

Some Design Terminology

1. Alignment

Alignment is the way that the different elements in a design are arranged, usually in relation to a page or document. In typography, alignment, which can also be called range, is the setting of text relative to a column, tab or page. It's very easy to notice when elements in a design aren't aligned.

2. Analogous (Colours)

Think of these as the neighbours of the colour world—analogue colours are colours that sit next to each other on the colour wheel. Think, in simple terms, red, orange and yellow—there's a dominant colour, a primary or secondary colour and a tertiary colour. Analogue colours match really well and create a proper colour harmony—resulting in a composed design. A famous use of analogue colours in the iconic Pentagram-designed Mastercard logo.

3. Aperture

The white space at the end of an open counter in typography.

4. Apex

In typography, the top point where two strokes are joined together.

5. Arm

When a horizontal stroke is not attached to a stem on one end.

6. Ascenders

Ascenders refer to the parts of lower case letters that extend above the x-height of a typeface. If you look back at that first sentence, you'll see loads of them—and that one too. In a majority of typefaces, the lowercase letters b, d, f, h, k and l are ascenders. Careful though, the letter t is not an ascender. In certain fonts, such as Garamond, the ascenders rise above the cap height.

7. Aspect ratio

Aspect ratio is most easily explained as the ratio of the width to the height of a rectangle—which usually, in design terms, is a picture or a screen. Aspect ratios are usually expressed as a mathematical ratio but, no fear, there's no maths involved—it's just two numbers separated by a colon. It's usually width:height so, for instance, the aspect ratio for an iMac is 16:9—16 inches wide by 9 inches high.

8. Backslanted

Italics leaning backward.

9. Ball Terminal

Ball-shape extension of a letter.

10. Baseline

In typography, the baseline is the invisible line that text sits on—think of it as the floor, but for text. It's also the place that x-height and other important parts of a font are measured from. There is also parts of fonts that don't sit on the baseline, but we'll get to them later.

11. Bleed

That little bit extra—the bleed is a printing term that refers to the edge of the sheet that will be trimmed off. In design terms, the bleed is the artwork or background colour that extends in to this area, in case the cut made to the design or sheet isn't exact. It's a way of ensuring that none of the design gets accidentally cut off or there's no unexpected borders.

12. Body Copy

The main text that people will read on a design. The body copy refers to the paragraphs, sentences or other text that are the main content in any publication, whether print or digital. Put in real life terms, the body copy of a magazine is the articles themselves rather than the titles, subtitles, authors, etc.

13. Bold

A heavy weight of any given typeface, often used for emphasis.

14. Bowl

The generally round or elliptical forms which are the basic body shape of letters such as C, G, O in the uppercase, and b, c, e, o, p in the lowercase.

15. Bracket

A curved connection between the stem and serif of some fonts. Not all serifs are bracketed serifs.

16. Brand Identity

The visual version of a brand. The brand identity is made up of everything that relates to the brand—logos, typefaces, colour palettes, slogans, tone of voice, website, packaging and other marketing material. When designers talk about ‘branding’, it usually involves developing all aspects of the brand identity.

17. Calligraphy

The art of writing letters with a very specific tool (e.g., broad nib pen, brush pen, etc.).

18. Cap Height

Back to our friend the baseline—the cap height is the height of the top of a capital letter in any given font above the baseline. The cap height refers specifically to letters with a flat top, such as H and I. Round letters like ‘O’ and pointed ones like ‘A’ may rise above the cap height in their capital forms.

19. Centre Aligned

When text is aligned to the centre of a text frame, with the rag on the left and right sides of the text frame.

20. Character

A letter, number, punctuation mark or symbol.

21. Character Set

Entire collection of characters for any given typeface weight.

22. CMYK

RGB's printing brother, CMYK, is the colour mode which should be used when designing for print. The four colours the name stands for, Cyan, Magenta, Yellow and Key (Black), are the four colours most widely used in printing. Similarly to RGB, these four colours can be combined in lots of different ways to produce a majority of colours in print—though, unlike RGB, these colours are subtractive so get darker as they are combined. Key/black is added on top of the other three as mixing them will never produce a pure black.

23. Complementary (Colours)

Think of these as the best friends of the colour world—complementary colours are the colours that sit directly opposite each other on the colour wheel. Examples of complementary colours are red and green, blue and orange and purple and yellow. Using complementary colours will make a design more aesthetically pleasing—and can also be used in things like logos and retail displays to make a design stand out more.

24. Contrast

Contrast is the arrangement of opposite elements on a page—in other words, when two things on a page are different. This can be light vs. dark colours, smooth vs. rough textures, text colour vs. background colour. Contrast can be used to create areas of visual interest or even drama within a design.

25. Counter

The white space enclosed by a letterform, whether wholly enclosed, as in 'd' or 'o', or partially, as in 'c' or a double-story 'a'.

26. Creep

Definitely not what you are thinking—creep, alternatively known as shingling, is the inside margin of a book, magazine or other publication. With some bindings, the creep often has to be made larger so that no content is covered when it is being read. Printing companies will sometimes have charts to calculate the size of the creep for their different paper stocks.

27. Crop Marks

Also known as trim marks, crop marks are specific marks (they kind of look like two lines crossing with a target) that indicate to a printer where the paper should be trimmed. They're essential when designing for print and make it much easier to communicate with the printers.

28. Crossbar

A stroke across a stem (as in the horizontal line of the letter 'T', 'H', 'E', etc.).

29. Descenders

Descenders are the opposite of ascenders, they're the tail of letters—the part of the letter that descends below the baseline. Generally, only the lowercase letters g, j, q, p and y are descenders. Though, in some fonts, the lowercase f, capital Q and J and certain numbers are also descenders. Both ascenders and descenders increase the recognisability of words to the extent that British road signs stopped using all capital letters and instead opted for their specialised font.

30. Display

Display type is fonts that are designed to make an impact and catch the eye—they're used for things that need to stand out: headlines, posters, billboards, logo. Famous examples of display type will often be seen across different mediums—Stencil, for instance, was used for the TV shows The A-Team, MAS*H and Recess but also in The Home Depot logo and on the 2001/02 Real Madrid kits.

31. Ear

The stroke attached to the bowl of the lowercase g. Some typographers use the same term for the lowercase r.

32. Ellipsis

Character composed of three dots...

33. Embossing & Debossing

Embossing and its counterpart debossing are finishing processes that involve creating dimensional relief images in to a piece of paper or card. The practice uses a printing press to, in the case of embossing, lift the design into the material or, in the case of debossing, sunk the design into the material.

34. Extended

Character with an exaggerated width a character such as an accent mark.

35. Foiling

A process also known as foil stamping, foiling is a type of printing where metallic or pigmented foil is applied to a surface through the application of heat and a die. A relatively uncomplicated process, foiling can add extra dimensions to a design especially packaging—they're excellent for catching a potential customers' eye on shop shelves.

36. Font Colour

Used in web design to specify a colour.

37. Font Size

The height of a typeface. It is usually measured in points (8, 10, 12, etc.), from baseline to baseline.

38. Font Weight

Font weight refers quite literally to the thickness of a font, in terms of both an individual font and different styles of a font—black, bold, light etc. Font weight ranges from 100 to 900 with “normal” font being 400 so 100 being extra light or equivalent and 900 being extra black or equivalent. Though, you’ll rarely need to use the numbers as Adobe Creative Cloud and similar programs give the font weight as their names.

39. Golden Ratio

First studied by the Ancient Greeks in the 5th Century B, the Golden Ratio is when you take two objects, divide the larger by smaller and get the result of 1.6180 (or near it). We could get way more mathematical than that but we’ll just confuse ourselves. The most famous example of the golden ratio is the golden rectangle—this can be split into a perfect square and a rectangle of the same aspect ratio. The golden ratio can be used to make designs well formatted and attractive.

40. Gradient

Sometimes specifically called a colour gradient, gradients are a gradual change of colour or shade—for instance a red slowly fading into an orange—or a colour gradually fading into transparency. There are two types of gradients, axial/linear or radial, and both show the range of different shades and hues.

41. Greyscale

Greyscale is a colour palette that only uses black, white and different shades of grey. The most obvious examples of greyscale are black and white films or photographs (which seeing as they contain greys, strictly aren’t black and white). Greyscale can also be used in design for many different reasons—from evoking nostalgia to helping you to learn how to design better with colour.

42. Grid

We can’t stress enough how important grids are to designers! Grids are an underlying system of horizontal and vertical columns and guides used to provide structure, consistency, accuracy in any design. They also make a designer’s life a whole lot easier.

43. Hand-lettering

Creating custom letters from scratch for a specific purpose/client.

44. Hard Return / Soft Return

Both of these terms refer to hitting the 'return' key and moving to a new line of text. They differ in that a hard return creates a whole new paragraph, whilst a soft return drops the text down remaining in the same paragraph.

45. Hex

Though designers will usually find their colours using the aforementioned RGB or CMYK, hex is still an important term to know. Hex is a six digit code used to represent a colour. For example, The Simpsons' yellow has the hex code FCD901. Hex codes are found alongside RGB and CMYK in a lot of design applications, but are most often used in HTML and CSS.

46. Hierarchy

One of the five basic principles of typography design, hierarchy creates organisation and direction in a design—it helps to give order to the text elements. Though it may not be immediately obvious to someone not in the know, you'll definitely have seen hierarchy in action in pretty much anything you have read. It makes text more understandable and easier to read.

47. Hook

Curved arch (such as on the letter 'f').

48. Icon

Icons are something we all see practically every day—they're images used to represent objects or actions. One of the most common examples of an icon is a magnifying glass used to signify a search, which is used on Google and countless other websites. Though, icons are used across a wide spectrum of industries—from supermarkets to the Olympics. Just make sure they're clear and not going to cause any confusion!

49. Italics

Forward-slanting characters, developed in early 1500s.

50. Joint

A stroke that connects with a stem.

51. Justified

Instances when text is aligned to the left and right margin within a text frame, with no rag on either side.

52. Kerning

Kern is the space between two specific letters or characters, and the process of adjusting the space between letters or characters. Kerning can increase the legibility of a word or a entire block of text. It helps to create proportional and balanced typography and, in turn, better looking typography.

53. Leading

Pronounced 'ledding', leading is graphic design jargon for 'line-spacing'. It refers to the space between two baselines of text. The larger the leading, the more space between the text giving it more room to breathe and, generally, making it look nicer. Bonus fact: the term originates from the strips of lead in typewriters which were used to spread the lines out evenly.

54. Left-aligned

Text that is aligned with the left margin.

55. Leg

Short stroke in a downward direction.

56. Letterpress

Letterpress is a distinctive printing process that dates back back over 500 years, but the origins of which date back at least 1000 years. It a kind of relief printing in which a press is used to apply the direct impression of a raised surface, in this case letters, which has been covered in ink against paper. It has seen a resurgence in popularity as a craft recently after a decline following the introduction of computers in the 1970s.

57. Ligature

A ligature occurs where two or more letters are joined together as one character.

58. Link

The stroke connecting the bowl and the loop of the lowercase g.

59. Logomark

A logo of a company that does not contain the brand name itself— usually a shape or character used to visually represent the company. Logomarks are more easily shown than described, so think of Twitter’s bird (which in case you didn’t know is called Larry after basketball legend Larry Bird) or Apple’s iconic apple with a bite.

60. Logotype

Also known as a wordmark, a logotype is a brand name styled as a logo—designed in a visually unique way for a company. They’re usually very obvious and quickly associate a business with its visual identity. Some famous and recognisable examples include Disney, Coca Cola and Google.

61. Lowercase

Lowercase characters are the non-capital letters of the alphabet. They make up the bulk of written text, with uppercase or capital letters used primarily only to start sentences or proper names. The term lowercase is derived from the days of metal type where the more frequently used letters were kept near at hand in the lower case while the less frequently used capital letters were kept in the harder to reach upper case.

62. Margin

The margin is the blank space between the edge of a page and the content within it. The margin ensures that everything, but especially text and body copy, sits properly and comfortably in the document. The width of a margin can really affect the overall feel and look of a design.

63. Masthead

Though it sounds like it should be something to do with a ship, the masthead is simply the title design for the name of a publication, usually found on the front cover of a magazine. Masthead can also refer to graphic image or text title at the top of a webpage.

64. Mock-up

A mock-up is a realistic, normally 3D representation of a design, used to demonstrate how a design will look in the real world. There's mock-ups for everything from tote bags to iPads so they can be used to show how an entire campaign or brand roll-out would look. Check out our list of [50 free mock-ups](#) to help bring your designs to life.

65. Monochrome

Monochrome is a colour palette made up of various different shades and tones of a single colour. It's important to note that while grayscale is monochrome, monochrome is not necessarily grayscale—monochrome images can be made up of any colour, for example an image made up of different shades and tones of purple.

66. Monospaced

A monospaced typeface is a typeface where each character is the same width, all occupying the same amount of horizontal space. They can also be called fixed-pitch, fixed-width or non-proportional typefaces.

67. Moodboard

The starting point for a lot of designers, a moodboard is a way for designers to collect together lots of visual references for a new design project—these can be photos, images or typography. Moodboards are used to develop the project's aesthetic, for inspiration or to help communicate a specific idea or concept.

68. Orphan

A widow's (see below) partner in crime, orphans is a single word (or very short line of two or three words) that sits on its own on a new line or new page/column. Like widows, they can be very frustrating but any designer worth their salt knows to always look out for these tricky bits of text.

69. Palette

A palette is the colour scheme that is chosen for a specific design or brand—making up part of a brand's style guide. A palette should be carefully chosen so that the colours in it work harmoniously together and help make a design as successful as possible. The term comes from an artists' palette, which is a board or slab where artists would lay and mix different paint colours.

70. Pantone (PMS)

The Pantone Matching System is a standardised colour scheme used for printing, in addition to graphic design, it is used in a number of other industries including product and fashion design and manufacturing. Each colour has its own individual number and name—this year's Pantone Colour of the Year is Living Coral, which has the Pantone number 16-1546. The numbers make reproducing and referencing colours super easy.

71. Pilcrow

A pilcrow is the name of the symbol, this one ¶, used to mark the beginning of a new paragraph or section of text. Pilcrows also appear on some software as a toolbar icon—it's used on Adobe Photoshop as the icon for the paragraph tab, which allows the user to make changes to their paragraph structure. It's also a great tidbit to know for any future pub quizzes.

72. Pixel

It's all good explaining the difference between pixels and dots, but what exactly is a pixel? A contraction of the words 'picture' and 'element', a pixel is the smallest basic unit of programmable colour on a computer and all digital images are made up of a large number of individual pixels. Basically, they're very, very small but very, very important.

73. Placeholder Text

You've probably seen the words 'Lorem Ipsum' before and thought "umm what?"—well, that's a placeholder text, which can also be called a filler text or dummy text. The placeholder text is used for testing purposes—they fill the gap where the words will be in order to show where and how the final copy will sit. The words 'Lorem Ipsum' themselves have been the industry standard since the 1500s—and were invented randomly by an unknown printer.

74. Point Size

The distance from the top of the highest ascender to the bottom of the lowest descender is the point size of any given typeface. Originally, this was the height of the face of the metal block on which each individual letter was cast.

75. PPI / DPI

The two measurements used to measure the resolution (see below). PPI stands for pixels per inch whilst DPI stands for dots per inch—they refer to the amount of pixels or dots, respectively, that can be placed in a line across one linear inch. PPI is used to describe the resolution of a digital image and DPI is used to describe the amount of ink dots per inch in a printed image. PPI can also affect the print size and quality of a design, but DPI has no affect on a digital design.

76. Printer's Proof

Never underestimate the importance of a printer's proof—these are mock-ups or a print sample of design that you can have in front of you, read, check and double check to ensure everything is correct and sign it off before sending it to the printer for the final print run.

77. Quick Keys / Shortcuts

Whatever you call them, quick keys or shortcuts are one of the most important things for a designer to know! They refer to the certain keys on your keyboard that allow you to carry out specific functions in a single click, rather than a longer, more complicated process. A majority of shortcuts combine pressing the cmd ⌘ key on Mac or the ctrl key on Windows and a combination of one or two letters, numbers or symbols.

Here's one to try—put your cursor on the word 'shortcuts' and press ⌘+ctrl+D.

78. Ragged Edge/Rag

Nothing to do with early 2000s R&B group Jagged Edge, ragged edges refers to when the body copy in a piece of design has uneven line lengths and the shape that this creates. They're relatively easy to clean up through kerning and tracking—whose definitions can also be found in this article!

79. Raster

Another kind of graphic image, a raster (which can also be called a bitmap image) is an image made up of a certain number of pixels. Each pixel has its own colour, hue, saturation and transparency which helps to make up the image as a whole. Unlike vectors, due to them being made up of pixels, raster images will lose quality and become blurry as they're resized.

80. Readability

Degree to which text can easily be read.

81. Repetition

Repetition simply means using the same element in a design more than once. Repetition simply means using the same element in a design more than once. Repetition simply means using the same element in a design more than once. It can create a sense of unity, cohesion and consistency.

82. Resolution

The term resolution refers to the number of units, measured in either DPI or PPI, that occupy a linear inch an image, both on screen and in print. Resolution is used to denote the quality of an image—it can generally be assumed that the higher the resolution, the better the quality of the image. You can tell if the resolution is too low as the image will appear blurry or pixelated.

83. RGB

Not to be confused with RBG (US Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg), RGB stands, somewhat simply, for Red Green Blue, and is the colour mode which should be used when designing for digital applications. The three colours, Red, Green and Blue, can be combined in many different proportions to create any colour in the visible spectrum and as each colour refers to light, they grow brighter the more they are combined—it's not magic, it's design.

84. Right-aligned

When text is aligned to the right margin with the rag on the left side of the text frame.

85. Rule of Thirds

The rule of thirds is a helpful way of aligning the subject of an image and making it aesthetically pleasing as possible. Imagine a 3×3 grid (or even add one in Photoshop or InDesign) over your picture and align the picture's subject with the guidelines or intersection points (where the lines meet) or allow the picture's different elements to flow through the grid.

86. Sans Serif

Sans is French for 'without' so you can probably guess that Sans Serif Fonts are fonts without serifs on the end of their letters. Usually, sans serif fonts are easier to read on the web and digital screens—for instance, Apple use the sans serif font Helvetica Neue, across all their operating systems. Alongside Helvetica Neue, some of the most well known examples of sans serif fonts are Futura and Brandon Grotesque.

87. Saturation

Saturation is a term used in chemistry and photography, but design-wise it's about colour. Put simply, saturation is the intensity and brilliance of a colour. Saturation is usually expressed as a number which represents the degree to which it differs from white—this means that, if the saturation is very low a colour will appear white or close to it and if the saturation is very high a colour will appear brighter and more intense.

88. Scale

Scale is the relative size of an object or the different objects within a single design. Scale is something that can be used very cleverly in a design and even be used to deliver a message. Two objects of the same scale are usually seen as being equal, whilst if one object is considerably larger then it could be seen as being more important. It can be used to create hierarchy or drama.

89. Script Type

Script type is a font that is based on modern or traditional handwriting styles. There's two forms of script fonts—formal and casual. Formal script fonts, the more traditional of the two, are based on seventeenth and eighteenth century letterforms. They are used, on documents like invitations and diplomas, to give a sense of elegance. Casual script fonts became popular in the 1970s and often appear to be created by a wet brush—showing a more active hand.

90. Serif

A serif is the small line that appears on the end of a letter in some typefaces—these typefaces are known as Serif Fonts. Serif fonts are easier to read in printed designs as the serifs make letters more distinctive and their shape makes even letter easier to recognise. Famous examples of serif fonts include Baskerville, Times New Roman and Garamond.

91. Shoulder

A curved stroke connected to a stem.

92. Skeuomorphism

A word that is fun to both say and write, skeuomorphism is when something, most usually a digital element, is designed to look like a physical replica of that thing, while not behaving in the same way or necessarily having the same function. Apple Macs have several examples of skeuomorphs on their operating system—have a look at the phonebook icon for the Contacts app for one such example.

93. Slab Serif Type

We're not done yet with serifs, Slab Serif fonts are an offshoot of serif fonts that are characterised by thick serifs—the serifs can either be block or rounded. One popular example of a rounded slab serif font is Courier, which was widely used in typewriters. Slab serifs became popular in the nineteenth century as printed advertising became widespread.

94. Stem

A vertical stroke in a letterform. Can be found in both lowercase and uppercase letters.

95. Stock Photo

Stock photos are licensed images that designers are able to use so they don't have to organise an entire photoshoot to get the images they need for a project. The stock photo industry has been around since the 1920s and there's stock photographs for pretty much everything—from wildlife to sport to architecture and everything in between—even the infamous Boyfriend Looking Back meme came from a stock photo.

96. Stress

A diagonal or vertical change in stroke width across a letter.

97. Stroke

Any linear feature on a letter.

98. Style Guide

A style guide is an important part of branding. They determine the correct set of standards for the branding of a business or publication—anything from a business card to a multi-page website. A style guide is used to ensure that all a brands' assets have complete uniformity and are kept looking spick and span. Now you know what a style guide is, you'll definitely keep noticing when brands have one!

99. Swash

Addition of a decorative stroke in typography.

100. Symmetry

In everyday terms, symmetry refers to a sense of harmonious balance and proportion. It's something most people are introduced to at an early age. In design terms, one of the fundamental principles of design, it does much the same—symmetry is used to add balance and create a sense of harmony in a design.

101. System Font

Main font used by a computer operating system.

102. Terminal

Any stroke which does not terminate in a serif is a terminal. It can be either straight or curved.

103. Texture

In design, texture refers to the visual appearance of a design. In others, adding rich, layered graphics to a design can help to create a visual texture. Designs can also imitate textures such as metal or fabric to likewise create a visual texture or add a fabricated tactile feel. Finally, texture can also be added to a print design through printing on different paper stocks or materials.

104. Thumbnail

A thumbnail is a small, rough sketches of how a designer wants their design to look—they can be used to help decide upon a layout or how a design will come together. They're usually done by hand in the very early stages of a design so all the different options can be explored before any work is done on a computer.

105. Tittle

A tittle (also known as, the much less interesting, superscript dot) is a small distinguishing mark—most commonly used to refer to the dot on a lowercase i or j. Tittles also appear above other letters in various other languages. It's also a great fact to know for your next pub quiz.

106. Tofu

Probably the most delicious word in this list, tofu is slang that refers to the little squares that are displayed when a typeface is not loaded on to a computer or when a font doesn't have a specific glyph. Noto is a font family that aims to remove tofu from the web entirely—it's short for 'No tofu'.

107. Tracking

Though they are similar, be careful not to confuse tracking with kerning. Tracking is the spacing of an entire word or paragraph (not just between two letters)—the act of tracking changes the space between every letter in a word/paragraph at the same time. It can be used to change the density and structure of a word or paragraph.

108. Triadic (Colours)

Triadic colours, or a triadic colour scheme, are three colours that are equally dispersed around a colour wheel. The most common of these are the primary colours; red, yellow and blue. Triadic colours tend to be more vibrant than complementary or analogous colours so it's important to consider how the colours balance together—there should be one dominant colour and the others used as secondary colours or accents.

109. Type Classification

Type of characters based on style.

110. Type Properties

Specific qualities that allow characters to fit on a grid.

111. Typeface Design

The process of creating a complete set of characters in a specific style. This could include uppercase and lowercase characters, mathematical symbols, punctuation, numerals, etc.

112. Typesetting

The process of laying out large amounts of text (e.g., a book, a magazine, etc.) and making sure it's legible and readable.

113. Type Size

The distance from the top of the highest ascender to the bottom of the lowest descender. It is usually measured in points.

114. Typography

The term typography refers to two things. Firstly, the style and appearance of printed words. Secondly and more importantly, it refers to the art and procedure of arranging type to make it readable, legible, attractive and engaging in print or digital designs. Typography is something that all graphic designers will deal with in their careers—whether they are working at a type foundry, creating their own typefaces, or working in UX design.

Want to learn more about typography? Check out Shillington New York teacher Nikita Prokhorov's [deep dive into typography](#), its history, rules and terms (some of which are included in this article).

115. Uppercase

Uppercase characters are the capital letters of the alphabet. Uppercase letters are normally used at the beginning of sentences and as the first letter of proper names. The term uppercase is derived from the days of metal type where the lesser used capital letters were kept in the harder to reach upper case while the more frequently used letters were kept nearer at hand, in the lower case.

116. Vector

A vector is a graphic image that is made with mathematical equations—they're defined in terms of 2D points connected by lines and curves to form shapes. Basically this means that vectors can be resized or scaled to any size without losing quality or getting blurry. They're very, very useful!

117. Vertex

The bottom point where two strokes are joined together.

118. White Space

White space, despite its seemingly misleading name, does not need to be white. It is the space, which can be any colour, pattern or texture, between different elements in a design that are essential in creating a successful design. Think of white space as giving a design visual breathing room, like some sort of design meditation. It can also be called negative space—which is slightly less misleading.

119. Widows

In typesetting, widows are the lines of text that are separated from the main body of paragraph—usually the end of a paragraph that goes over on to a new page or column or the opposite of that, the start of a paragraph that is at the very bottom of a page. They're the bane of a designer's life.

120. X-Height

X-Height refers very literally to the height of a lowercase x in a specific font. You may question why such a specific height is so important, but the x-height affects the proportion of any font and, in turn, its legibility. It can generally be assumed that as the x-height increases, legibility improves.