

CHARACTER ANATOMY

& a few odd sorts

Ampersand a ligature formed from an upper or lowercase *e* conjoined with *t* which spells *et* (and in Latin).

Aperture partially enclosed space in characters such as *n* and *C*.

Arm (or Leg) a horizontal stroke that is free on one end.

Ascender the part of the lowercase letters *b*, *d*, *f*, *h*, *k*, *l*, and *t*, that extends above the height of the lowercase *x*.

At a commercial symbol meaning *at the rate of*. While not a traditional typographic sort, its use in email addresses has made this character a typographic consideration.

Ball Terminal or *teardrop terminal*, a circular end of some letter parts in many romans and italics of the Romantic period, such as Bodoni and Clarendon.

Bang or *exclamation point* (a *screamer* in the British typographic and printing trades). One still occasionally hears the term, as in “Postscript files always begin with percent-bang” (%!).

Bar the horizontal stroke in the *A*, *H*, *e*, *t*, etcetera.

Bowl or *eye*, a curved stroke which makes an enclosed space.

Bracket or *fillet*, rounds and softens perpendicular angle between serifs and stems

Counter the fully or partially enclosed space within a character.

Descender the part of the letters *g*, *j*, *p*, *q*, *y*, and sometimes *J*, that extends below the baseline.

Dingbat a pictogram, symbol or other typographic sort showing fists (pointing hands), checkboxes, arrows, fleurons and other glyphs that can be placed into text (often for esoteric usage, as the suits of cards or chess pices).

Ear the small projection from the top right of the lowercase *g*.

Fleuron a botanical ornament, often the *Hedera* (ivy leaf), used to separate chapters and other blocks of text.

Hairline a thin stroke usually common to serif typestyles.

Italics a cursive alphabet which is matched with a roman font and used chiefly for *emphasis* and foreign words in text.

Ligature characters conjoined in order to avoid overlap. Common ligatures are: *fi*, *fl*, *ffi*, and *ffl*.

Link the connection between the top and bottom of a lowercase *g*.

Loop the lower portion of the lowercase *g*.

Octothorp or *numeral sign*, in association with telephones, the *pound sign* and in social media, the *hashtag*. This hard-working symbol comes from cartography, where it represents a village surrounded by eight fields. Ignored by typographers in the past, 21st century type designers will undoubtedly craft suitable hashtags for their designs.

Pilcrow a scribal mark to separate blocks of text, and now an invisible digital character marking paragraph returns, and largely ignored by digital type designers because it is so rarely seen.

Old Style Figures or *text figures*, lower case numbers which are valued for their invisibility, in body copy.

Section Sign a scribal form of double S (§), chiefly used in legal documents to cite sections of codes and statutes.

Serif a stroke added as a stop to the beginning and end of the main strokes of a character.

Shoulder the curved stroke of the *h*, *m* and *n*.

Small Caps upper case type designed at the lower case *x* height in an extended font family. Used for acronyms, initialisms and abbreviations (e.g., WWII) in bodies of text.

Spine the main curved stroke of a lowercase or capital *S*.

Spur a small projection off a main stroke; found on many capital *G*s.

Stem a main stroke that is more or less straight — not part of a bowl.

Stress the direction of thickening in a curved stroke.

Stroke a straight or curved diagonal line.

Swash a flourish replacing a terminal or serif.

Tail the descender of the *Q* or short diagonal stroke of the *R*.

Terminal the end of a stroke not terminated with a serif.

X-height the height of the lowercase letters excluding ascenders and descenders.

