

The Baskerville Experiment: Font and Its Influence on Our Perception of Truth

An interesting study:

<https://marketingexperiments.com/value-proposition/importance-of-font>

I use Palatino Linotype for my briefs (with headings in Open Sans, a sans serif font); what font do you use?

Lisa Solomon, New York

I remember this from years ago, we couldn't implement it. I'm stuck in Arial-ville.

Bob Arnold

I use Palatino for my correspondence and emails. I use Century Schoolbook for pleadings.

Robert "Robby" W. Hughes, Jr., Georgia

I am a fontist. I prefer serif fonts, but note that they are harder to see on some mobile devices, so I use a sans serif font for e-mail. I hate it.

My court has a defined set of fonts we are supposed to use. I use Courier, because I like the even spacing, particularly when writing declarations.

When I need to fit more on the page, I will switch to Times New Roman.

Lisa, I love Palatino!

Corrine Bielejeski, California

I found it to be a frustrating study because it did not consider Times New Roman, which is a popular font albeit commonly derided by font snobs. Although I like Palatino and Bembo, I use Times New Roman in my briefs because it does not call attention to itself, is probably permitted by jurisdictions with obscure rules about

fonts, and is likely to be in the reader's operating system (which lessens the chance that the system will substitute another font and create formatting issues and such).

Bert Krages, Oregon

Times New Roma for pleadings, Georgia for everything else.

Joseph C. Melino, California

The lone appellate tribunal in my state designates in a rule of appellate procedure the fonts it permits us to use in appellate briefs:

"A proportionally spaced typeface in Times New Roman, Bookman Old Style, Century Schoolbook, or Georgia fonts no smaller than 12-point must be used, except 11-point type in the same fonts may be used for footnotes in briefs."

The trial courts, however, are like the Wild West; but as a practical matter one sees mostly Times New Roman and Courier 10-pitch.

L. Maxwell Taylor, Vermont

The California Courts of Appeal require Century Schoolbook. Other than when I have to comply with that rule, I have used Times New Roman, thinking it was the default font for all. I see now that it is not. I will try some of these other fonts. Thanks for the post, Lisa.

I suggest some experiments here, which I will try soon.

I will post the same text, in different fonts, not state the name of each font, and ask for a vote for favorite. It will be a new thread. Seeing it on screen may not be the same as seeing it on paper, though.

Roger Rosen, California

Bookman is a really beautiful font.

Robert "Robby" W. Hughes, Jr.

When given the option, I generally use Book Antiqua 12 point - a serif font, but a little better spacing than Times New Roman, in my opinion - for pleadings and briefs. I also like Century Schoolbook, which is used by the US Supreme Court.

For documents that will be recorded, such as condominium documents, or easements, I use Book Antiqua for the drafts and Gill Sans MT (a sans serif font) for the final version, so I can easily see if it is the final execution version. I chose Gill Sans MT after seeing it recommended in *Typography for Lawyers* by Matthew Butterick. He makes very good points about purchasing fonts not provided by Microsoft, but I decided to stick with what was available in MSWord.

The article about the impact of fonts was quite interesting. I would obviously never choose Comic Sans for a brief, but I didn't think that other choices would have such a significant impact on the response. Definitely food for thought.

Caroline Achey Edwards, Pennsylvania

There may be more than one Bookman. Or are you referring to Bookman Old Style?

Roger Rosen

The whole "purchase non-MS" fonts seems like a non-starter to me unless you are confident that only your version, printed by you, will be the final version of a document. If a recipient of a document does not have the font you chose, unless it is embedded in the document, their program will revert to their default font--and some PDF programs can get wonky about even embedded fonts. I'm sure we've all seen the PDF printouts that look really, really odd.

To my mind, whether you are writing a brief or negotiating a contract, the best font is one that seems invisible, as in you don't notice it because it's not unusual. For that reason, I generally use Times New Roman in contracts. I tried Georgia for a while, because I think it's a prettier, but it was distracting. For emails, where fonts can make the message harder to read, the Segui UI font seems to fit that bill.

Kevin Grierson, Virginia

Palatino Linotype for everything unless court rules dictate otherwise.

William E. Denver

I almost want to convince myself to adopt Comic Sans for everything, across the board - pleadings and the whole nine - for no other reason than because it would be an excellent form of trolling since it's such a near universally-hated font. But, it's so god-awful that I don't think I could make myself do it.

E. Seth Combs, Kentucky
