



34 TYPOGRAPHIC SINS  
**Letterpress**  
*edition*



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# T<sup>hirty-four</sup> Typographic Sins

## 1 Two spaces between sentences.

Repent of this sin by using only one space.

## 2 Dumb quotes instead of smart quotes.

Evil: "Thou shalt not misuse type" § Good: "Thou shalt not misuse type"

## 3 Dumb apostrophe instead of a smart apostrophe.

Profane: Don't use prime marks § Sacred: Don't use prime marks  
By the way, apostrophes always face this way: Pot o' gold.  
They never face this way: Pot 'o gold.

## 4 Failing to tuck periods/commas inside quotes marks.

Immoral: "I love type so much", she confessed.  
Chaste: "I love type so much," she testified.

## 5 Failing to kern display type.

Unseemly gaps can impede readability and be distracting to the reader.  
Adjusting the spacing between letters will assuage your guilt.

## 6 Using a hyphen instead of an en dash.

Use an en dash to indicate a duration of time instead of the word "to":  
the 8–10 commandments, not 8-10 commandments.

## 7 Using two hyphens instead of an em dash.

An em dash signifies a change in thought—or a parenthetical phrase—within  
a sentence.

## 8 Too many consecutive hyphens.

It is sinful to have more than two hyphens on consecutive lines of type,  
and even that should be avoided.

## 9 Large amounts of bodytext in uppercase letters.

IT BECOMES REALLY DIFFICULT TO READ.

## 10 Large amounts of reversed type

**ARE HARDER TO READ.** Type on a busy background is also unreadable.

## 11 Using process colors for body text.

It is harder to read, but more importantly, it is hell to register on press.

## 12 Underlining titles instead of italicizing them.

Thou Shalt Not: The Holy Bible Thou Shalt: The Korán

## 13 Failing to eliminate widows.

A widow is a word that sits on a line by itself at the end of a paragraph.  
Avoid this or risk being cast into a lake of fire and brimstone.

## 14 Failing to eliminate orphans.

An orphan is the last line of a paragraph that sits alone at the top of a  
column or page. Type does not like to be alone.

## 15 Rivers in justified text.

Unightly large spaces between words occur if the line length is too short or the  
point size of the text too large.

## 16 Inconsistent leading.

Paragraphs should have the same leading for each line.

## 17 Indenting the first paragraph.

The first paragraph is never indented, subsequent paragraphs are.

## 18 Indenting a paragraph too far.

The standard indent for a paragraph is 1 em, not ½ inch. Most software has  
default tabs set for ½ inch, so adjust the tabs.

## 19 Failing to hang punctuation into the margin.

Punctuation has less visual weight than letters or numbers.  
Compensate for this in display text by hanging the punctuation into the margin.

## 20 Failing to use or create fractions.

Wicked: 1/2 § Righteous: ½

## 21 Incorrectly abbreviating AM and PM.

Unclean: am, AM, A.M. § Relatively Clean: A.M. § Clean: a.m. or AM

## 22 Failing to provide margins for type in a box.

ugly beautiful

## 23 Faux italic/oblique, bold and small cap type.

Impure: *Italic* § Pure: *Italic*  
Sinful: **Bold** § Virtuous: **Bold**  
Unkosher: SMALLCAPS § Kosher: SMALLCAPS

## 24 Strokes that encroach upon letterforms.

Hellacious § Heavenly

## 25 Horizontally scaled type.

Unrepentant: Scaled § Penitent: A condensed typeface

## 26 Vertically scaled type.

Purgatory: Scaled § Heaven: An extended typeface

## 27 Negative letterspacing.

Not very readable.

## 28 Bad line breaks in headlines and body text.

If you don't break lines for  
sense, they can be harder to read.

## 29 Stacking lowercase letters.

Vertical baselines are celestial.

## 30 Failing to indent bulleted lists.

• Bulleted lists look better when the second line aligns flush  
with the first letter of the line above it, instead of with the bullet.

## 31 Failing to use accent marks.

Sinner: No esta aquí § Saint: No está aquí.

## 32 Failing to align baselines of type in adjacent columns of body text.

Baselines of all columns of text on a page should align. This creates a pleasing  
margin of pure white space.

## 33 Failing to correct bad rags.

For centered or non-justified text, avoid obvious shapes (like pyramids,  
steps, wedges, angles and overly short or long lines).

## 34 Failing to use ligatures.

unholy: finish § holy: finish

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