



by Jenifer Juris

## Secrets of Terrific Type

### Lesson 03-01: Glyphs Breakdown

Now that we've covered some basic typography terms and how to use them, it's time to take our type design up another notch and explore the world of glyphs.

As we talked about before, having access to OpenType fonts is really going to play to our advantage. But before I cover how to access the glyphs (something we'll cover in the next part of Lesson 5), I want to go through a quick breakdown about glyphs first.

You see, the word Glyph covers a whole host of terms. Words like Contextual Alternatives, Stylistic Alternatives, Standard Ligatures, Discretionary Ligatures, Swashes, and Titling Alternates can all be wrapped up into the word Glyph.

I could give you a definition of what each word means and give you a visual example to go with it. But here's the thing, every single OTF font comes with a different number of Glyphs built in to the font and in different ways. What do I mean by that? Let me explain.

Ok, so first things first, a Glyph is a single character in a font or typeface. When a font designer creates a font, they can add as many glyphs or extra characters to their font as they wish (assuming they are creating an OTF).

When a font designer adds these extra characters or glyphs to their OTF font, there is more than one way they can code the glyphs into the font. The end result means that some OTF fonts have more glyphs than others and depending on HOW the glyphs are added to the OTF font, the glyphs can be more easily accessed.

On top of that, some fonts come with options that when used in a more complex program such as Photoshop CC or Illustrator, certain glyphs can be accessed automatically IF the font designer coded the font for those options.

Here's a visual example. For now, don't worry about how I do this, as I'll cover that in the next video for PSCC users. This example is for you to SEE what happens, not how it happens. So, I've typed my name using the font Amelia Script as is. No special glyphs or anything used.

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Here's the same font when I turn on the automatic setting for Swash and Contextual Alternatives.

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Here's the same font when I turn off Contextual Alternatives and turn on Stylistic Alternatives.

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But if I change this to a different font, to Amastery Script, all of those automatic options disappear.

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The font designer who created Amastery Script, still gave us many glyphs within the font, but they didn't code the font in such a way that Photoshop or Illustrator could access them in an automatic way.



All this to say, that in the end, the different types of glyphs, while they might matter to a full time professional designer, to us as hobbyists, it's not super important that we know the difference because every single font includes a different number of glyphs and the glyphs that are included don't always have the same glyph type available to us.

What does matter is knowing HOW to access glyphs and where and when we would want to use them.

And this is exactly what we are going to cover both for PS and PSE. So, get ready! We're about to learn how to use glyphs to create some gorgeous type.