

TYPE FAMILIES

In the sixteenth century, printers began organizing roman and italic typefaces into matched families. The concept was formalized in the early twentieth century.

ANATOMY OF A TYPE FAMILY

ADOBÉ GARAMOND PRO REGULAR

ADOBÉ GARAMOND PRO ITALIC

SMALL CAPS HAVE A HEIGHT THAT IS SIMILAR TO the lowercase X-HEIGHT.

ADOBÉ GARAMOND PRO REGULAR (ALL SMALL CAPS)

Bold (and semibold) typefaces are used for emphasis within a hierarchy.

ADOBÉ GARAMOND PRO BOLD AND SEMIBOLD

Bold (and semibold) typefaces each need to include an italic version, too.

ADOBÉ GARAMOND PRO BOLD AND SEMIBOLD ITALIC

*Italics are not *slanted* letters.*

TRUE
ITALIC

TYPE CRIME:

PSEUDO ITALICS
*The wide, ungainly
forms of these
mechanically skewed
letters look forced
and unnatural.*

ADOBÉ GARAMOND PRO, designed by Robert Slimbach, 1988

The roman form, also called plain or regular, is the standard, upright version of a typeface. It is typically conceived as the parent of a larger family.

The italic form is used to create emphasis. Especially among serif faces, it often employs shapes and strokes distinct from its roman counterpart. Note the differences between the roman and italic a.

Small caps (capitals) are designed to integrate with a line of text, where full-size capitals would stand out awkwardly. Small capitals are slightly taller than the x-height of lowercase letters.

Bold versions of traditional text fonts were added in the twentieth century to meet the need for emphatic forms. Sans-serif families often include a broad range of weights (thin, bold, black, etc.).

The typeface designer tries to make the two bold versions feel similar in comparison to the roman, without making the overall form too heavy. The counters need to stay clear and open at small sizes. Many designers prefer not to use bold and semi-bold versions of traditional typefaces such as Garamond, because these weights are alien to the historic families.

*Some italics aren't slanted at all.
In the type family Quadraat, the
italic form is upright.*

QUADRAAT, designed by Fred Smeijers, 1992.