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Secrets of Terrific Type

Lesson 02-10: Baseline Shift—Photoshop

Have you ever wished you could change something but you didn't know how so you stopped using that something because it wasn't working how you wanted? That was me before I learned about Baseline Shift.

Before I knew about Baseline Shift, I would purposely not use certain fonts because I couldn't stand how the numbers or punctuation would line up compared to the rest of the characters. Take note of the number 3 and the number 9 below to see what I mean.

Today is 3-19-18.

But the good news is, there is an easy way to fix that in PS and I no longer have to stop using certain fonts! Baseline Shift is the handy way to adjust this if you're like me and you want all of the bottoms of your characters to align. So, before I show you how, let's make sure we understand just what Baseline is and why we might want to adjust it from time to time.

The Baseline of text is the imaginary line that your type rests upon. Often, you'll see tails of certain letters extend beyond the baseline such as small letter P.

The imaginary line type rests upon.

So, when we say Baseline Shift, this means the Baseline of your type is being adjusted up or down. You can do this to any individual character or you can do it to a whole layer of text.

The most common thing that Baseline Shift is used for is to adjust the baseline of punctuation or numbers.

Let's take a look at how to do that in PS.

Step One: Prepare the Workspace

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.

In the Character panel, click to open the panel menu and choose Reset Character.

Step Two: Add Type

Get the Horizontal Type tool. In the Tool Options, select the font Cherry Swash, set the size to 72 pts and use Center Alignment.

On the document, click once and type a phrase with both letters and numbers. I'm typing Today is 3-19-18. Click the checkmark to commit.

Today is 3-19-18.

Step Three: Add Guide

Notice how the number 3 has a baseline much lower than the letters. Let's add a guide to help us better see that.

So to do that, make sure your Rulers are showing by going to the Menu Bar and choosing View > Rulers.

Now, from the top Ruler, click and drag down to create a New Guide that rests just at the baseline of the text.

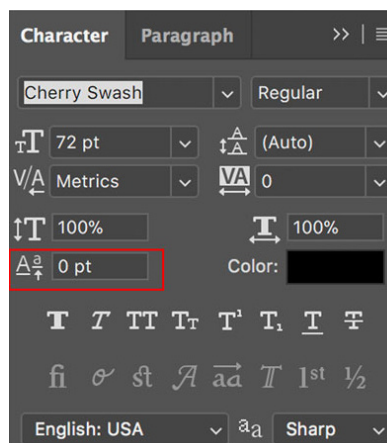
Today is 3-19-18.

Step Four: Adjust Baseline

This will help us see that the number 3 and the number 9 both have a lower baseline than everything else.

To fix this, I'm going to select the three by clicking on the line of text and selecting it.

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



Find the Baseline Shift field, and change the baseline of the 3 to 13 pts.

Now let's do the same for the number 9.

Today is 3-19-18.

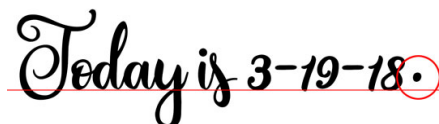
Ok, that looks better to me! Even though I think it's odd that the number 1 is so much smaller than the other numbers, I much prefer they have a common baseline.

For some of you, you might be thinking I'm being too picky about wanting my characters to all line up. And that's ok! It's totally your choice. If you like how the font is made and you don't want to change anything, that is completely up to you. But for as many of you that might think that, there are also some that have always wanted to be able to change that and now they can!

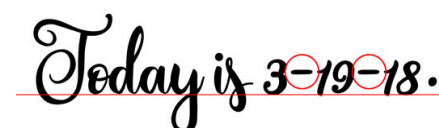
I want to show you one more example of when or why you might want to adjust the baseline shift. With many fonts, the punctuation may have a baseline that needs adjusting. Here's an example of what I mean. I wrote the same phrase as earlier using the Amastery Script font. Notice two things.



First, the period is not resting on the baseline.



Second, the dashes are actually quite high when compared to the numbers.



So, I'm going to move both the dashes and the period down by using a negative baseline shift. Below, you can see the difference. I gave the dashes a negative 5 and the period a negative 11. Now it all lines up and looks correct.



So let's ask a question. Are you going to be using Baseline Shift on a regular basis?

Well, that depends on you. If you're getting into designing items for pay, this is something you'll want to check for as you create your projects.

If you're a hobbyist who is like me and can be particular about the baseline being the same all the way across, you might use Baseline Shift on the occasional basis.

If you're a hobbyist who isn't bothered by it, then Baseline Shift isn't something you'll have to worry much about.

But Baseline Shift is an option for us in PS and even if you don't see yourself using it very often, you can still have some fun with it! You'll see how in the homework so get ready to create a cool piece of word art using Baseline Shift!