

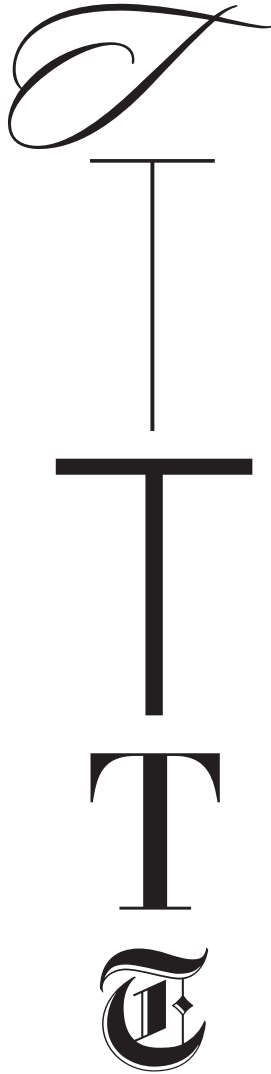
# Does this look good on me?



There are now about as many different varieties of letters as there are different kinds of fools.”

Eric Gill

By Deborah Withey



**TYPE STYLES** are like snacks — so many savory choices, each one with its own subtle texture and flavor. To paraphrase the words of a vintage American potato chip commercial: Betcha can’t pick just one! Or two or three? Or a type family? And everyone can name a favorite.

Whether you’re designing a magazine, a restaurant logo, a birth announcement or a newspaper, you need to answer one loaded question: What visual message do you want to project? Or in newspaper terms: What’s the story about?

Whatever type you choose — unless you throw a dart at a type book blindfolded — says something about IT. And when you’re designing a publication or creating a redesign, that IT is the newspaper.

So be informed about the publication before you make decisions. Not knowing enough would be like Chip Kidd designing a book cover without ever having read the book. In a publication that comes out daily, you need type that’s both sustainable and versatile enough to grow as your design grows. And sustaining a strong design means keeping true to the type structure you’ve so thoughtfully defined. So how do you go about creating this precious structure? The following talking points can help you define your publication, and match the look to your mission, content and audience.

Find your own voice.

## PILOT TYPE PALETTE

- Sloop
- Neutraface
- Vonness
- Tidewater
- Blackletter



From redesign to reality. When type and image fit together just as you imagined they could.

## all about it

- the mission
- the identity
- the audience
- the personality
- the style

## where is it

- the landscape
- the environment
- the history
- the culture
- the community
- the people

## who is it

- the voice
- the tone
- the mood
- the attitude



# Or, the art of choosing type

## THE HISTORY, THE WATER AND THE NAVY

The Pilot's circulation area includes the birthplace of the Nation, the Chesapeake Bay and the home of the Atlantic Fleet. These are some of my favorite local influences.



## talk about it

### Defying and defining six overused adjectives used to describe a typographic look.

**FRESH** Translation: It looks better than the old type. But your new fonts can't do it alone, continue to assess, tweak and push your type design.

**MODERN** The way to be modern is to be ahead of the curve and then change when the masses catch up with you. Or go back to the past because everything comes around again doesn't it?

**TRADITIONAL** What does the word mean visually? Serif, sure. Sans serif, maybe, but lay off the funky stuff. Traditional is playing it straight, using little or no decoration, where the type does the talking and doesn't draw attention to itself. About Helvetica, Christian Larsen, curator of the MoMA exhibition, says, "When reading it, one hardly notices the letter forms, only the meaning, it's that well-designed."

**SOPHISTICATED** Any well-drawn typeface can look sophisticated depending upon how it's used in the design. When you're mixing fonts, it's the application of the fonts and the execution of the design that make a publication "sophisticated."

This article is set in Poynter Agate Zero Regular with bold accents in Vonness Bold and Extrabold

**CLASSIC** The classic label isn't just for serif faces, it also doesn't mean safe design. On the contrary, a little black Chanel dress is a classic, but so is an updated Burberry raincoat — two very different looks but equally beguiling.

**CLEAN** Clean type is larger than or the same size as what you currently use but more legible. If readers notice and respond to any typography trait, it's this one. And if you still carry some computer-manipulated-horizontally-tortured fonts in your type closet, now's the time to come clean and toss them. Set your display fonts at 100% just as their creator intended.

Defining these and other catchall words goes back to the identity of your print or online subject. If The New York Post and The New York Times turned into people, went into a dressing room and reappeared wearing each other's typography, they'd emerge as vastly different characters. The content would remain the same, but the delivery would be different. In the case of type, the clothes do definitely make the man.

Find your own message.

## choose it

Once you've answered the questions to the left, you'll have a recipe for type selection. Look for the harmony and the discord. Now, choose or commission one font family with several weights and styles or choose individual fonts that work together.

## use it

Every recipe needs a dash of salt. When working with type, that salt is called contrast. Use contrast in most or all of these selections:

**size**

**weight**

**bold vs. light**

**tall vs. short**

**thin vs. fat**

**round vs. flat**

**straight vs. curved**

**serif vs. sans**

**hard vs. soft**

**plain vs. decorative**



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