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## Secrets of Terrific Type

### Lesson 02-05: Tracking—Photoshop Elements

Our next stop in the big world of type is all about Tracking! In the last lesson, we learned that Leading was the amount of space between lines of type.

This is not to be confused with tracking which is the amount of space between each character.

Tracking can be small,

**Tracking can be small.**

Or it can be large.

**Tracking can be large.**

And while the idea of tracking is pretty simple, you can use tracking in many different ways to achieve superior design results. For example, let's say you have a set of words you want to create into a piece of word art.

**Start Each  
Day With  
a Grateful  
Heart**

Some of the words are longer than the others. But the word art shape we need to create is a rectangle. How can this be done? Tracking, when used correctly, can be the ticket to creating this piece of word art to have the shape we want it to have.

Let's take a look at how to do this in PSE.

## Step One: Create a New Document

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

Press the letter D to reset the Color Chips to the default of black over white.

## Step Two: Add Type

Get the Horizontal Type tool. Before we do anything else, click on the Tool Options Menu icon and choose Reset Tool. The reason we are doing this is because any time we change a setting in the character panel, that setting can remain sticky. So, it's always best practice to reset the Type tool before starting a new project.

Now, in the Tool Options, I'm setting the font to Mark My Words with a size of 60 pts. I'm also going to use Center Alignment.

On the document, click once and start typing the phrase. My first line of type will say "start each". Once you're done typing, click the checkmark to commit.

*start each*

**TIP:** When you need to start a new line of text that's close to another line of text, Press and hold the Shift key as you click to create a new line of type. Doing this will tell the program you want to create a new line of type instead of it trying to activate the type that is close by.

On the document, while holding down the Shift key, click once to start the third line of type. This line is going to be my third line in the phrase as I want to alternate my fonts. So using the same settings, I'm going to type "a grateful" and now that I'm doing, I'll click the checkmark to commit.

*start each*

*a grateful*

Now, I need to create my 2nd and 4th lines of type. So, in the Tool Options, I want to change my font to Lane-Narrow and leave everything else the same. But before I can do that, I need to go to the Layers panel and click on the Create a New Layer icon. I need to do this before I change the font settings, otherwise it would have changed the layer I just typed to the new font since it was still activated.

I'm also going to press the Caps Lock key because I want these lines to be all caps.

Now, on the document, while holding down the Shift key, click once to start the second line of type. I'm going to type "day with" and now I'll click the checkmark to commit.

*start each*  
DAY WITH  
*a grateful*

And, again, on the document, while holding down the Shift key, I'll click once to start the fourth line of type. I'm typing the word "heart" and then I'll click the checkmark to commit.

### Step Three: Align Type

Get the Move tool.

In the Layers panel, click once on the top type layer and then while holding down the Shift key, click once on the bottom type layer so that all four layers are activated.

In the Tool Options, click on the Align Horizontal Centers icon. This will make sure that all four lines are centered correctly.

Next, I need to move and nudge things a bit in order for my lines of type to line up how I want them to. So I'll use the Arrow keys to nudge the lines up and down until I'm happy.

Ok, now that everything is centered, you can see the last line is much shorter than the others.



start each  
DAY WITH  
a grateful  
HEART

### Step Four: Adjust Tracking

So to fix this, we have to be a little creative. PSE does not give us a tracking option so our job here is going to be a little tedious. But we can still achieve wonderful results, it's just going to take a few extra steps to get there.

Get the Horizontal Type tool. Click once on the heart line of text so that you can edit it. The first thing I'm going to do is add two spaces between each letter. Click the checkmark to commit.



start each  
EACH DAY  
a grateful  
H E A R T

As you can see, this is close to what we need but it's a bit too big. We don't want to change the size of the letters but what we can do, is change the size of the spaces.

To do that, with the Type tool still activated, click once on the heart line of type. Use the Arrow keys to click over to the spot just right of the letter H.

While holding down the Shift key, press the Right Arrow key twice to select the two spaces between the letter H and the letter E.



In the Tool Options, change the Font Size to 36.

Now let's repeat that for the rest of the spaces and click the checkmark to commit.

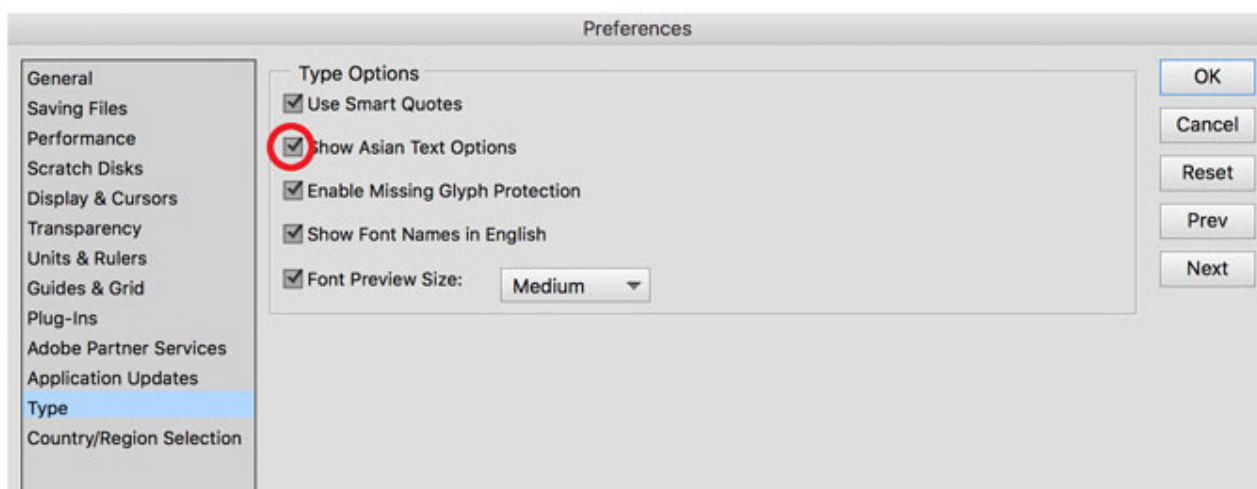


Ok, now that that's done, you can see, my last line is very close to lining up with the others which is what we wanted.

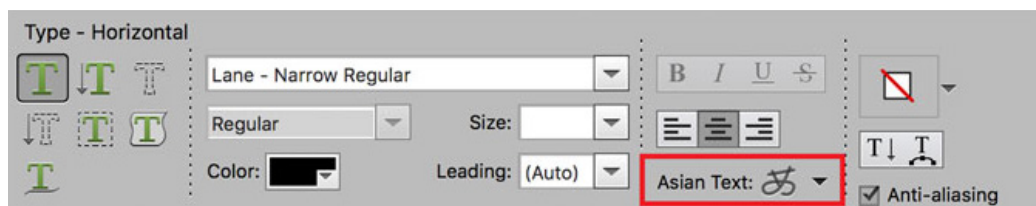
Using this method works. It will take a little extra time compared to PS, but you can still get the job done. The hardest part will be figuring out what font size will work best for the spaces so that things line up how you need. Each design project will require a different number of spaces. Sometimes, you'll be lucky and you won't have to change the font size of the spaces at all. Other times, you'll have to use more or less spaces between each letter.

Before we discuss some do's and don'ts, I need to show you one thing that PSE gives us that sometimes works when we need to decrease the tracking of a font.

So, let's go to the Preferences menu by pressing Ctrl K (Mac: Cmd K). Click on Type and this will bring up a few options. One of the options is Show Asian Text Options. Click to enable this and then Click OK.



Now get the Horizontal Type tool. In the Tool Options, you'll see the Asian Text Options are now there.



In the Layers panel, click to activate the Each Day layer so it's the active layer.

Then in the Tool Options, click to open the Asian Text Options. Click on the 0% drop down box and let's try changing it to 50%. As you can see, this made the tracking of this font smaller.

*start each*  
EACH DAY  
*a grateful*  
HEART

This can be a handy tool for a few reasons but I also need to warn you that this option doesn't work for all fonts. Each font will respond differently to the Asian Text Options. Sometimes, it doesn't work at all. It really just depends on how each font designer creates their fonts. But this is our only option if we need to reduce the tracking between characters.

Now that you've seen how to adjust the Tracking in PSE, let's discuss a few do's and don'ts.

#1. Due to the nature of script fonts and how each letter connects to the next, changing the tracking of many script fonts will not achieve a desirable result.

Almost all script fonts are made to have letters connect. As you can see, when I increased the tracking between the letters, it really made this font look tacky.



One caveat is that sometimes, a script font doesn't always track like it's supposed to. In those cases where the letters don't connect like they should, then you need to adjust the tracking in order for them to connect properly. Again, using the Asian Text Options will sometimes work for us in PSE. But not all Script fonts work with the Asian Text Options so just know that it might or might not work.

#2. Any fonts that don't connect, like serif, sans serif, or some handwritten fonts, you can adjust the tracking when needed. The biggest don't with tracking is to make the tracking too small.

If your letters don't have enough space between them, it makes things very difficult to read.

Don't make the  
tracking too small.

#3. Don't make the tracking extremely large.

If the letters are so spaced out that you can't tell it forms a word, then you've gone too far. There might be extreme design cases where something like this works but it's very infrequent.

L A R G E

So, the idea is moderation. When it comes to Tracking, you will more often try to increase it. And the amount you increase it can be quite large depending on the font and the design. Just make sure to not go too small or too extremely large and you'll be ok!

In the next lesson, we're going to spend a little more time working with tracking. We're going to create a modern style logo so get ready for our next project!