

# 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.

