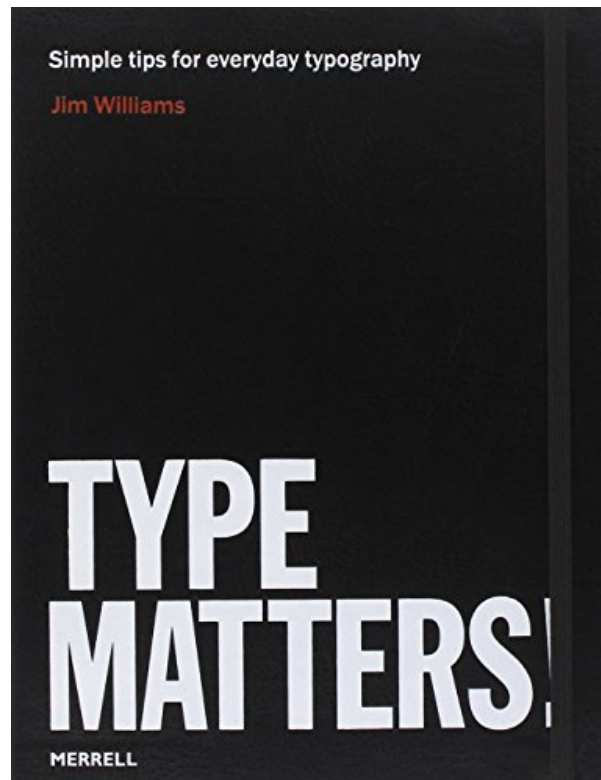


TYPE MATTERS! BY JIM WILLIAMS



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Simple tips for everyday typography

Jim Williams

TYPE MATTERS!

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Review

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About the Author

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Once upon a time, only typesetters needed to know about kerning, leading, ligatures, and hanging punctuation. Today, however, most of us work on computers, with access to hundreds of fonts, and we'd all like our letters, reports and other documents to look as good – and as readable – as possible. But what does all the confusing terminology about ink traps, letter spacing, and visual centring mean, and what are the rules for good typography? Type Matters! is a book of tips for everyday use, for all users of typography, from students and professionals to anyone who does any layout design on a computer. The book is arranged into three chapters: an introduction to the basics of typography; headline and display type; and setting text. Within each chapter there are sections devoted to particular principles or problems, such as selecting the right typeface, leading, and the treatment of numbers. Examples throughout show precisely what makes good typography – and, crucially, what doesn't. Authoritatively written and designed by a practitioner and teacher of typography, Type Matters! has a beautifully clear layout that reinforces the principles discussed throughout.

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Most helpful customer reviews

13 of 15 people found the following review helpful.

Making the Printed Word Legible and Readable

By Rob Hardy

Let's say you have read a popular volume like the delightful *_Just My Type: A Book About Fonts_* by Simon Garfield, and you have a new awareness of how important typefaces are. You didn't used to pay attention to fonts, but you'd like to know some practical information about how to use type, and how to avoid basic mistakes. If you have realized that type matters, you will do well to get the primer *_Type Matters!: Simple Tips for Everyday Typography_* (Merrell Publishers) by Jim Williams. It is a handsome volume, with flexible covers, two ribbon page markers, and an elastic loop in the back so that you can hold the end pages close to the back cover. Williams was asked by a design company in Manchester, England, to give a series of talks to help its designers with day-to-day typography, a presentation that was later printed up, was popular, and is now bound as this fine-looking book. It is obvious that every page has been carefully laid out, usually with examples (good and bad) of type at work in black, and comments or instruction in red. The pages are thick and their color creamy. The fonts are labeled, but this is not a book of font specimens, although there are plenty. It is, rather, a broader view of what makes a page communicate well and what makes it look good.

Type Matters! is well organized. The first part, "Background," gives a three-page history of type design, and gives some basic terminology. You may have been told to pay attention to every jot and tittle, and while jot can mean the tiniest part of writing or the least detail, a tittle in typography is specific: it is the dot above the i or j. Here is also a bright explanation of why some type faces of the same point size (basically the maximum vertical dimension of letters in a font) look bigger, although they are not. The second part is "Setting headlines and display type." There is a hilarious example of two contrasting letterheads, one for a financial advisor, and one for Rocco the Clown. They are both set in Copperplate Gothic BT and then in Jabberwub. I don't have to tell you anything but the names of the typefaces. The shapes of the letters should not imply that you would be amused by your financial advisor, nor that you would take your clown seriously. By far the longest part of the book is the third part, "Text setting," the basics for the regular readable page (rather than headings or display types). There are loads of examples here, including a particular peeve of mine, white letters on black background; this is often bad on the page and worse on a web page, but it happens all the time. Williams shows how typefaces that are nicely legible black-on-white despite (or due to) thin strokes and fine serifs can require active concentration to read when they are white-on-black. There's nothing wrong with a little white-on-black, and an example he shows using the sans serif, uniform stroke News Gothic Demi BT, is fully legible. You can learn here the considerations required in using raised or dropped capital letters in beginning paragraphs, the difference between capitals and small capitals, the use of dashes (the shorter nut dash and the longer mutton dash), different ways of indicating paragraphs, and much more.

There are two pages on those desiderata, legibility and readability. They are not the same thing. Legibility is "the clarity of individual characters and how easily they are deciphered." Readability is "the level of comprehension and visual comfort when reading typeset material." There are many examples here of both, emphasizing the great lesson that the type and its arrangement do their best work when they are quiet and do not present the reader with any distraction from the ideas in the words they form. Good type and arrangement, on the page and on the computer screen, help encourage the reader to continue reading, or at least do not discourage continuation. This book is an excellent introductory volume from which I learned a lot; those who want to learn more will do well to study its helpful bibliography and its directory of museums and other organizations that are dedicated to good typography. These may be simple tips, but they could change the way the world reads the writing you want to present.

7 of 8 people found the following review helpful.

Eh... it's ok

By Peter Collier

* nice to have on your desk - give your eyes a break - read a page - go back to work

it's ok like that - each page have a 'rule' and examples of text set to or against the rule

* it would be bad if you only read it digitally - the hard copy is pleasant to hold and flip through

* it's more of a nice object - that will be nice to pick up now and again

* looks cool on your desk

* i'm happy that i've got it - but once again - it's main that it's a nice object more then a text book on the subject.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful.

Type Matters--period.

By design dawg

Well I've never been very religious but I think I found my Bible. Wonderfully layed out with awesome examples and all the technical jargon you can handle, while still being an easy read. Can't seem to put it down and love the bookmarks. I am a young designer but will use this book the rest of my life, it's just that good.

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