

Taking Up Space

Taking Up Space is an occasional column written on graphic design issues by Brian Grebow, BG Communications.

They don't call them characters for nothing

From the days of Egyptian hieroglyphics (around 35,000 BC) to today's computer-generated images on a screen, typography has gone through many evolutions. These adaptations in their current form have formed the basis of a set of do's and don't guidelines for typography that I want to cover in this month's column. It is these do's and don'ts that are the real secrets of good typography and I can only cover a few in the space I have been allotted. As a former president of Apple once said, "We now have the technology to create the truly ugly page."

Do

1. Use one space between sentences.

Putting two spaces between sentences is holdover from the days of manual typewriters and mono-spaced characters. Today's computer-generated type and proportional spacing doesn't require two spaces.

2. Use block style for paragraphs.

For other than newsletters, I seem to flush left paragraphs with a line space between each paragraph. Although the indent style is good, having the eye go back to the left side of the page and then in for the

first word, can be tiring. For newsletters, and for any document that will not use spaces between paragraphs, I normally flush left the first paragraph and indent the following ones.

Don't

1. Use a lot words in all capitals.

It has been scientifically shown that it takes the eye at least 40% longer to read all caps. The eye recognizes the shape of letters and of words. Words or sentences in all caps are harder to read because the eye has to read them one letter at a time because the shape is all the same. Try using other type styles such as bolding to emphasize your message. A final note: don't ever put script faces—like Zapf Chancery or Brush Script—in all caps. It looks ugly and unprofessional.

2. Use type to convey mixed messages.

Use type to clearly complement the text. For example, using a hard type such Gill Extra Bold for a garden party invitation is not appropriate. It's like saying one thing with the type and another with the text.

