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Secrets of Terrific Type

Lesson 01-03: Font Types

As I stated in Lesson One, the world of type is a BIG world! With each lesson I hope to explore one piece of that world at a time. Lesson two is all about fonts and in this first part of lesson two, we are going to specifically talk about font types.

So, to begin, let's ask a couple of questions. Number one, what are font types? And Number two, why do we care?

A font type has to do with the type of file the font creator uses. While there are a handful of font types out there, there are only two main font types we need to worry about.

TrueType Fonts:

The first type is a TrueType Font. Created at Apple Computer, TrueType was designed to fill the need for an optimized, scalable font format. You often see this font type when you download free fonts. TrueType fonts have a file name that ends in .ttf. So they are easy to identify.

OpenType Fonts:

The second type of font is the OpenType Font. OpenType was developed jointly by Microsoft and Adobe and it was created to extend or expand the existing TrueType font file format. OpenType fonts have a file name that ends in .otf and this also makes them easy to identify.

So, why do we care about the different font types?

Well, there's one BIG reason. Glyphs or alternate characters!

The one main advantage to OpenType fonts is the ability to add International characters, glyphs, and many other textual alternatives to a font. In a later lesson we are going to learn all about glyphs and why we like them when it comes to designing text. For now, just know that having access to OpenType fonts gives you many more design options depending on the font or font family you are using. Typically, (but not always), you see more OTF fonts available for purchase because they take a lot more work to create.

So, when I have the option, I always download the OTF version of a font because I always want to have access to the extra characters that may come with it.

Let me show you a visual example of what I mean by extra characters.

Adam is the font name and here is a preview of all of the characters that come with this font:



Adelicia Script Regular										Size: 12
e	d	c	f	g	i	h	j	k	l	m
n	Glyph 16 U+006F LATIN SMALL LETTER O									
s	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U
V	W	X	Y	Z	a	b	c	d	e	f
g	h	i	j	k	l	m	n	o	p	q
r	s	t	u	v	w	x	y	z	{	}
[\	^	_	`	a	b	c	d	e	f
g	h	i	j	k	l	m	n	o	p	q
r	s	t	u	v	w	x	y	z	{	}
[\	^	_	`	a	b	c	d	e	f
g	h	i	j	k	l	m	n	o	p	q
r	s	t	u	v	w	x	y	z	{	}
[\	^	_	`	a	b	c	d	e	f
g	h	i	j	k	l	m	n	o	p	q
r	s	t	u	v	w	x	y	z	{	}
[\	^	_	`	a	b	c	d	e	f
g	h	i	j	k	l	m	n	o	p	q
r	s	t	u	v	w	x	y	z	{	}
[\	^	_	`	a	b	c	d	e	f
g	h	i	j	k	l	m	n	o	p	q
r	s	t	u	v	w	x	y	z	{	}
[\	^	_	`	a	b	c	d	e	f
g	h	i	j	k	l	m	n	o	p	q
r	s	t	u	v	w	x	y	z	{	}
[\	^	_	`	a	b	c	d	e	f
g	h	i	j	k	l	m	n	o	p	q
r	s	t	u	v	w	x	y	z	{	}
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g	h	i	j	k	l	m	n	o	p	q
r	s	t	u	v	w	x	y	z	{	}
[\	^	_	`	a	b	c	d	e	f
g	h	i	j							

In a later lesson, we will cover the various ways you can access these alternates in both Photoshop and Photoshop Elements.

So remember, while a TTF is still a good standard font type, an OTF can have many benefits and give us more options for designing text for our digital projects.