MICRO TYPOGRAPHY PART 1

MICRO TYPOGRAPHY PART 1: SPACING

Kerning :: Letter spacing :: Tracking :: Word Spacing

KERNING

Kerning is the act of adjusting the space between two characters to compensate for their relative shapes.

It refers to removing space between two characters to restore the natural rhythm found among the characters in the rest of the text. If letters in a typeface are spaced mathematically even, they make a pattern that doesn't look uniform enough.

* Letter spacing: adding space between two characters within a word.

KERNING: LETTER SHAPES

Vertical   Horizontal   Inclined   Cursive

There are four kinds of strokes that make up letter forms. These must be spaced in a logical, consistent manner to appear optically correct. The idea is to maintain comfortable optical volumes (figure/ground) between letter forms. Each letter should "flirt" with the one next to it.

KERNING: LETTER SHAPES

Small volume:
maximize space
(space the farthest apart)
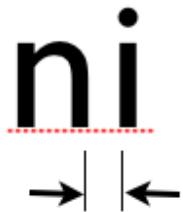
Medium volume:
adjust space
(space in between)

Large volume:
minimize space
(space the closest together)

ni

os

xy

Vertical & Vertical

Cursive & Cursive
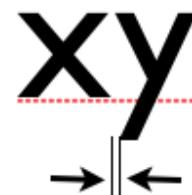
Inclined & Inclined

Here are the extreme spacing limits for combining stroke types. You can build your own letter spacing system for the other stroke combinations.

KERNING PAIRS

Kerning pairs are a pair of letters whose shapes (and negative space around those shapes) cause them to need a kerning adjustment.

Sample letters which always need kerning: W, Y, V, T, L, O. Sample letter pairs which always need adjusting: Wy, Ae, Yo, Te, Wo.

Often kerning happens between upper and lower case letters and between characters and punctuation.

KERNING PAIRS

Pay close attention to:

Always

Incline strokes:
A, K, V, W, Y

Always

Letters with arms/cross strokes:
F, L, T

Sometimes

Thin vertical strokes:
#1, l, i

Kerning :: Letter spacing
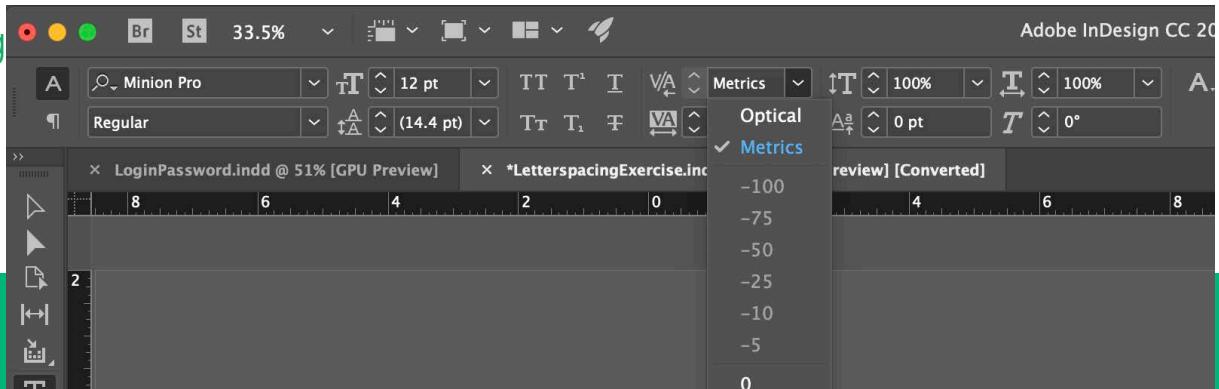
KERNING

AV   Wx

No Kerning — Default Metrics

AV   Wx

Kerning — Selecting Optical Kerning

AV   Wx

Kerning — Selecting Optical Kerning + Manual Adjustments

KERNING EFFECTS READABILITY

savvy kerning

carnal cloth

HOW TO OPTICALLY SPACE LETTERS

OPTICAL VOLUMES: Try to make these volumes "look" equal and create an even rhythm. A traditional graphic design standard for determining whether a word is letter spaced correctly is to envision pouring equal volumes of sand between characters | letters.

HOW TO OPTICALLY SPACE LETTERS

Wyoming

WORK WITH THE MOST TENACIOUS STROKE PAIR
FIRST. Use determined space for similar stroke pairs.
Then work in letter groupings of three. Use determined
space for the letter spacing for similar stroke pairs.

* W, Y, V, T, L,O: Wy, Ae, Yo, Te, Wo

HOW TO OPTICALLY SPACE LETTERS

PRINT AND REVIEW

PRINT AND REVIEW

PRINT AND REVIEW YOUR WORK: Try flipping the word upside down. You won't "read" the letters as strongly and so you will be able to focus more easily on the positive and negative shapes created by the letter forms and the spaces between them.

TRACKING

Tracking adjusts the overall space between letters across an entire word or body of text (not just two characters within a word)

TRACKING VS.

KERNING & LETTER SPACING

Kerning :: Letter spacing :: Tracking :: Word Spacing

TRACKING EFFECTS READABILITY

Tracking effects the evenness of texture for the type within a sentence or paragraph.

Kerning :: Letter spacing :: Tracking :: Word Spacing

WHEN TRACKING IS EFFECTIVE

Small type (6–7pt type) • Large type (Headlines) •

The smaller the text size the more tracking you need for readability. The larger the text size the less tracking you need.

Small type needs more tracking.
Tracking: 0/1000 em

.
Small type needs more tracking.
Tracking: +10/1000 em

Large type needs less tracking.
Tracking: 0/1000 em

Large type needs less tracking.
Tracking: -20/1000 em

Kerning :: Letter spacing :: Tracking :: Word Spacing

WHEN TRACKING IS EFFECTIVE

Small type (6–7pt type) • Large type (Headlines) • Type over color fields/patterns/images •

Reversing out type from a solid block of color or on a tint of color

When type is being read over a pattern or image

Tracking: +10/1000 em

Using a typeface of a higher weight can also help compensate for the optical illusion of a smaller and tighter type face

Kerning :: Letter spacing :: Tracking :: Word Spacing

Small type (6–7pt type) • Large type (Headlines) • Type over color fields/patterns/images • Capital letters •

CAPITAL LETTERS

Tracking: 0/1000 em

CAPITAL LETTERS

Tracking: +40/1000 em

Kerning :: Letter spacing :: Tracking :: Word Spacing

WHEN TRACKING IS EFFECTIVE

Small type (6–7pt type) • Large type (Headlines) • Type over color fields/patterns/images • Capital letters • Condensed type •

Condensed Type

Tracking: 0/1000 em

Condensed Type

Tracking: +20/1000 em

Kerning :: Letter spacing :: Tracking :: Word Spacing

WHEN TRACKING IS EFFECTIVE

Small type (6–7pt type) • Large type (Headlines) • Type over color fields/patterns/images • Capital letters • Condensed type • Type on a curve/path

Potential Problems with Letters on a Curve

Untouched
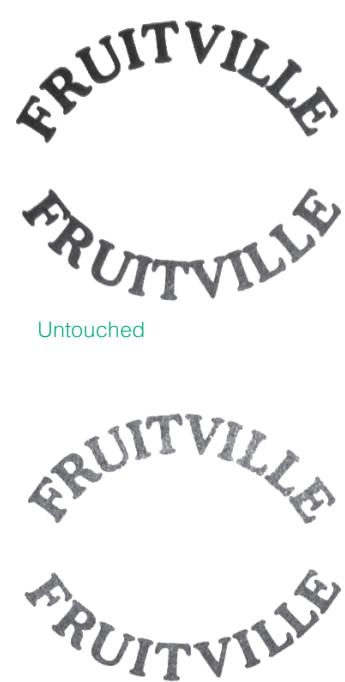
With Tracking and Kerning

WHEN TRACKING IS EFFECTIVE

REVIEW:

- Small type (6–7pt type)

- Large type (Headlines)

- Type over color fields/patterns/images

- Capital letters

- Condensed type

- Type on a curve/path

TRACKING: HELPFUL HINT

First track the entire word | sentence | paragraph, then kern. Kern the most intractable pair to start the process. That key pair will define the letter spacing for the entire word | sentence | paragraph.

WORD SPACING

Tryreadingalineoftextwithoutwordspac-
ingtoseehowimportantithasbecome.

WORD SPACING

Word spacing should make all the space intervals between words "look" the same. Volumes are adjusted as in letter spacing by optical examination. Words must not appear to run together or be spaced so widely as to appear to be separate units.

APPROPRIATE WORD SPACING

Word spacing should vary with typeface, type size, and type arrangement. Word spacing and letter spacing should be consistent. Tight letter spacing demands tight word spacing.

wordtspacing   word spacing

wordispacing   word spacing

wordwspacing word spacing

top is moderate / middle is tight / bottom is loose

JUSTIFIED TEXT

Too many rivers and gaps

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Too many hyphenations

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Kerning :: Letter spacing :: Tracking :: Word Spacing

JUSTIFIED TEXT

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APPROPRIATE SPACING

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Kerning :: Letter spacing :: Tracking :: Word Spacing

❶ Spacing is crucial in headlines or display type where the characters are larger and show the optical disparity between letters more readily.

❷ Spacing is good for readability of small text.

❸ Spacing is good for text on a color background, on a pattern or an image.

❹ Spacing is imperative for capital letters, condensed type or type on a curve.

❺ Spacing is necessary for justified blocks of text.

❻ Spacing is good for anything with small amounts of text | copy.