

ANATOMY of TYPE

with some punctuation, common diacritical marks & a few odd sorts

Acute Accent Diacritical that alters sound or emphasizes, as in *risqué* or *café*.

Ampersand 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 Horizontal stroke that is free on one end.

Ascender Stems of lowercase *b*, *d*, *f*, *h*, *k*, *l*, and *t*, that extend above the x-height.

Asterisk Reference to a footnote or annotation, or symbol for omitted matter (e.g., “f*ck”). From Greek *asteriskos*, “small star.”

At Sign Commercial symbol meaning “at the rate of.” Not a traditional typographic sort, but its use in email addresses has made this character essential.

Ball Terminal A circular end of some letter parts in many romans and italics of the Romantic period, such as Bodoni and Clarendon (AKA teardrop terminal).

Bang Printing trade jargon for the exclamation mark. A more current usage: “Postscript files always begin with percent-bang-P-S” (%!PS).

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

Bowl A curved stroke which makes an enclosed space (AKA eye).

Bracket Rounded perpendicular angle between serifs and stems that softens the transition (AKA fillet).

Counter Fully or partially enclosed space within a character.

Dagger Indicates a footnote if an asterisk has already been used. A double dagger marks a third footnote. The asterisk and dagger placed beside years indicate year of birth and of death respectively. (AKA obelisk)

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

Dieresis Two dots to indicate that a vowel is sounded, as in “naïve” (unfortunately “coöperation” is now spelled “cooperation”).

Dingbat Pictogram or symbol: fist, check box, arrow, fleuron or other glyph 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 Pointing hand dingbat (AKA manicule)

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

Hairline Thin stroke in some serif typefaces.

Italics Cursive or oblique alphabet and common to modern type families used chiefly for emphasis and for foreign words in text.

Leg Downward stroke on the *k*.

Ligature Characters conjoined, usually to avoid a clumsy 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*.

Numeral Sign On telephones the pound sign, on keyboards the pound key and in social media the hashtag. Usually neglected by type designers.

Oldstyle Figures Lower case numbers with ascenders and descenders valued for their elegant invisibility in body text (AKA text, lowercase, non-lining, ranging, or hanging figures).
Lining figures: 0123456789
Oldstyle figures: 0̣1̣2̣3̣4̣5̣6̣7̣8̣9̣

Pilcrow A stylized ‘c’ with a vertical line used as a Latin scribal mark to separate paragraphs (*capitula*), and now a digital character invisibly marking a paragraph return.

Prime Abbreviation for feet (1' = 12") and minutes in an arc (60' = 1°)

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

Serif Small projection added as a stop to finish the beginning and end of letter stems and strokes.

Shoulder Curved shape 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.

Solidus Thinner and more oblique than the keyboard slash (virgule), typographers use it to improvise fractions.

Sort Individual metal letter, number, or symbol in a font of type.

Spine Main curved stroke of an *S*.

Spur Small projection found on many capital *G*s.

Stem Main vertical or diagonal line in a letter.

Stress Direction/axis of thickening in a curved stroke.

Stroke Straight or curved diagonal line.

Swash Flourish added for decoration, verve or panache.

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

Terminal End of a stroke not terminated with a serif.

Virgule Slash found on keyboard.

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

