

# Popular Threads on Solosez

## Fonts, Points And So Many Choices

OK, this just seems like a subject that probably has been beaten to death BUT I didn't see it so...please don't flame me. I am simply wondering what you all use as a font in correspondence and contracts. I find that, coming out of a corporate environment, where everything was dictated (yes, even the type of font that is used) I am paralyzed by some decisions - such as what font to use. Gee, should I use Arial (hard for the elderly to read, hard on the eyes but nice and clean) or Times New Roman (just looks funny sometimes to me)..or something else.. Please someone in The Firm save me from this enormous decision!!!!

Ann Mayberry-French, Wauwatosa, Wisconsin

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I use Arial, but I use it at 11 or 12 point; it makes it a lot easier on older eyes- I've never had a complaint from a client.

Ronald A. Jones, Florida

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Here's a repost of a recent post on fonts to use in briefs (the readability studies should apply to letters and contracts as well):

Judge Mark Painter of the Ohio Court of Appeals has a column on legal writing in Lawyers Weekly USA. In his March 14 column, he addresses the appearance of briefs, with an in-depth discussion of fonts. He says that Courier is unreadable and Times New Roman is ok although the commas and periods are too small. He also says that, after conducting tests with hundreds of people in his seminars, he prefers Georgia; Palatino, Baskerville and Garamond are also acceptable for text, "although each has some good and bad points." He suggests using a different, sans serif font for headings, and to make them bold - he uses Arial Bold Italic. Other points:

- avoid all caps
- don't underline; use italics instead
- don't use too many caps (i.e., don't capitalize too many words in the text)
- avoid narrow margins

He also has a website with links to a lot of his other legal writing articles, at [www.judgepainter.org](http://www.judgepainter.org).

Lisa Solomon, Ardsley, New York

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I use Times New Roman (12pt) but there was a discussion on the list not too long ago that threw out "Georgia" as a good font to use for readability. I've been thinking of switching over to it but forgot how to change the default fonts in Word...



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Bernard C. Dietz, Glen Allen, Virginia

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I had that same question, seems like yesterday but was actually a couple years ago. Garamond was recommended to me by someone on the list serve for correspondence. Copperplate Gothic Bold for envelopes. I get a lot of compliments on the envelopes. Garamond looks a little different than the standard choices, need to upsize it a bit, but it shows a little personality, I think.

J.M. Schmitz

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I like Palatino Linotype (or sometimes referred to just as "Palatino"). It's easy to read, your punctuation doesn't get lost, and you don't have goofy spacing problems when you turn on the justification.

Christopher Bumgarner

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Why all the worry about fonts? Better to discuss how many angels can dance on the head of a pin. I've been using Times New Roman 12pt since I first got a computer. Looks great, never had a court (incl. the US S.Ct) complain about it and, til now, I've never heard anyone say it was worth discussing.

Richard O'Connor

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Most folks use Times New Roman, as the serifs make it a bit easier to read, and every blessed Windows installation in the world has it. Sometimes they'll use Arial for pleadings. You might look into some alternatives, like Palatino, Baskerville, or Bookman, and see if you like those. Any traditional serif book font should do. I am trending more toward Palatino, myself.

Mike Koenecke, Richardson, Texas

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I use Times New Roman 13 points all the way around. Unless I am trying to get my letter to fit on one page -- then maybe, just maybe, I will shrink it down to 12 points. I never use Arial for correspondence, but will use it for a title page on a Living Trust. As for court pleadings, I always check the local rules and if no preference -- then TNR 13 points is my favorite font and size. I know Garamond and others look better, but I need to write in fonts that everyone has and will always print out nicely no matter what printer is used.

Jennifer N. Sawday, Long Beach, California

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Just to tie your time up for awhile, here is a PhD thesis on the subject of readable fonts:

<http://plainlanguagenetwork.org/type/type.htm>

Cheryl Stephens

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Or save the read and note that the site is in TNR 13.5. Solves the question for me because FL appellate courts require either Courier 14 or TNR 14. so, I do everything in TNR 14. My suggestion: if anyone compliments you on your body typeface, stop using it--it getting in the way.

John P. Page, Tampa, Florida

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My choice is Gill Sans MT at 12.5. My only complaint is number "1" resembles lowercase L.

Jeffrey P. Buhrman, South Portland, Maine

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I use Times New Roman 12pt for correspondence and contracts. For briefs and pleadings, I use the same unless local rules require otherwise. For an interesting discussion of fonts, take a look at this link to the Seventh Circuit's Requirements for Typography in Briefs and Other Papers. The Seventh Circuit suggests that you can use one of several different fonts, including Century Schoolbook.  
<http://www.ca7.uscourts.gov/Rules/type.pdf>

Robert Farley

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I generally use a serif type for the body of documents. Times New Roman is my primary pick, but mostly out of habit. I too really like Georgia, and may increase my use of it. I've used Palatino for PowerPoint presentations, but don't think I would use it for a legal pleading or correspondence.

As for san serif, I generally use those only for emphasis / contrast, and for some strange reason, for e-mail. I like both Arial and Tahoma, and use both.

Then there's Comic Sans. I like it's look, particularly for short e-mails. But I wouldn't use it for correspondence or pleadings. Stephen M. Terrell, Indianapolis, Indiana

I use Century 12 pt. or Book Antiqua 12 pt.

By the way, this has to be one of the nerdiest threads in a while. No wonder I'm posting.

Shane L. Jimison, Richmond, Virginia

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Someone on the list indicated that the Federal Court of somewhere required their briefs to be in Palatino Linotype or New Century Schoolbook to make them easier to read. Sounds good to me?!?!

Randy Birch, Salt Lake City, Utah

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A reference (long lost) someone posted a while back led to the discovery that Times fonts are designed to help people read a document quickly, not necessarily for retention. The author (I think it was a judge writing about a court rule, IIRC) mentioned a couple of fonts that didn't really hamper scanning but seemed to result in better retention. The one I recall that appears in many Windows installations is Garamond.

Mike Riddle, Papillion, Nebraska

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Read "Painting with print: Incorporating concepts of typographic and layout design into the text of legal writing documents" at [http://www.ca7.uscourts.gov/Rules/Painting\\_with\\_Print.pdf](http://www.ca7.uscourts.gov/Rules/Painting_with_Print.pdf)

Lisa Solomon, Ardsley, New York

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I love Garamond, but had not considered upping the font size from 12. I just did a quick check & it's very pretty. Will try this in places that don't have requirements.

Ava M. George Stewart, Chicago, Illinois

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