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IADT Blogs

Serif vs. Sans Serif Fonts

January 6, 2011 • Administrator • [IADT Chicago](#) • 0 Comments

Most fonts fit into two basic categories - serif and sans serif. Serif fonts like Times New Roman and Courier New have small extensions or "serifs" on the ends of their letters, while sans serif fonts like Arial and Helvetica are clean, with no extensions. Experts disagree on exactly which fonts are best for readability and legibility, but they do agree on a few things:

[Serif Is Better for Long Copy](#)

Long bodies of copy are generally considered easier to read when they are written in a serif font. Because of this, serif fonts are overwhelmingly used in books, magazines and newspapers. Experts disagree, however, on how exactly serifs benefit long copy. Some think that serifs help guide the eye's flow through long pieces of text and make words more cohesive. Others disagree, pointing to studies that say these effects are minimal. Some experts believe that people might prefer serif fonts simply because they are more used to reading long copy in serif type.

[Sans Serif Is Better for Headlines and Short Copy](#)

Sans serif fonts are more suitable for headlines and short copy because they are better at catching attention. They are able to stand out because they are seen as bold and modern, as opposed to serif fonts which are usually considered more traditional and familiar. Using a sans serif font for a headline and a serif font for copy is an easy trick to help headlines pop out from copy. Sans serif fonts can be great choices for advertising copywriters, because copywriters are generally trying to write bold headlines and short, catchy paragraphs.

[Sans Serif Is Better for Computer Display](#)

Sans serif fonts are easier on the eyes than serif fonts when displayed on a computer screen due to several factors. First, the poor resolution on some computer screens can cause serifs to appear pixelated, making words difficult to read. Also, serifs can add a lot of extra distractions to a body of text when that text is displayed in a small size on a digital screen. Because sans serif fonts display well on a computer screen, they are the generally the first choice of Web designers.

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