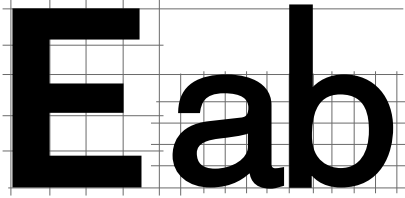


LEGIBILITY FACTORS

For easiest legibility at a distance, experience and research indicate that the width of a letter's vertical strokes should be about one-fifth its height. Horizontal strokes may be slightly thinner. These proportions apply equally to capital and lower-case letters, and are grouped into four areas: **Letterspacing**, **Perspective**, **Stacking** and **Line Spacing**.



Letterspacing. This example demonstrates the importance of a reasonable amount of air between letters. Extremely close spacing can reduce legibility, even with a clean, gothic typeface. Notice how crowding can confuse the intention of the copy by causing certain letters to attach visually to adjacent letters, thus "clear morn" could be interpreted as "dear mom."

***clear clear
morn morn***

Perspective. The legibility problem created by tight letterspacing is compounded when copy lines are viewed from an angle, which can occur in outdoor. Condensed typefaces start to resemble picket fences and horizontal strokes tend to appear thicker in relationship to the vertical strokes.

***clear clear
morn morn***

Stacking. This reduces readability and is not recommended for Outdoor designs. With a single horizontal line of copy, the eye moves through the message rapidly and without interruption. The stacking of additional lines reduces this facility and increases the time needed to comprehend the message. If, however, stacking is necessary for layout purposes, give careful consideration to line spacing.

**One works
two's tough
three's a crowd
four...forget it**

Line Spacing. As in the case of letterspacing, adequate air space is necessary for maximum legibility. If a copy line is riding "piggyback" on the copy line below it, the interplay of descenders and ascenders creates confusion.

**piggy piggy
back back**

COMMON MISTAKES

1. Crowding too many letters into a space tends to repel the eye and thus defeats the objective of getting type as large as possible.

OVERCROWDING

GIVE ME AIR

2. Too great a contrast between thick and thin elements leads to confusion.

CONFUSION

3. Strokes which are too fine do not utilize fully the basic shapes and fade into the background, becoming invisible at a distance.

A N E M I A

4. Bulky typefaces become blobs at a distance, basic shapes cannot be distinguished and letters are not recognized.

OVERWEIGHT

5. Script and similar styles sacrifice the basic shapes for the decorative aspect. Individual letters, therefore, cannot be identified.

Illegibility