

Professional templates for local newsletters are available from the Department of Communications. To maintain that professional appearance, keep in mind some basic rules of typography and publishing.

## Using fonts and styles

Using a clear and readable font makes your document easier to read and understand. Avoid decorative fonts, excessive underlining, or all caps in blocks of printed text.

If your document will be used electronically, be sure the font is easy to read on a screen. Although serif fonts are typically used for large blocks of printed text, sans serif fonts sometimes appear easier to read on a screen because their visual “weight” is more uniform.

**Serif fonts** (Adobe Caslon Pro, Times, Palatino) are often used for the main body text in books and magazines.

**Sans serif fonts** (Arial, Futura, Helvetica, Myriad Pro) are often used for headlines.

## Columns

Wide paragraphs of text force the reader’s eye to travel completely across the page before returning to the start of the next line. This slows reading progress because the reader is forced to find the correct line across a greater space on the page. Notice that most magazines and newspapers use a multiple-column format for their pages. This keeps the reader’s eye focused on the story and simplifies the task of reading.

## Avoid design problems

**Tombstoning:** headlines or other highlighted type items appear next to each other in adjacent columns. The reader may have difficulty deciding what element to read first. Try changing column alignment, changing the page layout, or editing the text to stagger the headlines.

**Trapped white space:** a “hole” appears between a headline and an adjacent graphic, or an article is too short to fill the column to the next headline. Try adjusting the size of the graphic adjusting the text so the white space falls at the bottom of the page.

**Claustrophobic pages:** columns of text crowd each other and creep toward the page edge. Try increasing margin size or adding more space around individual elements.

**Whispering headlines:** fail to attract attention to the text they introduce. Headlines should be significantly larger and bolder than the text they introduce.

**Irregularly shaped blocks of copy:** no consistent beginning point for each line. Flush left type is the easiest to read. Centered type is difficult to read because lines without a consistent starting point can cause readers to lose track of the text.

**Buried heads and subheads:** headlines and subheads isolated near column bottoms, followed by only one or two lines of type. Try editing text or leaving column bottoms uneven.

**Similar typefaces:** headline and body typefaces that are too similar in appearance (style, size, and weight). Aim for contrast.

**Underlining:** undermines readability. Try to use boldface or italic type for emphasis instead. More than a few underlined words cause visual clutter, forcing the reader to separate the words from the horizontal lines.

**Box-itis and rule-itis:** too many bordered page elements. Some dated newsletter designs use a box to frame each page and internal boxes around elements such as nameplates, pull-quotes, or sidebars, creating visual clutter.

**Jumping horizons:** text columns start at different locations within the pages of the same document. The “up-and-down” effect bothers the reader and is unprofessional in appearance. Start text the same distance from the top of the page throughout a document.

**Widows and orphans:** (widow) a syllable, word, or less than a third of a line alone at the bottom of a paragraph or page; (orphan) a word isolated from the rest of the paragraph to which it belongs at the top of a column or page. Edit or rewrite to avoid unsightly typography.

**Floating heads and subheads:** headlines and subheads that seem unattached to the text they introduce. The impact of a heading is weakened if it isn't immediately clear where it belongs.

**Unequal spacing:** inconsistent space between elements. Pay attention to the space between:

- headlines as related to top and sides of pages, as well as the text being introduced
- subheads and text
- captions and art
- artwork and text
- column ends and bottom margins

**Exaggerated tabs/indents:** default tabs and indents in word-processed files that are too large for the layout. Adjust them to be proportionate with the type size and column width.

**Cramped logos and addresses:** vital information that is obviously squeezed in. Try placing the address or other important elements on the page first, then build the document around them.

**Too many typefaces:** a mixture of typefaces, sizes and weights. Use the minimum number necessary to organize information and create a hierarchy of importance. Each variation in type slows reading.

**Extra space after punctuation:** use of two spaces at the end of a sentence. Electronic type inserts space appropriately after punctuation.

**To request a newsletter design for your unit, contact University Printing at 785-532-1158, or the Department of Communications Publishing Unit at 785-532-1148.**

**Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service**

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