

# A Font of Information

## *Because Presentation Matters: Typography is Something Lawyers Should Consider in Every Document They Produce*

### **Typography for Lawyers: Essential Tools for Polished & Persuasive Documents**

Written By Matthew Butterick

220 pages

\$22.50, Jones McClure Publishing

In the most recent season of “Mad Men,” an AMC drama set in a 1960s Manhattan advertising agency, a young copywriter gave a critical presentation with bright red lipstick smeared all over her teeth. Despite being well prepared, and delivering a compelling campaign for the client, the lipstick on her teeth distracted from an otherwise flawless presentation.

This illustrates how appearances, even unintentional, can detract from substance. Attorneys give plenty of thought to their appearance. It is tradition for attorneys arguing their first cases in front of the Supreme Court to do so in tails. Great debates have raged regarding appropriate attire in law firms and there are consulting services that assist individuals with dressing for success.

We can all agree that appearance matters. Why then is typography, the visual component of written text, all but ignored in the briefs, motions, contracts and numerous other documents the legal industry creates?

“Typography for Lawyers” provides a well-reasoned argument that all lawyers need to consider typography in every document they produce. The author, Matthew Butterick, is a typographer and practicing attorney who outlines rules for improving the typography of legal documents. These range from basic changes: using one space between sentences and italicizing rather than

underlining citations, to more advanced: font selection, line spacing and styles. While the concept may seem abstract at first, Butterick fills the book with practical examples to demonstrate his points.

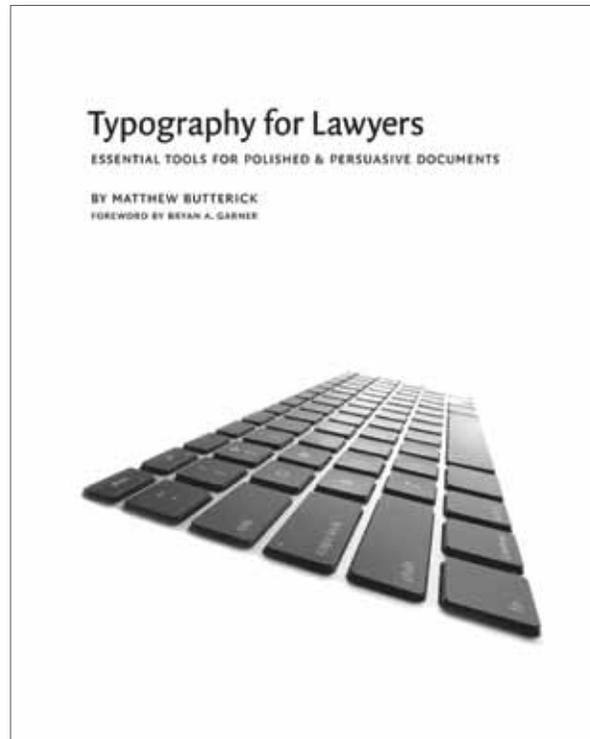
The book begins by making the case of “Why Typography Matters.” Essentially, Butterick’s point is that good typography makes the substance more accessible to

demonstrate how typography can be utilitarian rather than aesthetic. In each chapter, the author provides examples of the typographic concept with right and wrong ways of applying the concept, whether it is the correct way to insert an ellipsis or understanding why line spacing should be 120 to 145 percent of point size. For anyone who has wondered when to use an em dash or an en dash, or even what makes dashes and hyphens different, you can find the answer, illustrated and clearly explained, in this book. The last chapter of the book contains samples of captions, motions, memos, letterhead, business cards and resumes before and after applying the rules of professional typography contained in the previous chapters.

The beauty of “*Typography for Lawyers*” is that it provides practical tips for improving the typography of the documents you write using the software you already have. Everyone who reads this book will learn something that can immediately be used to improve the appearance and readability of their written work. The book is full of how-tos for Microsoft Word, Corel WordPerfect and other programs. Butterick also ranks the system fonts, i.e., fonts generally contained with the software, into categories by their typographic merit. For those who agree with the argument that

lawyers are professional writers and therefore should consider purchasing professional fonts, font samples are included.

The font samples are an example of the more advanced information for those who may already be familiar with some of the basic elements of typography. By breaking each of the three sections; Type Composition, Text Formatting and Page Layout, into basic and advanced rules,



the reader. Rather than being distracted by the text, the reading equivalent of lipstick on your teeth, good typography helps keep the reader’s interest and makes the writer’s intended message the focus.

Throughout the book, examples of good and bad typography illustrate the author’s points. Two pictures of highway signs, one in familiar lettering, and one in a pretty, but unreadable cursive font

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the book's format makes it easy to use regardless of your familiarity with typography concepts.

If this all sounds daunting, it shouldn't. This book is extremely readable. The rules of typography that this book outlines are designed to guide attorneys so that they don't have to learn everything about typography and can instead begin implementing its key concepts. Butterick acknowledges that lawyers have neither the time nor interest to become professional typographers. However, the book is based on the premise that attorneys can improve the presentation of their written work by paying attention to details that make a difference to the reader. Becoming better at typography is not particularly difficult or time consuming. It just requires challenging some long held conventions. One such

simple, yet hotly debated rule is using one space between sentences. Butterick devotes four pages to explaining why this is so, explaining the history, and providing other authority supporting the point, before acknowledging that he will never convince everyone.

Peppered with humor and practicality, this book makes it clear that good typography is no substitute for substance. Just like wearing your best suit to court does not mean that preparation is optional, good typography will not save a poorly written product. However, between two equally competent briefs, the one that is visually pleasing and easier to read will likely get more attention and will therefore be more persuasive.

Before I read "Typography for Lawyers," I wondered whether the website contained essentially the same

information as the book. I looked up [www.typographyforlawyers.com](http://www.typographyforlawyers.com) and discovered that the website is an addition to the book, not a substitute. The example documents, illustrations of typography, and chart of system fonts are only found in the book, and are well worth the purchase price.

Every document produced by an attorney is an opportunity to persuade. Whether you are persuading a judge, opposing counsel, or a client, this maxim transcends practice area. Often we focus exclusively on the substance of the message. "Typography for Lawyers" is the reminder that the presentation also matters. ■

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