

Best Practices - Typography

Introduction

Typography is the art and technique of composing written materials from type.

Many people hate reading text from a computer screen. Given the choice they will print content and read it from the page (have you just printed this?). As designers, we have a duty to help save trees, and our learner's eyes, by making our text as easy to read as possible!

Often e-learning courses contain far more text than they really need to. So as instructional designers, we should ensure that the text is well written, concise and easy to understand. I cover this in some of the other Best Practice Bytes.

Font selection

In general, sans serif fonts like Arial or Verdana, are easier to read than serif fonts (fonts with tails and hooks) like Times New Roman.

I recommend using Arial in a font size of 12pt for onscreen text.

Bold, italics and underlined text

Don't use *lots* of different fonts. It makes the text harder to read.

Use **Bold** for:

- Headings and subheadings;
- Avoid using it to **emphasise** words, it will take attention away from the headings.

You can use *italics* for

- Titles of published works;
- Avoid using it to *emphasise* words.

I tend to avoid using italics in e-learning text. *It makes the text harder to read, particularly if it is small.*

Only use underlined text for [hyperlinks](#).

Columns

It is harder for the eye to follow text that stretches across the screen. The eye can easily lose its place, particularly if there is a lot of text. It is harder for the eye to follow text that stretches across the screen. The eye can easily lose its place, particularly if there is a lot of text.

It is better to put text in columns, ideally around 50 characters in width. This technique is used in newspapers and magazines and works equally well on the screen.