

Spacing & Kerning [pt 2]

IF THE LETTER SPACING AND KERNING of a font you love is less than perfect, there's hope: today's design programs have advanced type manipulation features that allow you to improve the way any font looks "out of the box."

Spacing (and tracking)

Fonts are spaced and kerned to look their best at certain sizes, but you might choose to set type that's much smaller or larger. If the built-in spacing is not ideal for the way you are using the font, try opening or closing the tracking. This will increase or reduce the overall letter spacing in a selected block of text.

Tracking can be modified in design programs such as QuarkXPress™ by changing the "tracking value," and in Adobe® Illustrator® and Adobe® InDesign® by changing the "desired letter spacing" in the Paragraph palette.

Kerning

The goal of kerning is to adjust the spacing between two characters that appear too open or too tight. Before you make any kerning adjustments in your document, make sure that kerning is turned on in the type preferences menu of your page-layout program. **NOTE:** Most word processing programs, as opposed to page-layout or design programs, don't read kern pairs. If your goal is professional-looking type, invest in one of the more sophisticated page-layout applications that are available.

Any professional design program has the capability of

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If the spacing of a font is too tight (left), opening the tracking can make a big improvement in readability (right).

adjusting kerning manually (one pair at a time) in each document. There are usually keyboard shortcuts for these functions, which are very helpful when you're making many adjustments.

In most cases, the kern changes you make apply only to the pair of letters you have highlighted, not the entire font. To keep your document consistent, don't forget to search for all instances of that letter combination and kern

them also. This is most important in headlines, where variances are obvious. Due to the difficulty of maintaining consistency, kerning large blocks of text should be kept to a minimum.

Learning to properly space and kern a font takes time, patience, and an experienced eye. A good rule of thumb is the old adage: "less is more." Be conservative until you get the hang of it. ■

**Fa Ta Ye We AV F. T. Y. P,
y. r, f' 7. -7 's ."**

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y. r, f' 7. -7 's ."**

Troublesome letter combinations (top) display a much better appearance when kerned (bottom).