Lesser-Known Typography Anatomy

1. Aperture

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An aperture is a rounded and mostly enclosed negative space found in letters like 'c', 'n', and 'S'.





2. Axis

The axis is an imaginary line that runs from the top to the bottom of a letter and bisects both the upper and lower strokes.

3. Beak

A beak is a triangular appendage found at the end of a stroke on some serif typefaces.





4. Body

In digital fonts, the body is an invisible border that defines the padding around each letter.





5. Cross Stroke

Cross strokes run horizontally, cutting through the stems of letters 't' and 'f'.



6. Ear

An ear is an embellishment that is most frequently used on the upper right side of a lowercase 'g'.

7. Hook

The curve found on letters 'f' and 'j' is called the hook.





8. Joint

Joints occur where a stroke meets a stem.

9. Leg

Legs are the angled strokes found on letters 'K' and 'R'.





10. Ligature

A ligature is a type design element that merges two letters into one ('fi', 'ffl', etc). The resulting combination is easier to decipher and more visually appealing.

11. Loop

In the letter 'g', a loop is the encircled section that dips beneath the baseline. Loops also exist on the extenders of cursive letters like 'p', 'b', and 'l'.





12. Midline

The midline marks the top edge of lowercase letters, not including the ascenders in letters like 'b', 'd', 'k'.

13. Overshoot

Round letters like 'c', 'o', and 's' extend slightly past the baseline and midline to keep them from seeming smaller than letters with flat tops or bottoms.





14. Spine

The spine is the middle curve of the letter 'S'.

15. Spur

Spurs are tiny extensions, most often occuring at the meeting point between a curve and a straight vertical stroke.







16. Stem

Any vertical letter stroke is considered a stem.

17. Swash

A swash is an ornamental extension added to a letter.





18. Tail

The tail is the downward, decorative embellishment on the letter 'Q'.

19. Terminal

A terminal exists at the end of any letter stroke that doesn't have a serif.





20. Tittle

A tittle is the tiny dot that sits atop the letters 'i' and 'j'.