

OMG FONTS! :O

THEY ROCK YOU OH SO HARD

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FONTS: WHY THEY OWN YOU

Fonts own you because, without them, you wouldn't be able to use a computer (you are much too dumb to program in machine code with switches). Fonts allow computers to display and print text.

Fonts started out as bitmaps. That is, they were small grids of black and white (or green). They were tough, ugly, and purely utilitarian. Once computers became more powerful they could display text created with vector shapes (though they just made those vectors into bitmaps, as they still do, to make the computer run faster).

CREATIVE USES FOR FONTS

Fonts are nothing more than vector shapes. Vector shapes are shapes made of points connected by lines or curves, based on math. Because they're based on math and have no true resolution they can be resized to enormous sizes without losing quality. In fact, they only gain quality by doing so.

Now because fonts are just shapes, they also come in non-alphanumeric shapes, like this.



They can be used in graphics programs such as Photoshop and Illustrator to create interesting and colorful graphics.

DUDE, WHERE CAN I GET 'EM?

Well, first off, your computer comes with a package of default fonts. These are fonts that your computer requires in order to run (so don't delete them!). It also comes with a set of fonts that are commonplace on the internet, so websites will look as the designers, um... designed them. These fonts are all rather boring, and the fonts that attempt to look exciting and fun really just look like poopie. If you plan on sharing anything you make, please don't use the default fonts other than Arial, Times, or Helvetica.

When you install software for page layout, image editing, word processing, etc., they often come with a series of fonts as well. These include fonts that are exclusive to Adobe, or versions of other fonts that Adobe recreated in order to prove higher quality results for printing.

You can purchase CDs with fonts on them, and it's often something like "35,000 fonts for 99 cents! OMG!!" However, how many of those 35,000 fonts do you think are good, high quality fonts that are created for industry quality printing? Consider that the next place we'll talk about getting fonts from can cost five dollars per font (which is still a bargain). Now how do these cheap "valu-pak" fonts look? It's comparing dollar-store plastic toy cars to exotic European sports cars.

You can purchase fonts from what are called 'font houses'. Font houses are companies that specialize in making high quality fonts, which can be used for high quality printing. These fonts are purchased both individually (as a family) or in theme packs. Theme packs will give you more fonts for your money, but will probably include fonts you don't want.

You can also download free fonts off the internet for free. However, you have to be very careful to make sure that they are quality fonts. That is, if you try to use them for any industry-quality printing, they will actually show up and *not* look like poopie. Some font houses, as mentioned previously, have free fonts you can download from their website as a kind of advertising and promotion to display the quality of their font. Be careful to read the license agreements that come with free fonts, though, as they may not allow you to use them to make money.

Lastly, you can just copy fonts from one computer to the next. In order to ensure that the font will work without any problems it is best to transfer fonts from Mac to Mac, PC to PC. Macs can read just about every font PCs can read, but PCs still lag behind in the cross-compatibility race, so your luck with Mac to PC will be limited to the kind of font on the machine.

THERE'S MORE THAN ONE KIND OF FONT?! :<

Well duh. Fonts have been around for hundreds of years outside of computers, and they've changed and evolved over the years, why wouldn't fonts on a computer? As computer processors became more powerful they could handle higher resolution bitmap fonts. Once they became powerful enough to display fonts made from vector shapes the limits to what fonts could look like all but vanished. You can have plain ol' boring Times New Roman or you can have something neat like Futura (which is the font you're looking at right now). There are plenty of different kinds of fonts out there, but here's what you need to know.

Type 0: *The core fonts your computer needs to run. For the love of God, do not delete these fonts (unless you like reinstalling your operating system).*

PostScript (Type 1): *Developed by Adobe, this font is generally accepted as the highest quality font on the market. It was created for the purpose of high quality industry printing.*

TrueType: *Developed by Apple Computers, this is the most common type of font. It runs on Mac, Windows, and Linux.*

You really don't have to worry much about font types these days for general computing and 'secretary-level' page layout (like using Microsoft Word and printing to an office printer). If you're going to be designing a document that will be put on a printing press then you might want to consider your font choices more carefully.

MAKE SURE THAT FONT DOESN'T SUCK, YO!

Okay, so you found a font that you're completely head-over-heels for. It's the most gorgeous thing you've ever laid eyes on. Well, is it really that good of a font? Here's some things to watch out for when installing new fonts (especially those downloaded off the internet).

Letters & symbols: *Make sure your font has both upper and lower case letters, numbers, and characters such as bullets, parenthesis, and monetary symbols. If it's missing any of these then be careful on what you use them on.*

Family: *Does it include medium, bold, or italic? Telling programs to make a medium-style font italic or bold is good enough for home or office printing, but if you try to use them for industry printing then you will end up with either poopie quality or no font at all.*

Outlines: *This is to ensure your font is actually made of vector shapes, which is required for high quality printing. To do this in Photoshop make a text layer and type something out. Go to Layer, Type, then Convert To Shape. If it creates a layer with a vector mask then your font is okay. In Illustrator just place some text and go to Object and Create Outlines.*

If you use a Mac: *If you run Mac OS 10.4 then you can use a tool to validate the 'safety' of your fonts. It'll be in your applications folder (Shift + Cmd + A) called Font Book. Select your font, go to File and choose 'Validate Font' which will scan the font for necessary characters, code, and other things you generally can't see.*

THAT'S IT?

Well, that's all for now. This is just the foundation of fonts, but it covers all the important points of finding and using quality fonts.