Typography

GRS Writing Group – FRI 6 JUL 2018

Typography is the art of arranging type to make to make text legible, readable, and appealing. At UWA, the rules regarding the typography of a thesis are few. So unless your discipline follows rules provided in a specific style guide* you will need to make a number of typographical choices. You will need to decide how your text, tables and figures appear and how you can make best use of the white space that surrounds these elements.

*There are many style guides available in the UWA Library, including the APA Manual, Chicago Style Guide. Even if you are not required to follow a particular style, you may find it useful to see what styles are recommended for your discipline by reading a style guide relevant to your research topic.

Font

While Times New Roman has been the traditional choice of font for academic writing, there are a number of equally readable fonts. Serif fonts have short lines at the upper and lower ends of the strokes of a letter and are considered easier to read when text is printed. Sans serif fonts (without the additional short lines) appear 'cleaner' but 'less formal' and are often used for onscreen material. For your thesis you may want to consider these readily available fonts: Times New Roman, Garamond, Century Schoolbook, **Georgia**, Minion Pro, Cambria, Calibri, Arial, Helvitica, Verdana

- Given your thesis will be provided to examiners as a PDF (and the final version will be uploaded onto the UWA research repository as a PDF) you may want to consider a font that is readable both in print and on screen.
- Constantia is considered to be a good choice of font if you want to strike a balance between printed and on screen readability. The font was commissioned by Microsoft and was designed to have a consistent look in both mediums.
- Mixing of more than two fonts in any one document is not recommended, although two different fonts can be very effective for differentiating headings from body text (the paragraph text which contains the main body of information).

Hierarchy

In addition to font, you will also need to consider font size, and how you will highlight certain words on the page. In a thesis, there are typically a number of heading levels and you may also wish to emphasise certain words within the body text. The highest level headings (like your thesis title) should be the most prominent text, and heading levels inbetween should become less prominent as they move from the highest to the lowest level, with body text the least prominent.

- Prominence in academic texts is usually achieved by increasing font size and bolding.
- Underlining and italicization are best avoided, although many style guides prescribe headings levels using these features.
- Using colour is also possible, although examiners may print the thesis in black and white so colour cues may be lost. I would suggest combining colour with changes in font size to ensure there is a

visual hierarchy even in black and white. If using colour, use multiple shades of one colour rather than multiple colours.

- You could consider using a sans serif font for your heading and a serif font for your body text.

White space

The area between design elements includes spacing between letters, spacing between paragraphs, paragraph indentations, line spacing, margins, and spacing before and after headings, paragraphs, figures and tables.

- Some style guides ask for a double space after a full stop (APA), while others ask for a single space (Chicago). Research on readability of this space is inconclusive.
- The word default line spacing is slightly greater than a single line. Line spacing of 120-140% of font size is recommended for optimal readability. But remember you can adjust line spacing to suit individual pages – this can be very useful when you want to ensure tables do not break over pages and figures are not forced onto the next page leaving a large section of unwanted white space on a page.
- Spacing above and below headings can be used to emphasise hierarchy by further differentiating the heading from the body text, by increasing the spacing as the level of heading increases.
- Most word processors have a default margin of 1 inch and prior to submission of PDF versions of the UWA thesis, we asked for a 4cm LHS margin (gutter margin for binding) and all other margins 1". In many cases, 1" margins have quite a long line length. Line lengths of 45–90 characters including space, are thought to be the most readable.
- Paragraphs may be distinguished from one another by a line of white space OR an indentation at the beginning of the paragraph but NOT both. If indenting, the rule of thumb is to indent at least as far as the font size, and usually twice the size (ie if using 12 point font, indent 12-24 points).
- Ensure adequate space between figures (and the figure legend), tables (and table titles) and body text.

Justification

Text aligned along the left hand side margin is said to be left justified or ragged right text. This is thought to be the easiest alignment to read. Text that is aligned on both margins, called fully justified or flush text, is more difficult to read because unusually large spaces may appear between words and white space "rivers" may appear when spaces from lines above and below align.

UWA Thesis Style and Format advice http://www.postgraduate.uwa.edu.au/students/thesis/style

Butterick's Practical Typography https://practicaltypography.com/index.html#toc

Thesis Whisperer: What font should I choose for my thesis?
https://thesiswhisperer.com/2016/03/30/what-font-should-i-choose-for-my-thesis/

Next session AUG 3: Limitations

Find further details of the UWA GRS Writing Group, including advice sheets to download, see:
www.postgraduate.uwa.edu.au/students/resources/communities#writinggroup