

Fonts are fonts?

Fonts are available from many sources. Commercial fonts from Adobe, Bitstream, Agfa-Monotype, URW, and hundreds of smaller vendors, can be quite different from free or shareware fonts available on the Web. Use the criteria below to evaluate the quality and appropriate use of fonts that you own or wish to acquire.

Quality. High quality fonts are drawn one character at a time by professional typographers, who work hard to ensure attractive letterforms, smooth curves, straight lines, and consistent character weight. When you use free or low cost fonts at large sizes, you may notice strange variations in character appearance. Commercial fonts also include “hinting” algorithms, which cause small type to look better when printed on laser and inkjet printers.

Kerning information. Some pairs of characters, such as the “Wo” and “Aw” pairs, look best if a tiny bit of space is removed between the characters. This is referred to as kerning. Some commercial fonts contain much more extensive kerning information than free fonts. This results in lines of type with even spacing between characters.

Character sets. Some free fonts don’t include characters beyond A-Z, 0-9, and common punctuation. Commercial fonts usually include accented characters, cur-

rency symbols, ellipses, long and short dashes, and other typographic essentials.

Type families. Commercial fonts often include bold, italic, and other weights and variations of a single font to create a flexible, multipurpose type “family”.

Reserve the use of free fonts for occasional novelty or display uses. For high-volume use, or for materials that establish or maintain your organization’s identity, spend a little extra money to obtain high-quality typeface families. Typefaces from hundreds of vendors are available for purchase on the Web at www.eyewire.com, www.myfonts.com, or studio.agfamonotype.com.

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