

TEXT	DISPLAY	Avant Garde Gothic	Bauhaus	Bembo	Bodoni	Bookman	Caslon	Century	Cheltenham	Franklin Gothic	Futura	Garamond	Gill Sans	Helvetica	Kabel	Korinna	Quorum	Optima	Palatino	Souvenir	Times New Roman	Univers	Zapf Book
Avant Garde Gothic		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	2	3	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	3	1
Bauhaus		3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	2	2	2	1	2	1	2	1	1	3	1
Bembo		1	1	3	1	1	2	2	1	1	2	2	2	1	1	2	1	1	2	1	2	1	1
Bodoni		1	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	3	2	1	1	1	2	1	3
Bookman		1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	2	1	1	2
Caslon		1	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	1	2	2	1	1	1	3	2	1	2	1	2	1	2
Century		1	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	3	2	1	2	1	3	1	2
Cheltenham		1	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	1	2	2	1	1	2
Franklin Gothic		3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	1
Futura		3	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	3	3	2	1	3	1	2	1	1	3	1
Garamond		1	2	3	1	1	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	2	2	2	1	1
Gill Sans		2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	3	1
Helvetica		3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	1
Kabel		2	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	3	1	3	3	2	1	2	1	2	1	1	3	1
Korinna		1	1	1	2	2	1	1	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	2
Quorum		2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	3	1	1	1	2	1	2	1
Optima		2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2
Palatino		1	2	3	1	1	2	2	2	1	3	2	2	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	2	2	1
Souvenir		1	1	1	1	2	1	1	2	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2
Times New Roman		1	2	2	2	1	2	3	1	1	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	2
Univers		3	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	3	1	3	3	3	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	1
Zapf Book		1	1	1	3	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	2	2	1	1

1. Combine at will — 2. Not a conservative choice — 3. Think again

What's the problem with combining similar designs?

Typestyles that are close in design, but not from the same family create a visual discordance. Our sensibilities seem to require either strong typographic contrast—or none at all. To some degree this has even been proven in legibility studies. Researchers have found that typefaces and typographic arrangements which are pleasing to the eye are also the most legible. Unlike color combinations that can benefit from subtle contrast, typeface changes need to be obvious.

Something that only sounds dangerous, is to combine serif italic designs with almost anything. Since serif italic designs are virtually their own typestyles and originally they were created to either work on their own or mix with any number of serif styles, they can be mixed with sans serifs as well as just about any serif design. ¶ Finally, never combine a typeface with an electronic distortion of that typeface; they almost always look ungainly, and since the end result is not an integrated design variant, they almost always clash with the real design. The matrix above can provide some general guidelines for mixing typefaces.

A variety of display typestyle choices are listed across the top, and text choices are down the side.

To determine typestyle compatibility, cross-reference from horizontal to vertical. The number in the box that intersects two typestyles will indicate the degree of compatibility. The numeral 1 indicates typestyle compatibility (mix at will). Combinations intersecting with a numeral 2 should be handled with caution. Typestyles that intersect at a numeral 3 should be avoided.

One final note: *there are no typographic absolute. There are, more than likely, several application and circumstances that would render two normally mixable typestyles just about as compatible as oil and water. Conversely, there are surely situations that would enable normally incompatible typefaces to be the best of friends.*