

Bullets

WHAT KIND OF A BULLET doesn't travel at high speeds and is completely non-violent? A typographer's bullet, of course! This very useful typographic element can add emphasis, clarity and visual interest to all kinds of copy.

Simply put, a bullet is a large dot used to draw attention to each item in a list or series. The items can be single words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs. Even if you use the bullet that is part of your font, don't automatically assume it's the right size: it might need to be altered in scale or position to make it look balanced next to the text.

Here are a few guidelines to making the most out of this simple yet strong element:

✓ Bullets should be centered on either the cap height or x-height, depending on the nature of your copy. If all of your items begin with a cap, center the bullet on the cap, or a bit lower so it balances with the negative spaces created by the lowercase. If your items all begin with lowercase characters, center the bullets on the x-height. Insert some space after the bullet to avoid crowding.

✓ The preferred way to align bullets is with the left margin. You can also have the bullets overhang the margin, and keep all your text aligned with the left margin. Whichever style you choose, your listing will look best if items that run more than one line are indented so that the copy aligns with itself, and not with the bullet on the first line.

✓ To be more creative, substitute symbols or dingbats for the actual bullets. Try squares, triangles or check marks (just not all at once, as shown in the illustration!). Keep these simple and in proportion with the rest of your text.

✓ To save time and maintain consistency, copy and paste your perfectly styled and adjusted bullet for each usage.

TIP: Remember to copy a bullet that is a dingbat or other decorative image before you make global font changes to your text, in order to simplify reinsertion. ■

Things to put in a first aid kit:

- Cotton gauze bandages
- Regular bandages
- First aid tape
- Cotton gauze pads
- Safety pins

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- Safety pins
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- cotton gauze bandages
- ◆ regular bandages
- ◆ first aid tape
- needle & thread
- ❖ cotton gauze pads
- ✓ safety pins

Don't make bullets too large or too small (left). For variety, try other symbols as bullets such as ITC Zapf Dingbats (right). Just not all at once!