

What Font Do You Use?

A May 2011 discussion on SoloSez, the email listserv for general practice, solo and small firm lawyers

Dear Firm Members,

*Typography for Lawyers *has shamed me into mothballing my beloved Courier New 13. My old firm used Times Roman 12 and I vomit in my mouth a little bit every time I see it so that one is out. I have been using Garamond lately but it's just not satisfying (specifically, the capital "J" is upsetting,)it's like drinking A beer.

So what do you use? I'm hoping to find something similar to Courier New but, I guess, a little more updated. Help.

Kindly, Jimmy Mac

James M. McMullan, Alabama

Goudy old style

Graham W. Kistler, New York

But, as you know, Mont'y requires Courier 13 for appeals...a font which looks like it was written on an old Royal manual typewriter.

I used Times New Roman 14, dbl spaced.

Bobby Lott

Bookman Old Style.

Best wishes,

Jeffrey M. Summers, Virginia

For legal documents, I use Times New Roman, either 11 or 12 point.

However, I'm a sans serif kind of girl and I'm currently using Optima on my correspondence.

Since the law firm name is changing, I'm changing fonts for my logo, however, it's still sans serif.

Jeena R. Belil, New York

I like Sabon, Caslon, and Didot

Steve O'Donnell, Pennsylvania

Elitist! ;-)

In briefs, I use Palatino Linotype 11 pt for body text and Futura Md BT for headings.

Also, in *Typography for Lawyers*, Butterick mentions his own monospaced font, Alix. Bert, Butterick recommends Plantin, Starling and Bembo Book as alternatives to TNR. Lisa Solomon, New York

Wingdings, 12 point, though some clients have complained about readability.

Bob Bell

I still use TNR 12 for legal pleadings, but have started using Bookman OldStyle (sounds like a Wisconsin Beer) for contracts and correspondence.

Marc Matheny, Indiana

For text, I tend to use Garamond Premier Pro (<http://www.adobe.com/type/browser/landing/garamond/garamond.html>), but also use Century Schoolbook if I'm limited to system-installed fonts (it tends to be included with MS Office).

-Mark Lyon

Century family fonts (I use a derivative, New Century Schoolbook) are good enough for the highest court in the land, and that ought to be good enough for me.

Vince

Vincent Kan, Illinois

Maximo is a cute sans serif. Minion is another one I like, and I use Museu a bit on my web page, its a little casual

Steve O'Donnell

When I'm in a bad mood, I use Comic Sans 24-point for correspondence with the all-caps button ON, and Courier New 7-point for pleadings, without any caps or punctuation at all.*

Russ Gray, Utah

* May not actually be true. Courts around here demand at least 8-point.

I now publish The Legal Connection < <http://www.legaltypist.com/library> >ezine (or anything else which I think may be printed) in Century Gothic - it is the font that uses the least amount of toner and, along with burning no carbon to get to/from work, is how I'm contributing to the greening of our world.

Of course, client work is typed using whatever font the local court requires.

-- NotanAtty--

Andrea Cannavina

I really like typography and have about a zillion fonts on my computer so try to understand where I am coming from. I mostly use Times or Times New Roman in 12 point. I know it is not a glamorous font but it actually works wells in terms of space and appearance. There is only a small difference between the two but I think Times looks a little better in print and Times New Roman is a little more readable on a screen. If you really want something different from Times, my recommendations would be Palatino or Goudy in 12 point. I also think that Bembo is a very elegant font and is a personal favorite. Nonetheless, Times does not call attention to itself and remains my workhorse font. It's kind of like driving a Honda Accord instead of something a little more exotic.

If you want to stick with a Courier-type font, which I don't recommend because they look archaic, I would strongly suggest getting rid of the Microsoft abomination called Courier New and go with a better version such as Courier BT which you should be able to find by searching on the Internet.

P.S.: I drive neither a Honda Accord or something a little more exotic.

Bert Krages, Oregon

Nice to see someone else give Palatino a nod. It's been my fave for a decade and more.

Best,

Robert Thomas Hayes Link, California

What a great message thread!

I'm currently using Palatino Linotype in 12 point for legal documents and pleadings. I'm currently using Garamond in 14 point for letter correspondence - love the way it looks!

Chris Vaughn-Martel, Massachusetts

Comic Sans (bold & italicized) for pleadings. Garamond 11-point for correspondence.

Ryan Phillips, South Carolina

Goudy Old Style. I really like the look, it's satisfying, easy to read, and elegant.

Eric Ridley, California

I use Arial 12 point for everything. I find it very readable and it looks good with my logo.

I am a fan of Bookman Old Style, Garamond and Palantino for other stuff.

Cheers,

Michele Allinotte, Canada

As a general proposition, I prefer serif fonts. My system says I currently have 300 fonts installed; I've been collecting a while.

My templates are currently set up with Palatino Linotype 12 for pleadings, 11 for correspondence. (If it's especially brief, I'll up it to 12.) I use 0.9 line spacing in body copy (it's a large-leading font, more than I care for), with 6 points extra between paragraphs. I enable kern pairing for all fonts 8 points or larger.

For section headers in pleadings, I use the same font, with bold and all caps or small caps where appropriate.

For headers in firm documents (handouts, forms, etc.) and in my letterhead, I use Copperplate Gothic, and for my firm name, I use Edwardian Script. (Mixed case in Copperplate Gothic is a "small caps" face.)

For wills, I use Palatino Linotype, with headers in Copperplate Gothic and Old English Text MT.

For correspondence with clients known to have impaired or diminished vision (primarily seniors), I will use at least 12 point, sometimes 13, and I'll increase line spacing to 1.5 and increase the margins to shorten the lines of text. For longer documents, I may turn off justification.

For anyone who cares, I fully justify almost everything (that isn't centered or right-justified. I use 1" margins for most copy, but will tweak to balance white space on shorter documents, or to balance pagination generally. I prefer italics to underlining for case names in citations, but I generally use style sheets, so I can switch it out pretty easily if I know a judge prefers underlining.

-Rick (Two spaces after the period, thanks.)

Richard J. Rutledge, Jr., North Carolina

Book Antiqua 12 point.

Caroline

Caroline A. Edwards, Pennsylvania

Times New Roman 12 pt. If i started tinkering with fonts, I would never get any work done!

Michael A. Blake, Connecticut

Font, it's serious business.

What your font says about you < <http://www.readersdigest.ca/home-garden/money/what-your-font-says-about-you> > .

The Cracked Guide to Fonts < <http://www.cracked.com/funny-5647-fonts/> >.

NB: I'm not affiliated with Cracked, or with Reader's Digest.

NB2: I use Tahoma.

-Andrew Wentzell, Florida

I've switched my firm to Garamond Pro. (Whatever font you're using, buy the "real" version, not the version that comes with Word.) I like the dropped f italics. I tend to use 1.1 line spacing in 13 point with 10 points between paragraphs.

Erik Hammarlund, Massachusetts

My font of choice is Palatino Linotype. It has serifs and is a bit larger than Times New Roman or Helvetica.

John Davidson, Pennsylvania

I loved *Typography for Lawyers*!

I use Sabon for all correspondence and pleadings and Cambria for my website and e-mails.

Nicholas Proy, Maryland

Yeah, that's me. Actually, I'm surprised that so few fonts have been mentioned.

Steve O'Donnell

I've surprised myself with a partiality to Microsoft San Serif. I like the shape and proportions, it's clean, none of the letters mother up. Times New Roman 13 pt is more readable than 12.

The Ravalli County court uses Times New Roman 12. The Missoula County Court wants 14pt type, double spacing. 14 pt TNR seems about the same as 13 pt MSS.

cj

Carolyn J. Stevens, Montana

I really like Verdana. It's a lot easier to read for my older clients than TNR. They like boring
J

Tracy L. Laaveg, North Dakota

I use Arrus BT for pleadings, 11 seems to work best in my pleading templates.

Correspondence is usually done in Times New Roman, 12

Now I'll have to waste time exploring some of those that have been listed, to see what I'm missing out on!

Laurie

Laurie Axinn Gienapp, Massachusetts

Early on I settled on Calibri (before I knew it was considered lame and overused by some - I was from a world of TNR, Arial and Tahoma) for my documents, pleadings and letters. For my firm name I always use Copperplate Gothic, together with certain colors, it's the closest to a "logo" that I have.

But now I want to go check out some of these other fonts that have been mentioned. Maybe it's time for a change (from Calibri).

C.

Cynthia Hannah-White, Hawaii

I also recommend Arno Pro for a slightly more modern look. I used to use that before I switched over to garamond.

But there are a lot of things out there. Laurentian is nice; it's a magazine font.

try looking through the search stuff at fonts.com for more. -- Erik Hammarlund

I really like arial 11 pt. I could never get used to TNR....

Ronald R Kilponen, Michigan

All of my pleadings are 11pt Century Schoolbook, except federal court where they are 13 pt. My correspondence is 12 pt. Book Antiqua

Robert Hughes, Georgia

Arial needs to die, now. It was MS's meager attempt to get around paying licensing fees to use Helvetica. If you like Arial, I suggest you make the switch to Helvetica or Helvetica neue. Both are more attractive and easier to read than Arial.

I use Mrs Eaves 12 pt as my font for all pleadings and correspondence. For my blackletter font, when I want to look ye olden and fancye, is Ruca.

Leo M. Mulvihill, Jr., Pennsylvania

Ariel - 11 or 12 point for 98% of what I do, even though I LOVE Cambria and Calibri and detest and abhor Times New Roman. Its like the plague - I can't seem to eradicate it from my font directory.

Best Regards,

Dana Fortier ~ Virtual Operations & Business Manager NotAnAtty

Cambrian and Calibri are as bad as TNR in my book, if not worse!

Leo M. Mulvihill, Jr.

What font to use really depends on what you're using it for. For emails, I generally prefer a sans serif like Calibri. For contracts, I usually use Georgia, though some clients prefer TNR and others (mostly Europeans, for some reason) prefer Arial.

With contracts, I'd love to scour fonts.com and other places for a distinctive, readable font (and I'm always open for recommendations) but I've found that if a font I use is too different from TNR or Arial it becomes a distraction. Georgia is easy on the eyes but not so different from TNR that people give it much thought, which is what I want/need in a contract.

Kevin W. Grierson, Virginia

Man,

Ya'll have put a lot of thought into this...

Seth Crosland, Texas

For pleadings and briefs, TNR or Garamond. For correspondence and my personal memos, Candara.

Ann Penners Bergen

No one has mentioned Helvetica! I like the light version in 10 pt. for correspondence. Still use Times New Roman for pleadings, etc.

Heidi Frison, Minnesota

It may merit noting that Georgia was specifically designed to *replace* Times New Roman - not as a general substitution, but specifically in low-resolution applications, such as on-screen (in the days before 1200x1600 monitors) and in faxes.

Which is it say that if you use Times New Roman, you may wish to substitute Georgia for faxes (or documents likely to be copied a lot, scanned, etc.), since it is specifically designed to render more readably at the < dpi resolutions of fax machines (150 dpi by default, if I recall).

And, I think I've mentioned this before, but when I was in Elder Law Clinic, I did some research on the question of "readability." Because it's fairly subjective, it's hard to get empirical studies. However, most studies find that the "most readable font" for any given individual is likely to be the font most dominant in school texts around the time they learned to read. Thus, early in the 20th century, open serif fonts, such as Century Schoolbook. Mid-century, open (and progressively more closed as the century progressed) sans serif fonts. After the 60s, we tended to move back toward more traditional serif fonts (TNR), but less open.

Also note that as the century progressed, typewritten copy (ITC Typewriter, Courier) came to replace typeset copy, and those fonts evolved (Prestige, Prestige Elite, Orator), and were later again replaced by computer "typeset" fonts such as Times, Helvetica, Univers, Avant Garde, etc.

So, consider your audience, and look to their grade school books to find the "most readable" face.

-Rick

Richard J. Rutledge, Jr.,

Comic sans all the way (cue *The Simpsons* theme song)

Dan Nguyen, California

Dana called it "Ariel", which reminds me of my favorite mermaid joke: [in a miffed tone, she says] "My name is HELVETICA!"

Susan Gibbs

If you are using LibreOffice or OpenOffice, many of the other fonts mentioned here are not included in these applications. I use Plantagenet Cherokee and Constantia (the former for printed documents). For emails, I actually like to use Georgia - to me it's nicer-looking and readable.

Tim Ackermann