



The Plus One Approach

To Fonts

by: Anna Bartosik



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How do you feel about fonts? Or perhaps: do you have any feelings about fonts?

The **Courier** font from a dot matrix printer produced the first adverse response to a font I ever had.

The second font I grew to shun away from is **Times New Roman**. I had to submit my dissertation in this font and I waited until the last possible moment to convert my working document to Times New Roman because I couldn't bear to hear how my writing sounded in my head while reading it in this font. This avoidance strategy had an unexpected benefit, as I was able to detect errors I hadn't noticed when converting my document.

If you spend any time looking at memes, you're familiar with the extreme love/hate that folks have for **Comic Sans**. Some adore its friendliness and others dislike the casualness of the font and its uneven visual weight.

Before you dismiss (or disagree with!) any of the feelings you're experiencing about these fonts, there is a lot of research which focuses on the emotional perception of fonts. For example, Juni & Gross's (2008) study on satirical readings from The New York Times presented identical texts to participants in a Serif and Sans Serif font, and asked study participants to rate the satirical nature of the texts. Study participants perceived the text written in **Times New Roman** more satirical (and angrier) than the same text presented in **Arial**. This could be due to several factors, including preconceived notions about what information is conveyed in a specific font.

Font Choices for Various Tasks

Let's take a look at how the style we choose can speak or not speak to our adult learners, and how our font choices make our work more or less inclusive for learners in educational settings.

To address the needs of readers with visual disabilities, most of us are familiar with using font sizes to meet accessibility needs; 28pt is a standard for body text within a slide deck, whereas 12pt is the size often stated for printed documents. However, there are other considerations in addition to size: in addition to legibility and readability, shape, scale, weight, style, dimension, spacing, and alignment are important considerations. Please refer to [The Disability Union's website](#) on making documents readable for people with visual disabilities.

When designing learning materials for online consumption, I push my personal font favourites aside and strive for readability and accessibility; this means different fonts for different tasks. When creating a presentation slide deck, they are always viewed on screens, whether in a large room or on a computer monitor or mobile device. Sans Serif fonts read best in these instances, mostly due to the spacing of the characters and the amount of empty space surrounding words. At the moment, I use a combination of **Roboto** and **Lato** for my slide presentations; Roboto for headings and Lato for text. Lato is also the default font that we see on Brightspace. I have set them as my default theme for any new PowerPoint I create. If you would like to know how to set a PPT template, please [view these instructions](#). If there is a font you would like to set as your default in Microsoft Word, [take a look at these instructions](#) to see how to reset your default settings.

When selecting fonts for printed documents, I find legibility becomes more important, in part because on screens we can rely on grammar/spellcheckers to help us differentiate. Selecting a font that allows the reader to easily tell the difference between certain characters is not always easily perceived in Sans Serif fonts. Keep this in mind if your printed material contains numbers and letters, or if you're sharing a wifi password. You'll note, however, that not every Serif font is created equally, as seen in the Courier New examples.

Various Fonts and How They Display Characters

Font	Lowercase	Uppercase	Number
Segoe UI			1
Arial			1
Roboto			1
Lato			1
Times New Roman	l	I	1
Comic Sans		I	1
Courier New	l	I	1

The table provided illustrates the visual distinctions among the lowercase letter "L (el)," the letter "l (ai)," and the numeral one across various font types, including Segoe UI, Arial, Roboto, Lato, Times New Roman, Comic Sans, and Courier New.

Supporting Dyslexic Readers

Many of the things mentioned above also support dyslexic readers, with the addition of the following items:

- San Serif fonts are preferred.
- Larger fonts may be easier to read.
- Line spacing should be increased.

An important note about formatting text visually to support your dyslexic learners and colleagues: you can bold text to draw attention to it; avoid underlining and using italics; avoid using all capital letters as well.

I've shared a lot of information in this post and I had promised this series to be a Plus One Approach; there is an easy way to help learners with reading text, and it requires one thing: direct readers to Immersive Reader, available in all Microsoft Products.

This is what a part of this document looks like when I use Immersive Reader.



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If you've never considered the impact your font choices have on your readers, whether they are students or colleagues, I hope you take some time to consider how your written text is perceived and whether the font makes it easier or more difficult to process.

If you are curious about the font I used in this text, it is Segoe UI – available in MS Word and PowerPoint.

Next time, we'll have a look at assignment instructions within documents and on Brightspace.

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