

The evolution of symbols have influenced the letterforms we use today. They played a prominent role in communication from recording information, representing ideas, and expressing ourselves.



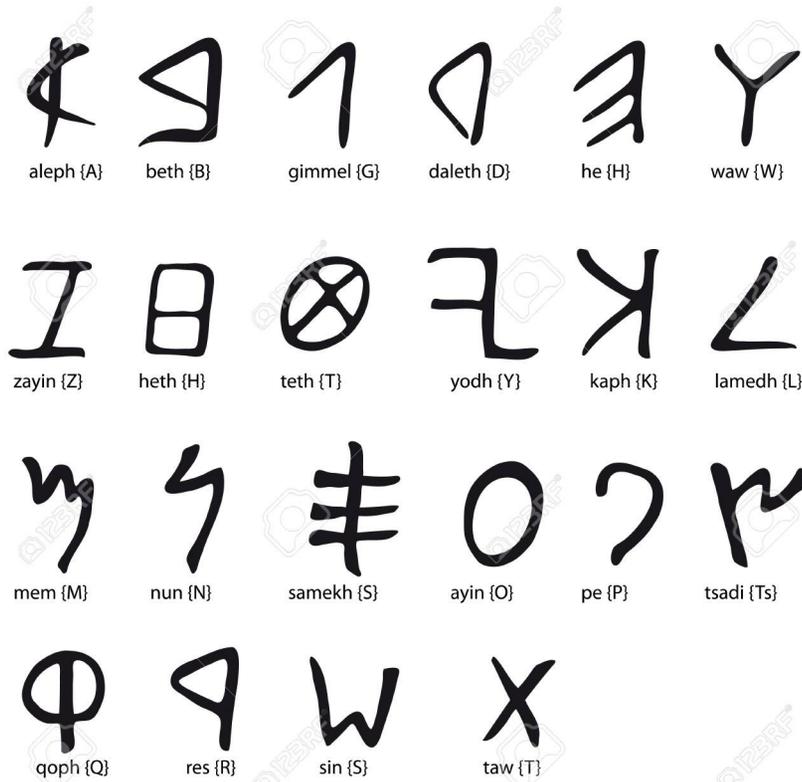
Pictograms

Pictures of an object in the physical world. Some scholars say cave paintings could be considered one of the earliest forms of graphic communication; for instance, these could be hunting instructions.



Ideograms

Simplified or stylized pictograms. Symbols made of geometric shapes to represent an idea.



Phonograms

Symbols or signs representing primary sounds. The Phoenicians developed a set of 22 symbols.

GREEK ALPHABET

By Ben Crowder • <https://dribbble.com/iamcrowder> • Last modified 1 May 2013

Αα

ALPHA [a]
ἄλφα

Ββ

BETA [b]
βῆτα

Γγ

GAMMA [g]
γάμμα

Δδ

DELTA [d]
δέλτα

Εε

EPSILON [e]
ἒ ψιλόν

Ζζ

ZETA [dz]
ζῆτα

Ηη

ETA [eː]
ἦτα

Θθ

THETA [θ]
θῆτα

Ιι

IOTA [i]
ιώτα

Κκ

KAPPA [k]
κάππα

Λλ

LAMBDA [l]
λάμβδα

Μμ

MU [m]
μῦ

Νν

NU [n]
νῦ

Ξξ

XI [ks]
ξεί

Οο

OMICRON [o]
ὀ μικρόν

Ππ

PI [p]
πί

Ρρ

RHO [r]
ῥῶ

Σσς

SIGMA [s]
σίγμα

Ττ

TAU [t]
ταῦ

Υυ

UPSILON [u]
ὀ ψιλόν

Φφ

PHI [pʰ]
φεῖ

Χχ

CHI [kʰ]
χεῖ

Ψψ

PSI [ps]
ψεῖ

Ωω

OMEGA [ɔː]
ὦ μέγα

Greek Alphabet

The Phoenician alphabet was adapted by the Greeks, it was the first to have distinct letters for vowels as well as consonants



Roman Alphabet

Romans adopted the Greek alphabet and fashioned several more distinctive letters.

Belief in important religious texts promoted the production of books.

Nearly all books, Illuminated Manuscripts, were written in monasteries, by scribes who were production letterers.



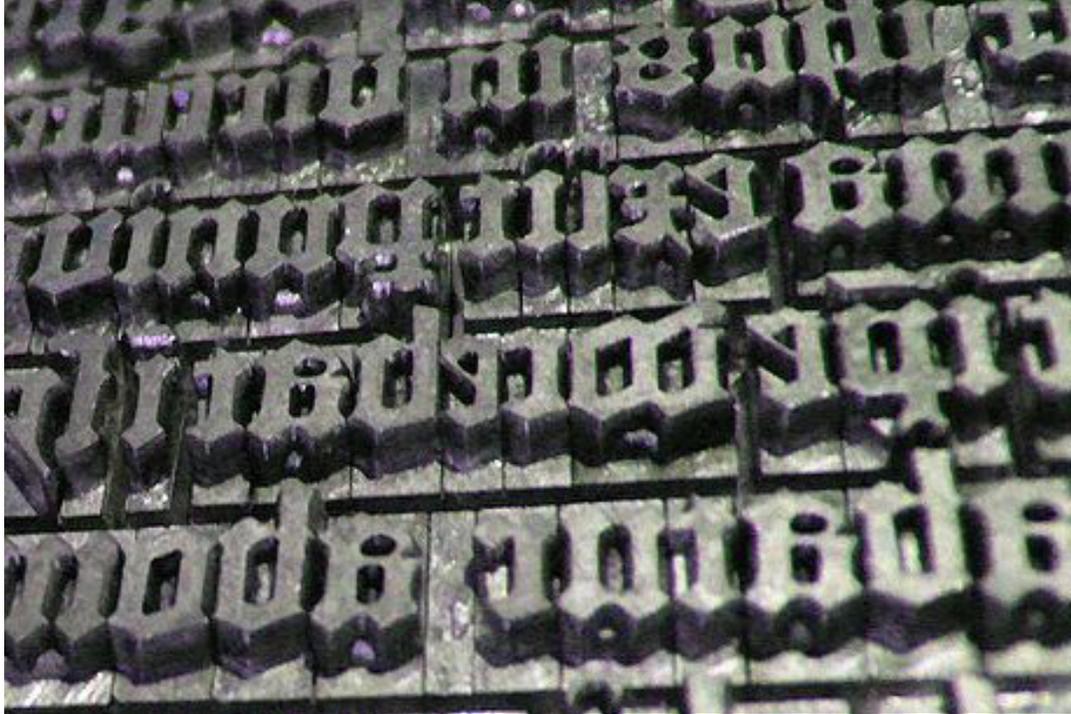
Illuminated Manuscripts

Books were objects of value and contained elaborate ornamentation. Illustrated initials were painstakingly designed. Monks could devote a lifetime to a single manuscript.

Parchment was being replaced by the invention and availability of paper.

Wooden blocks of type stamps were being replaced with letterforms cast in steel.

The increased demand for books, including the growth of universities, moved book craft from the monastery to production facilities.



Invention of Printing

Movable type was perfected by Johannes Gutenberg in Germany in the 15th century. For the first time, a technical system of mass production was applied to publishing. Each metal alphabet character could be hand-cast in great quantities. These types could then be assembled and imprinted to paper via special inks and a printing press of his own design.

The first typefaces were directly modeled on the forms of calligraphy, a reflection of the tension between hand and machine.

et dñs rex sup omne terra. qñ dñs
erit dñs vnus: et erit nomē eius vnū.
Et reuertet omnis terra usq; ad deser-
tū: de colle remmon ad austrū iherlm.
Et exaltabit et habitabit in loco suo
a porta beniamin usq; ad locū porte
prioris et usq; ad portā angulor: et
a turte ananeth usq; ad torcularia re-
gis. Et habitabūt in ea: et anathema
nō erit ampl⁹. Sed sedebit iherlm secu-
ra: et hec erit plaga qua punitur dñs o-
mnes gentes q̄ pugnauerūt aduersus
iherlm. Tabesceat caro vniuscuiusq; stā-
tis sup pedes suos: et ocli eius corab-
scent in foraminibz suis: et lingua eorū
stabesceat in ore suo. In die illa erit tu-
multus dñi magnus in eis: et appre-
hendet vir manū proximi sui: et cōse-
retur manus ei⁹ sup manū proximi
sui. Sed et iudas pugnabit aduersus
iherlm. Et cōgregabūtur diuicie omni-
um gentiū in circuitu: aur⁹ et argentū
et vestes multe satis. Et sic erit ruina
equi et muli et cameli et asini et omni-
um iumentorū que fuerūt i castris illis:
sicut ruina hec. Et omnes qui reliqui
fuerunt de vniuersis gentibz que venerūt

omnis lebes in iherlm et in iuda landi-
ficat⁹ dño exercitū. Et uertēt omnes
ymolātes et sumēt ex eis: et coquēt i eis.
Et nō erit mercator ultra i domo dñi
exercitū in die illo. *Explicit Zachariae
pheta. In apit Malachias pheta.*



Daus verbi dñi ad
israhel i manu ma-
lachie prophete. Di-
legi vos dicit dñs.
Et dixistis. In quo
dilexisti nos? Non
ne scater erat elau iacob dicit dñs? Et
dilexi iacob: elau autē odio habuit. Et
posui sepe mōtes eius in solitudine:
et hereditatē eius in dracones deserti.
Quō si dixerit ydumica destrudi sumus
sed reuertentes edificabim⁹ que destrui-
ta sunt: hec dicit dñs exercitū. Isti edi-
ficabūt et ego destruiā. Et vocabūtur
termini iniquitatis: et ip̄sus cui iracū-
dus est dñs usq; in eternū. Et ocli v̄ri vide-
būt: et vos dicetis. Magnificet dñs
sup terminū isrl. Fili⁹ honorat p̄tē:
et seru⁹ dñm suū. Si ergo patet ergo sū
ubi est sp̄nor meus: et si dñs ergo sum-
ptus est timor m⁹ dicit dñs exercitū?

Non e michi volucras i vobis dicit dñs
exercitū: et intin⁹ nō suscipiā de manu
v̄ra. Ab ortu tñi solis usq; ad occasū
magnū ē nomē meū i gētibz: et in omni
loco sacrificat⁹ et offert nomini meo ob-
lato munda: q̄a magnū nomē meū in
gētibz dicit dñs exercitū. Et vos pol-
luistis illud in eo q̄ dicitis nescia dñi
ocaminata ē: et qd̄ supponit detēnibile
ē cū igne q̄ illud deuorat. Et dixistis.
Ecce de labore: et resufflastis illud dicit
dñs exercitū. Et intulistis de rapinis
claudū et lāgitudū: et intulistis mur⁹.
Nūqd̄ suscipiā illud de manu v̄ra di-
xit dñs? Maledict⁹ dolosus q̄ habet i
grāge suo masculū: et vorū faciēs imo-
lat debile domino. Quia rex magn⁹
ego dicit dominus exercitū: et no-
mē meum horribile in gentibus. 11.

Et nūc ad v̄os mādātū hoc o sa-
credores. Si nolueris audire et
si nolueris portare sup cor ut deus glo-
riā nomini meo ait dñs exercitū: mit-
tā i vos egestatē et maledicā benedicti-
onibz v̄ris: et maledicā illis qm̄ nō po-
sueris sup cor. Ecce ergo proiciā vobis
brachiū: et dispersā sup vulgū v̄rū str-

Blackletter emulates a dense, dark handwriting, a highly orna-
mental style of typography.

Gutenberg used blackletter in his Bible.

Italic letters were introduced in the fifteenth century and modeled on a more casual style of handwriting. For calligraphers, the italic form saved time when writing the text, while in printing, the cursive form saved space.

Today, the italic style in most fonts is not simply a slanted version of the roman (like oblique); it incorporates the curves, angles, and narrower proportions associated with cursive forms.

In the sixteenth century, printers began integrating roman and italic forms into type families with matching weights.

A small family is an intimate group consisting of roman, italic, small caps, and possibly bold, bold italic, semi-bold, and semibold italic styles.

A superfamily consists of dozens of weights and/or widths.

Aa

Palatino

Humanist or Old Style

The roman typefaces of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries emulated classical calligraphy.

Aa

Baskerville

Transitional

These typefaces have sharper serifs, a more vertical axis, and higher contrast than humanist letters.

Aa

Bodoni

Modern

Radically abstract with thin, straight serifs, vertical axis, and sharp contrast from thick to thin strokes.

Aa

Clarendon

Egyptian or Slab Serif

Heavy slablike serifs used for advertising. There were numerous bold and decorative typefaces designed.

Aa

Gill Sans

Humanist Sans Serif

Sans-serif typefaces with humanist characteristics.

Aa

Helvetica

Transitional Sans Serif

Uniform, upright characters makes it similar to transitional serif letters.

Aa

Futura

Geometric Sans Serif

Built around geometric forms. The Os are perfect circles, As and Ms sharp triangles.

A basic system of classifying typefaces was devised in the nineteenth century, when printers sought to identify a heritage for their own craft analogous to that of art history.

Humanist or Old Style 1400s to 1600s

These roman typefaces emulated classical calligraphy. Many typefaces today, including Bembo, Garamond, Palatino, and Jenson are named after printers who worked in the 15th and 16th centuries.

Aa

Centaur

Aa Qq Rr

Aa Qq Rr

a

VASARI

Bruce Rogers, 1914, based on Nicholas Jenson's type, 1470.

Garamond

Aa Qq Rr

Aa Qq Rr

á

TRIANON

abcdefghijklmnop
nopqrstuvwxyz
0123456789

Claude Garamond

1480–1561

Sabon

Aa Ee Rr

Aa Ee Rr

a

ı:ı In the beginning

abcdefghijklm

nopqrstuvwxyz

0123456789

Jan Tschichold,
1967

Transitional 1700s to 1800s

Eighteenth century printers, William Caslon and John Baskerville abandoned the rigid nib of humanism for the flexible steel pen and the pointed quill. These typefaces have sharper serifs, a more vertical axis, and vivid contrast between thick and thin elements.

Aa

Baskerville

Aa Bb Cc

Xx Yy Zz

Q

Nutgarden

abcdefghijklm

nopqrstuvwxyz

0123456789

John Baskerville

1757

Perpetua

Aa Qq Rr

Aa Qq Rr

a

JUDÆA

abcdefghijklm

nopqrstuvwxyz

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Eric Gill

1929

Modern 1800s

Giambattista Bodoni and Firmin Didot carried Baskerville's severe vocabulary to new extremes. Their typefaces — which have a vertical axis, sharp contrast between thick and thin, and crisp, waferlike serifs — unhinged from calligraphy and typographic tradition.

Aa

Bodoni

Aa Qq Rr

Aa Qq Rr

a

✧ HORATII ✧

Giambattista

Bodoni

1740–1813

a b c d e f g h i j k l m

n o p q r s t u v w x y z

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Didot

Aa Qq Rr

Aa Qq Rr

a

MOLIÈRE

abcdefghijklm
nopqrstuvwxyz
0123456789

Firmin Didot

1799

The rise of industrialization and mass consumption came advertising, a new form of communication demanding new kinds of typography.

Fonts of astonishing height, width, and depth appeared. Serifs abandoned their role as finishing details to become independent architectural structures.

Egyptian or Slab Serif 1900s

These typefaces transformed the serif from a refined detail to a load-bearing slab. The slab serif asserts its own weight. It was quickly denounced as a typographical monstrosity.

Aa

Rockwell

Aa Ee Gg

Nn Qq Rr

a

TURBINE

Monotype
Corporation
1934

abcdefghijklm
nopqrstuvwxyz
0123456789

Clarendon

Aa Ee Gg

Nn Qq Rr

a

Fann Street

Thorowgood

and Co.

1845

abcdefghijklm

nopqrstuvwxyz

0123456789

Humanist 1900s

Humanist characteristics include proportions that were modeled on old style typefaces, open strokes and a slightly higher contrast in strokes in comparison to other sans-serif typefaces. They retained some elements of writing.

Aa

Gill Sans

Aa Qq Rr

Aa Qq Rr

a

COLLEGIUM

abcdefghijklm

nopqrstuvwxyz

0123456789

Eric Gill

1928

Frutiger

Aa Ee Rr

Aa Ee Rr



Accès aux avions

Adrian Frutiger

1976

abcdefghijklmnop
nopqrstuvwxyz
0123456789

Transitional 1900s

Closely related to the characteristics of transitional serified typefaces, these typefaces include a more upright axis and a uniform stroke.

Aa

Helvetica

Aa Ee Rr

Aa Ee Rr

a

Kunsthalle

abcdefghijklmnop

qrstuvwxyz

0123456789

Max Miedinger

1957

Univers

Hb Mp Sx

Hb Mp Sx

Hb Mp Sx

a

Adrian
Frutiger
1957

à á ü 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

@ ? ! () ' { } , . ; : - ' " "

Franklin Gothic

Aa Ee Rr

Aa Ee Rr

a

Wigglesworth

abcdefghijklm

nopqrstuvwxyz

0123456789

Morris Fuller

Benton

1902

The avant-garde artists of the early twentieth century rejected historical forms for works that are experimental, radical, or unorthodox. They abandoned the human hand and offered austere alternatives.

Geometric Sans Serif 1900s

At the Bauhaus, Herbert Bayer and Josef Albers constructed letters from basic geometric forms—the circle, square, and triangle. The Bauhaus was an art school in Germany that combined crafts and the fine arts.

Aa

Futura

Aa Qq Rr

Aa Qq Rr

d

Zuführung

a b c d e f g h i j k l m
n o p q r s t u v w x y z
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Paul Renner

1927

Century Gothic

Aa Ee Rr

Aa Ee Rr

d

BALLOON

abcdefghijklmnop

nopqrstuvwxyz

0123456789

Monotype Imaging

1991

Responding in 1967 to the rise of electronic communication, Wim Crouwel rejected typographic convention and designed his letters for optimal display on a video screen.

new ALphabet
_i_n
crouuel



cathode ray tube

In 1967 Wim Crouwel designed the typeface New Alphabet, a design that embraces the limitations of the technology used by early data display screens, thus only containing horizontal and vertical strokes.

In 1985 Zuzana Licko embraced the language of digital equipment with the addition of the personal computer. She and her husband Rudy VanderLans were cofounders of Emigre Fonts and Emigre magazine.

Emperor
OAKLAND
Emigre

Zuzana Licko created coarse-resolution fonts for desktop screens and printers in 1985. These fonts have since been integrated into Emigre's extensive Lo-Res font family, designed for print and digital media. Some fonts include: Emperor, Oakland, and Emigre.

The early 1990s, designers grew dissatisfied with clean, unsullied surfaces, seeking to use more physical processes. Letters became scratched, bent, bruised, and polluted.

Template Gothic

Template Gothic designed in 1990 by Barry Deck, is based on letters drawn with a plastic stencil.

The typeface refers to a process that is mechanical and manual. Deck designed Template Gothic while he was a student of Ed Fella.



Edward Fella creates designs by hand and with software, combining diverse techniques.

Although the 1990s are remembered for chaos and decay, type designers still built general purpose typefaces designed to accommodate broad bodies of text.

Mrs Eaves

Aa Qq Rr a

Aa Qq Rr

Nasturtium

Mrs Eaves designed by Zuzanna Licko. Licko produced historical revivals during the 1990s alongside her experimental display faces. Mrs Eaves is inspired by the eighteenth century types of Baskerville, and is one of the most popular typefaces of its time. In 2009, Mrs Eaves was joined by the sans-serif Mr Eaves.

FF Meta

Aa Ee Rr

Aa Ee Rr

a

Kornhaus

Erik Spiekermann is a legendary German type designer. He has published numerous books and articles on the subject of typography for magazines. Spiekermann with his significant other, Joan Spiekermann, launched the FontShop. It was the first mail-order producer and distributor of electronic fonts.

Gotham

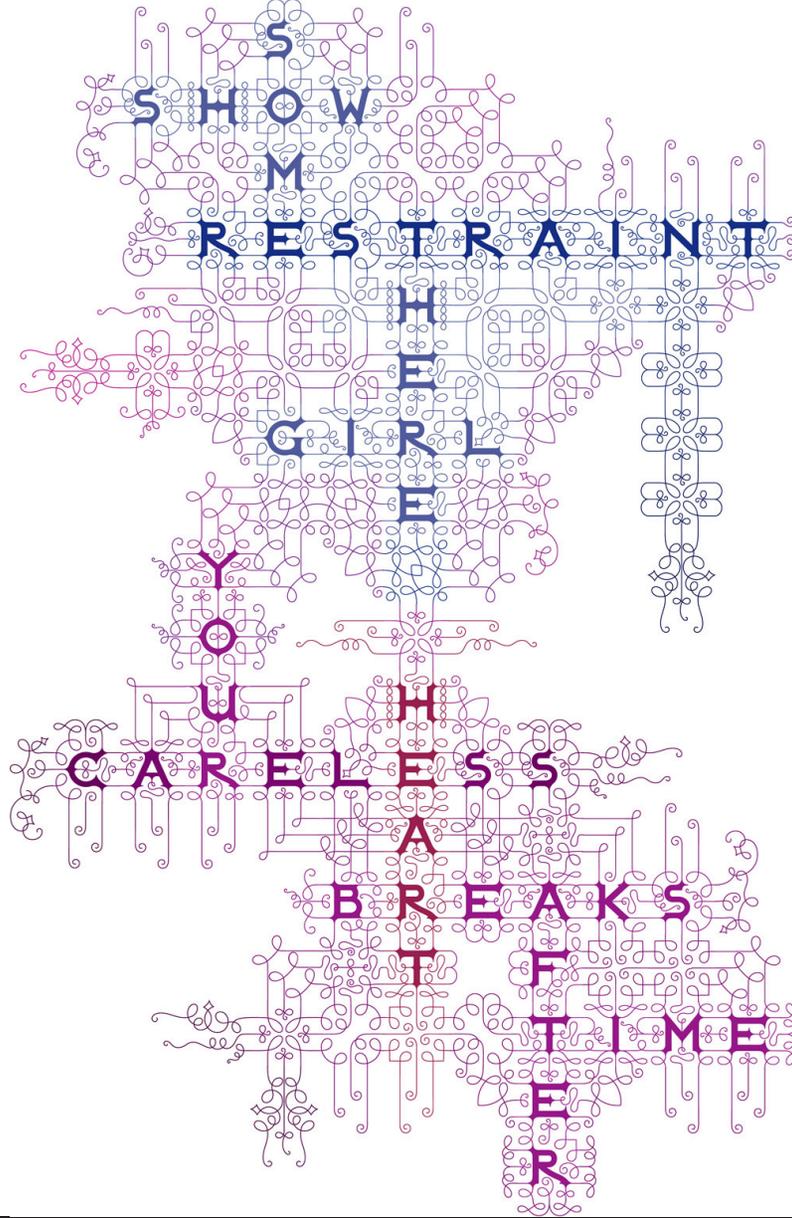
Aa Ee Rr

Aa Ee Rr



Vernacular

Gotham was introduced by Tobias Frere-Jones in 2000. Gotham is derived from letters found at the Bus Terminal in New York City. It became the signature typeface of Barack Obama's 2008 presidential campaign.



Restraint by Marian Bantjes, ornament font which happens to contain letterforms.

Graphic designers consider the history of typefaces, their current connotations, as well as their formal qualities when choosing a typeface.