

PARTS OF THE LETTER

Typography evolved from handwriting, which is created by making a series of marks by hand; therefore, the fundamental element constructing a letterform is the linear stroke (stem). Each letter of our alphabet developed as a simple mark whose visual characteristics clearly separated it from all others.

PARTS OF THE LETTER

By learning the vocabulary designers and typographers can develop a greater understanding and sensitivity to the visual harmony and complexity of the alphabet.

PARTS OF THE LETTER

As with any craft that has evolved over 500 years, typography employs a number of technical terms. We will be learning these terms throughout the semester. The following describes specific parts of letterforms. Knowing the letterform component parts will make it much easier to identify specific typeface in the future.

baseline:

the imaginary line defining the visual base of the letterform.

all letterforms sit on the baseline.




cap height:

the height of the upper case in a font, taken from the baseline to the top of the character.



x-height:

the height lowercase x. if you compare typefaces of the same point size they may not have the same x-height. all of the lowercase x's are the same point size.



bembo
old style

Immaculate typography is certainly the most brittle of all the arts. To create a whole from many petrified, disconnected and given parts, to make this whole appear alive and of a piece – only sculpture in stone approaches the unyielding stiffness of perfect typography.

8/13



baskerville
transitional

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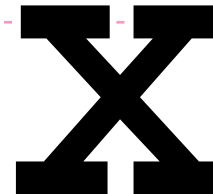
8/13



bodoni
modern

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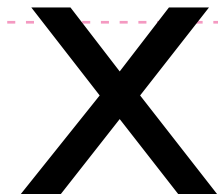
8/13



rockwell
slab serif

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8/13



futura
sans serif

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ascender

a stroke on a lowercase letter that rises above the x-height



descender

a stroke on a lowercase letterform that falls below the baseline.

serif: the short strokes that finish off the major strokes of the letterform.

bracket: a curving joint between the serif and the stroke



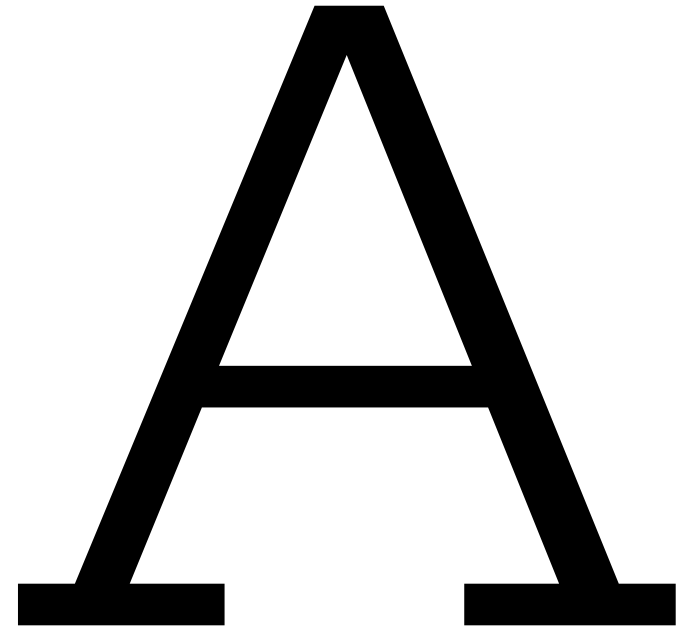
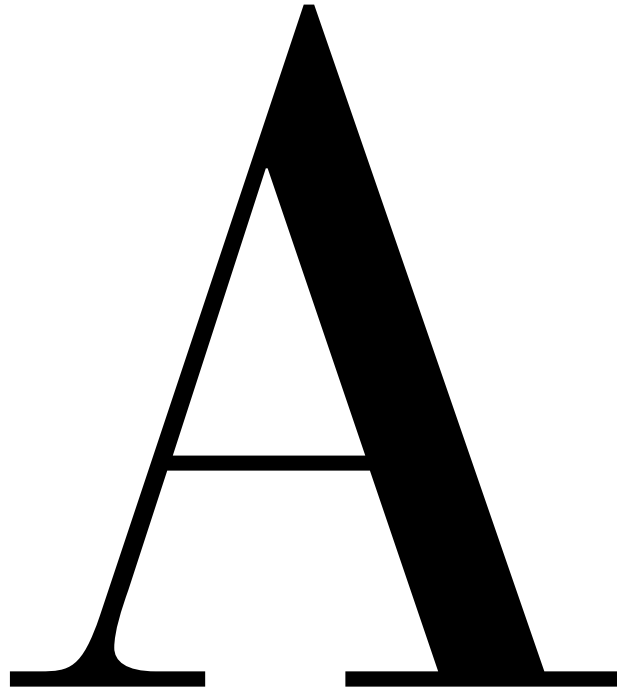
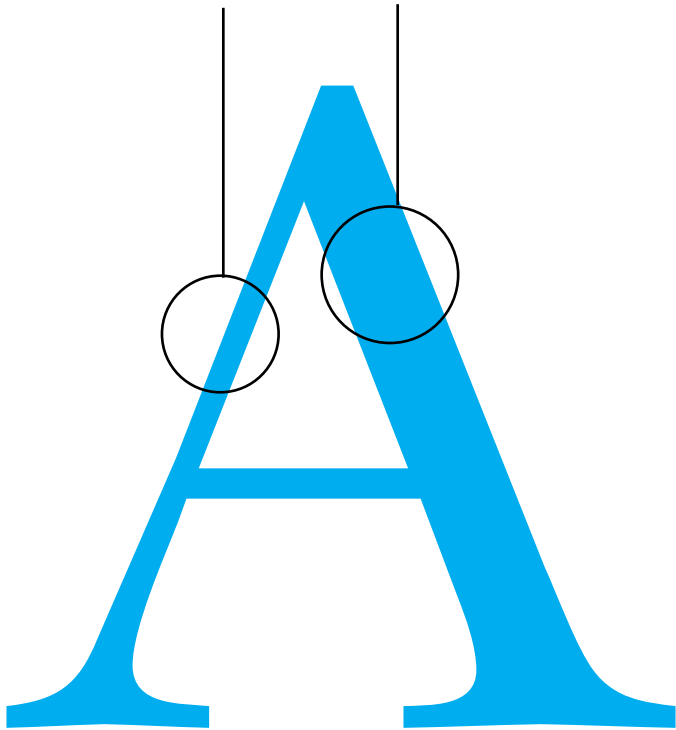
bracket

baskerville
transitional

bodoni
modern
extreme thick and thins

rockwell
slab serif
nearly mono-weight

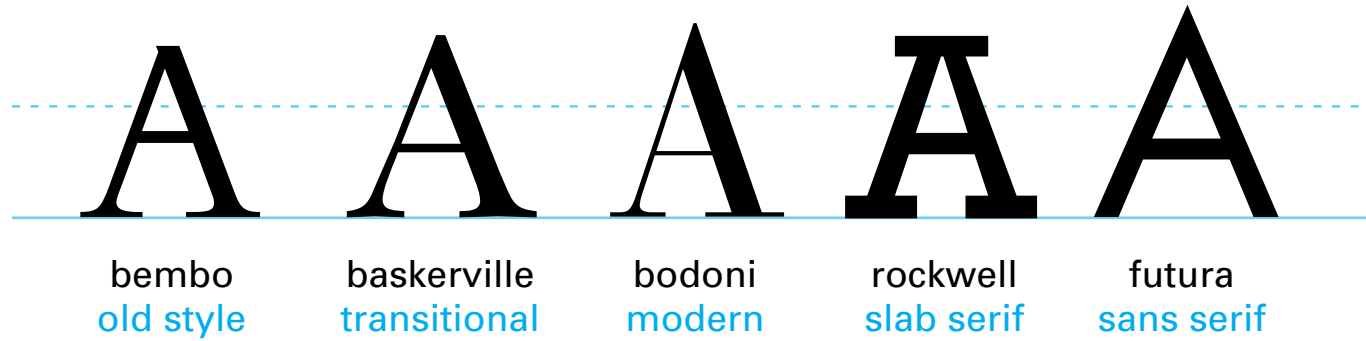
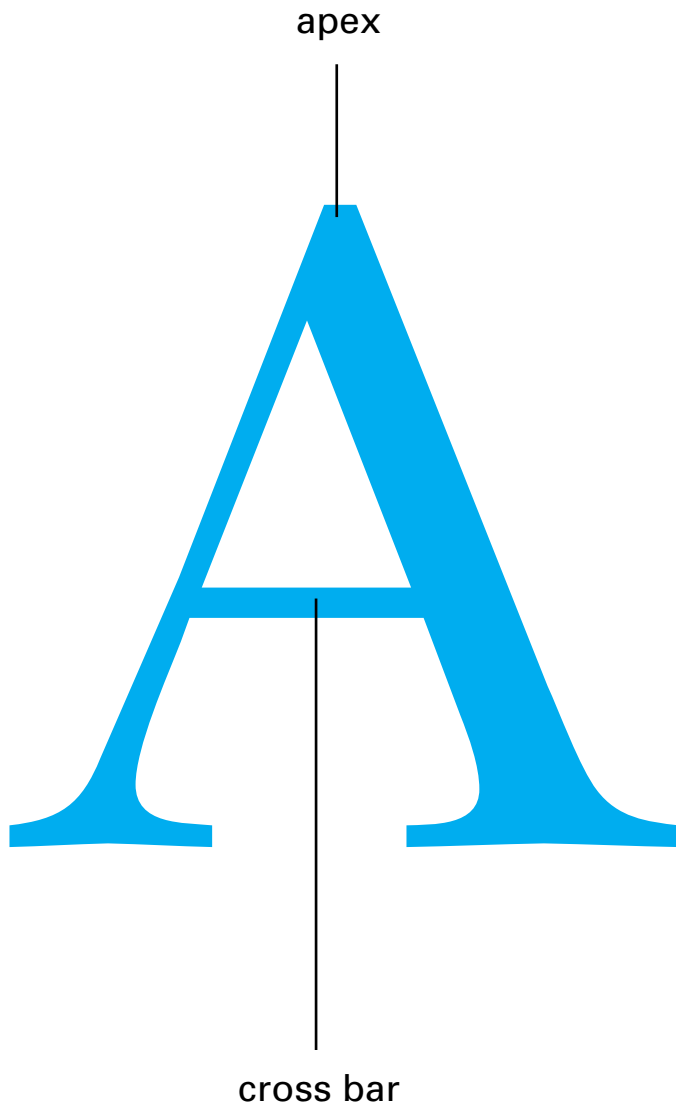
stroke width



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bodoni
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extreme thick and thins

rockwell
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nearly mono-weight



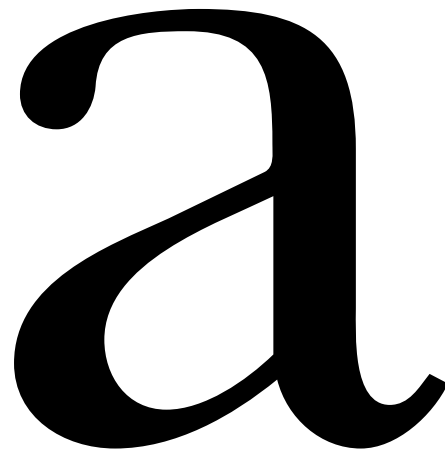


final

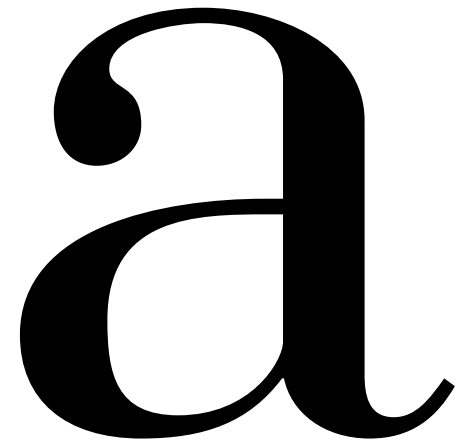


bembo
old style

terminal



baskerville
transitional



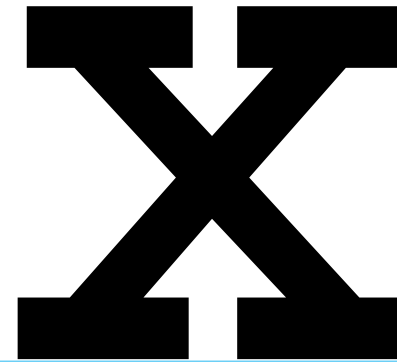
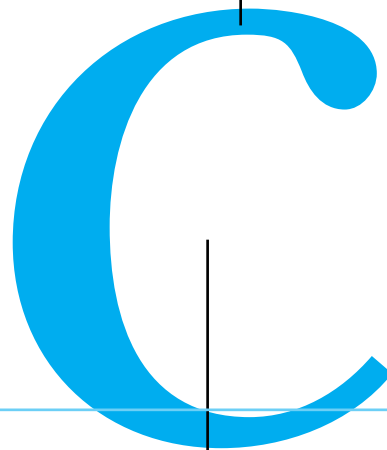
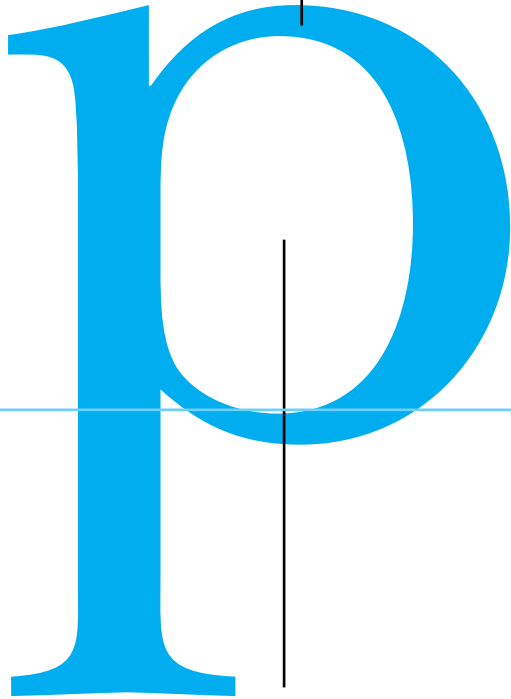
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bowl

bowl

bowl:

the rounded form that describes a counter. the bowl may be either open or closed



counter

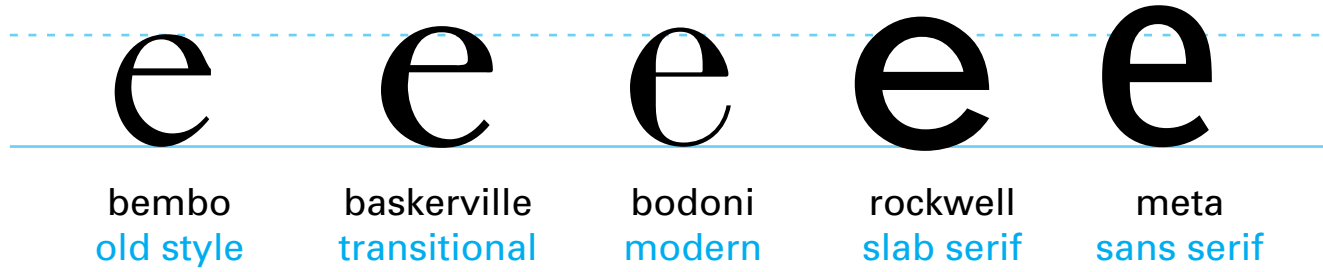
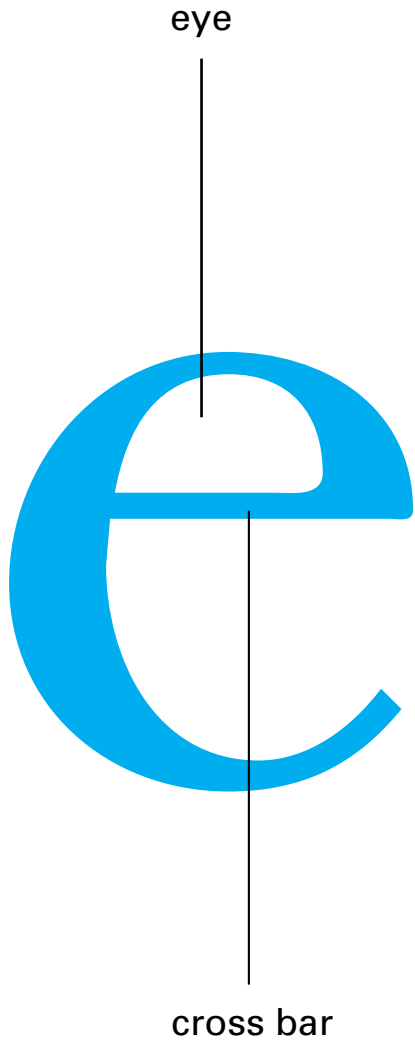
counter

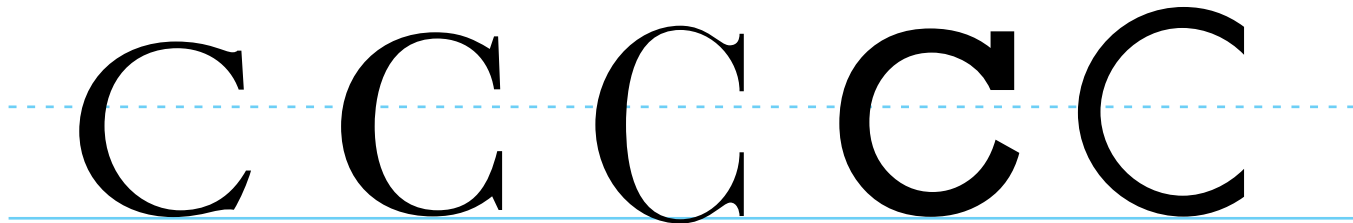
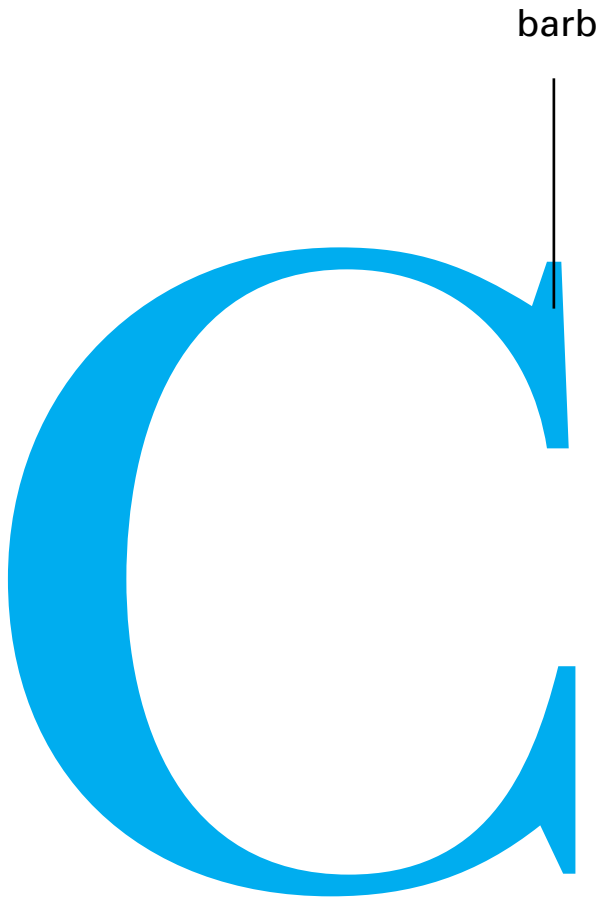
counter:

the negative space within a letterform either fully or partially enclosed.



example:
of how counterform can be used in design and especially logos.





bembo
old style

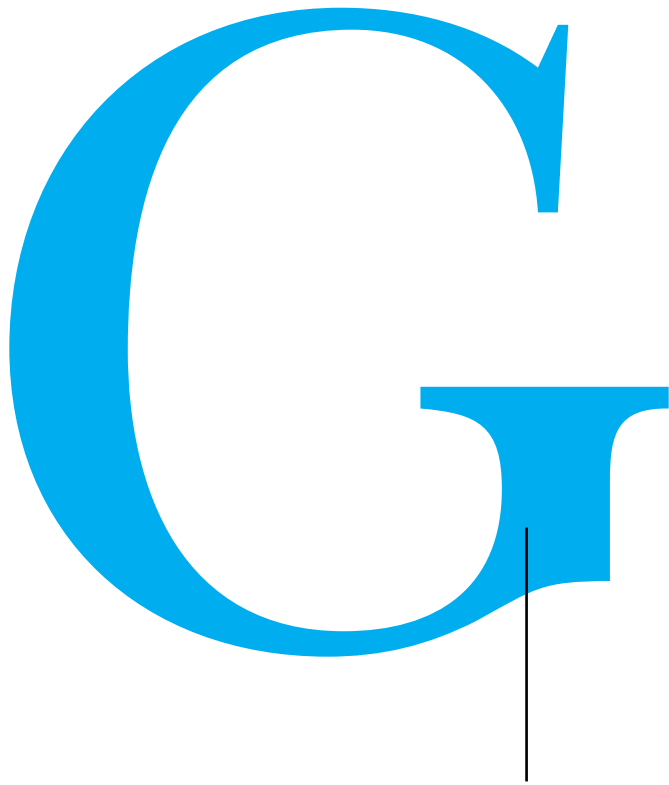
baskerville
transitional

bodoni
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rockwell
slab serif

futura
sans serif

b b



spur



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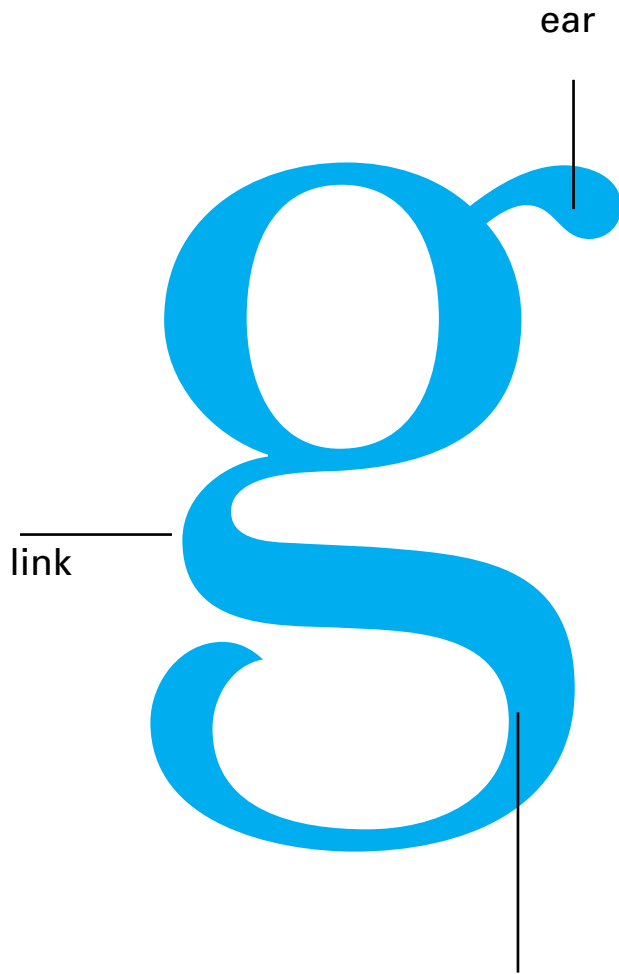
baskerville
transitional

bodoni
modern

serifa
slab serif

meta
sans serif

link: the stroke that connects the bowl and the loop of the lowercase g.



loop
the bowl at the lower part of the lowercase letter g. it can be open or continuous.



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old style



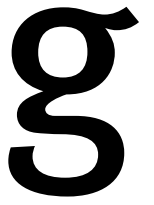
baskerville
transitional



bodoni
modern



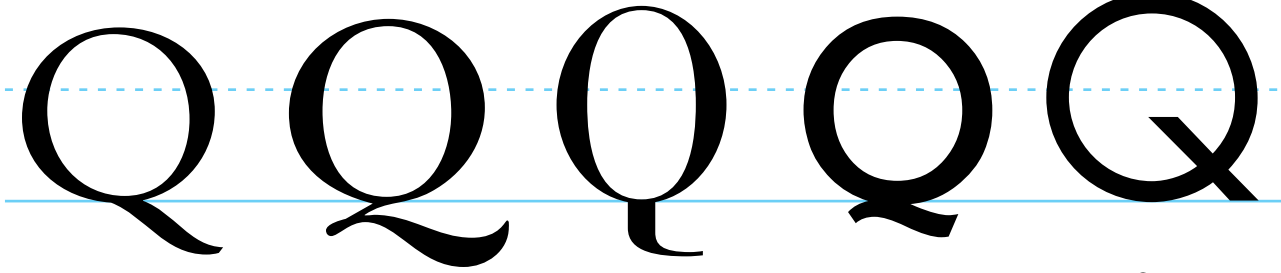
rockwell
slab serif



meta
sans serif



tail



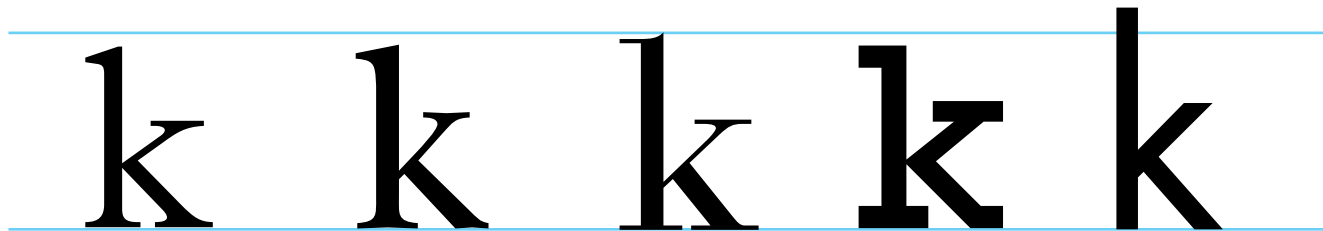
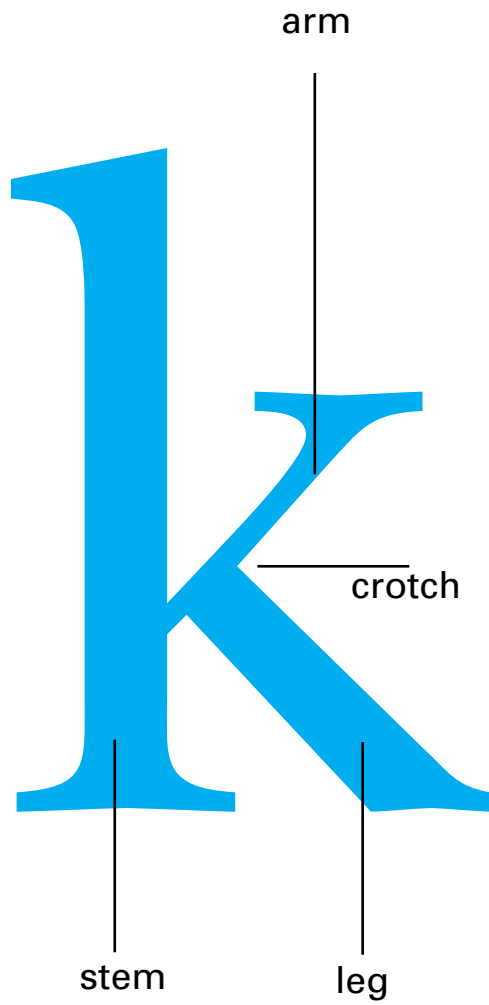
bembo
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baskerville
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rockwell
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futura
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bembo
old style

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bodoni
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rockwell
slab serif

futura
sans serif

R

leg

R R R R R

bembo
old style

baskerville
transitional

bodoni
modern

rockwell
slab serif

futura
sans serif

