



Typeface Anatomy

— Basic parts
of a typeface

ASCENDER

The upward vertical stem on some lowercase letters, such as 'h' and 'b', that extends above the x-height is the ascender.

APERTURE

The aperture is the partially enclosed, somewhat rounded negative space in some characters such as 'n', 'C', 'S', the lower part of 'e', or the upper part of a double-storey 'a'.

AXIS

An imaginary line drawn from top to bottom of a glyph bisecting the upper and lower strokes is the axis.

BASELINE

The imaginary line upon which the letters in a font appear to rest.

BOWL

The curved part of the character that encloses the circular or curved parts (counter) of some letters such as 'd', 'b', 'o', 'D', and 'B' is the bowl.

BRACKET

The bracket is a curved or wedge-like connection between the stem and serif of some fonts. Not all serifs are bracketed serifs.

**CAP HEIGHT**

The height from the baseline to the top of the uppercase letters (not including diacritics).

COUNTER

The enclosed or partially enclosed circular or curved negative space (white space) of some letters such as 'd', 'o', and 's'.

CROSSBAR

The (usually) horizontal stroke across the middle of uppercase 'A' and 'H' is a crossbar.

DESCENDER

Any part in a lowercase letter that extends below the baseline, found for example in 'g', 'j', 'p', 'q', 'y', etc. Some types of descenders have specific names.

EAR

Typically found on the lower case 'g', an ear is a decorative flourish usually on the upper right side of the bowl.

EYE

Much like a counter, the eye refers specifically to the enclosed space in a lowercase 'e'.

LINK/NECK

Much like a counter, the eye refers specifically to the enclosed space in a lowercase 'e'.

LOOP/LOBE

In a double-storey 'g', the loop is the enclosed or partially enclosed counter below the baseline that is connected to the bowl by a link. The enclosed or partially enclosed extenders on cursive 'p', 'b', 'l', and similar letters are also called loops.

TAIL

The descending, often decorative stroke on the letter 'Q', or the descending, often curved diagonal stroke on 'K' or 'R' is the tail.

TERMINAL

The end (straight or curved) of any stroke that doesn't include a serif.

X-HEIGHT

The height of the lowercase letters, disregarding ascenders or descenders, typically exemplified by the letter x. The relationship of the x-height to the body defines the perceived type size. A typeface with a large x-height looks much bigger than a typeface with a small x-height at the same size.

Further Reading

- FontShop Fundamentals 2
- Erik Spiekermann's Typo Tips
- Type Glossary
- Type Anatomy

Online Resources

- Fontshop.com
- FontFeed.com
- Spiekermann.com

FontShop Education

Without training the best typefaces can only go so far. That's why FontShop is more than a shop that sells fonts — we want to help you do great work too. Get more typography tips and tutorials at fontshop.com/education.

About FontShop

Founded by Erik Spiekermann and Neville Brody in 1989, FontShop is the original independent retailer of digital type. We offer more than 100,000 fonts from dozens of expert-selected foundries, including our house brand: FontFont.

Colophon

This document is set in FF Meta Headline for titles, FF Meta Serif for text, and FF Unit for captions.



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