TYPE SPECIFICATION

Type is specified for point size, leading, typeface, treatment, line width and justification. For example:

10/12 Palatino medium u/lc justified to 14 picas

means that this type will be set in 10 point, with 2 point leading, in Palatino medium (or regular), in upper and lower case and justified (smooth left and right sides) to 14 picas. Usually, this specification would be written as follows:

10/12 Palatino (justified) to 14 picas.

Unless otherwise specified, the medium treatment is assumed and the type will be set as typed as far as case is concerned. Alignment (eg. "justified") is frequently so well established by corporate style that it is not specified; but you're always safer to include alignment commands.

SPECIFICATION FACTORS

Type specs are usually the result of three considerations:
1: Page size and number of columns.
2: Aesthetic judgement, including appropriateness.
3: Legibility.

PAGE SIZE AND NUMBER OF COLUMNS

The page size (called "trim size") minus the margin spacing is called the "image area". The image area width, minus any inter-column spacing, divided by the number of columns, will give the column width of the type. (See sample.) The number of columns is a combination of physical limitation and artistic judgement within legibility ranges. Usually, the number of columns follows customary style for publication formats (eg. two or three for newsletters, three for magazines, four or five for tabloid newspapers, five to seven for standard-sized newspapers).

Margination is important. All publications must have some margination. Normal margination varies from two to four picas, with three picas somewhat common. (If you are using a laser or other desktop printer, check required margination: most require thee picas). There are two normal approaches to margination: uniform and progressive. **Uniform margination** means that all margins are the same. **Progressive margination** means that margins increase in size as they go around the page, usually beginning with the gutter or interior margin and progressing to the outside of the page (counterclockwise for even numbered pages, clockwise for odd numbered pages), ending with the largest margin at the bottom.

Inter-column spacing is the space between columns. This is usually at least one pica but not more than two, except for special effects. One-half pica may be acceptable with a column rule. One and one-half is common.
(**A word about interior spacing.** All interior spacing should be the same: i.e.. spacing between rules and type and type blocks should be the same as the inter-column spacing.)

ARTISTIC JUDGEMENT, INCLUDING APPROPRIATENESS

Type face selection as well as other specification requirements are a major element of the designer's aesthetic creativity. There are no rules for typographic aesthetics; but appropriateness must be considered. Type and type treatment creates the basic "look", "mood", of "feel" of the publication. This look should be appropriate to the message, medium and market: it should reflect the mood and feel that the client or product requires to reach the target audience with the proper message. This is largely a matter of artistic judgement.

LEGIBILITY

Legibility, however, is not a matter of subjective judgement, but a scientifically consistent measure of the physical process of perceiving and recognizing letter shapes in word configurations. Legibility includes a number of elements and applies only to text in quantity: the basic text style of your publication. Legibility is not a serious limitation for small amounts of text such as captions, quote extracts, headlines or subheads.

Point Size

Type should be neither too large nor too small. Too large reduces the amount of information processed in each fixation pause in reading; too small obviously is too hard to see. For text type, 9, 9-1/2, 10, 10-1/2, and 11 are considered the normal range, with some use of 12 point in wider lines, some advertising, and some brochures. As line width gets narrower, some designers reduce point size: eg. they will use 10 point on a 14 pica line but go to 9 or 9-1/2 on a 12 pica line. The trend is to slightly larger point sizes, especially considering the advancing median age of our population.

Line Length

Again, as in all things typographical, the via media is the ideal -- moderation is the key. Lines should be neither too short nor too long. Too short increases the back and forth scanning; too long also reduces legibility. There are rules: 1-1/2 times the lower case alphabet length is an optimum width; or twice the point size in picas is a good maximum (eg. 10 point type means a 20 pica line is about as wide as you usually want to go). However, if you have the choice, opt for the wider vs. the narrower line. Traditionally, book typography is the most legible, and book lines run 24 picas-plus. A general rule is that for most publication formats 14-18 picas is optimum. If pushed, you can reduce to 12 picas. **But generally avoid lines narrower than 12 picas if at all possible.**

Frank Romano, a leading tyupographical expert, suggests the following:

6 pt: Minimum-8 picas; Optimum-10 picas; Maximum-12 picas
7 pt: Minimum-8 picas; Optimum-11 picas; Maximum-14 picas
8 pt: Minimum-9 picas; Optimum-13 picas; Maximum-16 picas
9 pt: Minimum-10 picas; Optimum-14 picas; Maximum-18 picas
6 pt: Minimum-8 picas; Optimum-10 picas; Maximum-12 picas
10 pt: Minimum-13 picas; Optimum-16 picas; Maximum-20 picas
11 pt: Minimum-13 picas; Optimum-18 picas; Maximum-22 picas
12 pt: Minimum-14 picas; Optimum-21 picas; Maximum-24 picas
14 pt: Minimum-18 picas; Optimum-24 picas; Maximum-28 picas
16 pt: Minimum-21 picas; Optimum-27 picas; Maximum-32 picas
18 pt: Minimum-24 picas; Optimum-30 picas; Maximum-36 picas

--Frank Romano in The Hammermill Guide to Desktop Publishing for Business

Leading

Leading means the space between lines. When 10 point type has two points of leading it is specified as 10 on 12. Some leading is necessary for ease of reading; too much reduces legibility. Usually one to two points is good, depending upon the point size and the x-height of the type. As type gets larger, increase leading: eg. 9/10, 12/14. 10/12 is a very common specification. Never set type solid, or with no leading. Romano also suggests the following:

6 pt: Minimum-Solid, Best-1 pt, Maximum-1 pt
7 pt: Minimum-Solid, Best-1 pt, Maximum-1-1/2 pt
8 pt: Minimum-Solid, Best-1-1/2 pt, Maximum-2 pt
9 pt: Minimum-Solid, Best-2 pt, Maximum-3 pt
10 pt: Minimum-Solid, Best-2 pt, Maximum-3 pt
11 pt: Minimum-1, Best-2 pt, Maximum-3 pt
12 pt: Minimum-2, Best-3 pt, Maximum-4 pt
14 pt: Minimum-3, Best-4 pt, Maximum-6 pt

--Frank Romano in The Hammermill Guide to Desktop Publishing for Business

Type Treatment

Type treatments other than regular or normal should be used sparingly, for emphasis or contrast, and not for the bulk of your text type.

•**Slant:** Either regular or reversed italics reduces legibility.

•**Condensed vs. Expanded (also "letter width" commands):** Any reduction or enlarging of the letter width treatment (see **Graphics Master** p. 87) reduces legibility. Use of the "set width" or "letter width" command on desktop publishing programs reduces legibility (see sample sheet). Use the normal treatment of the letter for best legibility.

•**Boldness:** Type comes in various degrees of boldness: eg. ultra(extra) light; light; medium (regular); semi-bold; bold; extra (ultra) bold. (See **Graphics Master** p. 76) The normal or regular treatment of the type is how it was designed and is usually the most legible. Avoid light or bold treatments for text type; use them for contrast or emphasis.

Contrast with Background including Colors:

Always try to maximize the apparent foreground-background contrast in order to make the type as visible as possible. Be careful of color combinations (eg. blue type on blue paper; brown type on brown stock). Also be careful of reverses and surprints.

A **reverse** is when the type is dropped out of a solid background (eg. white type on a black background). A surprint is when type is printed over a background (eg. black type on a light gray background). Tints of a color (eg. grays of black) are specified in percentages: 0% = white; 20% = light gray; 50% = medium gray; 80% = dark gray; 100% = black. Generally, any reverse or surprint reduces legibility and should be avoided for large amounts of text. As a general rule, never reverse into anything less than 80%(70%) gray and never surprint onto anything more than 20%(30%) gray. Legibility research discourages large-scale use of reverses at all. According to extensive legibility research, the most legible color-on-color combinations are: 1 - Black on yellow; 2 - red on white; 3 - green on red; 4 - black on white; 5 - black on purple; 6 - orange on white; 7 - red on green (Miles Tinker, **Legibility of Print.** p. 149). (Don't get carried away with this and think that black on purple is a good color combination.) **The general rule is: attempt to maximize not minimize foreground-background contrast.**

Case

Upper and lower case letters are more legible than all caps.

Alignment

Ragged left (or flush right) or centered copy has very poor legibility. Raged right (flush left) and fully justified are most legible. Ragged right vs. full justification is an aesthetic decision. But realize that some desktop publishing programs have some problems with their hyphenation and justification programs and do not justify lines as well as the more professional typesetting programs. Test your type specs by running samples if you're using a DTP program. The wider the line and smaller the type size the better the hyphenation program will work (eg. 10 points on 14 picas usually works well but 12 points on 12 picas may be more difficult). You can adjust the letter and word spacing parameters of your program to improve justification.

[H&J (hyphenation and justification) programs: The computer program which hyphenates words using either a rule or dictionary and them aligns the right side of the column evenly by adjusting the space between letters and words. Generally, an H&J program will have maximum and minimum inter-word and inter-letter spacing parameters which you can adjust. The program will add or subtract spacing evenly between words to align the right side of the line after making the appropriate hyphenation, if necessary. If inter-word spacing will not align the line, then the program will increase or decrease spacing between letters.]

Stock

In addition to color, stock texture and finish can reduce legibility. High gloss finishes may make it difficult to read because of glare. Rough textures may also make it difficult to read some type. Generally, textured stock should not be used where there is extensive, small text to be read.