

A Guide to Fonts

In computer terminology, a **font** is a set of one or more letters each designed with stylistic unity. A font usually consists of an alphabet of upper and lower case letters, numerals and punctuation marks. It may also contain mathematical or map-making symbols.

Fonts can be divided into families according to some of the stylistic properties. For web design purposes, these font families are *serif*, *sans-serif*, *cursive*, *fantasy*, and *monospace*.

Serif Fonts

Serifs are small horizontal lines that rest on the tops and bottoms of the characters that make up a font. A font has serifs if letters look like they have feet. Serif fonts are the preferred font for the printed page, but should **not** be used on web pages. Examples of serif fonts are:

- Garamond
- Bookman Old Style
- Times New Roman
- Goudy Old Style

Sans-serif Fonts

Sans-serif fonts are fonts without serifs. These fonts are easier to read on a monitor and **must** be used as the default font on all web-pages. Particularly, all paragraphs must be displayed in a sans-serif font. Examples of sans-serif fonts are:

- Arial
- Lucida Sans
- Trebuchet MS
- Verdana

Verdana is a font that was invented by Microsoft for use on web pages.

Cursive Fonts

Cursive fonts look more like handwriting. They typically slant to the right. They should never be used as the default font on a page. They are fine for small sections of text including headings. Examples of cursive fonts are:

- *Brush Script MT*
- *Lucida Handwriting*
- *Script MT Bold*
- *Comic Sans MS*

Fantasy Fonts

Fantasy fonts are primarily decorative. In general, fantasy and cursive fonts are only used for accents, headlines, and call-outs. Examples of fantasy fonts are:

- **COPPERPLATE GOTHIC BLACK**
- **Impact**
- **Broadway**
- Papyrus

Monospace Fonts

A font is a monospace font when every character that makes up the font is exactly the same width. A monospace font may also be a serif or a sans-serif font. Normally, monospace fonts are used solely for coding examples or to provide directions. Examples of monospace fonts are:

- Courier New
- Lucida Console

CSS & Fonts

The CSS property used to specify a font is *font-family*. Not all fonts are available to all browsers, and not all characters are available in all fonts. It is therefore customary to provide the browser with a list of fonts that you would prefer, followed by a font family name to use when the browser can't find the specific fonts you've chosen.

Names describing a specific font should be capitalized. Names describing a font family should not be capitalized. If the name of a specific font contains more than one word, then the entire font name should be enclosed in double quotes.

Here are some commonly used combinations:

```
font-family: Arial, Helvetica, sans-serif;
font-family: "Century Gothic", "Gill Sans", Arial, sans-serif;
font-family: Tahoma, "Lucida Grande", Arial, sans-serif;
font-family: Geneva, Arial, Helvetica, sans-serif;
font-family: "Courier New", Courier, monospace;
font-family: "Lucida Console", Monaco, monospace;
font-family: "Marker Felt", fantasy;
font-family: Papyrus, fantasy;
font-family: Broadway, fantasy;
font-family: Impact, fantasy;
font-family: Broadway, "Goudy Stout", fantasy;
font-family: "Lucida Handwriting", "Script MT Bold", cursive;
font-family: "Comic Sans MS", "Brush Script MT", cursive;
font-family: "Script MT Bold", "Lucida Handwriting", cursive;
font-family: "Brush Script MT", "Comic Sans MS", cursive;
```

Font Size

Font sizes may be represented several ways. When creating documentation to be printed, the size of fonts is measured in *points*. A 12pt font is smaller than a 14pt font.

Because a user has more control over the size of fonts on a webpage, fonts are typically not measured in points, but in a measure called an *em*. An *em* is the height of the uppercase letter M in the default font on the page. A font whose size is *.8em* is smaller than the default size on the page, and a font whose size is *2em* is twice as tall as the default height on the page. (Note that there is no space between the number and em.)

Another way to measure the size of fonts is to use percentages. *80%* and *.8em* are two different ways of writing the same size. *200%* and *2em* are also equivalent.

In CSS terminology, in addition to using *%* and *em*, there are 9 keyword values that can be used to specify the size of the font. All are in reference to the default font size on the page: *xx-small*, *x-small*, *small*, *medium*, *large*, *x-large*, *xx-large*, *smaller* and *larger*. The keyword *medium* refers to the default size of the font on the page.

The CSS property used to specify the size of a font is *font-size*. Here are some examples:

- `font-size: xx-small;`
- `font-size: .8em;`
- `font-size: 150%;`

Bold, Italic, & Underline Font

To change text to **bold**, the CSS *font-weight* property is used. According to the W3C standard, the *font-weight* property has 13 keyword values: *normal*, *bold*, *lighter*, *bolder*, *100*, *200*, *300*, *400*, *500*, *600*, *700*, *800*, and *900*. In practicality, only *normal* and *bold* actually work.

To change text to *italic*, the CSS *font-style* property is used. According to the W3C standard, the *font-style* property has 3 keyword values: *normal*, *italic* and *oblique*. In practicality, there is no difference with today's web browsers between *italic* and *oblique*.

To change text to underline, the CSS *text-decoration* property is used. According to the W3C standard, the *text-decoration* property has 5 keyword values: *none*, *underline*, *overline*, *line-through* and *blink*. Although it is part of the standard, never, ever use *blink!!!* Some browsers will actually ignore it!

Here are examples:

- `font-weight: bold;`
- `font-style: italic;`
- `text-decoration: underline;`