Working with Text Paths

PROJECT NOTES:

Against The Clock training materials are created to work on both Macintosh and Windows. Any significant difference from one platform to another is clearly explained in the text.

Key commands are written using the following format — Macintosh/Windows.

Before completing this project, you should download, install, and activate the ATC fonts, which are available for both Macintosh and Windows operating systems.

Although QuarkXPress isn't an illustration program, one of the most widely-used functions of such programs as Adobe Illustrator or Macromedia FreeHand is the ability to place type on a path. It might be a simple shape such as an angled line, or it can be as complex as a person's silhouette.

QuarkXPress 6.5 offers powerful and flexible functions for creating text on a path (or *path text*), allowing you to achieve dramatic and compelling text effects without leaving your favorite design environment — and without the need to purchase expensive illustration software if making text flow along a shape is all you need to accomplish.

Why Use Text on a Path?

The use of text on a path can be very simple or incredibly complex. You might achieve the effect you're looking for using a circle or an arc; in other cases you might even have to combine two or more text paths to get the look or effect you're seeking.

Before you determine where it's appropriate to use path text and where good old fashioned horizontal (or vertical) text better suits your needs, you should think in terms of two categories of text elements in your designs. The first, and most common, is *body text*. Body text comprises (in most cases) the actual story you're trying to tell. The second category is the one where path text comes in, and that's *display type*.

Display type is every word, number, or character that's *not* body text (or *body copy*, as it's called in the industry). Headlines, logotypes, special price banners, text inside of starbursts or other graphic elements (called *bugs*) are all examples of display text. Many instances of display text require that type follow paths; circles, angled lines, curves, ovals, and other shapes.

How QuarkXPress Handles Path Text

QuarkXPress 6.5 provides a number of different ways for you to incorporate path text directly into your designs without having to leave the comfort of home, so to speak. This isn't to say that the program's path text functionality is a replacement for industrial-strength drawing programs, because it's not meant to be. For almost any instance of path text, however, QuarkXPress 6.5 meets the need quite well.

There are four tools for creating text paths. They are:

The Bézier Text Path tool is used to draw curved shapes, including, but certainly not limited to circles and ovals. If you've ever used Adobe Illustrator or Macromedia FreeHand, you've probably learned how to use similar drawing tools.

The Line Text Path tool draws straight lines. To use it, simply click and drag where you want the line to appear.

The Orthogonal Text Path tool draws horizontal, vertical, or diagonal (45°) lines.

The Freehand Text Path tool acts like a pencil, allowing you to draw freehand paths or shapes on which you can then place text.

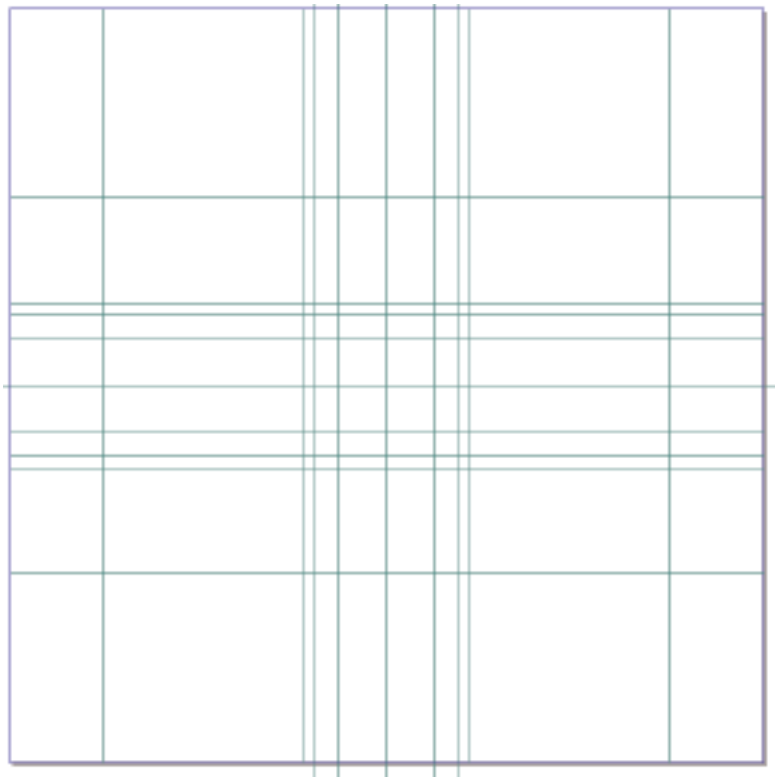
ORIENT TEXT ON A PATH

When you create text on a path using QuarkXPress, you can define how the baselines of each character are positioned relative to the shape. This path text characteristic is known as *orientation*. There are four different options available to you, and the best way to understand how they effect text on a path is to see each of them in action.

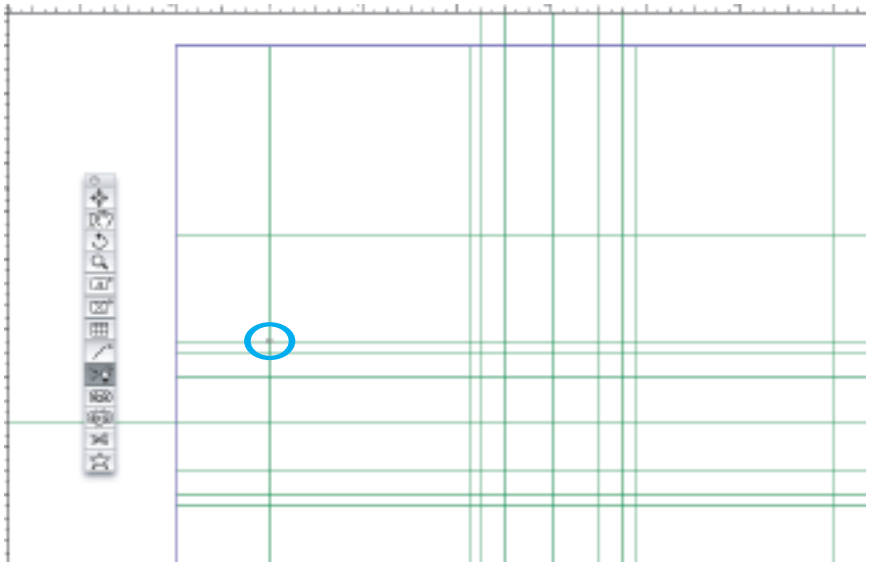
1. Open the file **travel.qxp** from the **RF_Textpath** folder. Save it to your desktop as "pathtext.qxp".

It's a good idea to keep an intact, original copy of this document. In fact, you might consider using it to create a template on your machine for creating type around circles and ovals. Once you understand how it works to help you draw circles and ovals, the idea can be applied to graphics of just about any size.

Take a minute to look at the file. It's a 4″ square layout with margin guides at the page edges. It displays a fairly complex set of page guides, the purpose of which will become evident in a moment. You're going to use these guides to draw perfect ovals, curves, and circles using the Bézier Text-Path tool.

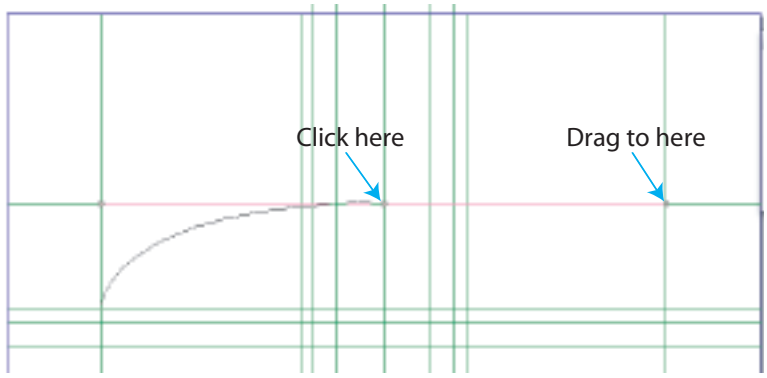


2. Select the Bézier Text-Path tool and click at the intersection of the first vertical and second horizontal lines, as shown below.

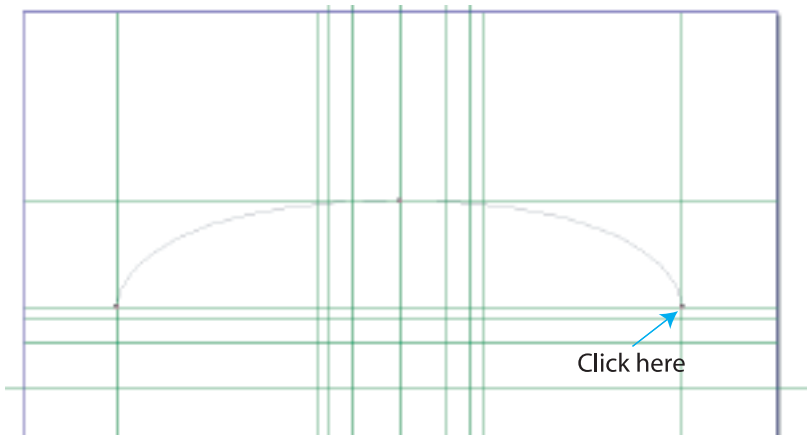


3. Next, click the center of the top-most horizontal guide, hold down the Shift key, and drag until the handle stops at the right-most vertical guide.

   This sounds more confusing than it actually is. What you're doing is clicking once to start a curve, shift-clicking and dragging curve handle to the right, and drawing one-quarter of a perfect oval.



4. To finish the oval, click the tool at the point opposite to the one where you started; Voila! A perfect half oval.



5. Select the Content tool and type "This is text on a path".

   Unless you've change the default settings for text orientation, it's likely that the type is aligned at the left side of the shape, beginning at the start of the line and flowing to the right up the curve. Your default font might be different than what you see in the following image, but that won't have any impact on what you're going to learn.

6. Center the line of text by pressing Command/Control-Shift-C.

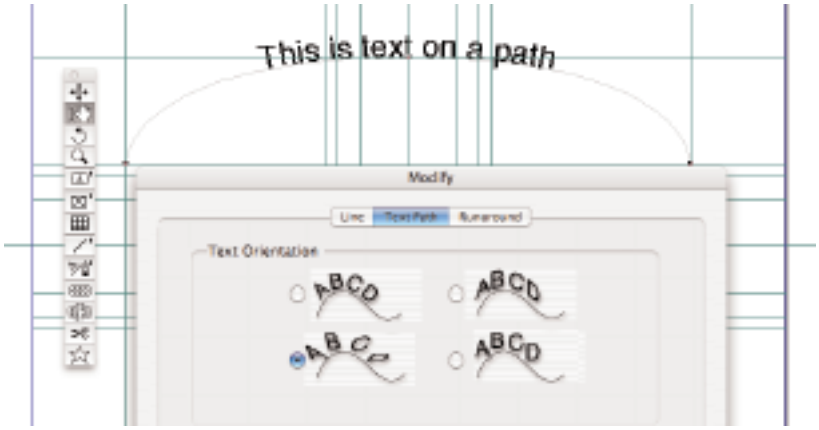
   All justification options are available when you're creating text on a path; in most cases, though, you're not going to use full justification — it's simply not that useful when dealing with display text elements.

7. Choose Format>Modify and display the Text Path tab.

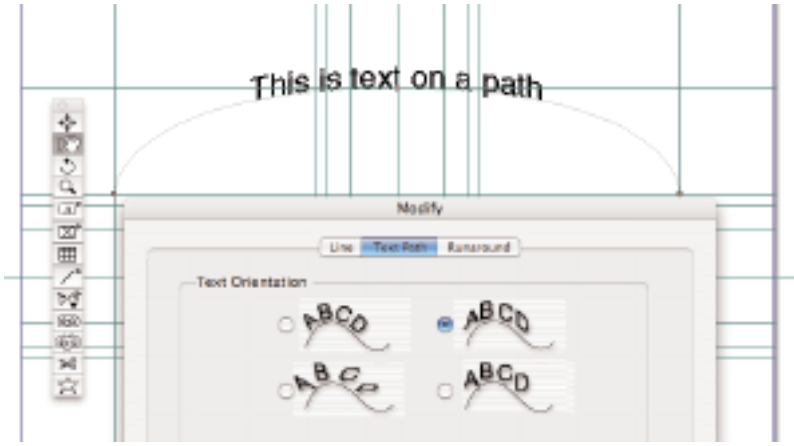
   As you can see, the orientation of path text is based on how the *baselines* of each character are positioned relative to the path on which they lie. The default orientation is shown in the upper-left corner; each character's baseline is positioned on a plane relative to the portion of the curve beneath it.

8. Select the option on the lower left corner and click the Apply button.

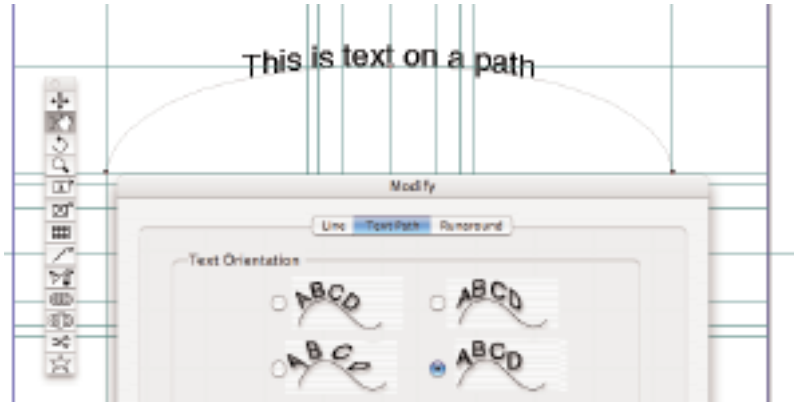
   This orientation option attempts to skew each character relative to the overall shape of the line on which the text is placed; it's not our favorite, but is meant to simulate a three-dimensional shape in which the type leans towards the viewer on upward slanting slopes and away from the viewer on descending portions of the curve.



9. Activate the radio button for the upper-right option. This fits the baseline to the curve itself, distorting the characters to match the shape. The upright portions of each *glyph* (character) remain perpendicular to the path.



10. Activate the radio button for the lower-right option. This keeps the baseline aligned to the horizontal while forcing each character to follow the curve on which it's been placed.



11. Activate the default (top-left) option and click OK.
12. Save the file, and keep it open for the next exercise.

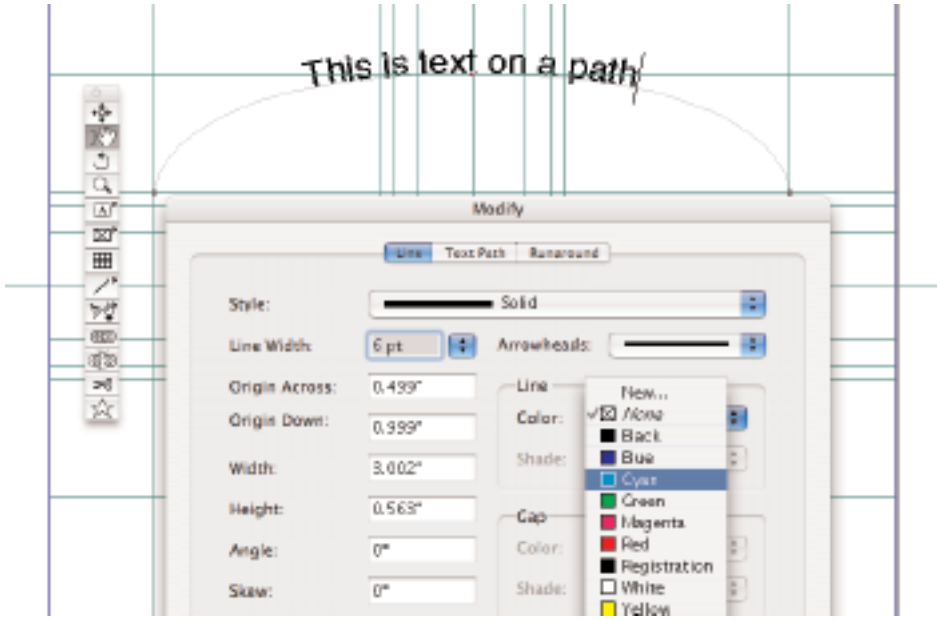
ALIGN PATH-TEXT BASELINES TO A SHAPE

You can also control the position of the baseline relative to the line on which it's been placed. This alignment refers to the *vertical* alignment of the text; whether the baseline sits above, on, or below the path itself.

The best way to visualize the effect of modifying the vertical alignment of text relative to the path on which is sits is to make that path really visible. By default, a text path is set to a hairline width with no assigned color. In this exercise you're going to make the line 6 points wide and change its color to cyan.

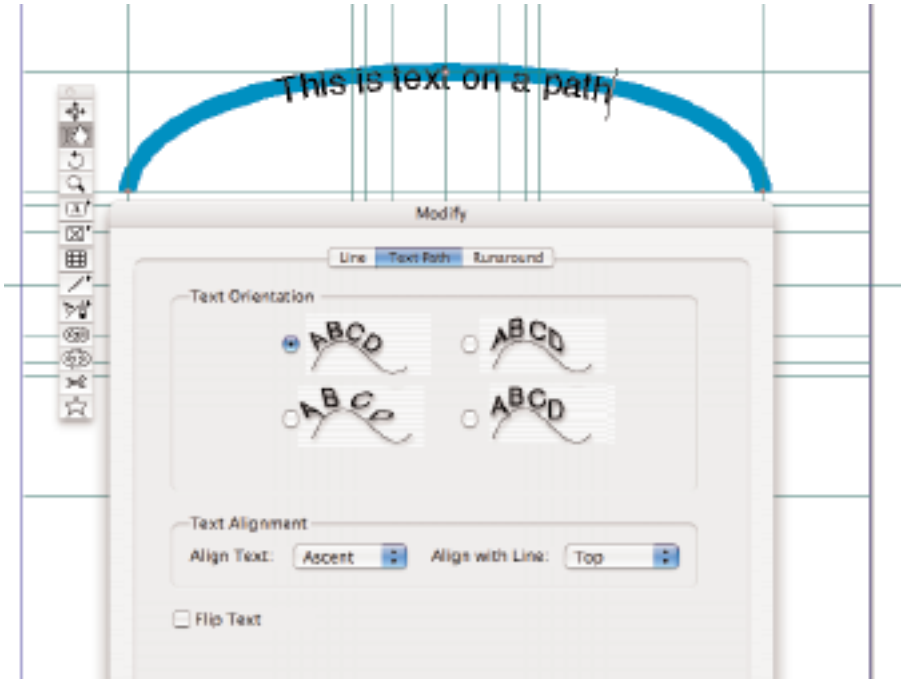
1. If it's not already selected with the Content tool, select the text that you placed on the path in the previous exercise. Choose Format>Modify and dislay the Line tab.

2. Change the line width to 6 pt. and choose Cyan in the Color menu. Click Apply.



3. Display the Text Path tab. Choose Ascent from the Align Text menu and Top from the Align with Line menu; click Apply.

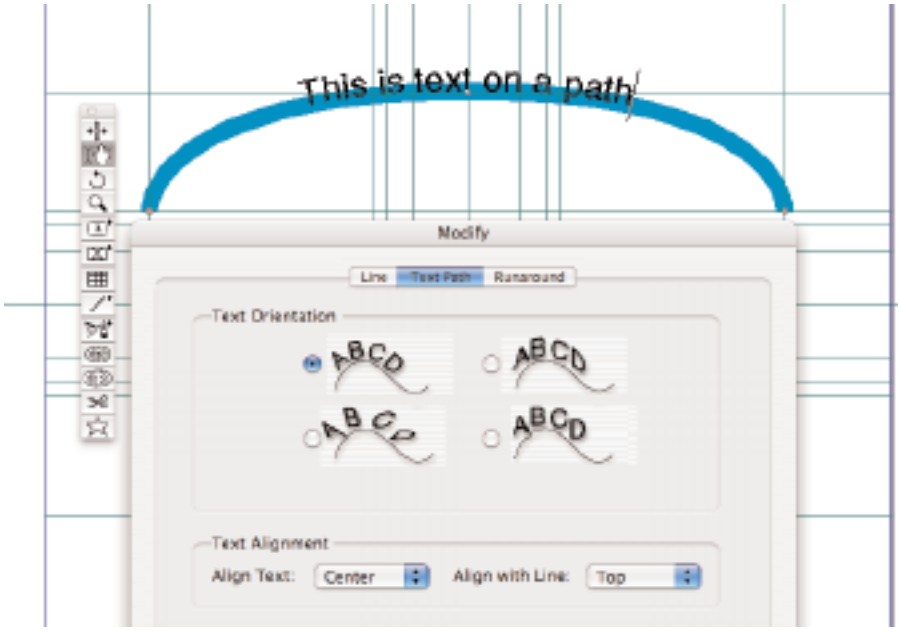
   This option aligns the very top of the capital "T" (and any other capital letters in the font) with the top of the (now) thick cyan line.



4. Choose Center in the Align Text menu and click Apply.

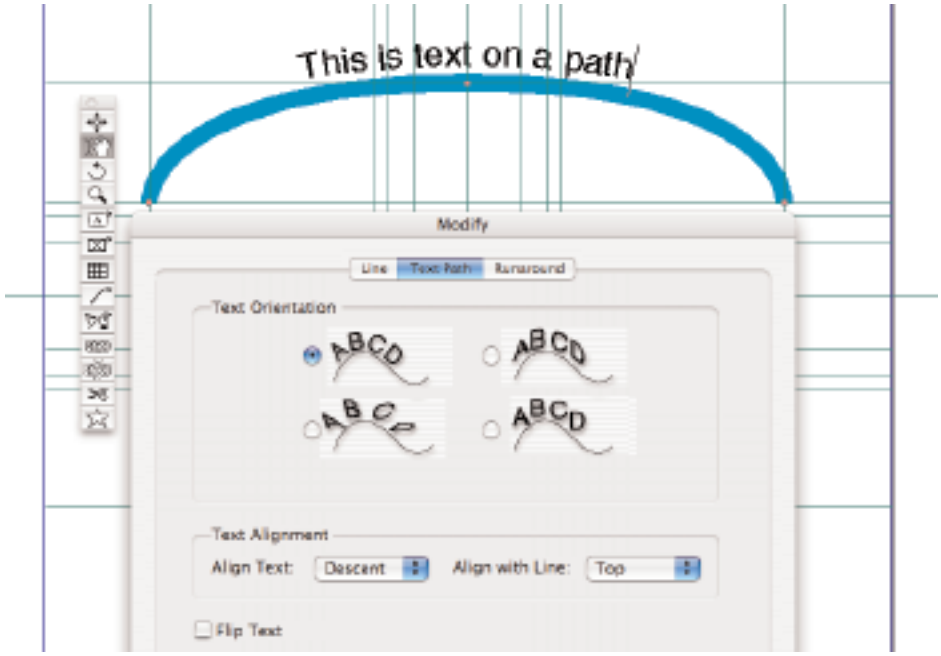
   This option aligns the baseline of the text with the center of the cyan line.

   Again, think baseline. The baseline is the bottom of a capital latter or the bottom of the main portion of a character with a *descender* or "tail". (The letter "p" has such a tail; it extends below the imaginary line that defines the bottom of a capital letter (the "T" in this example).

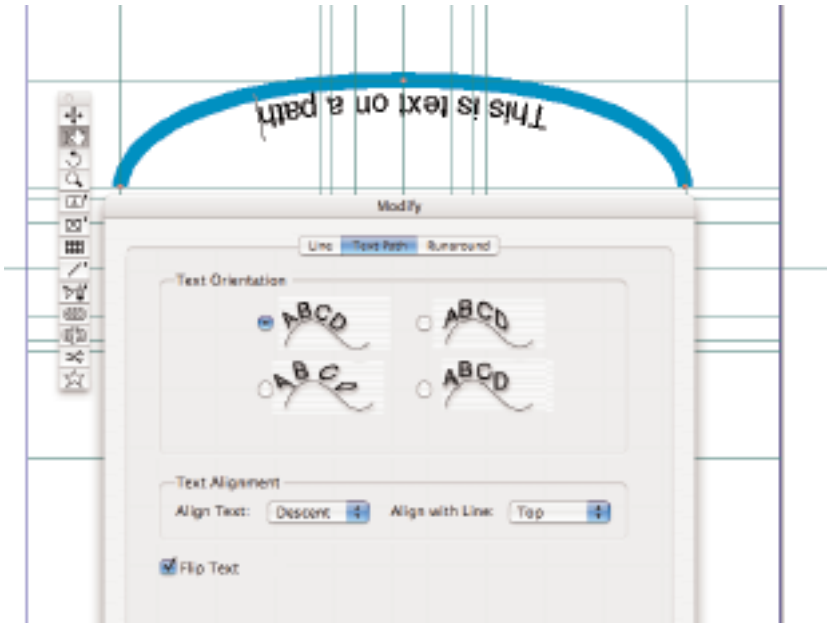


5. Select the Descent option and click Apply.

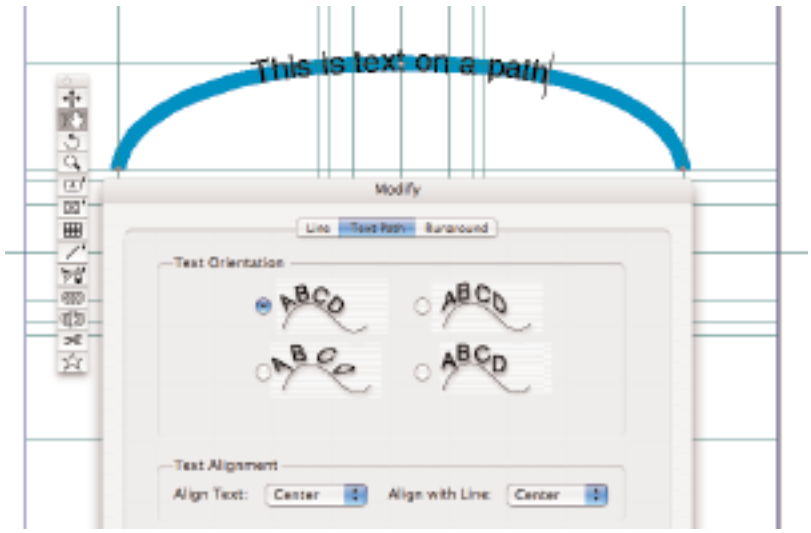
   The lower-case "p" in "path" has a descender. Selecting the Descent option positions the bottom of the tail exactly on the top of the cyan line.



6. Activate the Flip Text check box and click Apply.



7. Uncheck the Flip Text box, then change both Text Alignment menus to Center and click Apply.



8. Save the file and close it.

As you can see, being able to place type on a path is relatively simple, yet the variety of options you have available to you relative to positioning, alignment, and path characteristics are almost unlimited. Using your imagination and a careful approach to selecting fonts appropriate to the task, you'll soon be generating graphics directly within QuarkXPress that will look like they were done using a dedicated illustration application.

Applying Yourself to the Concepts

Now that you've had a chance to work with the basic concepts behind putting type on a path, you should spend time applying what you've learned to your own work.

Here's a fictional job assignment that you might consider using to get some practice with the techniques you've just covered. It will require applying everything you just tried along with some things you'll have to figure out on your own.

This image was created entirely within QuarkXPress and incorporated line styles, path text, regular paths, and the Star tool. We also used Layers to help us organize the various elements — of which there were quite a few — while we were building the logo.