

Type Measurement

What are points?

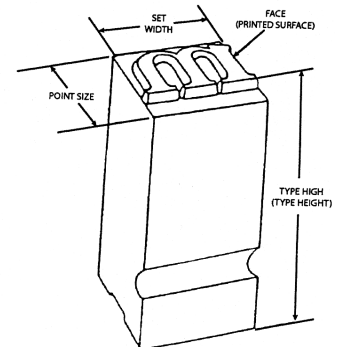
The size of type is usually measured in points, a unit of length in use since 1735, with various values. In the United States it was formerly 0.013837 inch (72 points = 0.996...), but with the rise of digital typesetting the value 0.013888..., that is 72 points = 1 inch, has become the standard.

What are picas?

Picas are another unit of measure for longer distances. Just as feet are used to measure greater distances when inches would be impractical, picas are used to measure the length of lines of type. A line of type would be 18 picas wide, not 216 points wide.

Twelve points = 1 pica; 6 picas = 1 inch; 72 points = 1 inch

All measurements of type originally referred to the dimensions of a cast piece of metal type – not the size of the printed letter. Points are also used to measure the distance between lines of type. (LEADING)



What is Leading?

Leading is the distance between lines of type – measured from baseline to baseline.

Categories of Type Sizes

Body Copy – 14 points and smaller

Subheads – 15 to 24 points

Headlines – 25 points and larger

Display Type – all headlines and subheads

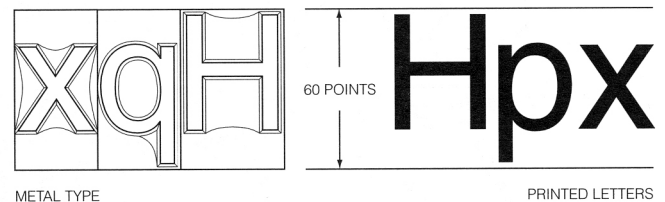
36 Point Headline

This Subhead type is set to 18 point.

Body copy is the type that is set in paragraphs. It is usually set in a comfortable size to read. This type is set in 9 points with 11 points of lead.

How do I measure type?

You may assume that you would measure the height of the capital letters, but this is not correct. The point size of type is measured from the top of the ascenders to the bottom of the descenders. This will give you a close approximation of the actual point size of type. In cast metal type, there would be a slight edge above the ascenders and below the descenders. Before the advent of cold type, type was measured by the size of the metal slug.



How do I measure type that is all caps?

Since you obviously can't measure from ascender to descender, there is no way to know for sure the exact type size of the type. But we can find an approximate height by measuring the cap height and multiplying the distance by 1.3. Capital letters only comprise 66-75% of the total height of the type. Since the proportion of the cap height to overall size varies from typeface to typeface, we can never determine the size absolutely. This method will at least give you close to the correct measure.

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Why does some type look larger at a certain point size than others?

Because the x-height varies from typeface to typeface. Some typefaces have a larger x-height than others, which makes them look larger. The main visual weight of the typeface lies within the x-height.



These are all examples of 36 point type. Notice the variations in the x-height. Since the main visual weight of the type is within the x-height, this variation causes some type to look larger than others.

How do I use the type gauge to measure type?

1. Measure the height of the type using the **Computer Type Scale** on the short side of the gauge. Each mark represents 2 points.
2. Measure the leading using the **Leading Gauge** in the center portion of the Type Gauge. Align the lines to the baselines of multiple lines of type. When you find the one that precisely matches, look at the number to the side of that section. The sections are divided by the thicker lines. For display type, you may have to skip over lines and multiple the number by however many lines you must skip.
3. Measure the line length using the **Computer Pica Scale** along the bottom of the Type Gauge. Each mark represents a half a pica.

How do I write down my measurements?

1. Write the type size and leading as a fraction with type size on top and leading on the bottom.
2. Write the line length in the following form:

TIMES NEW ROMAN
12/14 x 45p0

This notation indicates the measurement of the type that you are reading. The type is set in Times New Roman at 12 points with 14 points of lead and a column width of 45 picas and 0 points.