Typography is the foundation of all graphic design. And if there’s one sure way to improve as a graphic designer, it’s to become more confident and more sophisticated in your use of type. This fully updated third edition is a comprehensive guide to creating professional type with Adobe InDesign. It covers micro and macro typography concepts, from understanding the nuance of a single spacing width to efficiently creating long and complex documents. InDesign Type shows not just how to use InDesign’s extensive type features, but why certain approaches are preferable to others, and how to avoid common mistakes. Whether you’re creating a single-page flyer or a thousand-page catalog, whether your documents will be printed or viewed on screen, InDesign Type is an invaluable resource for getting the most out of InDesign’s typographic toolkit.

InDesign Type provides:

• An exclusive focus on the typographic capabilities of InDesign
• Complete coverage of macro and micro typography in InDesign
• Clear, engaging explanations of the why and the how of good typography

Nigel French is a graphic designer, photographer, and software trainer living in Brighton, England. His website is www.nigelfrench.com.

“Typo nerds will love Nigel French’s third edition of InDesign Type; of course. But it’s also a treat for anyone who appreciates good design.”

— Terri Stone, Editorial Manager Adobe

“I am in awe of Nigel’s creative eye, generous spirit, and well-honed typographic prowess… InDesign Type is one of my most-used InDesign references.”

— Aimee Marie Concepcion, Co-host InDesign Secrets

“InDesign Type is a must-have resource for anyone working with type. Nigel’s friendly tone and style will teach you the nuances, details, and craft of professional typography while simultaneously showing you how to leverage all the typography features in InDesign.”

— Michael Ninness, Senior Director Design Product Management and User Experience, Adobe

“Among the many books that cover similar material, I find Nigel’s writing to be the clearest, most precise and most accessible treatment of the essentials of type.”

— Ina Saltz, Professor The City College of New York

“If you want to learn how to use type to create beautiful designs, read this book.”

— Mike Rankin, Editor in Chief CreativePro.com and InDesign Magazine

“I see her father, aged and bent, but otherwise stored, and faithful to all men in his healing office, and a place to see the good old man, so long their friend, in ten years; to enriching them with all he has, and passing through his roads; until I hold a sanctuary in their heart, and in their own in my how I see her, and a woman on the anniversary of a grand, and held sacred in the other soul, than I was in the same of both. “I see my child who lay upon her bosom and who bore my name, a man winning Nigel French his way to the path of life which once was mine. I see him winning it so well, my name is made illustrious there by the light of his. I see the old one, the bloated away. I see him there—MY NAME—THROW UPON MINE—SHAPED AWAY. I SEE HIM—RE-MADE!”

— Terri Stone, Editorial Manager Adobe

“IT IS A FAR, FAR BETTER THING TO DO. IT IS A FAR, FAR BETTER REST THAT I GO TO THAN I HAVE EVER KNOWN.”

— Charles Dickens, A Christmas Carol
Acknowledgments

I'd like to thank the following people for their help (and patience): Victor Gavenda, Nancy Peterson, Charlene Charles-Will, Stephen Nathans-Kelly, Scout Festa, David Van Ness, and Jean-Claude Tremblay. I'd also like to say a big thank you to Melanie for being so lovely.
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Want to drive a designer crazy? Show them some poorly typeset text with too-tight spacing between words and uneven spacing between letters. They cringe because they literally feel it’s wrong — it’s a sensitivity much like slipping into a bubble bath only to find that someone has left behind a thin layer of sand. Designers want to go one step further: They want to fix it, make it right, resolve the dissonant chord, clean up the mess.

Design — and especially the design of text, called typography — is something that anyone can learn. It involves two steps: developing the feeling, and learning how to make type better. Having “the eye” (the feeling for type) leads to misery if you don’t know how to handle the tools to change it. And understanding the software is meaningless if you don’t know what you’re looking for.

Fortunately, I’m pleased to say that this book can help you do both. I’ve known Nigel French for many years, and I can tell you that he is one of the top typography trainers in the world, specifically because he understands the importance of “the eye” and the tools typographers need to master to transfer what they see to the page.

Adobe InDesign is the industry’s best tool for setting type in short and long documents, for print and onscreen display. The more you know about InDesign, the more fun it is to use it — especially when you have a teacher like Nigel.

— David Blatner  
co-host, InDesignSecrets.com  
co-author, Real World InDesign CC
Introduction

Today we are all typographers. Everyone knows what a font is, and most people have an opinion about the fonts they like and those they don’t. Typography is no longer an arcane trade plied by curmudgeonly men with inky fingers, but rather a life skill. We make typographic decisions every day: the material we choose to read in print and onscreen, the fonts we select for our correspondence, and the advertising we respond to, consciously or subconsciously.

This democratization of typography is empowering; anyone can participate. But to participate well it helps to know a thing or two; with power comes responsibility. If you’re using InDesign, or plan to, then you have at your disposal the state-of-the-art software for creating typographic layouts of any length and complexity. It’s worth bearing in mind that the concepts behind InDesign didn’t just arrive simultaneously with the program’s launch in 1999. InDesign itself may be a mere pup, but the principles upon which it is built are part of a long tradition. InDesign is part of a continuum of technological advances going back to the fifteenth century with the invention of movable type. The terminology and typographic conventions upon which InDesign is built have evolved over generations. The typefaces on our font menus — even the funky postmodern ones — are clearly related to the letter shapes chiseled into the Trajan Column in Rome nearly 2000 years ago.

Whether you’re new to InDesign or have been using it for some time, you’ve probably found yourself wondering: What are all these controls? Where did they come from? And, perhaps more important: How do I use them, and why? This book attempts to answer these questions. It’s not just a book about working with InDesign. Because I believe it’s impossible to talk about InDesign without discussing typographic history and best practices, it’s also a book about why certain type solutions work better than others.
If you’re working in InDesign today, you’re probably at least thinking about designing EPUBs and digital magazines. With each new release, InDesign is getting better at creating documents in these digital formats. If you’re working with an older version of InDesign, my advice is to upgrade. The majority of the new features and enhancements since version 5.5 relate to digital publishing. This third edition addresses how InDesign’s toolset has been adapted and extended so that we as typographers can produce professional-quality digital, as well as print, layouts.

Designing with type is a subjective discipline, so it’s useful for you to know where I’m coming from and why I’m advancing the opinions I am. I’d say that my type preferences are more “old school” than experimental, my style more conventional than boundary pushing. I admire graphic designers who break the rules of type and do it well; I groan when I see graphic designers breaking the rules and doing it badly. Unfortunately, I think the majority of graphic designers that break the rules fall into the latter camp.

It’s an oft-repeated adage that good typography is “invisible,” meaning that, rather than drawing attention to itself, typography should serve the words it represents. As Stanley Morison, who in the 1930s brought us Times (the font designed for the Times of London, although the newspaper no longer uses it), said, “For a new fount to be successful it has to be so good that only very few recognize its novelty.”

This perhaps makes typography sound like a thankless task. Where’s the fame? The glory? There are few celebrity typographers, and those few walk the streets in relative anonymity. Nonetheless, typography is a noble cause. If typefaces are the bricks and mortar of communication, then we, the typographers, are the architects. A simple and understated building may pass unnoticed by many, but everyone notices an ugly one. Likewise with typography: Good designs serve their purpose and may not elicit comment, but we can all spot bad typography, even though we may not be able to say why it’s bad. InDesign Type exists to demonstrate the rules and conventions of professional typography, specifically as they
relate to InDesign, so that we can avoid ugly and thoughtless type—which, I believe, is a major step in the direction of creating beautiful type.

**Who Should Read This Book?**

This book deals with English-language typography—not because it’s the most important, but because it’s what I know. It’s primarily concerned with the typographic conventions of magazine and book publishing, whether those books and magazines are intended to be read in print or onscreen. The techniques in this book will help you create pages and layouts to a professional standard by following certain typographic “rules.” To this end, my approach is utilitarian rather than experimental. These rules are not intended to be stifling or limiting to creativity, but rather are intended as a starting point. Learn the rules. Then, if you choose, break them—but break them consciously, knowing why you do so. Whatever you do, don’t ignore them.

I should also mention that although it was written specifically for Adobe InDesign CC, most of the techniques in the book are applicable to earlier versions of InDesign. Where there is a keyboard shortcut for a command, I indicate the Macintosh shortcut first, followed by the Windows shortcut in parentheses. For example: Cmd+Option+W (Ctrl+Alt+W).

I hope you find *InDesign Type* a useful addition to your design bookshelf. If you enjoy the book, you might be interested in viewing my “InDesign Typography” course on Lynda.com, which is structured in much the same way as the book and uses many of the same examples.

I’m keen to get your feedback, so please email me with any comments, corrections, or suggestions.

—Nigel French

nigel@nigelfrench.com
Leading

Leading (pronounced “ledding”) is the space between lines of type. The term comes from the days of hot-metal typesetting when thin strips of lead, known as reglets, were inserted by hand between the lines of type to add vertical space. Lines of type without these strips of lead were—and still are—referred to as “set solid.” Leading plays a big part in the readability of text. Body text is usually made more readable by a positive amount of leading (a value greater than the point size of the type). Headlines and display type, however, may benefit from negative leading. When it comes to screen type, leading is usually referred to as line height.
Getting the Lead Out

When it comes to leading there’s no “one size fits all.” Tight leading increases the density of the type and gives it authority. But if you go too tight, your type looks claustrophobic and the descenders of one line collide with the ascenders of the next. Loose leading can create a luxurious look. But if it’s too loose, the lines of type look like individual strips rather than cohesive paragraphs and the type is made less readable. This is especially true if the leading value is greater than the size of the space between the paragraphs.

Leading is measured in points from one baseline to the next. The leading value includes the point size of the typeface and the actual space between the lines. Thus, 10-point type with 12 points of leading really means two points of space between each line. This is written 10/12, and spoken “10 on 12.” Other common type size and leading combinations for print body text are 9/11, 11/13, and 12/15.

How Much Is Enough?

Bad leading makes your text harder to read because the eye has trouble locating the next line of type. Choosing an appropriate amount of leading depends on several variables:

- **The nature of the text.** While text intended for continuous reading benefits from some breathing space, a short burst of advertising copy or a title might be more effective if the lines are tightly leaded.

- **Type size.** As type size increases, you will want proportionally less leading. With display sizes, the same relative amount of space between the lines appears larger, so much so that it’s common to use negative leading for display type.

- **The width of the column.** Increase leading as you increase column width, or measure. Increasing the leading anywhere from 0.5 point to 2 points improves readability by keeping the lines distinct and preventing the eye from dropping off to the line below or doubling back to reread the same line.
The width of the column gutters. Leading, like all type attributes, needs to work in harmony with everything else on the page. The width of the column gutters should be the same as the leading value or a multiple thereof. If the gutters are too small, there will be a tendency to read across the columns; too large and the separate columns will look unconnected.

The size of the word spaces. A general rule is that your leading should be wider than your word spaces to ensure that the eye moves along the line rather than down the lines. Justified type in narrow columns, such as in newspapers, may result in word spaces larger than the leading. This causes the eye to jump to the next line rather than to the next word. In such situations, extra leading ensures that the space between the lines is at least as wide as the space between the words. Better still, don’t set justified type in narrow columns.

How will the struggle for existence, briefly discussed in the last chapter, act in regard to variation? Can the principle of selection, which we have seen is so potent in the hands of man, apply under nature? I think we shall see that it can act most efficiently. Let the endless number of slight variations and individual differences occurring in our domestic productions, and, in a lesser degree, in those under nature, be borne in mind; as well as the strength of the hereditary tendency. Under domestication, it may be truly said that the whole organisation becomes in some

I How will the struggle for existence, briefly discussed in the last chapter, act in regard to variation? Can the principle of selection, which we have seen is so potent in the hands of man, apply under nature? I think we shall see that it can act most efficiently. Let the endless number of slight variations and individual differences occurring in our domestic productions, and, in a lesser degree, in those under

A: If leading is tight, especially with justified text on a narrow measure, there is the risk of having more space between the words than between the lines.

B: Here the leading is equal to the word spacing.

LEADING AND COLUMN WIDTH
A: The leading is too tight.
B: The leading has been increased to compensate for the wide column.

GUTTER WIDTHS
A: The gutter width is the same as the leading value.
B: The gutter width is too big, and the columns lose their visual relationship to each other.
C: The gutter is too small, so that the two columns look almost like a single line.
The color of the background. We’re used to reading black type on white paper, so when we use the opposite, we’re guaranteed to get attention. However, reversed type tends to “sparkle,” making it harder to read. A slight increase in leading can compensate. In addition, if you’re working in print, avoid delicate serifs and consider using a heavier weight.

The characteristics of the typeface. Typefaces with larger x-heights are perceived as bigger than other typefaces at equivalent sizes. The lowercase letters are large relative to the size of the overall character, and thus require more leading.

Didone (also called Modern) typefaces that have a strong vertical stress, like Bodoni, guide the eye down the page rather than across the line. Adding more leading with these typefaces keeps the eye tracking horizontally rather than vertically.

Typefaces that combine a low x-height with particularly tall ascenders require special treatment. The low x-height begs suggest tighter leading, but tighter leading might cause the ascenders and descenders to collide. Much depends on the characters themselves. If you’re working on display type, rewording — if you have editorial license — might make all the difference. Let common sense prevail, and be open to the possibility that colliding ascenders and descenders might even look good in certain situations.

Leading Shortcuts

To tighten the leading of a selected range of text: Option+Up Arrow (Alt+Up Arrow)

To loosen the leading: Option+Down Arrow (Alt+Down Arrow)

The increment is determined in the Size/Leading field in the Units & Increments Preferences. To increase or decrease the leading value by five times this increment, press Cmd+Option+Up Arrow (Ctrl+Alt+Up Arrow) or Cmd+Option+Down Arrow (Ctrl+Alt+Down Arrow).
Pour and drink; and according to your choice of goblet, I shall know whether or not you are a connoisseur of wine. For if you have no feelings about wine one way or the other, you will want the sensation of drinking the stuff out of a vessel that may have cost thousands of pounds; but if you are a member of that vanishing tribe, the amateurs of fine vintages, you will choose the crystal, because everything about it is calculated to reveal rather than hide the beautiful thing which it was meant to contain.

TIP: A convenient rule of thumb for determining leading is to take the width of a column in picas and divide it by the size of the type, then round the result to the nearest half point. For example, 10-point type on a 24-pica measure yields a leading value of 2.4. This is rounded up to 2.5 and expressed as 12.5 (the lead added to the point size).
Typefaces with small x-heights appear to have more horizontal space between lines and thus require less leading.

Bold and Semibold typefaces benefit from extra leading to prevent the type color — the density of the letterforms as a block — from appearing too heavy.

Type in all caps requires less leading because the absence of descenders makes the lines appear farther apart.

Screen Leading (Line Height)
The W3C accessibility guidelines recommend a line height of 1.5 ems. While this is a good starting point, it’s not a figure that should be adhered to slavishly. Just as with print, optimal line height onscreen is a nuanced thing, and should factor in the size of the type, the length of the line, the x-height of the typeface, and the perceived preferences of the audience. While it’s broadly true that line height onscreen will be more than its equivalent in print (in part because line lengths onscreen tend to be longer), all of the factors discussed above are as applicable to screen typography as they are to print typography.

(Not) Using Auto Leading
Auto Leading is a relatively new concept, emerging with desktop publishing in the mid-'80s. InDesign’s Auto Leading value is by default 120 percent of the type size, although you can change this in Justification options. You can spot Auto Leading on Control panel or Character panel because the value is in parentheses.

While Auto Leading just about works for body text, it usually looks awful applied to display type, causing the lines to appear too far apart. Auto Leading is one of those default, works-OK-most-of-the-time-if-all-you’re-doing-is-designing-a-newsletter-for-the-local-scout-troop features. It is not a tool of the professional designer.

The best thing you can say about Auto Leading is that it’s convenient. You can change your text size as often as you like and your type will always be readable. As your font size increases or decreases, so does your leading.
This may sound like a good idea, but Auto Leading is actually proportional to the biggest piece of type in the paragraph. This means that if you have just one character larger than the rest of the paragraph, your leading value will be 120 percent of that character. This problem most often occurs at the end of the paragraph. Here’s the scenario: The user selects the type by swiping, and unknowingly excludes the hidden paragraph mark at the end of the paragraph. They reduce the size of the type but not the size of the paragraph mark, with the result that the last line of the paragraph has more leading than the rest of the paragraph. You can avoid this by selecting paragraphs with four clicks, ensuring that the paragraph mark is part of the selection and so takes on the same formats. It’s also a good idea to work with hidden characters shown (Type > Show Hidden Characters, or Cmd+Option+I/Ctrl+Alt+I), to see exactly what is — and what isn’t — selected. Even with such precautions, it’s still best to avoid Auto Leading.

In a nutshell, Auto Leading doesn’t give you the control that you need. If you’re using 10-point type, Auto Leading is 12 points, a nice easy number to work with. However, if you’re working with 11-point type, then your leading value is 13.2, which is difficult to calculate in multiples if you intend to work with a grid — see Chapter 16, “Pages, Margins, Columns, and Grids.”

If books are printed in order to be read, we must distinguish readability from what the optician would call legibility. A page set in 14-pt Bold Sans is, according to the laboratory tests, more legible than one set in 11-pt Baskerville. A public speaker is more audible in that sense when he bellows.

Adobe Caslon Pro 10/12
Helvetica 10/13
Bodoni 10/12.5

Typefaces with a larger x-height, like Helvetica, require more leading. Didone or Modern typefaces that have a strong vertical stress, like Bodoni, require more leading to keep the eye moving along the line rather than down the page.

Even though Raniscript has elongated ascenders and descenders, its low x-height means it looks good tightly leaded.
Auto Leading and Inline Graphics

Auto Leading does have a legitimate use: when you’re using inline objects. These are frames (usually, but not exclusively, picture frames) that are dragged or pasted into a blank paragraph in the text and thereafter move with the text flow. If the text makes specific reference to figures above or below, those figures can be inline graphics, so that the relationship between text and graphic is never disrupted by edits to the text. Inline graphics are a hybrid of text and graphics: You control their vertical spacing with leading. Auto Leading ensures there’s always enough space for the graphic on the line, since the leading value increases or decreases according to the height of the graphic. When working with inline graphics, make a paragraph style with a leading value of Auto (you may wish to adjust the percentage of the Auto Leading) and apply this to the blank-line paragraphs into which the graphics are dragged or pasted.

The “Apply Leading to Entire Paragraphs” Preference

Whether you’re working with Auto Leading or absolute leading, the height of a line is determined by the largest piece of type on that line. This can cause inconsistent leading if you mistakenly have one character bigger than the rest. You can change this behavior in your Type preferences by selecting Apply Leading to Entire Paragraphs. This means only one leading value can be applied to any given paragraph. Changing this setting does not affect the leading in existing frames.

This is arguably a useful “safety” feature, but I feel it gives too much control to the software. While we want only one leading value per paragraph most of the time, there are occasions — such as working with display type — when we need to control leading line by line. In such situations, we want mixed leading values to give the optical effect of consistency — something not possible with this preference turned on.

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quiscil.
Keep It Consistent, Except ...

Leading, like much in typography, is about rhythm, and as with a piece of music, you want your rhythm to be steady and unfaultering. The best way to achieve this is to set the leading values within paragraph styles. Should you need to change the leading values, you can edit the style definition rather than work on the text locally.

When it comes to fixing widows and orphans, don’t mess with the leading. You have other tricks up your sleeve — rewriting, tracking, adjusting word and letter spacing, discretionary hyphens, forced line breaks — to fix such problems. Tempting though it may be to tighten the leading a little here and there, your document will suffer if you do. Keep your body text leading consistent; otherwise, the rhythm of your type will wander like the beat of a distracted drummer.

Also, don’t be tempted to go for the quick ‘n’ dirty solution of using vertical alignment, which increases the leading in a short column to make it bottom out (that is, end on the same baseline as other columns). While columns of uniform depth are preferable in continuous prose, InDesign can achieve this with the Balance Columns feature, which adjusts the height of all columns rather than just extend the shortest one.

There may be times when you need to relax consistency in favor of optical leading and tweak the leading of individual lines to make the leading appear more consistent. Such a situation may arise in display type if one line lacks descenders.

When Leading Gets Ignored

There are two scenarios when your leading value is overruled:

Baseline grid. If your text is aligned to a baseline grid, the grid increment trumps your leading value. For example, if you have a 12-point baseline grid and you increase the leading of text aligned to that grid to 13 points, the leading rounds up to the next grid increment of 24 points. See Chapter 16, “Pages, Margins, Columns, and Grids,” for more details.

Vertical justification. The Text Frame Options dialog box (Cmd/Ctrl+B) contains the Align pop-up menu, which you
can use to force your text to vertically align within its text frame. Choose Align > Justify, and the leading value becomes irrelevant. The text fills the vertical space of the frame, regardless of how much space it has to add between the lines to do so — almost always a bad idea. To use vertical justification without overriding your leading values (a slightly better option), increase the Paragraph Spacing Limit so that InDesign can add space between the paragraphs instead of between the lines of text. See Chapter 7, “Alignment.”

Leading is one of the most important factors contributing to the readability of text. It ain’t rocket science, but there are a number of variables to consider. While there’s no single “right” leading value, there are plenty of inappropriate amounts. To sum it up: Avoid Auto Leading (except for inline graphics), think about the purpose — as well as the characteristics — of the type you’re working with, and exercise a strong degree of common sense. And always trust your eyes.
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