

Style-linked Fonts

AS EVERYONE KNOWS BY NOW, computers are not rational machines, but willful and occasionally spiteful creatures. It's not always easy to explain why they do what they do. For example: when you're formatting type, why does applying a bold style to a font sometimes access the true-drawn bold weight, yet other times the same action creates a clumsy "fake" bold version of your typeface? In this case, there is an explanation: style-linking.

Most major font foundries (as well as some of the smaller ones) style-link font families, especially text faces. If a font is style-linked, you can highlight text in the regular (or book) weight, choose "bold" from your application's style menu, and the font "knows" to access its own true-drawn bold weight. The same is true when you choose "italic" from the style menu – you'll get the font's true-drawn italic, as opposed to a computer-generated slanting of a roman.

With style-linked fonts, even an actual bold italic weight can usually be accessed through the style menu. Style-linking will also work if you use your application's keyboard command shortcuts for styling text.

You can check with the foundry or manufacturer of a font to find out if it's style-linked, but it's easy to find out for yourself. Create a test document that lists, twice, the name of each font family and all its weights (see illustration). In the first listing, format the name by accessing the italic and bold weights from the font menu. In the second listing, use the style bar or keyboard commands to format the text.

Compare the two lists. If both listings look exactly the same, that typeface is style-linked. If they don't, it's

not, but the exact result will depend on which software you're using – QuarkXPress will resort to "fake" styling and attempt to make a bold or italic out of the roman text – a typesetting no-no! – while Adobe InDesign will not attempt the formatting at all. If you're unsure whether the two listings are identical, print them out and/or enlarge them and take a closer look. ■

Regular	Regular
<i>Italic</i>	<i>Italic</i>
Bold	Bold
<i>Bold Italic</i>	<i>Bold Italic</i>

The text on the left was styled using the style bar in QuarkXPress; the font menu was used to style the text on the right. The result? The top text got slammed with "fake" styling, which means this typeface is not style-linked. All text set in Scala.