

## 5 Tools of Typographic Emphasis

When it comes to adding emphasis to your message, less is always better. In order for type to stand out, it has to be the exception. When everything is bold, nothing stands out. In general, one level of emphasis is adequate, two levels are substantial and three are overkill.

There are five tools you can use to create emphasis: 1. Italics 2. Boldface 3. Size 4. Color and 5. typestyle change

### *Italics*

To be grammatically correct, italics are used for titles, foreign words, technical terms and subtle emphasis. Use italics to emphasize words, phrases or whole sentences in text copy. One or two words in italics will stand out without interrupting the flow. An italics sentence tends to be more disruptive than an emphasis, and a paragraph can be hard to read.

### **Boldface**

Using bold for emphasis makes a stronger statement than italics. Again, use of restraint is strongly recommended. Some fonts come with various levels of bold (demi, heavy, bold, extra bold, etc.). Make sure that the type of bold you select is appropriate for the amount of emphasis you want to create.

### Size

Making type bigger can be effective but there are also some drawbacks. Unless you are using generous line spacing, increasing the size of the font for one or two words, the bigger words will look cramped between the lines. (Figure A)

For a sentence or more it is best to separate it from the rest of the text and treat it like a pull quote or separate block of type. (Figure B)

### Color

Colored type can be a powerful way to show emphasis. The less color you use, the more it will stand out. You want to plan your use of color to make the most of it. When using color for a single word, it is better to use boldface with the color to adjust for the color's lower contrast when compared to black.

### Typestyle change

An excellent rule of thumb when changing typestyle is "the greater the difference in type designs, the better the mix and the more powerful the emphasis." A good combination is using a sans serif typeface with a serif typeface. (Figure C)

## The “Nevers” of creating emphasis with type

Never underline text.

Never reverse a large block of type out of a dark background.

Never emulate a highlighter effect by using yellow behind copy.

Almost never use bold italic.

NEVER SET ALL CAPS FOR EMPHASIS IN TEXT COPY.

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### (figure A)

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### (figure B)

#### pull-quote style

Miniamconse molobore er ad molorper sit lor ad ea facin et, sit prat luptatio coreet, vullan vent ut adit dolore faccum velessit numsan ero od min henissit.

augerit dolorem dio od eugiam ip elit  
nonulluptat in ut iustis endiatie feugiatum  
delis am zzriliquis nibh euis nos adit, sequis  
nosto odion ulput nit aci blaore

feugait iliquamet irit velissequat lutpat utat eraese  
consequ issectem ing euisim velent irit praesto consed

#### separate text-block style

Miniamconse molobore er ad molorper sit lor ad ea facin et, sit prat luptatio coreet, vullan vent ut adit dolore faccum velessit numsan ero od min henissit.

augerit dolorem dio od eugiam ip elit nonul-  
luptat in ut iustis endiatie feugiatum delis  
am zzriliquis nibh euis nos adit, sequis nosto  
odion ulput nit aci blaore

feugait iliquamet irit velissequat lutpat utat eraese  
consequ issectem ing euisim velent irit praesto consed  
elis ercincidunt aliquis estrud tat ad tet lorem vullaore  
vullum zzriusci exer sumsand ipsumsan henit vulpute  
ex ea feugait wisit ver ipit digna feugiat dipsuscilit

### (figure C)

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