

Deciphering Desktop Publishing Terms Is Half the Battle

Accessible desktop publishing tools have brought an arcane dialect to the masses. Not too long ago, only publishing professionals knew — or cared to know — what pica, kerning, crop, or PMS meant. Now almost anyone who wants to produce a nice-looking report or a simple newsletter comes across these terms in the layout programs' menus and manuals. Unfortunately, these terms are not always used correctly in manuals, or they are replaced with general terms meant to make nonprofessional users feel less threatened. Here is some of the basic terminology, grouped by publishing task.

TYPOGRAPHY CHARACTERS:

A *font* is a set of characters at a certain size, weight, and style (for example, 10-point Palatino Bold). It is now often used as a synonym for *typeface*, which is a set of characters at a certain style in all sizes, weights, and stylings (for example, Palatino). A *face* is a combination of a weight and styling at all sizes (for example, Palatino Bold Italic). A *font family* is a group of related typefaces (for example, the Franklin family includes Franklin Gothic, Franklin Heavy, and Franklin Compressed).

Weight describes a typeface's thickness. Typical weights, from thinnest to thickest, are ultralight, light, book, medium, demibold, bold, heavy, ultrabold, and ultraheavy. There are three basic stylings: *Roman* type is upright type; *oblique* type is slanted type; and *italic* type is both slanted and curved (to appear more like calligraphy than roman type). Type may also be *expanded* (widened), *condensed* (narrowed), or *compressed* (severely narrowed).

The *x-height* is the height of the average lowercase letter (based on the letter X); the greater the height, the bigger the letter looks compared to other letters in typefaces with a smaller x-height but the same point size. The *cap height* is the size of the average uppercase letter (based on the letter C).

A *descender* is the part of a letter that goes below the baseline (as in a q); an *ascender* is the part that goes above the x-height (as in a b). A *serif* is the horizontal stroke used in giving letters visual character, such as those used in the upper left and bottom of the letter p in a typeface such as Times. *Sans serif* means the typeface does not use these embellishments (such as Helvetica).

SPACING:

Leading/line spacing is the space from the base of one line (the *baseline*) to another. (Leading is named after the pieces of lead once used to space out lines).

Tracking/letter spacing is the overall space between letters within a word; if you increase tracking, space increases globally. *Word spacing* defines the preferred, minimum, and maximum spacing between words.

Kerning is an adjustment of the space between two letters to accommodate the letters' shapes. For example, you would have tighter kerning between *to* than between *oo* because *oo* looks better if the *o* fits partly under the *t*. *Pair kerning* is a table of letter pairs that you always want kerned by the program.

Justification adds space between words (and sometimes letters) so each line aligns at both the column's left and right margin. *Ragged right* and *flush left* both refer to text that aligns against a column's left margin but not right margin; *ragged left* and *flush right* text aligns against the right margin but not left margin. *Centered* text has equal space on both margins. *Justification* also means the type of spacing: justified, ragged right, centered, or ragged left.

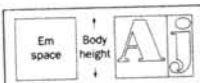
Vertical justification adds space between paragraphs (and sometimes between lines) so that the tops and bottoms of each column on a page align. (This is often confused with *column balancing*, which ensures that each column has the same number of lines.) *Carding* is a vertical-justification method where the space added between paragraphs is in one-line increments. *Feather-*

ing uses fractional-line spaces between paragraphs.

MEASUREMENT UNITS:

A *pica* is a measurement of column and page width and depth. A pica is just under one-sixth of an inch (it is usually rounded up to one-sixth). A *point* is a measurement of type size and space between lines. There are 12 points in a pica, so there are about 72.27 points to the inch (again, it is frequently rounded down to 72 points per inch).

An *em*, *en*, and *thin space* are, respectively, the horizontal space taken up by a capital M, capital N, and lowercase t. An *em space* is the same width as the current point size, an *en* half of that, and a *thin space* half again. In other words, for 12-point type, an *em* is 12 points wide, an *en* six, and a *thin space* three. A *figure space* is the width of a numeral (in most typefaces, all numerals are the same width to make tables align naturally), which is usually the same as an *em*.



PARAGRAPHS:

You typically mark a new paragraph with an *indent*, which adds space (an *em* space in newspapers and magazines) in front of the paragraph's first letter to set it off. An *outdent* moves the first character past the left margin and places the other lines at the left margin; it is typically used in lists. A *block indent* moves an entire paragraph in from the left margin, such as in a long quote. A *hanging indent* is like an outdent except that the first line begins at the left margin and all subsequent lines are indented.

A *bullet* is a character (often a filled circle) that shows a paragraph as one element of a list; it can be indented, outdented, or kept at the left margin. A *drop cap* is a large capital letter, used at the beginning of a section or story, that extends down several lines into the text (the rest of the text wraps around it). A *raised cap* is the same as a drop cap except that it does not extend down into the text; instead, it rests on the baseline of the first line.

Style sheets are named sets of attributes such as spacing, typeface, indent, leading, and justification that you can apply to your paragraphs. You *tag* each paragraph with the style-tag name you want to apply to it, and any formatting changes made to the style's definition are automatically reflected in all other paragraphs that have been tagged.

HYPHENATION:

A *hyphen* splits words at the end of a line and joins words that combine to modify another word. *Hyphenation* is determining where to place the hyphen in split words. *Consecutive hyphenation* determines how many lines in a row may end with a hyphen; more than three is considered bad typographic practice. *Hyphenation zone* defines how far from the right margin a hyphen may be inserted to split a word. An *exception dictionary* lists words with nonstandard hyphenations; you can add words that the default hyphenations does not know or override the default hyphenations for words like "project" that are hyphenated differently as a noun (project) than as a verb (pro-ject). A *discretionary hyphen* in a word tells the program to hyphenate that word at that place if that word must be split; it affects only the word it is placed in.

LAYOUT ELEMENTS:

Layout is arranging the text and graphics elements on a page or series of pages. A *column* is a block of text. If there is more than one column side by side, there is a *gutter* of space (usually 1 or 2 picas in a newspaper or magazine) between them. The *margin* is the space between the edge of a page and the nearest standard block of text. For visual effect, text or graphics can intrude into the margin.

A *wrap* is a text cutout, where the column is intruded by graphics or other text. Rather than overprint the text, the column's margins are altered so the text goes around the graphic or other text. A *wrap* can be rectan-

gular, polygonal, or curved, depending on what it is wrapping around and the layout program's capabilities.

A *folio* is the page number and identifying material (such as month or publication name) that appears at the bottom and/or top of every page.

White space is the part of the page left empty to create contrast with the text and graphics, providing visual relief and emphasizing the text and graphics.

A *frame* holds layout elements on the page. Most desktop publishing programs use frames for their elements. Using a mouse, you can select frames to delete, copy, resize, or otherwise manipulate them in your layout. You can create a template for repeat use by using empty frames and defining style tags in advance.

IMAGE MANIPULATION:

Cropping an image means selecting a part of it for use on the page. *Sizing/scaling* an image is determining the amount of reduction or enlargement of the image (or part thereof) used. With layout programs, you can often distort an image to size it differently horizontally than vertically, which achieves special effects such as compressing or stretching an image.

Reversing (also called *inverting* in some programs) exchanges black and white, which is like creating a photographic negative.

TOOLS:

Galleys are single columns of type. They are typically used to proof hyphenation and errors and to show the authors of books what the text will look like for correction before it is laid out.

A *grid* is the basic layout design, including standard positions of folios, text, graphics, bylines, and headlines. A layout artist adapts each story to the grid, modifying the grid when necessary to each layout. It is also called a *template*. A *dummy* is a hand-drawn layout of a particular story. *Guidelines* show where columns and margins typically are on the grid. In some programs, guidelines are nonprinting lines you can use to ensure that elements align.

An *overlay* is a piece of transparent paper or film laid over a board for overprinted material such as text or graphics and to indicate screens in a different color. Some programs have electronic equivalents.

PRODUCTION:

Registration marks tell a printer where each negative should be positioned relative to other negatives (the registration marks must line up when the negatives are superimposed). *Crop marks* tell a printer where to cut the negatives; nothing outside the crop marks is printed. *Crop marks* are used both on full pages to define the page size and on images to show which part of the image is to be kept.

A *screen* is an area to be printed at a particular percentage of a color (including black). For example, the border of a page may have a 20-percent black screen.

Spot color is a single color applied at one or more places on a page, such as for a screen or as part of an illustration. You may have more than one spot color per page. Spot colors may be process or PMS colors. A *process color* is one of the four primary colors in publishing: black, yellow, magenta, and cyan. A PMS (Pantone Matching System) color is an industry standard for specifying a color; the printer uses a premixed ink based on the PMS number you specify; you look up these numbers in a table of colors. *Four-color* is the use of the four process colors in combination to produce most other colors; most magazines and newspapers use four-color. A *color separation* is a set of four photographic negatives — one filtered for each process color — shot from a color photograph or image that when overprinted will reproduce that image. A *build* is an attempt to simulate a PMS color by specifying the appropriate percentages of the four process colors and overprinting them.

— Galen Gruman

