

# T<sup>hirty-four</sup> Typographic Sins

## 1 Two spaces between sentences.

Repent of this sin by using only one space.

## 2 Dumb quotes instead of smart quotes.

Evil: "Thou shalt not misuse type" § Good: "Thou shalt not misuse type"

## 3 Dumb apostrophe instead of a smart apostrophe.

Profane: Don't use prime marks § Sacred: Don't use prime marks  
By the way, apostrophes always face this way: Pot o' gold.  
They never face this way: Pot 'o gold.

## 4 Failing to tuck periods/commas inside quotes marks.

Immoral: "I love type so much", she confessed.  
Chaste: "I love type so much," she testified.

## 5 Failing to kern display type.

Unseemly gaps can impede readability and be distracting to the reader.  
Adjusting the spacing between letters will assuage your guilt.

## 6 Using a hyphen instead of an en dash.

Use an en dash to indicate a duration of time instead of the word "to":  
the 8–10 commandments, not 8-10 commandments.

## 7 Using two hyphens instead of an em dash.

An em dash signifies a change in thought—or a parenthetical phrase—within  
a sentence.

## 8 Too many consecutive hyphens.

It is sinful to have more than two hyphens on consecutive lines of type,  
and even that should be avoided.

## 9 Large amounts of bodytext in uppercase letters.

IT BECOMES REALLY DIFFICULT TO READ.

## 10 Large amounts of reversed type

**ARE HARDER TO READ.** Type on a busy background is also unreadable.

## 11 Using process colors for body text.

It is harder to read, but more importantly, it is hell to register on press.

## 12 Underlining titles instead of italicizing them.

Thou Shalt Not: The Holy Bible Thou Shalt: The Korán

## 13 Failing to eliminate widows.

A widow is a word that sits on a line by itself at the end of a paragraph.  
Avoid this or risk being cast into a lake of fire and brimstone.

## 14 Failing to eliminate orphans.

An orphan is the last line of a paragraph that sits alone at the top of a  
column or page. Type does not like to be alone.

## 15 Rivers in justified text.

Unightly large spaces between words occur if the line length is too short or the  
point size of the text too large.

## 16 Inconsistent leading.

Paragraphs should have the same leading for each line.

## 17 Indenting the first paragraph.

The first paragraph is never indented, subsequent paragraphs are.

## 18 Indenting a paragraph too far.

The standard indent for a paragraph is 1 em, not ½ inch. Most software has  
default tabs set for ½ inch, so adjust the tabs.

## 19 Failing to hang punctuation into the margin.

Punctuation has less visual weight than letters or numbers.  
Compensate for this in display text by hanging the punctuation into the margin.

## 20 Failing to use or create fractions.

Wicked: 1/2 § Righteous: ½

## 21 Incorrectly abbreviating AM and PM.

Unclean: am, AM, A.M. § Relatively Clean: A.M. § Clean: a.m. or AM

## 22 Failing to provide margins for type in a box.

ugly beautiful

## 23 Faux italic/oblique, bold and small cap type.

Impure: *Italic* § Pure: *Italic*  
Sinful: **Bold** § Virtuous: **Bold**  
Unkosher: SMALLCAPS § Kosher: SMALLCAPS

## 24 Strokes that encroach upon letterforms.

Hellacious § Heavenly

## 25 Horizontally scaled type.

Unrepentant: Scaled § Penitent: A condensed typeface

## 26 Vertically scaled type.

Purgatory: Scaled § Heaven: An extended typeface

## 27 Negative letterspacing.

Not very readable.

## 28 Bad line breaks in headlines and body text.

If you don't break lines for  
sense, they can be harder to read.

## 29 Stacking lowercase letters.

Vertical baselines are celestial.

## 30 Failing to indent bulleted lists.

• Bulleted lists look better when the second line aligns flush  
with the first letter of the line above it, instead of with the bullet.

## 31 Failing to use accent marks.

Sinner: No esta aquí § Saint: No está aquí.

## 32 Failing to align baselines of type in adjacent columns of body text.

Baselines of all columns of text on a page should align. This creates a pleasing  
margin of pure white space.

## 33 Failing to correct bad rags.

For centered or non-justified text, avoid obvious shapes (like pyramids,  
steps, wedges, angles and overly short or long lines).

## 34 Failing to use ligatures.

unholy: finish § holy: finish

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## Typographic Sins

Using the "Typographic Sins" poster on the preceding page, pick three of the sins and explain the type sin in your own words, elaborating on why it's bad and bring to class 3 examples of that sin in actual use. Avoid looking for the following sins: #1, 23, 25, 26 and 31.



### SIN #15 – Rivers

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