



## 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](http://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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