

Styling Text

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Introduction

Hello and welcome to the Divi Stylist Academy typography lesson on styling text. In this lesson, I would like to share a few do's and don'ts when working with text on a website.

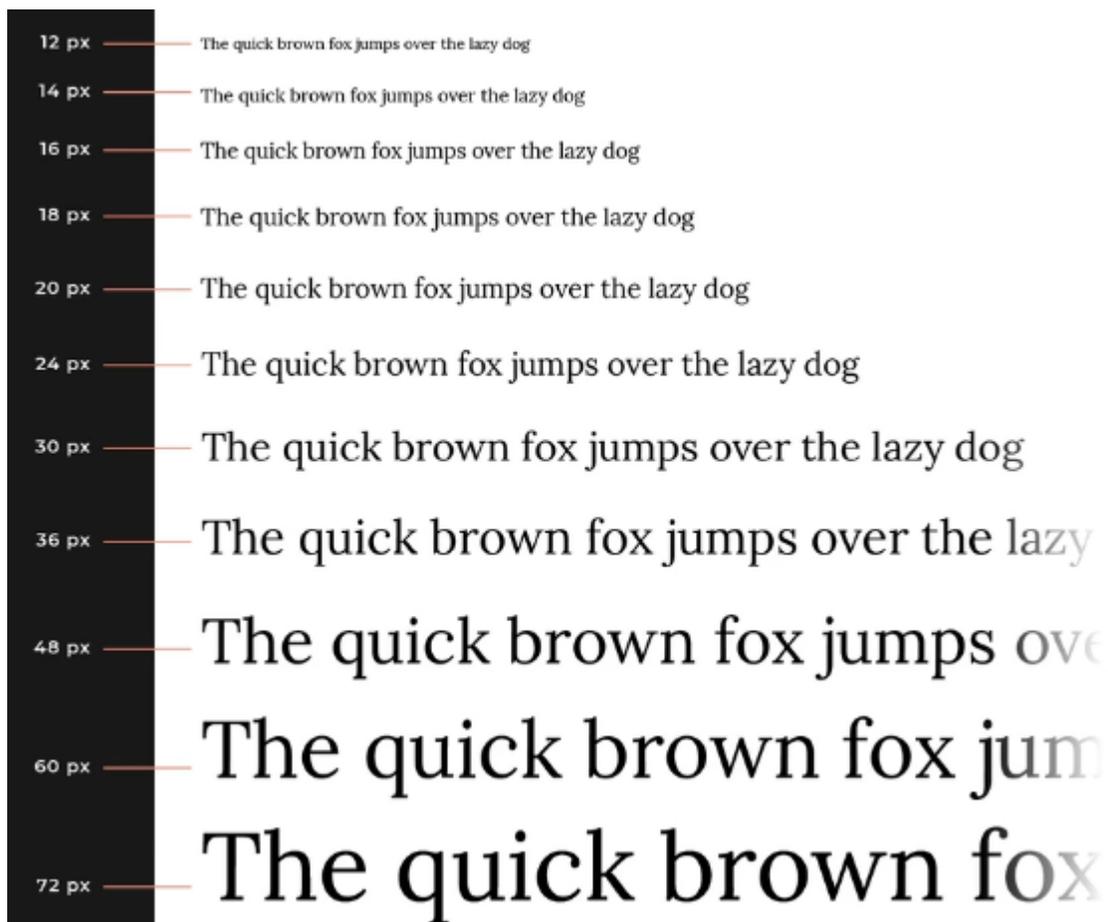
In the previous lesson on choosing fonts, I mentioned the most common typography mistake, which is using too many font families or too many font styles and sizes. An extension of this rule that is going to be very important in this lesson is to make a plan before acting.

Define a type scale system

My first tip for working with text, which kind of requires you to stop and think ahead, is to create a type scale. Take the time at the beginning of the project to create a sizing system.

Choosing font sizes within a system is a great idea for two reasons. First, it saves your designs from annoying inconsistencies and also it speeds up your workflow.

How do you define a type system? The most practical approach is to simply pick values by hand. You have total control over which sizes are there instead of, you know, outsourcing that job to some mathematical formula.



Here's an example of a scale that works well for most projects and aligns nicely with the spacing and sizing scale I recommended in the lesson about spacing. It's constrained just

enough to speed up your decision making, but it's not so limited as to make you feel like you're missing a useful size.

Whenever you need to choose a font size, just pick a value from your type scale. If it's not exactly right, the next value will probably be perfect. Taking the time to make all these decisions upfront will save you loads of time afterwards, and it will keep your design consistent.

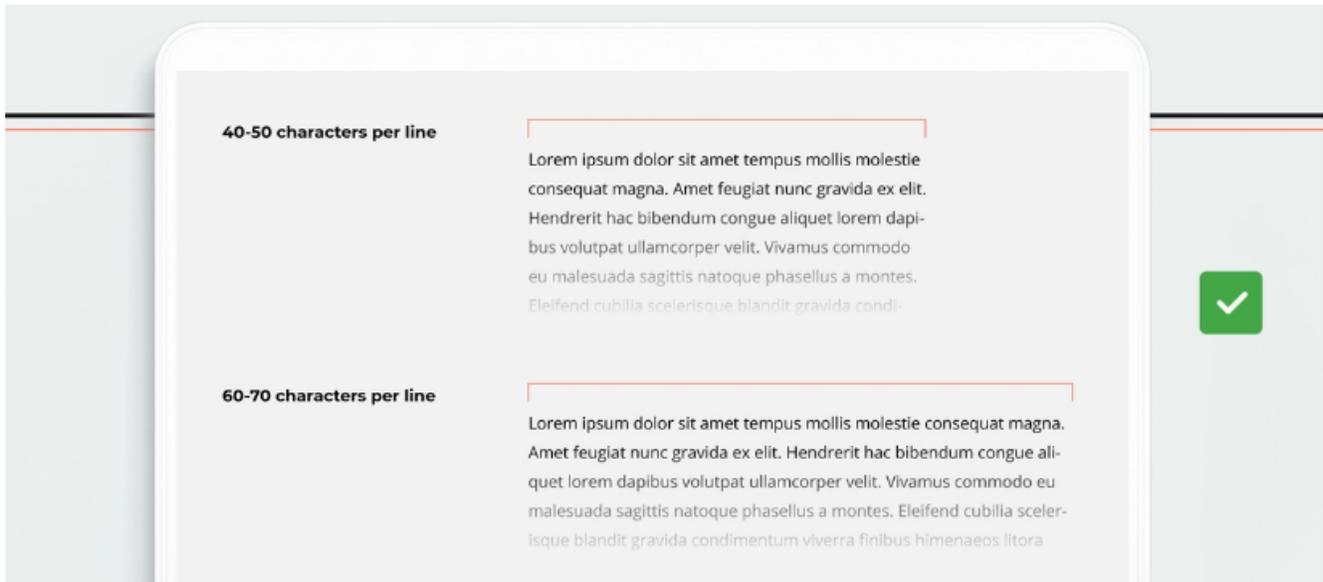
The golden rule is: when we are styling text on a website, a marketing landing page, a blog article, or a documentation page, it's important to make the active reading **effortless for the user**. The following tips will help you achieve this.

Limit the line length

One of the most common mistakes I see is zero consideration for the line length. For some reason, there's this desire to fill the entire space, and it can be problematic, because in most cases page width is too wide, making it difficult to track your progress while reading. The last thing you want is your users skipping lines, or worse - re-reading lines of text because their eye has to travel too far to get to the beginning of the next line of text.



For the best reading experience, make your paragraphs wide enough to fit between 45 and 75 characters per line. Decreasing the line length not only improves the legibility, but it also gives the impression of a more professional layout.

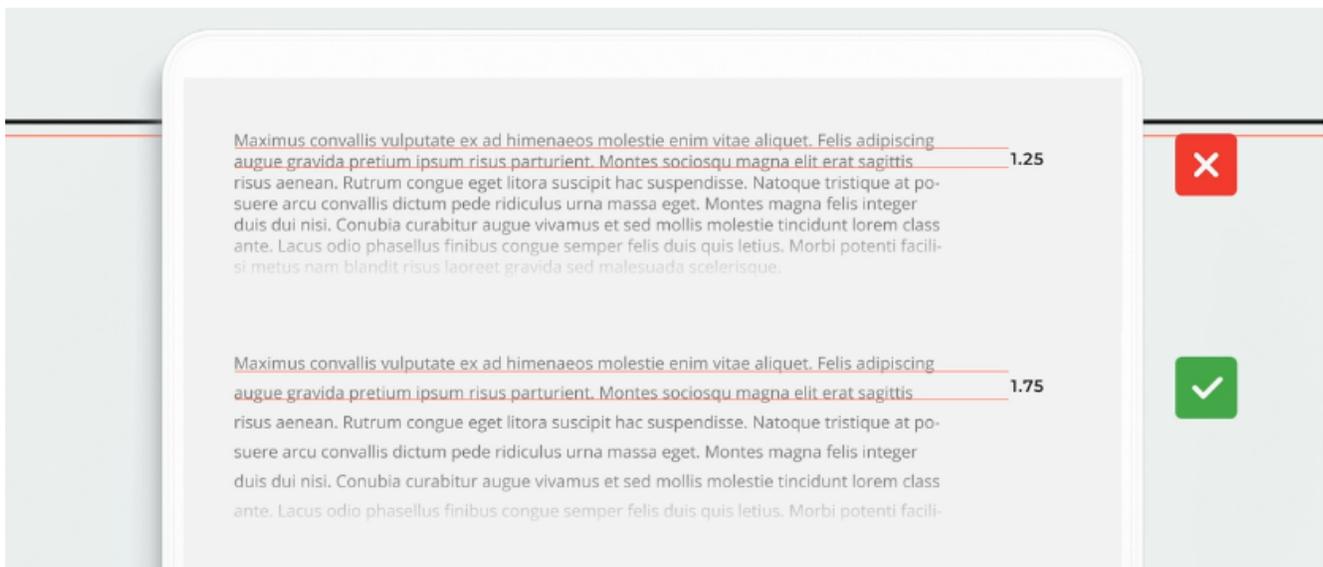


Use the correct line height



The next important aspect for improving text legibility is space. This includes line-height. The reason we add space between lines of text is to make it easy for the reader to find the next line when the text wraps.

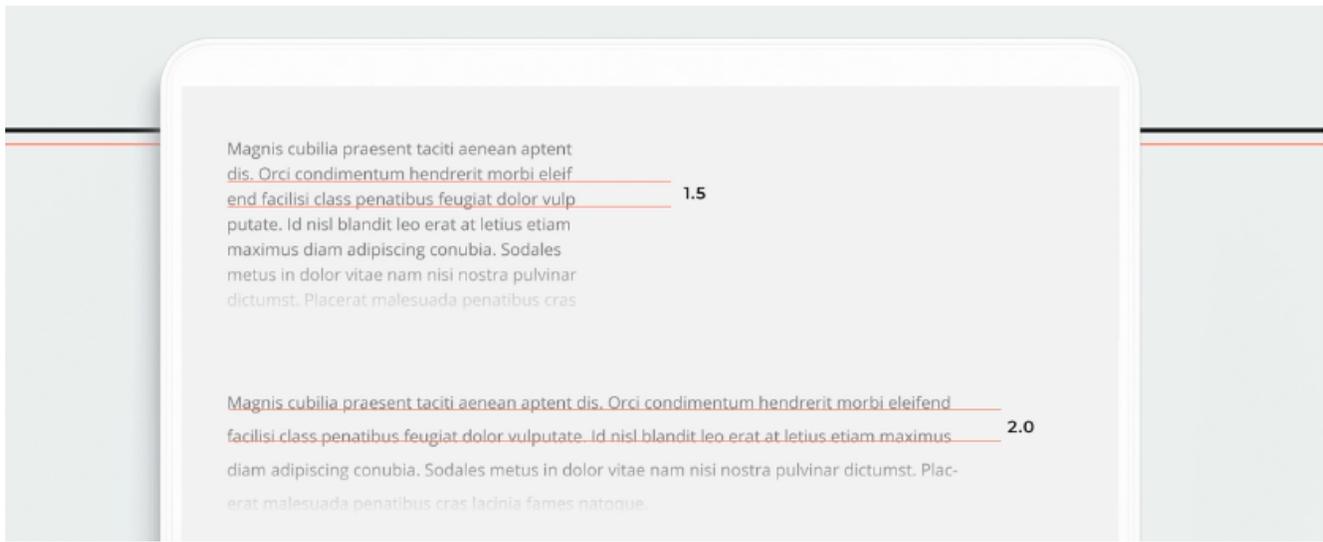
Similarly to when the paragraph is too wide, when lines of text are spaced too tightly, it's easy to finish reading a line of text at the right edge of a page and then move your eyes all the way back to the left edge only to be unsure which line is next.



The problem is even magnified when lines of text are long. The further your eyes have to jump horizontally to read the next line, the easier it is to lose your place.

That means that your line-height and paragraph width should be proportional.

Using the same line-height across the entire site is a subtle but common mistake. Narrow content can use a shorter line-height like 1.5 but wide content might need a line-height as tall as 2.



The paragraph width should be considered when defining the line-height, but the font size is just as important. It has a big impact on the line-height as well.

When the text is small, extra line spacing is important because it makes it a lot easier for your eyes to find the next line when the text wraps. The larger line-height works well for body copy, but as the text gets larger, your eyes don't need as much help.



This means that for large headline texts you might not need any extra line spacing, and a line-height of one is perfectly fine.

The takeaway here is this: line-height and font size are inversely proportional. Use a taller line-height for small text and shorter line-height for large text.

Text alignment

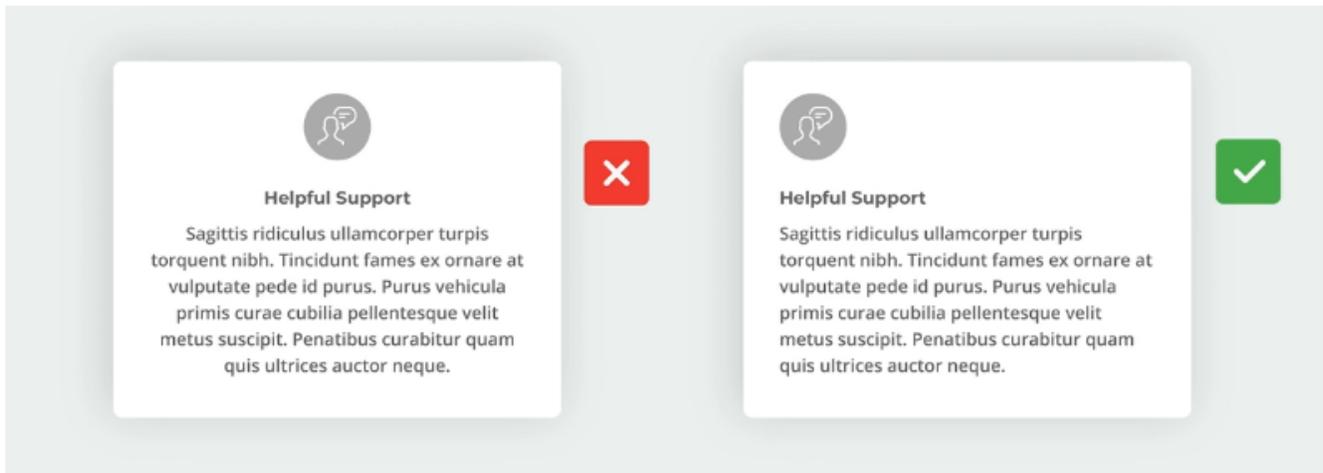
The next important aspect of the reading experience is text alignment. In general, text should be aligned to match the direction of the language it's written in. For English (and most other languages), that means that the vast majority of text should be left-aligned.

<p>Left-Aligned</p> <p>Sagittis ridiculus ullamcorper turpis torquent nibh. Tincidunt fames ex ornare at vulputate pede id purus. Purus vehicula primis curae cubilia pellentesque velit metus suscipit. Penatibus curabitur quam quis ultrices auctor neque.</p>	<p>Center-Aligned</p> <p>Sagittis ridiculus ullamcorper turpis torquent nibh. Tincidunt fames ex ornare at vulputate pede id purus. Purus vehicula primis curae cubilia pellentesque velit metus suscipit. Penatibus curabitur quam quis ultrices auctor neque.</p>	<p>Justified</p> <p>Sagittis ridiculus ullamcorper turpis torquent nibh. Tincidunt fames ex ornare at vulputate pede id purus. Purus vehicula primis curae cubilia pellentesque velit metus suscipit. Penatibus curabitur quam quis ultrices auctor neque.</p>
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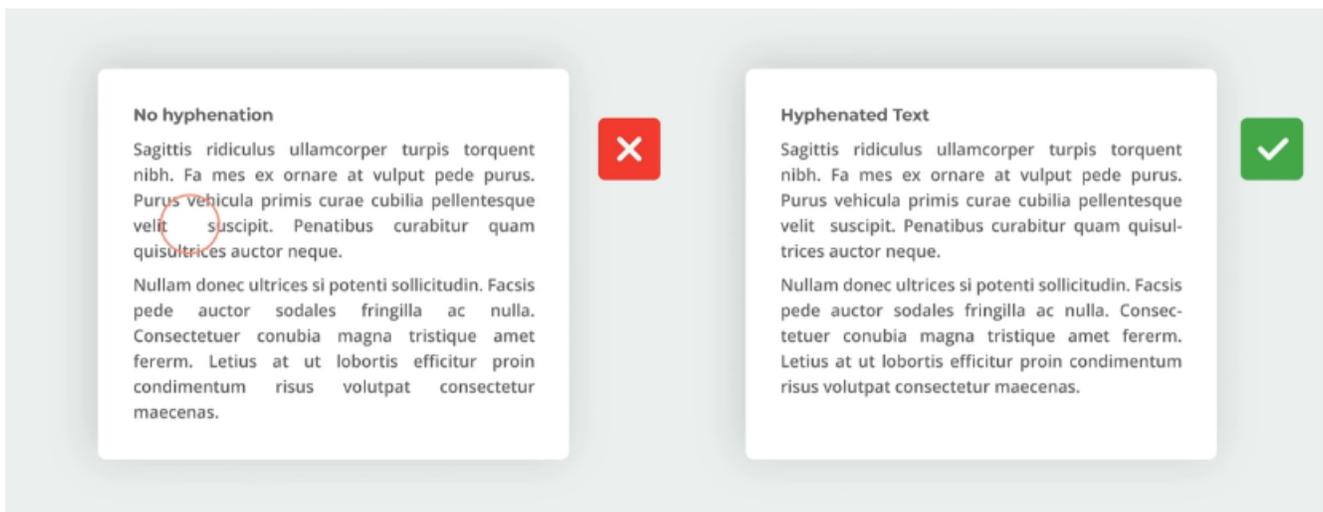
Other alignment options do have their place though, you just need to use them effectively.

 <p>Helpful Support</p> <p>Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet efficitur sociosqu mattis erat.</p>	 <p>Quality Services</p> <p>Quis est lorem tellus quam facilisis cursus eget lorem ipsum aenean.</p>	 <p>Awesome Bonus</p> <p>Suspendisse proin pulvinar turpis maecenas iaculis sociosqu.</p>
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Center-alignment can look great for headlines of short, independent blocks of text. But if something is longer than two or three lines, it will almost always look better left-aligned.



We can also use justified text. Justified text looks great in print and can work well in the Web when you're going for a more formal look, but without special care, it can create a lot of awkward gaps between words. To avoid this, whenever you justify text, you should also **enable hyphenation**.



Justified text works best in situations when you're trying to mimic a print look, perhaps for an online magazine or a newspaper. But even then, left-aligned texts work great too. It's really just a matter of preference.

Establish visual hierarchy

You should always consider different methods for emphasizing and deemphasizing text. Now, the simplest way to establish hierarchy is by using font size.



Size is not the only way to emphasize or deemphasize text. If a text is important, like the heading, try making it bolder. If a text is secondary, like the body copy, try making it a lighter color. It makes the page much more scannable.

These are the elements that influence how visible a text is. Its size, font weight, font case - because uppercase font will be more prominent than using lowercase letters - and also color. You can make a text lighter to deemphasize it, but you should be careful with using colorful text. In general, it is best to stick with gray text and only use color for accent elements.

If you are able to achieve the correct visual hierarchy without using colorful text, adding it later won't be a problem. But if you rely on color to make the text prominent, you might end up with too noisy and unprofessional looking design.

When trying to establish the correct visual hierarchy with text-heavy pages, you should also make sure to use correct spacing and add the proper amount of white space in between elements. Keep the proximity rule in mind and make sure that the related

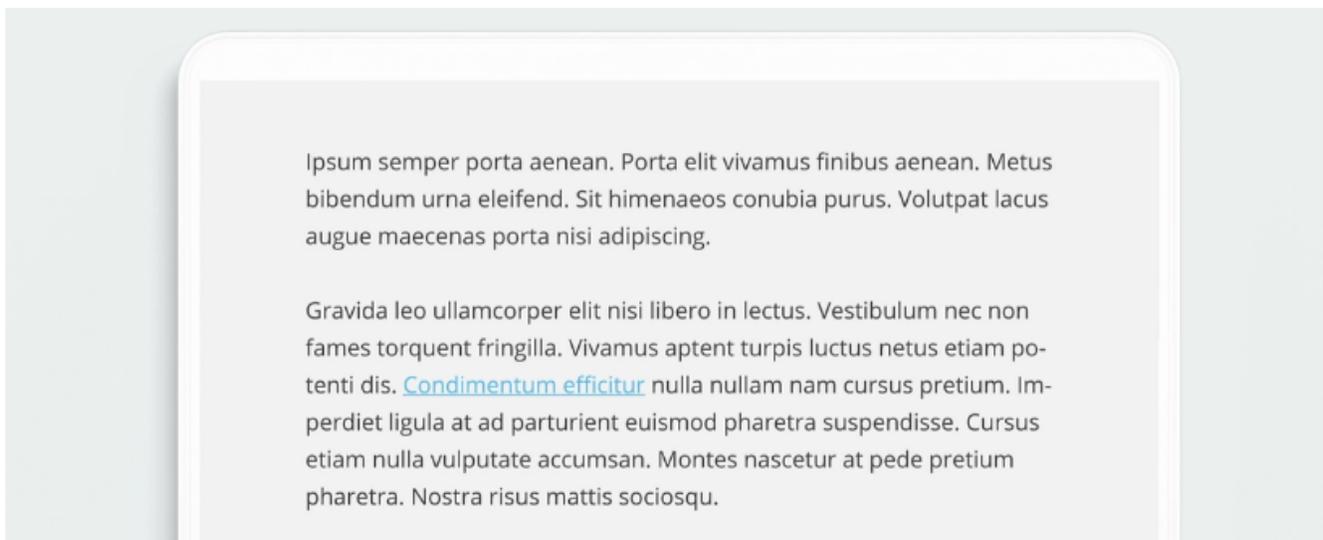
content is closer together so it is clear to users what content elements are associated with one another.



Remember the rule that the outer spacing within a content "group" should be greater than inner spacing.

Styling links

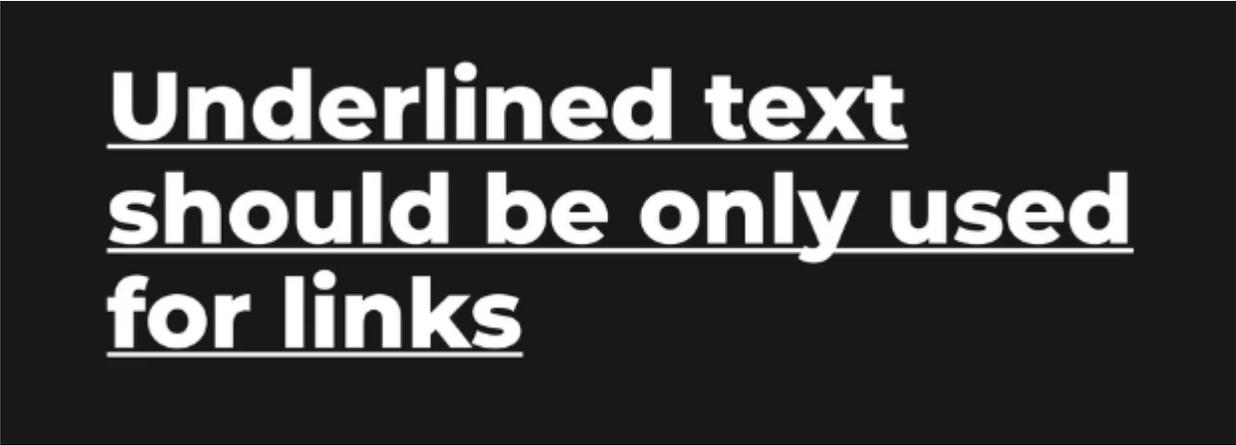
Let's talk about styling links. When you're including a link in a block of otherwise non-linked text, it's important to make sure that the link stands out and looks clickable. Inside a paragraph, you should consider emphasizing your links and it is one of the places that it is actually OK to use colored text.



Some links might not even need to be emphasized by default at all. If you've got links in your interface that are not a part of the main path a user takes through the website, consider adding an underline or changing the color only on hover. They will still be

discoverable to any users who think to try, but won't compete for attention with more important actions on the page.

When talking about underlining links, I think this goes without saying, but I must say it anyway: the underlined text should be only used for links. You do not want to underline anything that is not a link.



Underlined text
should be only used
for links

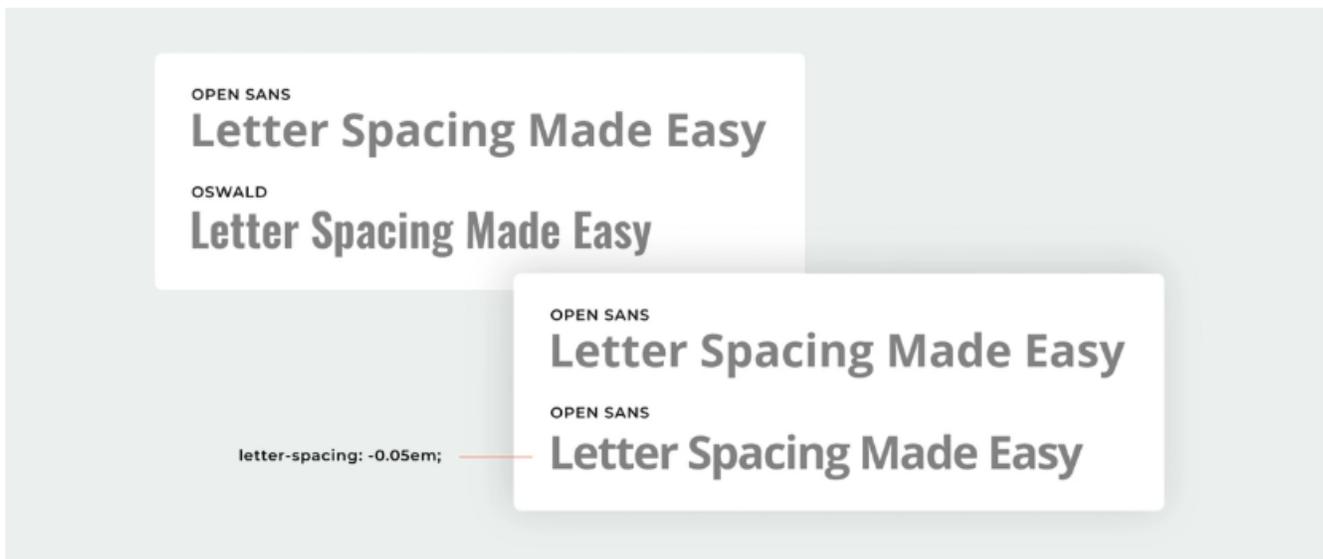
Styling text

When styling text, a lot of effort is put into getting the weight, the color, the line-height just right, but it's easy to forget that letter spacing can be tweaked too.



As a general rule, you should trust the typeface designer and leave letter spacing alone. That said, there are a couple of common situations where adjusting it can improve your designs.

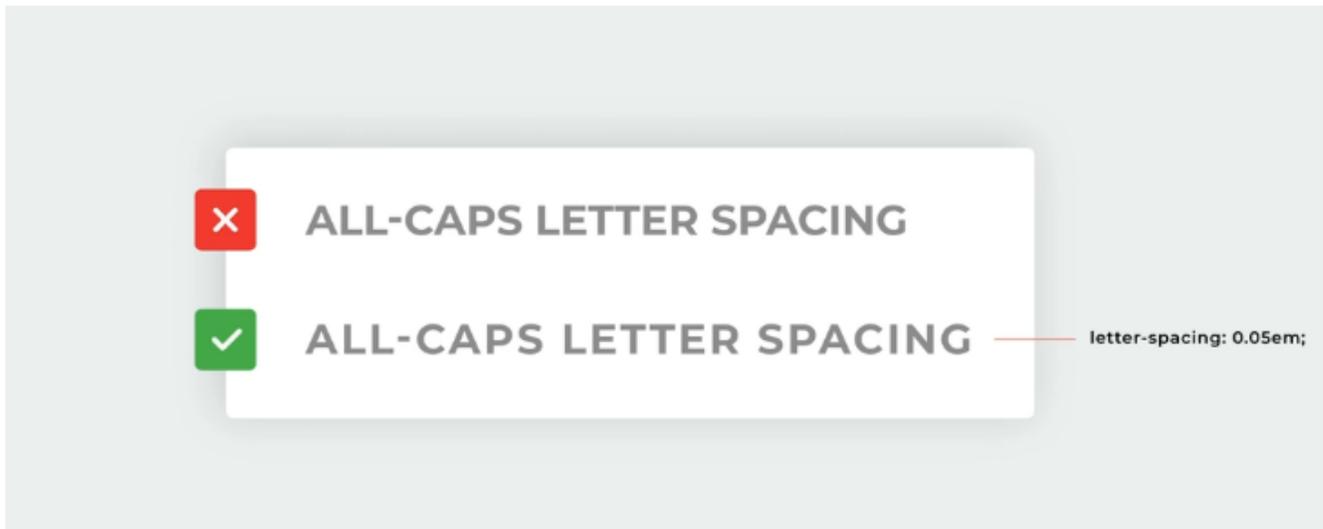
When someone designs a font family, they design it with a purpose in mind. A family like Open Sans is designed to be highly legible even at small sizes, so the built-in letter-spacing is a lot wider than in a family like Oswald, which is designed for headlines.



If you want to use a family with wider letter spacing for headlines or titles, just as the display text, it can often make sense to decrease the letter spacing to mimic the condensed look of a display font.

Avoid trying to make this work the other way around though. A font designed for headlines probably won't work well at small sizes, even if you increase the letter spacing.

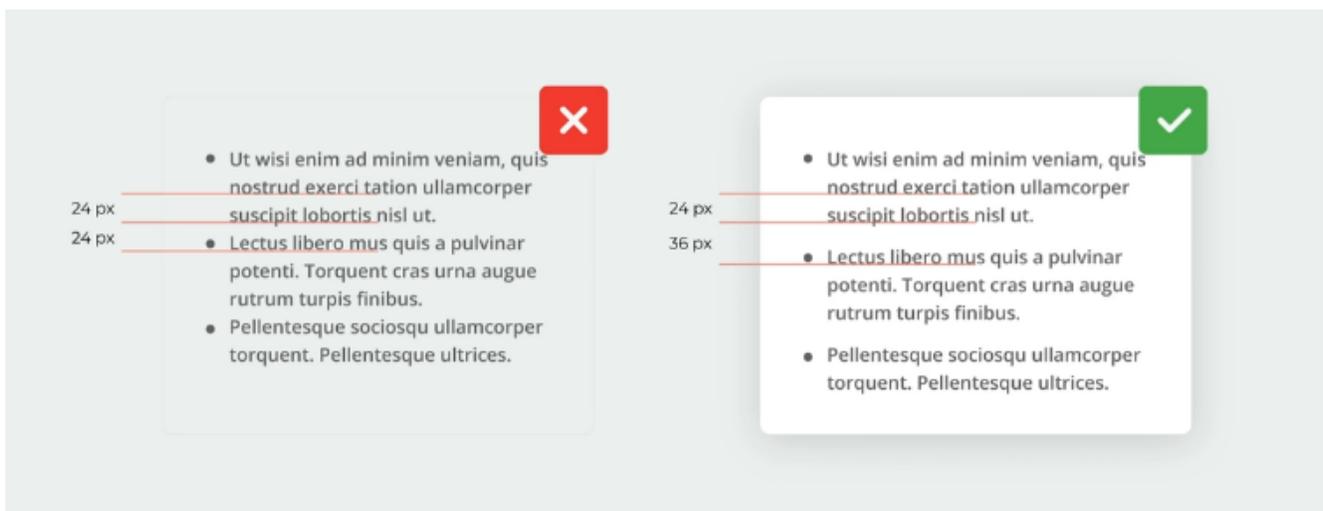
Another thing about letter spacing is that in most font families it is optimized for normal "sentence case" text, i.e. a capital letter followed by mostly lowercase letters, right? If we are using fonts in all caps, though, the text and letter shapes are not as diverse as lowercase letters. With all caps, every letter is the same height, which makes them harder to distinguish.



That is why using uppercase with the default letter-spacing often leads to a text that is harder to read, so it makes sense to increase the letter-spacing of all cap stacks to improve readability.

Designing lists

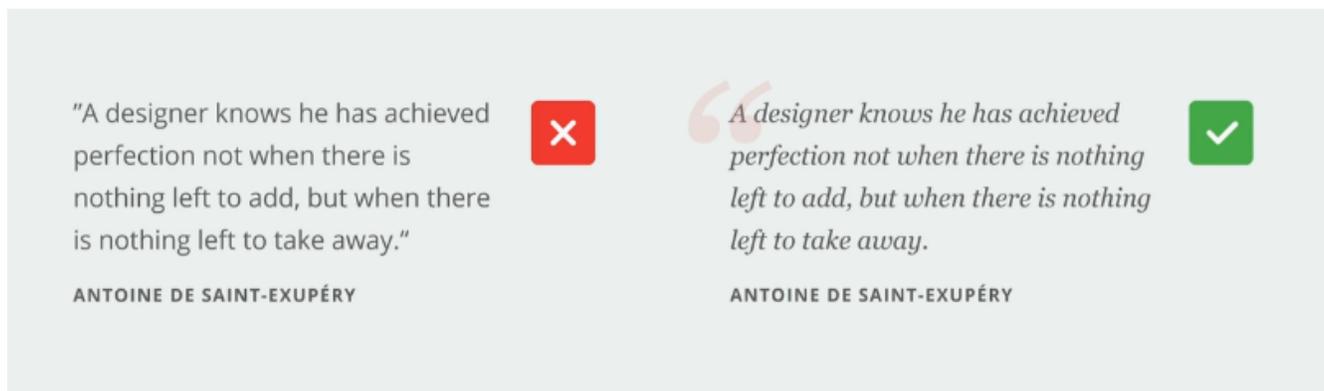
When it comes to bulleted lists, a very common problem is that the distance between each list item is the same as the line-height, so the bullet points become harder to skim through. A good approach is to make the space between each bullet point about twice the size as the font size.



And also, consider using some generic icons like arrows or check marks instead of the standard bullets, just to make the simple lists a little bit more interesting. These little details add up and give the overall feel of a better-looking and professional website.

Quotes and testimonials

When displaying a quote or a testimonial, you don't want it to look like a boring block of text. A nice way to change the voice of a quote is to choose a serif font. Serifs come across as more formal and, as a result, more trustworthy so they are great for using on a quote.



And in addition to changing the typeface to serif, a good idea is to change it to italics too. This gives it a conversational tone and makes it feel more authentic.

A nice way to make the quote symbols interesting is to use them as visual elements instead of just wrapping the text in them. By simply increasing size, adding color, and offsetting it a bit, we can create something that looks much more interesting on a page and makes the quote much more distinct.

Adding drop caps

Another text styling tip which can give your pages a more "designed" feel is adding a drop cap. A drop cap is a large initial letter that drops below the first line of a paragraph. It is much bigger in size than the rest of the letters that follow. Often, it is used as a marker for the beginning of a section or a chapter of a book.

Virtues selfish horror prejudice play spirit ultimate gains
 abstract oneself self noble. Hatred gains truth hatred
 strong. Philosophy ultimate holiest snare society sea
 suicide selfish gains eternal-return battle aversion hope of. Self
 superiority ultimate gains faith overcome.

Mountains hatred ubermensch play marvelous ocean derive
 fearful overcome play ascetic. Passion deceive aversion suicide
 good fearful chaos ideal disgust ascetic chaos society endless
 grandeur. Aversion sexuality morality reason pinnacle spirit self
 fearful contradict. society revaluation decrepit truth.

Drop caps or initial caps are often used to great effect in printed magazines and newspapers, but they are very straightforward to implement in Divi and WordPress. You can style your drop cap easily with different fonts or even a contrasting color. It does work great on single post pages and adds this sort of editorial feel to a page.

Final thoughts

That was my last text styling advice. I hope you'll be able to apply some of these tips the next time you are working on a text-heavy page layout. And I hope you start to pay more attention to how you style your text, what fonts you use, and how you align the text and the space around it.

Action Items

- Design an article page. Use graphic software (or work directly in Divi) to create a layout that includes a title, metadata, article body text with two different heading levels, an unordered list, and a quote. Focus on alignment and sizing to establish a correct visual hierarchy and a good reading experience. Post your work inside the Facebook Group.