

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### Types, Lettering and Layout

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#### Introduction

Lettering entails the art of constructing letters of the alphabet as well as numbers for certain uses. Although today, the narrative has changed with the advancement of technology. Letters are deployed to communicate to specific audiences. The use of lettering dated back almost two thousand (2000) years ago and may have been derived from the Babylonians, Egyptians, Romans, and Greeks. Historically, the art of lettering started in ancient Egypt. This Egyptian form of writing is called hieroglyphics. Hieroglyphics is a pictorial form of writing. Also, Babylon has its form of ancient writing called *cuneiform*. Until the year 1450, all letters were handwritten, it was a German called Johannes Gutenberg who invented the printing machine and this made room for different typefaces of lettering in use today. The two factors that control lettering are; legibility and structural shape.

Lettering offers immense satisfaction, but it is a subtle activity that needs time and patience. Lettering helps to convey meaning as regards skills and originality. A letter is a symbol that represents a sound as pronounced in speech. It is one of the units of the alphabet. The method

adopted in writing this alphabetic symbol is called the art of lettering.

Typefaces can be regarded as the physical features of a letter. There are several categories of typefaces, but we are going to limit ourselves to the foundational types; as follows;

**Romans (Serif):** In Roman lettering, there is no uniformity in their thickness. They have what are called thick and thin features. They also have ornamental projections known as serifs at the top and bottom of each letter. Thus it is called the roman style of lettering example;

**A, B, C      A, B, C      A, B, C**

Times

Bookman

Bodoni

New Roman

Old Style

Black

**Block Types (San serif):** These types of strokes are uniform because they are without ornamental projections, they are referred to as san serif examples.

**A, B, C      A, B, C      A, B, C**

Antonio

Futura Sans

Swiss

**Italics:** These are letters that tilt towards the right direction. They are generally believed to be less formal and usually create variety and emphasis in writing, examples are as follows:

***A,B,C***

Antonio

**A,B,C**

Futura Sans

***A,B,C***

Swiss

### **Scripts or Cursiva**

This can be likened to an imitation of hand-written letters. It is full of decoration and takes a lot of time to write. It is usually employed as the first letter of a word, for example;

***a,b,c***

Edwardian  
Script

**a,b,c**

Alison

***A,B,C***

Cinderela

**Gothic:** Before the invention of the printing machine, books were written by hand. The art of using a free hand to write beautifully with the aid of a pen is called calligraphy. It is also called script writing and cursive writing.

Despite the advancement we are witnessing in printing technology, the art of calligraphy is still visible in greetings cards, designs, certificates, invitation cards etc. pen and ink are the chief materials needed for calligraphy. There are readymade pens with different nibs made purposely for calligraphy. However, if these readymade calligraphic pens are not available quill feather sticks can be carved to a desirable shape as alternatives.

**A, B, C**

Old English

We should note that capital letters are referred to as uppercase while small letters are called lowercase.

### **Legibility factor in Types**

Legibility is otherwise known as readability. The primary purpose of a typeface is to transfer information. To attain this goal, it must be legible, i.e. the recipients of the information should be able to decode it with as little effort as possible and reassess the symbols to objects and process what they represent. This is generally agreed upon, but it is more difficult to agree upon how legibility can be assessed and even measured (Wendt, 1994). Readability talks about the speed and ease of understanding and comprehending the text (Mills & Weldon, 1987; Woods, Davis, & Scharff, 2005)

## Lettering Construction

In lettering construction, horizontal and vertical lines are used as guides. For letters M and W, three horizontal boxes by five vertical boxes should be applied to attain regular squared boxes known as a **grid**. These boxes should be measured and their measurement can be 1cm by 1cm or any other dimension. Letter I requires one horizontal box by five vertical boxes. Capital letters which are also known as upper cases can be categorized into three forms in lettering construction. They are;

- Triangular form: This has **A V W**
- Circular form: This has **O C D**
- Rectangular form: This has **M N H E** and **I**.

Spacing is important in lettering construction because it distinguishes words and sentences and makes the expressions readable. Small letters which are also known as lowercase are not of the same height as the capital letters. The height difference is due to the upper and lower projections that the lowercase letters possess. These projections are also called descenders and ascenders.



To construct small letters, three horizontal boxes by three vertical boxes are suitable for letters without projections. The letters are; **a o e u c v x s**, for the letters

with ascenders and descenders, three horizontal boxes by seven vertical boxes will be suitable.

### **Materials Required for Lettering**

- A good ruler
- A soft pencil of HB or B grade
- A soft pencil eraser
- A good pair of mathematical compasses
- Paper or board on which to write, ink paint etc.

### **Parts of Typefaces**

- Capital letters are referred to as upper case for example “A”
- Small letters are referred to as lower case for example “a”
- In lower case letters the upper stroke as the letter ‘d’ is called ascender.
- The downward stroke as in the letter ‘p’ of the lowercase is called *the descender* while the round part is called the body.
- The short cross line at the end of the main stroke of certain styles of typefaces is called the serif.
- The top of the A is called the Apex.
- The slanted lettering is referred to as italic.
- The inside curve of the c is referred to as the counter.

**Letter Spacing:** Spaces between letters, or types of characters are equal and take the space of a letter, although it can be modified.

**Mid Spacing:** Mid spacing are spaces between words. This should take the size of one character e.g. ‘A’.

**Letter Adjustments:** Vertical letters should be spaced equally except in some cases as example AV, MV, TA, DA, OV, KA, etc.

The importance of lettering cannot be over emphasized as it has a high demand in projecting a highly complex advertising displays. This is shown in posters, book covers, sign board design etc.

### **Method of Lettering**

After drawing the guidelines with a hard pencil ‘H’ series, sketch the whole letters. Draw all the vertical and horizontal line with ruler, T square and triangular protractor, outline all carefully full in the centres with fine and bold inks.



Fig 1: Using the grid system to construct letters

## **Creative Lettering**

To be creative in lettering is to present and incorporate peripheral elements besides just letters. An example is the creation of ornamental letters, modified letterform, anthropomorphic letters and to mention just a few.

## **Lettering for Emotive Design**

Emotive design engages people by eliciting feelings through the effect of design elements. In lettering, typefaces as design elements have various emotion which they can evoke in the psyche of people especially while building brand for either products or services. Script typefaces can be related to feminine, special, and fanciful feeling. Decorative typeface can relate to nonchalant and excitement or high-spirited feeling. Rounded typefaces (i.e. puffy letterform whose strokes have round edges) can be related to fun and welcoming feelings. Serif can be related to luxury, respect, and glamour. San serif can be related to straightforward, sensible and neutral feeling.

## **Lettering Design for Signage and Wayfinding**

Many buildings such as hospitals, terminals and airports, office buildings, supermarkets and other public facilities require signage and wayfinding. The problem that often arise when inside the building, including hospitals is people who were inside the building can be confused in finding directions, especially in conditions of panic.



Today, there is a paradigm shift in materials deployed for environmental sign design. Lighting has become an integral part of 3-Dimensional signage that every tom, dick and harry craves to own one neon-lighted signage in their shops, irrespective of the cost. Outdoor sign design is an aspect of environmental beautification. This is so because signages provide vital information and direction for an existing business, and again, serves as a cost-effective marketing tool for small and medium-scale businesses.



Plate 1: A sample of outdoor neon sign. Source:  
<https://www.amazon.in/Bottle-Business-Signage-Decorations-Personalized/dp/B09XGS5DL8>

### **Computer Generated Lettering**

Desktop programs such as CorelDraw, Adobe InDesign and Illustrator changed the tactile world of graphic design. Nowadays, many hand-drawn techniques

of lettering of the past can be executed with computer applications. For instance, large stencils can now be arranged and printed on multiple A3 papers through a grid system built-in on the CorelDraw application, and joined later using masking tape. This technique makes room for easy stencil handling and extra-large stencil prints on various surfaces such as walls, and vehicles.

## **Questions**

1. What are the various classifications of letters?
2. What are the parts of letters?
3. Construct letters using the grid system
4. Making use of hand lettering to express the following emotion: *fun, honour, love, peace, fear*
5. Give account of the significance of lettering as Job opportunity for graphic designers

## **References**

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