

# Types of Fonts

## Serif

Serif fonts have worked well for hundreds of years. They tend to look more old-fashioned and ‘establishment’. The serifs – the flowing marks at the points of letters – work by leading the eye on to the next letter, making for a smoother and easier read. However, this only works at high resolutions (e.g. print). At low-res, the extra complexity decreases clarity, and the reduced whitespace between letters makes recognition slower. I find that serifs become more acceptable at higher sizes.

## Sans

Sans-serifs are literally fonts that don’t have serifs. They look more modern and open. Sans-serif fonts are more readable than serifs on pixel-based displays, because they are simpler, which translates well to low-resolutions.

Many sans fonts have been developed specifically for electronic media. The most readable sans-serif fonts are broad, providing ample space between letters, which facilitates recognition. In the opinion of most designers, **Verdana** is the most effective font for body text.

Verdana is specifically good for body text, because it’s a broad a spacious font, which leaves an ample

square space for each letter. This makes it easier to distinguish each different letter at low resolutions.

## Emphasis

Create emphasis through using underlines, bold and italics, but use them sparingly. To draw attention to a whole line, consider using a coloured background, or emboldening, which are less detrimental to readability than underlines or italics.

Emboldening increases contrast, and contrast only works when it has something to contrast **against**. Lots of bold text doesn't draw attention, it competes for attention, creates extra noise and decreases readability.

Italics are *quite handy* for emphasizing words or short phrases. They tend to have a softer emphasis than emboldening. Italics should not be used for blocks of text, because they can have a similar effect to serif fonts at small resolutions, reducing readability. Sans-serif fonts that work well on screen can have poor readability in italic form.

Similarly, underlining text can serve to emphasize certain words or short phrases, when used in moderation. Be careful that underlining for emphasis is not mistakable for hyperlinks (perhaps by having hyperlinks in blue without underlines in normal state, exhibiting the underline on hover).