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Secrets of Terrific Type

Lesson 03-02: Glyphs How-To—Photoshop

In this lesson, we're going to learn how to access glyphs that come with OpenType fonts. I'm so excited to show you how easy it is to use alternate characters to create beautiful type.

Having access to PSCC is a big advantage when it comes to accessing glyphs in an OpenType font.

First, we're going to look at the rest of the icons in the Character panel that we didn't cover in Lesson 4.

Second, we'll cover a panel we've yet to look at, the Glyphs panel.

But before we do either of those things, I want to go over WHY we would want to use glyphs in the first place.

The first reason any of us might want to use glyphs is because they are pretty. Many alternate characters come with swashes or flourishes that make an individual letter look more special than the standard letter.

Here's an example. The standard capital letter A vs the Alternate capital letter A's.



Here's one more example. Here's a small standard y along with all the alternate y's available.



The second reason I use glyphs on a regular basis is repetition. When I'm creating a piece of word art or big title and I'm using a font that's either handwritten or script, the type looks more natural if a repeated letter isn't an exact copy of itself.

For instance, here is the word Merry in standard form. And I've added a version where an alternate r was used. The difference isn't massive but it definitely looks more natural than the standard one where both r's look identical.



Here's another example. Let's say I want to create a title for my digital project and that title is Those eyes though. There isn't a double letter situation but there are a lot of small e's and h's. This is the standard version.



And for comparison, here is the version where some alternates are used.



Another reason you might want to use Glyphs is to fill space. Remember our homework from Lesson 4 when we made a postcard using Scale to our advantage. Under the word nothing, we filled some empty space with a set of doodles and it turned out cute. But we could also use an alternate small g to help fill that space instead.



So now that we've covered some of the reasons why we'll want to use glyphs, let's go to PS and take a look at HOW to do it.

I've already created a new document that is 12 inches by 12 inches at 300ppi with a white background.

Press the letter D to reset the color chips.

In the Menu Bar, choose Window > Character to open the Character panel.

Click on the Character panel Menu icon and choose Reset Character.

The first thing we're going to do is explore the rest of the icons in the Character panel. In order to do that, I have to use fonts that were coded to give me access to those options. The fonts I will use I purchased some time ago and they're not one of the free fonts I had you download. I have found that not many of the free fonts will have all of these options available. But, if you have a font that has these options, use that font instead while you follow along if you prefer.

So, get the Horizontal Type tool. In the Tool Options, I'm setting the Font to Allegretto Script, the Size to 72 pts, and I'm using Center Alignment.

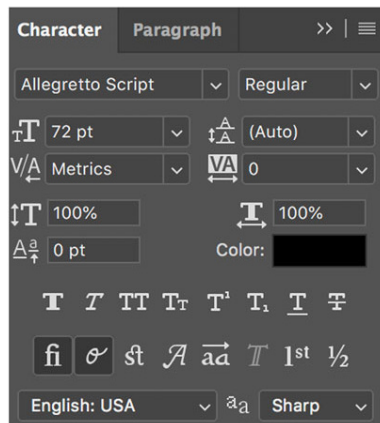
On the document, I'll click once and type the words Happy Birthday. Click the checkmark to commit.

Happy Birthday

IMG 07

Now, In the Menu Bar, choose Window > Character to open the Character panel again.

When you open the panel, you'll see that in this case, the font already has the first two icons activated. The first icon is for Standard Ligatures, and the second icon is for Contextual Alternates. Let's unselect both to see what happens. The change is subtle but it's there.



Happy Birthday

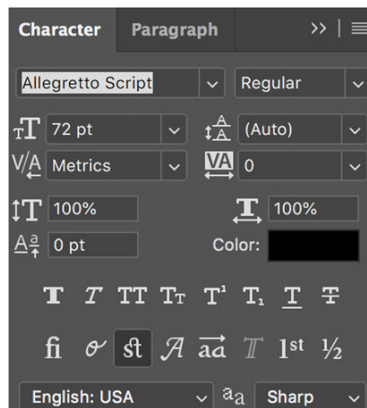
In this case, the icon images kind of give us an idea of what they do. Standard Ligatures will often connect two letters in a more natural way which is why so many OTF fonts come with this built in.

In this case, the Contextual Alternates icon will change how a letter at the end of a word ends.

I'm going to add another phrase to the document so with the Type tool still active, on the document, I'll click once and type the words "stay with me." Then I'll click the checkmark to commit.

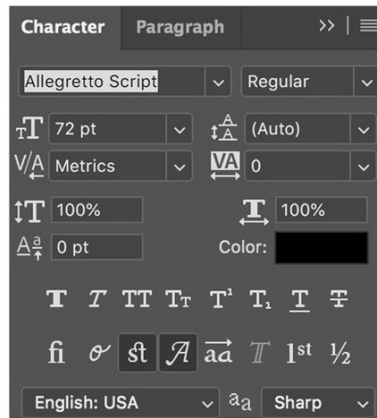
stay with me

Now I'll click on the 3rd icon, which is for Discretionary Ligatures. Notice how it connected the s and t in stay and the t and h in with.



stay with me

Let's leave that on and then turn on the 4th icon, which is for Swashes. In this case, that option wasn't too bad.

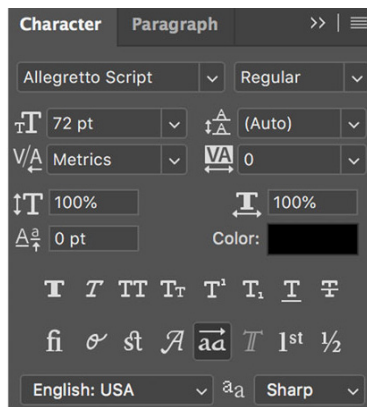


stay with me

Let's go back to Happy Birthday and use the Swash option there. In this case, using the automatic Swash option is a hot mess! This is the reason why using these automatic settings isn't always a good idea. But that's why you try it first and then if it's bad, like this example, you just un-click the Swash icon to remove it.

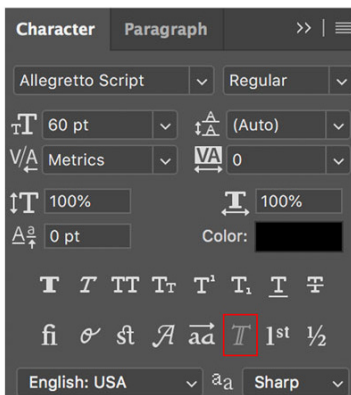
Happy Birthday

Ok, let's go back to stay with me and try the fifth option, which is for Stylistic Alternatives.



standard stay with me
stylistic alternate stay with me

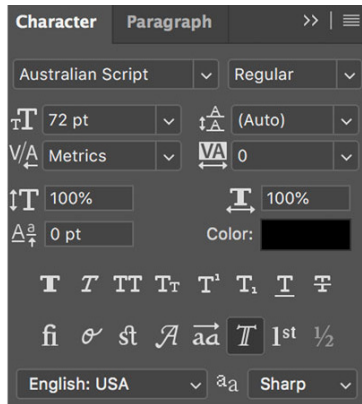
And as you can see, the 6th option isn't available to this font. The icon is grayed out so that's how you know it's not an available option.



So let's change the Happy Birthday type to the Australian Script font.

Happy Birthday

Now, the 6th icon is available to us and it's for Titling Alternatives. Let's turn that on and see what happens. In this case, it's not horrible but it is almost too much.



Happy Birthday

So here's the deal, sometimes, those automatic options can be handy. I really like using the standard and discretionary ligatures when they are available. But, I almost never use the Titling Alternatives or Swash option because it often makes things way too crazy!

The good news is, we can have total control over what glyphs we want to use and to do that, we're going to use the Glyph panel.

So, let's delete the text layers we have on the document and start fresh.

Now get the Horizontal Type tool. In the Tool Options, set the Font to Milkshake, set the size to 60 pts, and use Center Alignment.

On the document, click once and type Happy Birthday. Click the checkmark to commit.

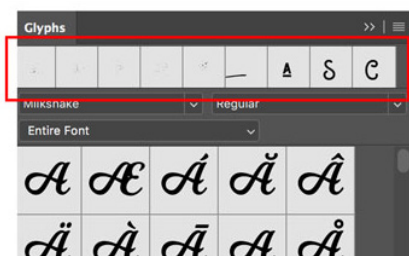
Happy Birthday

In the Menu Bar, choose Window > Glyphs to open the Glyphs panel.

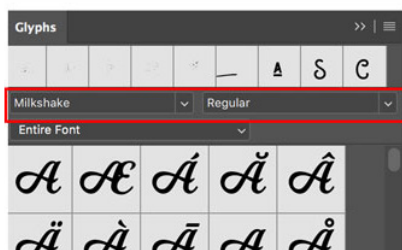


Let's get you comfortable with the panel before we do anything.

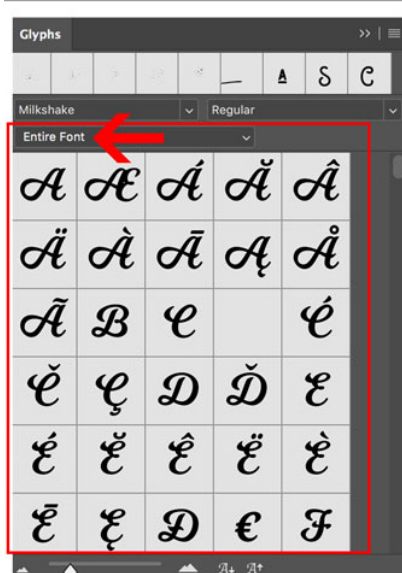
Up at the top, the very top row, is a list of recently used glyphs.



Below that, there is the font drop down box.

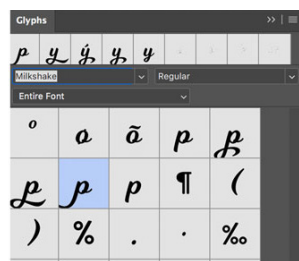


Below that, is a list of ALL of the glyphs that come with the font Milkshake as long as you have Entire Font selected.



So with this panel open, let's select the second small p in the word Happy because that's the p I want to change.

With this font, I can see all the small p options right next to each other. I'm going to try this one by double clicking on it. Ok, I like that!



Happy Birthday

Now I'm going to select the small y in the word Birthday. I'm going to double click on this small y. Ok, I like that, too. I'll click the checkmark to commit.



Happy Birthday

Let's delete this type layer and start fresh again.

With the Type tool active, in the Tool Options, I'm going to change the Font to Amelia Script. I'll leave everything else the same.

On the document, I'll click once and type the phrase My name is Jenifer. Then I'll click the checkmark to commit.

My name is Jenifer.

With some fonts, we are given a shortcut to the Glyph panel. Let me show you. I'm going to select the capital M in the word My.

Notice the hatched row of lines below the selection? That indicates that this font has built in options that are recognized for each letter.



I'm going to move my mouse down and see what happens.

When I do that, a small window pops up and I'm given three capital M options plus a small black arrow.



If I click on the small black arrow, it will take me to the full Glyph panel we had opened earlier. But for the moment, I'm going to just use the options here that show below the hatched area.

I'm going to select the 3rd option for the capital M by clicking on it.

My name is Jenifer.

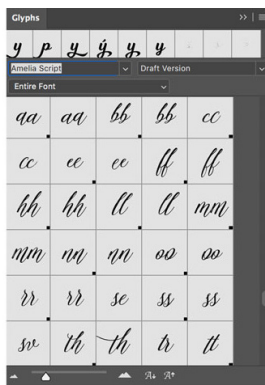
Now, the next letter I want to change is the capital letter J. So I'll select that. Here I'm given 4 options and I'm going to choose the 3rd one again.

My name is Jenifer.

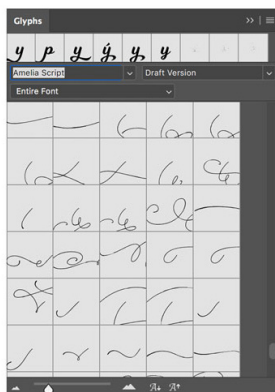
I can do the same thing with any of the letters. I'm going to select the small s and change that, too.

My name is Jenifer.

Now, let's go back to the Glyph panel. I want to show you the benefit to looking at the Entire Font. If you scroll through, you'll see every single character that comes with this font. As we get towards the bottom, you'll see the font designer included some double letter combinations for us.



Keep scrolling and you'll see that they also included some fancy swashes for us to use as accents or to create our swash style letters.



Each OTF font will have more or less things available here. That's why it's always fun to scroll through the Entire Font to see what the options are before you use the font to create some type.

Other Fonts with Extra Characters

Now that we've looked at the Glyph panel, let's take a quick look at how to use fonts where the swashes or extra characters are in a separate font.

The first font I'm going to show you is Melonde. This is a super cute font that gives you alternate characters in a different way. Instead of coding the extra characters for the font as alternate glyphs attached to the main font, they decided to give us the extra characters in two separate font files.

Let me show you how that works.

Get the Horizontal Type tool.

In the Tool Options, set the font to Melonade and the size to 100 pts.

On the document, click once and type a word. I'll type the word lovely.



Now, before committing the type, let's do the following:

Go to the first lowercase L in the word, lovely and select it.

Now, in the Tool Options, change the font to Melonade Swashleft.



Then, select the lower case Y and in the Tool Options, change the font to Melonade Swashright.



Now you can click the checkmark to commit.

Feel free to delete this layer and start fresh for this next example.

Another font that is a good example to look at is Forestelly. This is a font that isn't listed on the Free Font List I gave you for this class, but it's a good font to look at because you may come across another font like this and I want you to know how this works.

With Forestelly, there is a main font, and then there are just swashes as a separate font. This can sometimes be difficult to work with because it can be hard to tell if the swashes are for the left or right side of a letter.

So with the Type tool active, in the Tool Options, set the font to Forestelly Bold and keep the size at 100 pts.

On the document, click once and type the word lovely.



Before you commit the type, do the following:

Place your cursor at the beginning of the word.

Now, in the Tool Options, change the font to Forestellyswashes Bold.

You can now type an upper case letter, such as capital A to add a swash.



But, because you can't see what each swash looks like and what letter it goes with, it's a good idea to open the Glyph panel and use that to insert the swashes instead. So I'll delete this swash for now.

Open the Glyphs panel and adjust the slider at the bottom so you can see each swash clearly. The first set of swashes is for the left side of the word. I'll double click on the fourth swash to add it at the beginning of my word. The GID for that swash is 4.



Now place your cursor at the end of the word. The font will switch back to Forestelly Bold so change it to Forestellyswashes Bold again.

I really like that swash so I want to put it at the end of the word. So I'll double click to add it.



As you can see, this swash was only meant to be used on the left side of a letter. So, we need to find the matching swash for the right side of a letter.

So go back to the Glyph panel and scroll until you locate the swash that matches it but is flipped. The GID is 27.

Double click on the glyph to insert it and click the checkmark to commit.



Glyphs Dos and Don'ts

So, now that you've seen HOW to use Glyphs, let's talk about some do's and don'ts.

#1. Don't make every single character special.

When you do, it makes it look awful and hard to read.



#2. Do focus on the ends of words.

The first letter and the last letter can be an opportunity for a swash or fancy alternate.



#3. Do focus on the tails.

Letters like p, q, g, or t, b, d can also be opportunities for something fun. Just make sure it works with the whole word and doesn't give you a messy look in the process.



#4. As we talked about in the beginning, do focus on repeated letters.

When it's an option with a handwritten or script font, it's always a good idea to change double letters or repeated letters used within a short amount of words. So here the double L looks more natural and the 3 small s's do, too because I varied them.



Again, as with many of our other type designs, moderation is key. Using alternates can really give your word art a special edge, as long as you don't over do it.

Now, I need to add a quick note here before we move on to the homework for this lesson.

PS users have it good when it comes to glyphs. Having access to the Glyph panel gives us so many options when creating type. So, get ready! The homework for this lesson is going to be so much fun! We're going to create some small packs of word art that you can use on so many different projects.