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Forgotten Rules and Style of Typesetting

The Desktop Publishing Revolution put the power to set type—for better or worse—in the hands of the masses. Here are a few typesetting rules and best practices we should revive now in the age of InDesign.

By **PARIAH S. BURKE**

I wasn't around for the evolution of written language,¹ but I have witnessed the *devolution* of written communication in the last several decades.

Over the past 5,500 years, the power of widely distributed written communication has been a privilege given first to the individual, then to the many, then—thanks to desktop publishing—to the masses. Yet it has taken a mere six decades for the masses to abuse written language to the point of miscommunication, near subliteracy, and bad typesetting.

Look at your keyboard. Look closely at the marks on your top row of number keys; now at the keys surrounding the Enter or Return key. The punctuation you see there represents only slightly better than half the punctuation marks in the English language.

If English contains so many more glyphs (or characters), why don't we have keys for them on our keyboards? Two simple reasons: Economics of size, and ignorance.

Historically, typewriters began the devolution of the written word as a matter of practicality. After all, to add all those other glyphs on an iron and plastic typewriter would have

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made the already unwieldy device larger, heavier, and harder to use. Today's computer keyboards are descendants of typewriters, of course, and few companies want to risk changing a system that everyone is already used to. You'll see dozens of additional buttons added to keyboards for controlling media players, Web browsers, and e-mail applications, yet the simple hyphen still stands in for six different kinds of dashes. You can jump to your Web browser's home page with a single button press, but—as you'll soon see—you need three fingers to make an em dash.

Ignorance plays an even greater role in typesetting's sad slide into its current state. Most of the correct punctuation and spaces are in our digital fonts and are accessible within our applications, but many users don't know why or how to use them. That's where this article comes in. While by no means exhaustive, here are a few of the rules and best practices for setting text in the English language.

Style

Style, in this case, does not refer to Pantone swatches and typeface aesthetics. Rather, here we're exploring grammatical style—what you should (or shouldn't) type. The correct and consistent application of punctuation and English grammar rules is as important as the composition, tone, and imagery of a project. In many ways, getting the copy right is more important because pictures and visual devices communicate a message on their own, whereas text is solely a vehicle for communicating a message comprised of words.

While those who read your typeset copy may not—and, in fact, *should* not—notice when everything is right, they will often notice—if only on some deeply unconscious level—when something's wrong.

Jack and Jill went up that hill *really* just to fetch a pail of water?!

FIGURE 1: Double punctuation, a kickstand on a pickup truck.

Single Ending Punctuation. Double punctuation such as that in **Figure 1** is a kickstand on a pickup truck: It serves no purpose and looks idiotic. Is it a question or an exclamatory statement? Pick one and live with it. If you can't tell that the sentence is a question without a question mark, rewrite it. Use strong language—words, not punctuation or all caps—to convey strong emotions and emphasis.

Ellipsis. An ellipsis, used to signify an incomplete or implied thought, consists of three dots. Some people add a period following an ellipsis for a total of four dots because they've been taught that the only punctuation capable of ending sentences are periods, question marks, and exclamation points. The ellipsis *is* a sentence endmark, but for sentences that have not ended; the ellipsis signifies that the statement is incomplete, that there was more to the thought left unwritten. A period, by contrast, ends a complete thought. The two are diametrically opposed and can't be used together. Either the thought is complete or it isn't.

On the Internet, it's common to see an ellipsis consisting of four, five, six, or 45 dots. That doesn't make it correct. More dots does not equate to greater emphasis anywhere but

The mouse ran up the clock...
The mouse ran up the clock...

FIGURE 2: Three periods (top) do not make an ellipsis (bottom).

in the correspondence of 13-year-olds who shouldn't be faulted for not knowing better (unlike a grown-up graphic designer).

It's also important to note that an ellipsis is *not* three periods. The dots are often smaller than periods, and with more space between them, as seen in **Figure 2**. Some people even prefer to make their own ellipsis with a combination of periods and non-breaking spaces.

at the helm. Mr. Fargas
at the helm. Mr. Fargas

FIGURE 3: The need for double spaces with typewriters (top), and the lack of need with digital type (bottom).

Single Space After a Sentence. In typewriter days, monospaced serif typefaces (such as Courier) ruled the planet. When sentences ended in certain wide, blocky characters like *m* and *h*, periods often crowded ending serifs to the point of rendering the period indistinguishable from the letter (**Figure 3**). It wasn't always clear when one sentence had ended and another begun. This was especially true when the next sentence began with a proper name, mooting the cue of capitalization. To compensate, the practice of separating sentences with double spaces was adopted.

Computer-set type no longer suffers from the kerning issue of indistinguishable periods, but the practice of entering two spaces following a sentence (that ends in any punctuation) remains. Why? Ignorance.

The limitation of typewriters forced the universal adoption of the double-space work-around, and, when computers replaced typewriters in American business, no one remembered the reason the practice developed in the first place. Two spaces after a period (or any punctuation) persists because, as far as most business people—and still many designers—know, that's how it has always been done. And, if it's always been done that way, it must be a rule, right?

1. Mary had a little lamb—it was salty.
2. Jack be nimble. Jack be quick. Jack jumped over the candle—
Eek! Stop, drop, and roll, Jack! Stop, drop, and roll!
3. Little Miss Muffet sat on a tuffet—does the average child know
what this is these days?—eating her curds and whey.
4. For the Wolf, it was about challenging himself by blowing
down progressively more resilient structures—straw, twig, brick.
5. Little Boy Blue, come blow your horn—the cow's in the corn.

FIGURE 4: Em dashes are commonly used—not just in nursery rhymes.

Em Dashes. As the name implies, an em dash is often equal to the width of a given typeface's capital *M*. (Though they're often far wider than the *M* character in condensed, script, and other typefaces.) Em dashes are perhaps the most commonly used punctuation character not already on the computer keyboard. They signify a break in thought and often replace parenthesis, colons, or semicolons—and sometimes

commas—when those marks don't convey the strength or context required.

As you can see in **Figure 4**, em dashes are used in a variety of situations.

For an example of how *not* to set em dashes, you need look no further than the most widely used set of grammatical style rules for journalists, the *Associated Press Style Guide*. The *AP Style Guide* says that em dashes should be surrounded by spaces.

Em dashes are frequently used in written English. They're important, and so is their correct and consistent application. Two hyphens are not an em dash — they're two hyphens. That was the typewriter workaround, using two hyphens. This same hack persists today largely as a result of ignorance, but also to circumvent limitations on the Web and other digital media where em dashes are either impossible or overly difficult to use.

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FIGURE 5: Too much of a good thing (top), and just right (bottom).

as those typed with the keyboard's Spacebar. With some typefaces, all you need is word-em dash-word; with others, however, the dash could seem to run into the glyphs on either end. In such cases, bracket your em dashes with thin or hair spaces. I typically try the hair space first, which is narrower than the thin, then move up if necessary. Remember: Your goal is to keep just enough separation between the em dash and words at its ends to keep all glyphs distinguishable, without introducing distractingly wide white space. Both hair and thin spaces are found on InDesign's **Type > Insert White Space** menu.

There *are* times when it's necessary to insert full spaces around em dashes. Em dashes are treated by most software as non-breaking dashes; if a sentence must wrap at the point of an em dash, the application wraps both the dash and the words on either end of it. When the surrounding words are more than a few letters each, the result can be an overly deep rag or large gaps between words in fully justified text.

Results are even worse on the Web because browsers have no concept of paragraph composition or hyphenation. Fortunately, InDesign *does* recognize em dashes as breaking characters and *will* wrap such phrases correctly—after the em dash.

The AP requires that spaces flank an em dash to accommodate line breaks and wrapping; one aspect of readability is sacrificed to preserve another. Whether that's an appropriate trade-off depends on your perspective. Now that InDesign and InCopy correctly account

For a visual example of why the AP *Style Guide* is wrong, see **Figure 5**. The upper example includes an em dash flanked by spaces. Without reading, quickly roll your eyes across the paragraph. Can you spot the em dash? Of course you can; it attracts your eye like rivers did in the days before InDesign's multi-line/paragraph composer. How about the lower paragraph? Not as obvious there, but enough of a break in the sentence to get the meaning across without yanking your eye out of lines above or below the dash.

The lower example actually *does* contain spaces—but not full spaces such

Note

Illustrator and Photoshop, although trained as InDesign's text-handling apprentices, have not learned how to properly break lines ending in em dashes. Illustrator and Photoshop will break them, but in doing so, they transform the em dash into a hyphen. The net result is that an offset clause or list becomes a compound word, which is much worse than wrapping the em dash and its connected words.

for em dashes and line breaks, other software should begin to follow suit. Eventually even the AP should return to proper grammatical use of this common punctuation mark.

En Dashes and Hyphens

Unlike em dashes, en dashes are rarely the width of a typeface's capital *N*. Instead, they're generally exactly half the width of an em dash. Their usage is even more versatile than their more corpulent brother em, but even less consistently employed in modern digital typesetting. Many people consider the shorter, thicker hyphen as interchangeable with the en dash. That's understandable but incorrect.

Hyphens are only correctly used in five situations in English writing. First and foremost, hyphens break words syllabically where lines wrap—thus InDesign's Paragraph palette Hyphenate option. Their next major function is to join compound words such as *table-top* and what are called *nonce* compound words and phrases—compounds created only for use in a specific situation, like *Ms. Gotta-Be-All-I-Can-Be*. Similarly, hyphens are used when writing a list of compound words that share a common ending; for example: *Two-, four-, and eight-point increments*. The final two proper uses of hyphens are when spelling out a word (e.g. *p-i-c-a*) and when writing prefixes or suffixes of words, as in this example: *More than one pica is picas, although you will hear pica, without the -s, used in the plural, too*.

En dashes, by contrast, are used in place of the words *to*, *through*, or *from*, such as in a range of numbers or dates. For example:

Incorrect (hyphen):	12-14 pts leading
Correct (en dash):	12–14 pts leading
Incorrect (hyphen):	Claude Garamond 1490-1561
Correct (en dash):	Claude Garamond 1490–1561

En dashes are also used in specific instances of compounds words, but these are not so simply defined, which is why many designers ignore the poor en dash all together. For the sake of clarity, let's leave those compound word rules for another time.

En dashes, like hyphens, should never be surrounded by full-width spaces, though a judicious use of a hair or thin space is sometimes warranted if the en dash is jostling its neighbors.

Readability

The plain (and kind of disheartening) truth of typesetting is that, the better it's done, the less anyone will notice. Text is made to be read—and in order. Make the text perfect, and readers' eyes should move through the type effortlessly, easily tracking back and forth through the lines, moving from one paragraph to the next, never losing their place in copy. No typographical construct should jar a reader's eye out of one sentence and into another.

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Inserting Expanded Punctuation

So, how *do* you insert em dashes, ellipses, and the other common punctuation and special characters missing from your keyboard? There are several ways. Within InDesign, you can use the Glyphs palette or the Type > Insert Special Character menu (**Figure 6**). If you don't like the default keyboard shortcuts, you can always change them with the Edit > Keyboard Shortcuts command.

And, as you might expect, most such characters have standard keyboard shortcuts that can be used within InDesign and other applications. I've called them out in the table below, plus a few that InDesign left off the Insert Special Character menu. Note that, on Windows, the following shortcuts require the use of your keyboard's numeric keypad and will not work with the top row of numbers.

InDesign has alternate keyboard shortcuts in the default set for most of the symbols below—especially on Windows where nearly all the special symbols already have predefined keyboard shortcuts. These shortcuts are typically InDesign-only, though, whereas the ALT+ codes shown below work in *any* Windows application. (Can you sense an impending cool tip?) The ALT+ codes are universal (and thus more useful), so why not use them and reassign all those InDesign-only shortcuts to different InDesign commands? The Change Case commands would be an excellent choice for your first four shortcuts. For more on Change Case commands, see the sidebar “Busting a (Small) Cap” on page 15.

Of course, if you do your own copywriting in InDesign CS2, InCopy CS2, or Microsoft Word, you can often forego these shortcuts and use Autocorrect to replace your typewriter-style punctuation with correct punctuation on the fly.

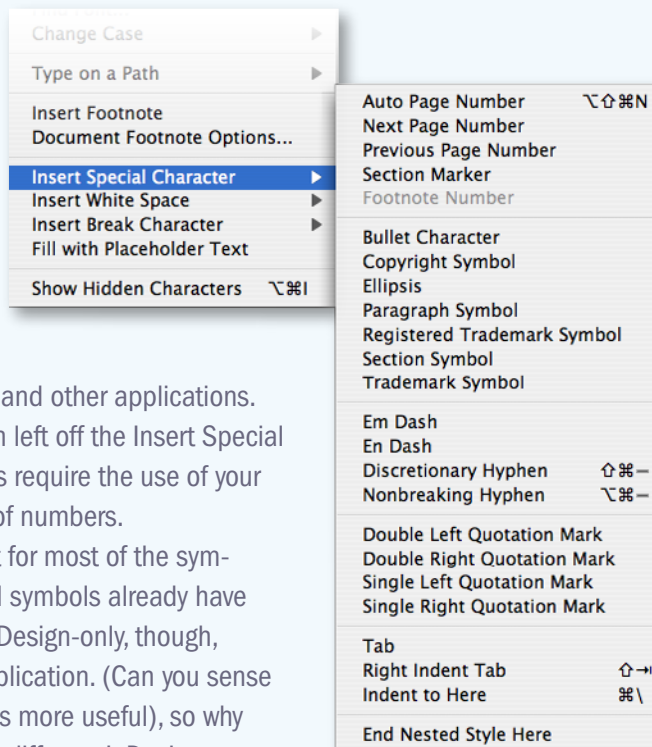


FIGURE 6: InDesign's Insert Special Character menu (shown on Mac InDesign).

Glyph		Mac	Windows
Em Dash	—	SHIFT+OPT+-	ALT+0151
En Dash	-	OPT+-	ALT+0150
Ellipsis	...	OPT+;	ALT+0133
Paragraph (Pilcrow) Symbol	¶	OPT+7	ALT+0182
Section Symbol	§	OPT+6	ALT+0167
Degree Symbol	°	SHIFT+OPT+8	ALT+0176
Dagger Symbol	†	OPT+T	ALT+0134
Double Dagger Symbol	‡	SHIFT+OPT+7	ALT+0135
Bullet Character	•	OPT+8	ALT+0149
Middle Dot	·	SHIFT+OPT+9	ALT+0183
Cent Symbol	¢	OPT+4	ALT+0162
Copyright Symbol	©	OPT+G	ALT+0169
Trademark Symbol	™	OPT+2	ALT+0153
Registered Trademark Symbol	®	OPT+R	ALT+0174



FIGURE 7: Hello, again, hello. I would recognize your shape anywhere.

All Caps

Human reading studies over the last twenty-odd years have resulted in two schools of thought. One postulates that we don't read the letters of familiar words so much as recognize their shape. The other believes that it's the shape of letters and letter pairings we recognize more than the shape of their containing words. Regardless of which theory proves true, we don't see and interpret the meaning of each letter in every word we read: We read by *shape* association. Anyone who has ever sent a typo to press after multiple rounds of proofreading should recognize that truth.

Take a common word like *hello*. It see-saws up and down, with high points and low, roughly square spaces, and familiar arrangements of straight lines, curves, and open areas. When presented in lowercase, as in **Figure 7**, the usage is so familiar that hardly anyone needs to devote brain power to sounding out individual letters and sounds.

Consider the same word set in all caps in **Figure 8**. Or how about small caps? Not quite as instantly recognizable, is it?

Setting type in all caps or small caps slows down reader comprehension. It forces people to actually *read* the text, recognizing each letter's meaning and sound, and rebuilding the sound and definition of the word. It's a slower and more taxing process than reading mixed case—the norm in the vast majority of the thousands of words we read on any given day. Setting an uncommon word in all caps or small caps doubles the effort and time of recognition because uncommon words must be interpreted anyway.

Capitalizing copy has a benefit (emphasis) and a cost (making the reader work harder and slowing word-per-minute reading time). When one outweighs the other, typeset accordingly. Readers will make the same choice: If the benefit of all caps outweighs the cost, they'll read it.

However, never set more than three consecutive lines in all caps—fewer if the type is small, the line is long, or if it contains long, uncommon, or unfamiliar words. Here are several other best practices for setting all-caps lines of text:

- Increase the point size.
- The higher the leading, the better (within reason).
- Be careful about adjusting character scaling as that impacts letter shape recognition.
- Sans serif all caps tend to be more recognizable than serif or display typefaces.

- Don't use monospaced or fixed-width typefaces.
- Don't combine italics with all caps.
- Don't loosen or tighten the tracking any more than 5 percent.



FIGURE 8: Hello... Do I know you?

Small Caps

With few exceptions, when you use capitals in paragraph text, they should be small caps. In paragraphs and even single lines of text, small caps blend better with their surrounding



text. They retain the greater importance of capitalized letters but are less obtrusive. Using small caps creates a sense of belonging—of type unity and continuity—that’s missing when normal capital letters are used for more than the initial letters of sentences and proper names.

Genuine small caps are capital letters drawn at the size of lowercase; they’re not scaled-down versions of regular caps. Depending on the typeface, they may be more open and slightly wider, proportionally, than caps and lowercase glyphs, to increase readability. Because the stroke weights of small caps match those of capital and lowercase letters in the same font, they look deliberate and intentional, like they belong, not spindly, scaled-down afterthoughts.

Before OpenType fonts and InDesign introduced instant-on small caps, creating them was, at best, a chore of selectively changing fonts to an alternate or “expert” version; at worst, it was an easy single-button click that scaled capitals down to 70–85% size, with commensurate reduction of stroke weights. Typewriters, of course, had no such small caps function, which nearly led to the obsolescence of small caps. With OpenType fonts (and application support for them), genuine small caps are making a resurgence, although when and where to use them is still a mystery to many designers.

The style rules are simple: Capitals are required to begin a sentence or proper noun

Beginning a sentence about Mr. John Q. Public, CPA...
USAF Col. John J. Jameson today joined the NASA expedition to...
Logo deadline: 9:30AM
...of the written language around 3000 B.C.E.
As first reported here on DESIGNORATI...
8.5 x 14 INCHES

(**Figure 9**). In all other cases, small caps are preferred. Such instances include time and era notations, measurement and monetary shorthand, acronyms, and capitalized abbreviations.

Rules governing the usage of small caps are the most often bent in the interests of style. *USA Today* and the *Atlantic Monthly*, for example, use small caps only for acronyms and initials of three or more letters. Small caps are used to set “NASA” or “WYSIWYG,” while “U.S.” and “PM” are left in normal

caps. Within the magazine *Newsweek* and my *Designorati* Web site, small caps are used to set the name of the publication within its own pages, creating an aesthetic separation between other publication titles that are italicized mixed case. *Popular Science* varies the practice slightly by setting its moniker POPSCI in mixed caps and small caps.

Like all caps, setting an entire line of text in small caps carries a readability cost. In some instances, such as with mixed-case capital letters combined with small caps, it’s a lower cost because variable heights restore a small measure of shape recognition. Usually, however, the cost is higher because small caps are relatively rare and force readers to interpret a new set of shapes. Floating on their own, without type set in other cases, small caps are seen simply as capitals. Among mixed case, they can be jarring to the eye because they are neither the familiar shapes of capitals nor the more familiar lowercase.

FIGURE 9: Caps and small caps, living and working together in harmony.

Never set more than two consecutive lines in small caps—or just one if the type is small, the line is long, or if it contains long, uncommon, or unfamiliar words. When setting lines comprised entirely of caps and small caps, let the following best practices guide you:

- Increase point size slightly.
- The higher the leading, the better (within reason).
- Be very careful about adjusting character width.
- Sans serif typefaces increase shape recognition.
- Don't use monospaced or fixed-width typefaces.
- Don't combine italics with small caps.
- Don't loosen or tighten the tracking any more than 5 percent of the point size.

Numerals

Letters are not one-size-fits-all, so why should we expect numbers to be?

Once again, typewriters had limited space in their fonts, so sacrifices were made. One sacrifice readily arrived at by the developers of those machines were proportional-height numerals (sometimes known as “oldstyle” numerals).

With their uniform X-heights and lack of ascenders and descenders, monospaced tabular lining figures are the ideal for producing columns of data such as you might find in spreadsheets, price lists, menus, and inventory reports. But there are plenty of other uses

for numerals besides these, and in those cases, numbers that are proportional in width or height (or both) often make more sense.

OpenType fonts and InDesign have now restored the ability to use correct sets of numerals for both tabular data as well as passages of text. **Figure 10** shows a paragraph of type including, at the top, typical computer-set numerals—lining, sharing a uniform height but proportional width.

Try reading the passage and not being distracted by the figures as your eye draws nearer to them. In paragraph text, lining numerals look like capital letters, and have the same

For at least 5,500 years, human beings have been communicating in writing. Although high school Social Studies classes credit Mesopotamia for the invention of written language around 3000 B.C.E., recent discoveries in Luxor, Egypt and Harappa, Pakistan predate the Mesopotamian finds by five hundred years. None of these civilizations had any known connection, which presents the theory that writing developed independently but roughly simultaneously. I'm inclined to believe this theory. I wasn't around for the evolution of written language, but I have been witness to decades of devolvement of written communication—so have you.

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FIGURE 10: Standing out in a crowd is not a good thing if the crowd is a paragraph of text. Lining numerals (top) are distracting, while oldstyle numerals (bottom) blend to allow smooth reading.

affect on readability that all-caps words have: needless distraction.

Look at the lower example of Figure 10. Glancing quickly at the passage, do the numerals stand out? Look at their mixed heights and how some descend below the baseline. Don't they look more in place and part of the text flow than the top-most example? These are proportional-height numerals, referred to in OpenType as “oldstyle” for their relative

absence since the rise of the typewriter. Like alphabetic words, they see-saw up and down, allowing their presence to blend in with the flow of text rather than jutting out from it.

InDesign cs2.....US\$699.00	InDesign cs2.....us\$699.00
InCopy cs2249.00	InCopy cs2249.00
Adobe Garamond Pro OpenType168.99	Adobe Garamond Pro OpenType168.99
<i>InDesign Magazine</i> #1111.00	<i>InDesign Magazine</i> #1111.00
Typesetting perfect numerals.....Priceless	Typesetting perfect numerals.....Priceless

FIGURE 11: Tabular lining numerals have their place—in aligned data (right). Proportional oldstyle figures (left) are better left for paragraph text.

or the right-hand example, using fixed-width and consistent height numerals?

Short lists of numbers may employ Proportional Oldstyle (variable width and height) figures as a stylistic choice. In such cases, readability is still diminished, but the length of the list—up to, say, ten items—makes the readability impact negligible. Other fonts include Tabular Oldstyle numerals (variable heights but fixed width), which align vertically in tables and tabbed columns, but with panache.

The terminology can be confusing. *Proportional* (variable) and *tabular* (fixed) refer to the width of numerals, while *oldstyle* (variable) and *lining* (fixed) describe the height and where numerals fall in relation to the baseline.

OpenType and InDesign include support for up to four combinations of these attributes in each typeface (**Figure 12**): Tabular Lining (fixed width and height), Tabular Oldstyle (fixed width, variable height), Proportional Lining (variable width, fixed height), and

Proportional Oldstyle (variable width and height). All four are accessible from the Character palette's menu, on the bottom of the OpenType submenu. These can also be added to paragraph and character styles, and, if chosen with all documents closed, set as the default numeral style when typing new text in future documents.

Once you understand the styles available, the rules are simple: In paragraphs of copy, where numerals mingle among mixed text, insert them as Proportional Oldstyle. Among all caps, use Proportional Lining. In tabbed lists and tables, use the Tabular fixed-width style. Within short lists, either Tabular Lining or Tabular Old Style is acceptable, but stick to Tabular Lining for long lists or multiple columns of figures.

Keep in mind a couple of tips for setting numerals:

- Try to choose OpenType fonts that include multiple figure styles or at least the appropriate figure style for the situation.
- Set the default figure style for your most common tasks—if you typically typeset paragraphs, make Proportional Oldstyle your default figure style; if you set tabular data more often, default to Tabular Lining or Tabular Oldstyle.

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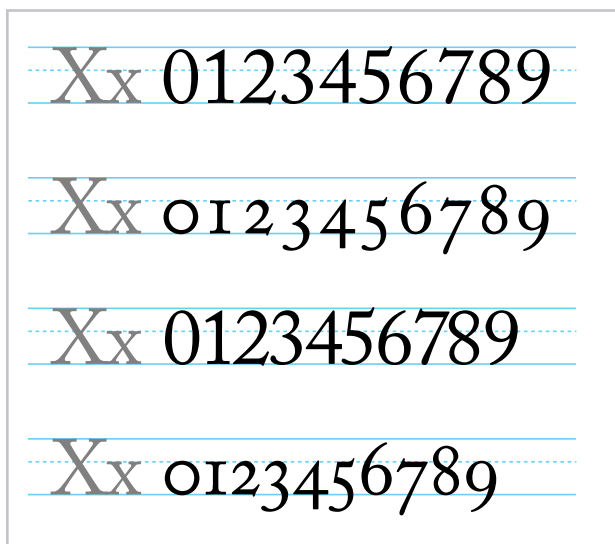


FIGURE 12: Four types of numerals available in many OpenType fonts—in this case, Adobe Caslon Pro. Top to bottom: Tabular Lining, Tabular Oldstyle, Proportional Lining, and Proportional Oldstyle.

Busting A (Small) Cap

Making small caps is easy (but it should be easier). Highlight the desired text with the Type tool (or select the text frame with the Selection tool to affect all the frame's text), and, from either the Character palette menu or the menu on the Control palette's Character mode, choose Small Caps (**Figure 13**). It's important to note that, if the selected type has any capital letters, this command will *not* make them small caps. In other words, use this command for mixed case caps and small caps. To force all characters to small caps, instead select Open Type > All Small Caps from the Character or Control palette menu.

Here's an extra useful tip: Make character styles for both Small Caps and All Small Caps. Then, next time you need them, you can avoid menus all together. Just highlight text and click once on the Character Styles palette—or use the even faster Quick Apply method. Of course, significant as it may be, convenience isn't the only reason to use a character style. By using a character style, you'll ensure that your text won't lose its small caps style if you force-apply a paragraph style to the containing paragraph or text frame.

Not all OpenType fonts contain genuine small caps. It depends on what the type designer felt was important. When a font does not contain genuine small caps, the OpenType menu will indicate that by surrounding the All Small Caps option with brackets.

Creating small caps from such fonts (or from TrueType or Type 1 Postscript fonts that obviously cannot contain additional genuine small caps glyphs) with the Character palette menu's Small Caps command will instead scale the letters down horizontally and vertically to create faux small caps. To control how faux small caps are scaled, use the Small Cap measurement field on the Advanced Type pane of InDesign's preferences. The default is 70 percent, although 80 to 85 percent often yields better results.

If you're setting words that are capitalized and shouldn't be either all caps or small caps, there's another, often overlooked, InDesign feature that might help. On the Type menu, you'll find the Change Case submenu, which will instantly convert any selected text to UPPERCASE, lowercase, Title Case, or Sentence case. Unfortunately, the change case commands are text *transformations*, not *styles*; thus they can't be saved as part of either paragraph, character, or even object styles. You'll have to manually apply them each time, which is still easier than retyping more than a couple of words here and there.

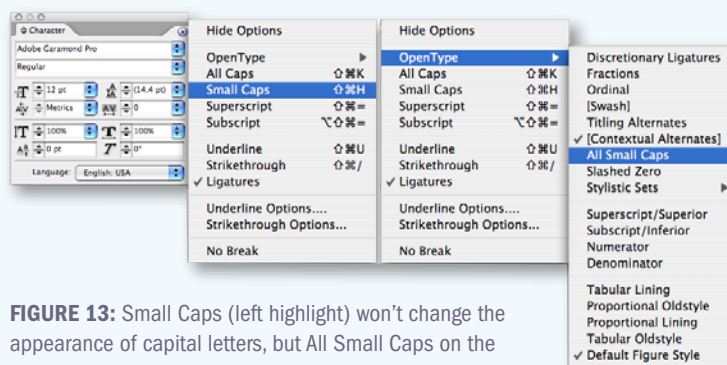


FIGURE 13: Small Caps (left highlight) won't change the appearance of capital letters, but All Small Caps on the OpenType menu (right highlight) will make all selected text small caps regardless of its actual case.



- For efficiency in documents with multiple passages of text or tables of data, include the numeral choice in paragraph styles.
- Make global character styles for other numeral styles so you may quickly apply them in different situations.
- When setting type for the Web, Monotype's Georgia typeface is a good choice, as its default (and only) figure style is Proportional Oldstyle.

Final Words

Why is it important to follow the rules? In the case of readability, the answer is self-evident. Stylistic rules are equally important—but somewhat more flexible—because text is made to be read. It serves no other purpose. Writing is the process of conveying a message, be it a commercial one, editorial, or a blog post. Typesetting is the art and craft of ensuring that written messages are as effortlessly read and comprehensible as possible, and typesetting must also follow the structure and form of the audience's language. The rules presented here are, for the most part, grammatical rules that have been part of the English language for hundreds of years. Others are best practices arrived at by those who have typeset billions of English words, sentences, and paragraphs over the same period.

This discussion has been limited to the most often-abused rules, and by what you can do today using InDesign and modern fonts. The hyphen, em dash, and en dash are by no means the only dashes in English or English typesetting. We didn't even touch on the figure dash, quotation dash, or swung dash, to say nothing of the various types of spaces. Still, it's a good start.

In the Age of InDesign, when subliterate typesetting is so prevalent, the above can help revive the lost style of typesetting and make your text more readable, reader-friendly, and stylish—just like the days before DTP and the typewriter.

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