



the consistently inconsistent typeface

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Typography I

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## Typography

Typography is the art and technique of arranging type in order to make language visible. The arrangement of type involves the selection of typefaces, point size, line length, leading (line spacing), adjusting the spaces between groups of letters (tracking) and adjusting the space between pairs of letters (kerning). Type design is a closely related craft, which some consider distinct and others a part of typography; most typographers do not design typefaces, and some type designers do not consider themselves typographers. In modern times, typography has been put into motion — in film, television and online broadcasts — to add emotion to mass communication.

Typography is performed by typesetters, compositors, typographers, graphic designers, art directors, comic book artists, graffiti artists, clerical workers, and anyone else who arranges type for a product. Until the Digital Age, typography was a specialized occupation. Digitization opened up typography to new generations of visual designers and lay users, and it has been said that “typography is now something everybody does.”

## Eric Gill

The designer of Gill Sans, Eric Gill was born in 1882 as Arthur Eric Rowton Gill, and died in 1940.

Associated with the Arts and Crafts movement, he was also an important British sculptor, artist, and typeface designer.

Eric Gill gave us Perpetua and Joanna (named after one of his daughters), among others.

His personal life was later discovered to be rather controversial; his well-known religious views and subject matter being seen as at odds with his sexual and paraphiliac behaviour and erotic art.



## The History of Gill Sans

The history of Gill Sans stems from Edward Johnston's iconic typeface, Johnston Sans, designed for the London Underground in 1913. Eric Gill, who had studied under Johnston at London's Central School of Arts and Crafts, later became a friend and apprentice—and even had a small role assisting in creation of the proprietary typeface.

Drawing heavily on Johnston's work, Gill first experimented with his 'improvements' in 1926 when he hand-painted lettering for a bookshop sign in his hometown, Bristol. Gill also sketched a guide for the bookshop owner, Douglas Cleverdon, who later published the work in *A Book of Alphabets* for Douglas Cleverdon.

The alphabet, which at the time only contained uppercase letters, was noticed by Stanley Morison for its commercial potential. A Monotype advisor, Morison commissioned Gill to develop a complete font family to compete with the sans-serif designs released by German foundries fueled by the overwhelming success of *Futura*. The font was released commercially by Monotype in 1928 as Gill Sans.

# Gill Sans

regular, 72 pt

**was initially designed for**

bold italic, 24 pt

**ADVERTISING,**

bold, 40 pt

*but its different weights*

italic, 36 pt

*work wonderfully to*

light italic, 30 pt

**exaggerate the headline**

ultra bold, 22 pt

and *understate the body text.*

light, 26 pt

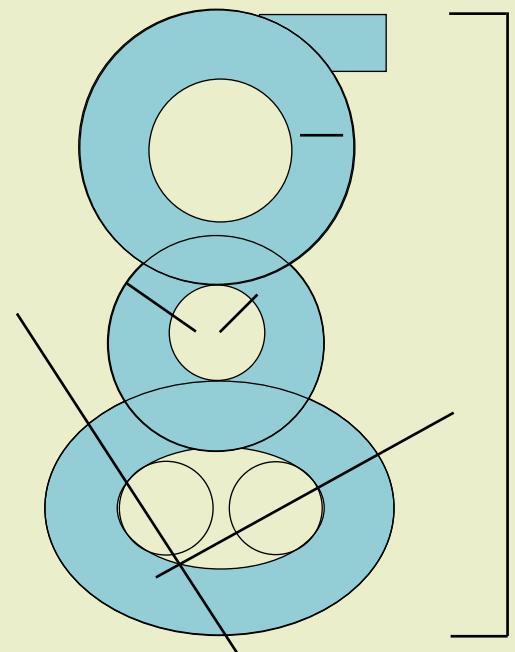
## The Gill Sans family

Originally released as metal type, over 36 derivatives emerged between 1929 and 1932—many of which were created by the Monotype drawing office (with input by Gill). The typeface is renowned for its inconsistencies between weights, as they were not mechanically produced from a single design (opposed to others like Helvetica).

The Gill Sans family ranges from Light to the exaggerated Ultra Bold—“because every advertisement has to try and shout down its neighbors,” Gill explains in *Essay on Typography*.

Gill’s lettering is based on classic roman proportions, which give the sans-serif a less mechanical feel than its geometric

contemporaries. The typeface was initially recommended for advertising and headline use, but as the public got used to reading sans-serif, Gill Sans turned out to work just as well for body text.



# WEIGHTS FROM LIGHT TO ULTRA BOLD

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z  
light

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z  
light italic

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z  
italic

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z  
regular

**a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z**  
bold

**a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z**  
bold italic

**a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z**  
ultra bold

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z  
light

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z  
light italic

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z  
italic

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z  
regular

**A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z**  
bold

**A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z**  
bold italic

**A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z**  
ultra bold

# NUMBERS

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0



## Consistently Inconsistent Characteristics

t  regular,  
triangular topped

bd  regular,  
flat bottom  
and spurless

p  italic,  
calligraphic tail

a  regular,  
tail

R  regular,  
elongated leg

i  ultra bold,  
small dot

g  regular,  
eyeglass shaped descender

pq  regular,  
flat top and  
spurless

r  ultra bold,  
transition from bold to  
ultra bold changes to  
rounded end

## Gill Sans Today

Despite its inconsistencies, Gill Sans remains popular. Today over two dozen Gill Sans designs are available digitally, with mainstream reach thanks to its inclusion on Mac OS X and Microsoft Office. It can be seen everywhere, used (or overused) on everything from corporate logos to movie posters—one industry that has actually embraced the unusual Ultra Bold.



The type for this book was obviously set in Gill Sans, the consistently inconsistent typeface.

It was bound using perfect bind, the only binding suitable for this humanist typeface.

This publication was designed by the one and only, Dana Shiroma (D-shizzle Shiro-yomama on the streets) in the infamous Badlands. She is also suffering from minor carpal tunnel syndrome and over-dramatic disease.

The designer would like to leave you with a poem dedicated to Gill Sans, found at <http://poorphraser.tumblr.com/post/4107574848>.

I like Gill Sans  
I'm a Gill Sans Man (or Woman)

I use Gill Sans  
ev'ry chance I can

I like Gill Sans  
and Gills Sans Light

I choose Gill Sans  
ev'ry time I write

I love Gill Sans  
if the truth be told

My muse, Gill Sans  
and **Gill Sans Bold**

I like Gill Sans  
in the *italic*

I enthuse Gill Sans  
Eric Gill: smart alec

I like Gills Sans  
It's the font I want

to peruse Gill Sans  
Can't refuse Gill Sans

Introduce Gill Sans  
to ev'ry woman, child, man

From x-height to base  
It's the best typeface

It's sculptured grace  
never out of place

AND IN UPPER CASE  
It's just the ace!

It's the BBC  
HM Treasury

Classic Penguin Books  
It's how Britain looks

It's Parliament  
British Government

It KEEPS CALM and CARRIES ON  
It's British Railways

from our yesterdays  
The Church of England font

(but not the one with water)  
Ev'ry conversa-shan

about Gill Sans  
must legally point out:

Eric Gill abused his daughter.  
And his dog.

Weird man.  
But, dash it,

I like Gill Sans.

