

# 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 *e* and *C*.

**Arm** 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 mark* (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, checkboxes, arrows, fleurons and other glyphs that can be placed into text (often for esoteric usage, as the suits of cards or chess pieces).

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

**Fist** A pointing hand dingbat.

**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 typefaces.

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

**Leg** Downward stroke on the *k*.

**Ligature** Characters conjoined, usually to avoid overlap. Common ligatures are: *fi*, *fl*, *ffi*, and *ffl*, and *&*.

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

**Loop** The lower portion of the lowercase *g*.

**Number Sign** On telephones the *pound sign*, on keyboards the *pound key* and in social media the *hashtag*. This hard-working character was ignored by typographers in the past, but 21st century type designers will undoubtedly craft suitable hashtags for their designs.

**Pilcrow** A scribal mark to separate paragraphs, and now an invisible digital character doing the same job 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* (§), now 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 letter stems and strokes.

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

**Small Caps** Upper case type designed at the lower case height in an extended font family. Used for acronyms, initialisms and common abbreviations (e.g., *wwii*) in text. Like *old style figures*, valued for invisibility in blocks of text.

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

**Spur** A small projection found on many capital *G*s.

**Stem** A main stroke that is more or less straight.

**Stress** The direction of thickening in a curved stroke.

**Stroke** A straight or curved diagonal line.

**Swash** A flourish added for decoration, *verve* or *panache*.

**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.

