a typeface as technically good.

# Features

First, look out for features: a good typeface will have genuine small-caps and italics. It will also usually have multiple weights, old-style and titling numerals, and more. Poor faces usually lack several or all of these features.

Genuine bold      Genuine small-caps      Genuine italics

The VEXING *anys.*

The diagram shows the phrase 'The VEXING anys.' in a teal-colored serif typeface. Above the text, three labels with red arrows point to specific features: 'Genuine bold' points to the 'The', 'Genuine small-caps' points to the 'VEXING', and 'Genuine italics' points to the 'anys.'.

# Even Spacing

Second, good typefaces feature even spacing and proper kerning. All the characters should have visually similar spaces on all sides, with the spaces between letters the smallest, the spaces between words a bit larger, and the spaces between lines of text the largest.

Also, for each group of three letters, the middle letter should look visually centered between the other two. The process of making sure every combination looks even is called Kerning. This extends beyond standard letterspacing because certain combinations need to have space added or subtracted to look even.

Equal spacing

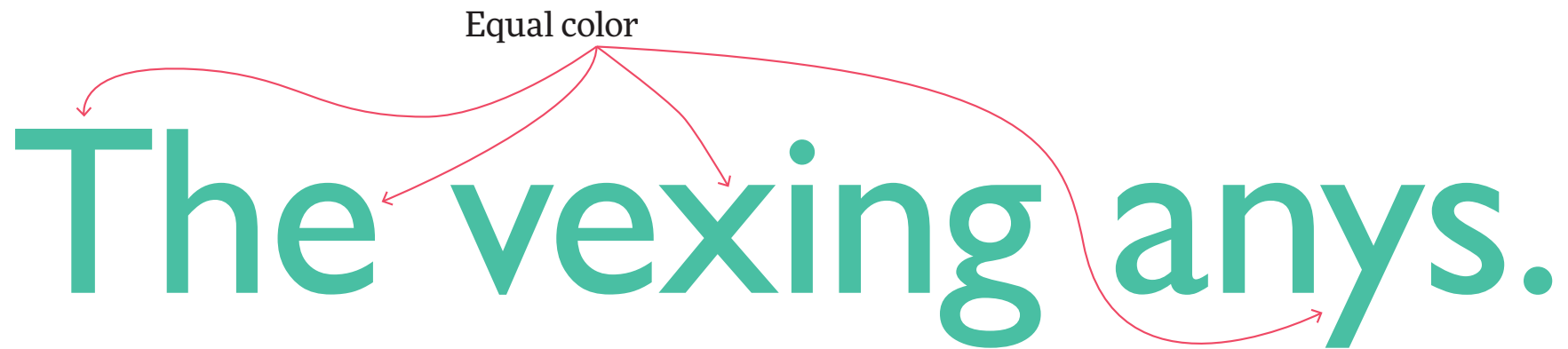


The vexing anys.

# Consistent Color

Third, the characters should all have consistent color. That is to say that none of the characters look heavier or lighter than the other (they all have consistent stroke weight and an equal ratio of black space to white space (or foreground to background)).

Equal color

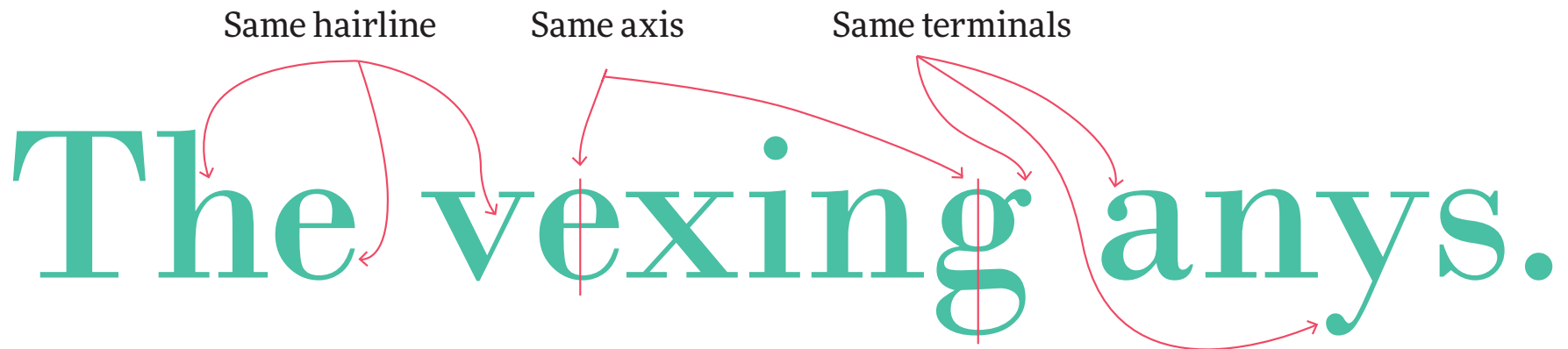


The vexing anys.

A diagram illustrating the concept of 'Equal color' in typography. The text 'The vexing anys.' is shown in a teal color. Red arrows point from the label 'Equal color' to various parts of the text, including the 'T', 'e', 'v', 'x', 'i', 'n', 'g', 'a', 'n', 'y', 's', and the period, demonstrating that all characters have a consistent color and stroke weight.

# Consistent Design

Fourth, all the characters should have similar design characteristics. So, if some letters have short, unbracketed serifs, then all letters with serifs should look that way. If some letters have high stroke contrast, then they all should. You get the idea.



# Georgia

Georgia was designed by Matthew Carter for Microsoft back in 1993. It was made to be legible when printed at small sizes or on a low-res screen (like the kind used in the early 1990s). It's a transitional serif, so it's a bit like Caslon (and Times), but with a larger x-height, more open forms, and more obvious features. Again, it was made for low-res screens, so the bold is especially bold.

Georgia is a good multi-tool font that you can use for longer documents and academic titles.



ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ  
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz  
1234567890 .,:!@#&

Large eye,  
horizontal bar

Large x-height,  
slight overhang

Slightly diagonal  
axis

Medium aperture,  
large counter,  
large terminal

The vexing anys.

Medium stroke contrast

Asymmetrical serifs  
with brackets

Bulbous  
terminal

# Palatino

Designed by the late Hermann Zapf, Palatino is a humanist serif (like Garamond) created in 1948. Based on older, calligraphic letters, Palatino looks almost like writing done with a broad-nib pen.

While made for headlines, it has experienced great popularity with books as well. (It's actually one of the ten most used serif typefaces.)



ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ  
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz  
1234567890 .,:!/?@#&

Large eye,  
curved bar

Large x-height,  
slight overhang

Diagonal axis

Large aperture,  
large counter

Medium stroke contrast

Asymmetrical,  
rectangular serifs  
with brackets

Calligraphic  
terminal

The vexing anys.

# Baskerville

Baskerville, designed by John Baskerville in 1757, is what's known as a transitional serif typeface, as it helped bridge the gap from old, humanist typefaces like Garamond—which had its roots firmly in calligraphy—with newer, rational faces like Didot—which were highly constructed and featured idealized shapes.

Baskerville draws the reader's attention by being fairly “flashy,” so it's good for genuinely interesting content or important titles.



ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ  
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz  
1234567890 .,:;!?@#&

Medium eye,  
horizontal bar

Medium x-height

Slanted axis

Open forms and  
large aperture

The vexing anys.

High stroke contrast

Heavy serifs, almost  
symmetrical, with  
large brackets

Bulbous  
terminal

# Didot

Similar to Bodoni, Didot is a name given to a number of fonts with a similar style. Firmin Didot created the most popular versions in the late 1700s, taking influence from Baskerville's high contrast and more vertical axis.

Didot is a member of the rational serif category. As with all type categorization, this label is contested, though, with many preferring the term modern or Didone.

This is a great typeface for fancy titles.



ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ  
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz  
1234567890 .,:!@#&



# Verdana

Designed by Matthew Carter for Microsoft, Verdana was crafted to work well on screens with poor resolution. It's a humanist sans-serif, with a large x-height, open spaces, and fairly organic shapes.

Verdana works very well on screens, where it's intentional design choices shine through. It doesn't work as well in print, though, as it can look too spacious. Its bold is also more bold than one would expect—this results from the fact that the only way to make a 1-pixel-wide character bolder is to make it 2 pixels wide, a larger increase than most print fonts.



ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ  
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz  
1234567890 .,:!/?@#&

Large eye,  
Straight bar

Large x-height,  
medium overhang

Open, wide shapes

Large aperture,  
open counter

Low stroke contrast

No serifs, with a  
double-story 'a' and  
monocular 'g'

Square Full stop

The vexing anys.

# Gill Sans

Based on the alphabet designed by Edward Johnston for the London Underground, Eric Gill's Gill Sans has become one of the most popular Humanist sans serifs around. This means its strokes take influence from actual pen strokes, with moderate to high stroke contrast and a diagonal axis, without the addition of serifs.

You can use Gill Sans for most things—it's Humanist forms make it readable in long-form text, while its character makes it visually interesting at large sizes.



ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ  
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz  
1234567890 .,:;!?@#&

Small eye,  
Straight bar

Small/medium  
x-height, small  
overhang

Open shapes

Large/medium aperture,  
small counter

Very low stroke contrast

No serifs, with a  
double-story 'a' and  
binocular 'g'

Circle Full stop

The vexing anys.

# Century Gothic

Century Gothic is a geometric sans serif meant to rival Futura. Released in 1991, Century Gothic features a number of design characteristics that make it work well for as a display font in large titles. Its relatively tight spacing, large x-height, and normalized stroke weight make it work well when its set in a large point size.

It also uses 30% less ink than Arial; though, its wide characters end up using more paper.



ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ  
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz  
1234567890 .,:!@#&

Large eye,  
Straight bar

Large x-height, low  
overhang

Wide, geometric shapes

Close to no stroke contrast

No serifs, with a  
single-story 'a' and  
monocular 'g'

Round Full stop

The vexing anys.

# Futura

Futura is a geometric sans-serif, meaning (a) that it has no serifs—those little feet you see on Garamond and Caslon—and (b) it's made out of simple shapes—circles, triangles, and rectangles—as opposed to other faces, which are meant to look at least a little bit like hand writing.

Designed by Paul Renner in 1927, Futura echoed many of the views of its time—the reduction to basic shapes and a lack of stroke contrast make it a nice companion to many of the teachings of the Bauhaus, though it wasn't directly linked.

Futura's moderately low x-height lends itself well to use in body text. Now, many people will tell you not to use a sans serif in body text, but they're probably full of it. Futura looks perfectly handsome in body text.



ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ  
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz  
1234567890 .,:!@#&

Large eye,  
Straight bar

Small x-height, large  
overhang

Very geometric  
shapes

Almost circular  
counter

Almost no stroke contrast

No serifs, with a  
single-story 'a' and  
monocular 'g'

The vexing anys.

# Rockwell

Rockwell is a very popular slab serif, or Egyptian, typeface. In this style, which is getting super popular right now, the serifs are usually unbracketed and have the same stroke weight as the main strokes (i.e. they're really big). They also tend to be a bit similar to some Grotesque sans serifs, like Akzidenz Grotesk.

Rockwell is more of a Geometric style, meaning it's made out of simple shapes—similar to Futura—with a few notable exceptions (the lowercase a, for example, doesn't fit the normal single-story Geometric template).

Rockwell was designed in 1933 and is a popular choice for display type (titles and large text). Because of its fat serifs and heavy weight, it's not suited to body text.



ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ  
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz  
1234567890 .,:;!@#&

Large eye,  
Straight bar

Large x-height,  
slight overhang

Vertical, almost  
non-existent axis

Medium aperture,  
large counter

Low stroke contrast

Big, rectangular  
serifs without  
brackets

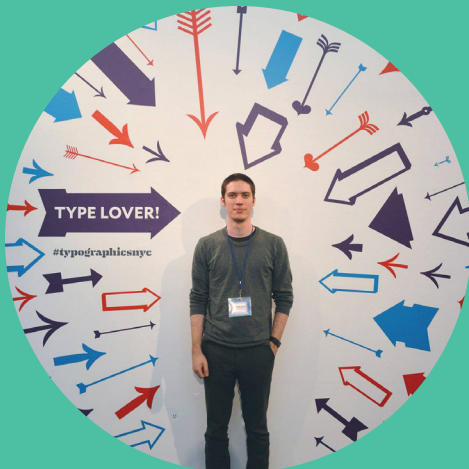
Rectangular  
terminal

The vexing anys.

# Conclusion

I hope you learned something! If you did, [send me an email](#) and let me know! If you want me to send you more typography ebooks and articles, then subscribe to [type365.com](#). It's free and I won't share your info with anyone. I promise.

If you use any of the fonts we discussed, snap a photo or screenshot and send it to me! I'd love to expand this book with some real-life designs.



## About me

I'm a typophile living in Charlottesville, Virginia. I spend my days as Marketing Manager for Tom Tom Founders Festival, a local nonprofit that celebrates Virginian entrepreneurship and creativity. I spend my evenings and weekends designing type, writing about type, teaching letterpress printing, watching Community, and playing basketball.

[Email me!](#)