



What  
typeface  
goes with that?

How to pick a typeface that complements a graphic. *Continued* ▶

# What typeface goes with that?

The key to coordinating type and graphic is to find what they have in common

**Y**ou've found the graphic you want and need a typeface to go with it. How do you choose?

We think of type as something to read, but type is actually artwork: A, B and C are lines, corners and squiggles—*images*—to which we've assigned sound and meaning.

This is why type is so expressive. While the alphabet represents *data*, words in print convey playfulness, stateliness or business depending on how they're drawn.

Which is the key to selecting just the right typeface. Since type and graphics are, visually speaking, the *same thing*, the thing to do is to coordinate their visual properties.

We'll show you. In this article, Harry & Sons have a favorite graphic—this tree here—for which they want a complementary typeface to complete their business card. Watch.

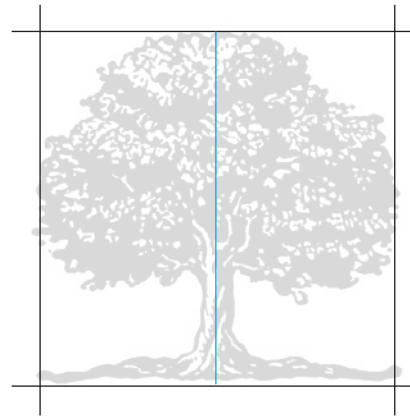


Before



## Evaluate the image

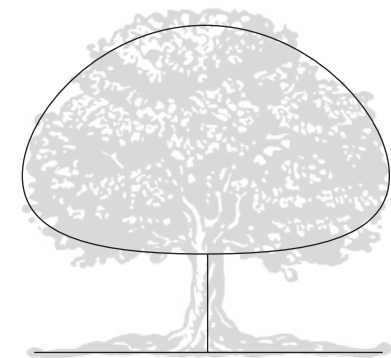
To coordinate type and image, we must first find their common visual properties. Start with the graphic, and evaluate it for proportion, shape, line and texture.



### Proportions/mass

Proportions and mass are BIG and affect everything else. Because proportions can be deceptive, it's a good idea to draw a bounding box (above). Actually draw it; don't trust your eye. The tree is:

- square
- symmetrical
- upright

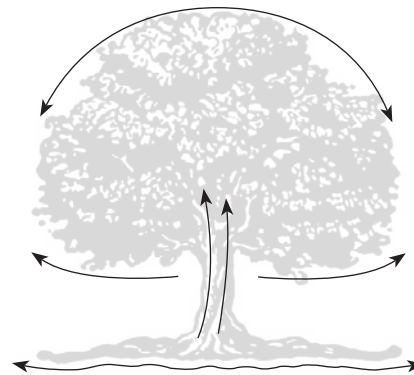


### Shape

Shape is the primary quality by which we identify an image. The tree is an ovoid shape atop a straight-line, vertical trunk on a straight-line, horizontal base—something of an egg on a stick.

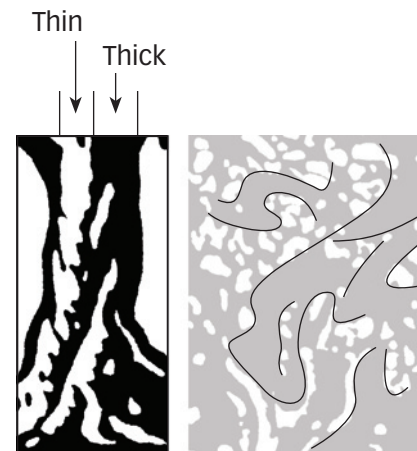


Because we tend to only identify images (“this is a tree”) and not really *see* them, this drill may at first seem like looking for faces in the clouds. But look closely; there’s a lot there.



### Line

Line means the overall *sweep* or *drape*—as in the line of a dress—and it also means *edge*. Here, we see a predominantly horizontal sweep, a top-down drape and a gnarly, detailed edge.



### Texture

The tree has a *lot* of surface texture. The irregular foliage is obvious and random, but note especially the interaction of thick-thin, negative-positive areas (squint and it’s easier); which appear as shapes and rivers—like the surface of a mossy pond.



## First edit

There are *so many* typefaces available that we have to cull out many quickly. Start with the biggest elements—proportion and shape—and eliminate the styles that are most different.



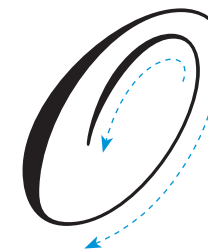
### Incompatible typestyles



Condensed



Extended



Swoopy



Blocky

With a visual understanding of the tree, it's easy to see that condensed, extended and swoopy typestyles don't match its square proportions and symmetrical shape. The blocky typeface (above, right) is closest to square but artificially constructed, which is likewise dissimilar. The first edit in this case eliminates all typefaces except those with standard, squarish proportions and upright posture.





## Second edit

What's funny is that squarish, upright styles comprise half the world's typefaces including all the standard ones! So we must look further.  
The second edit: Line and texture.



### Standard-proportion typestyles: sans-serif and Roman

Ab

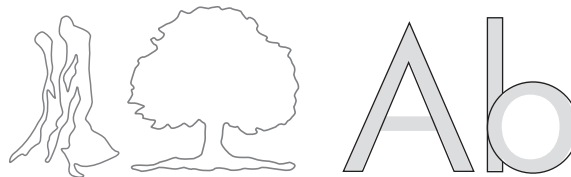
#### Right proportions, wrong lines

Sans-serif typefaces are generally mechanical and tend to have uniform strokes, repetitive curves, straight lines and sharp corners. The lines and texture of these faces are quite unlike the natural, organic tree (below).

Ab

#### Right proportions, better lines

Like the tree, old-style Roman typefaces are full of detail and variety. Their thick-thin strokes, serifs, terminals and counters create a lot of texture and interaction that can complement the richest, most detailed image.





## What's left?

After two major edits we have a much shorter type list; we're down to standard-proportion, Roman typestyles. Which is best? In this case, line and texture are the keys—but now we'll look closer.



### Roman typestyles



Transitional

Modern

Oldstyle

**Standard-proportion, Roman typefaces are the oldest\* of all styles and the most common. They can be sorted into a half-dozen major categories, each with sub-categories. The basic proportions, serifs and thick-thin strokes make Roman typestyles easy and pleasant to read; as a result, they comprise most of the text in our books, newspapers and magazines.**

\*How old is old? [Trajan](#), one of today's most popular serif typestyles, is based on the engraved text at the foot of Trajan's Column in Rome inscribed nearly 1,900 years ago! Many other everyday serif typestyles are 100 to 300 years old. Talk about standing the test of time!



### Third edit

As before, we're looking for commonalities but now in the details. Look at all three viewing "distances" (below), because different and useful characteristics are evident at each one.



# Tree Service

**Middle** Shape and pattern

# Abetg

**Near** Lines and edges

Harry & Sons Tree  
Service Pruning  
Removal Trimming  
Stump Removal  
Clean-ups Firewood

**Far** Texture and "color"

### Times Roman

Popular Times Roman is a sharply defined typeface with pointy corners and thick-thin strokes of mechanical regularity. Its serifs have flat ends that are too small to blunt the sense they're tiny needles (above) that would prick your finger if you touched them. Times Roman is too uniform and too pointy to complement the rounded, organic forms of the tree.







Pay attention to the small lines, small shapes and especially the interaction between letters, which creates *texture*—the tree is full of texture! Do you see uniformity or irregularity, similarities or differences?



Tree  
Service

Abetg

Harry & Sons Tree  
Service Pruning  
Removal Trimming  
Stump Removal  
Trimming

#### Bauer Bodoni

Part of the *Modern* serif category, Bauer Bodoni is an upright style characterized by extreme thick-thin contrasts and a uniform stroke so repetitive that it creates a pattern (left, bottom). Moderns are beautiful typefaces widely used in fashion and finance, but their sharp edges and geometric precision are machine-made and rigid, quite different from the soft, touchable tree.





Remember the faces in the clouds? It's a matter of training your eye, but once you can see patterns and currents, especially in the white spaces, your work will take a big step forward. Below, Gargoyle is a match:



Tree  
Service

Abetg

See the similarities?



Harry & Sons Tree  
Service Pruning  
Removal Trimming  
Stump Removal  
Clean-ups Firewood

**Gargoyle Medium Old Style**

Gargoyle is a *Humanist* typeface; meaning it has *Old Style* proportions yet with the appearance of having been drawn by hand instead of mechanical tools. It's full of variety and irregularity, with low contrast between thicks and thins; funky, rounded corners and quirky serifs, few of which are alike. Its interaction of lines and shapes is warm, varied and organic just like the tree. *This is our typeface.*



### Put it to work

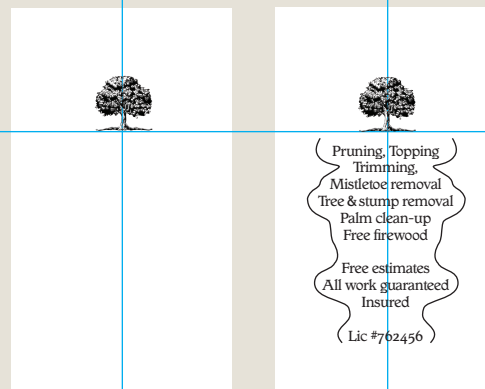
As with the type, let the image influence the layout—here it's upright and stately like the tree, centered with irregular edges. The deep green color is richer and more organic than the original bright green.

#### Front



Everything builds off the tree. Turn the card upright, then run down the page just like a tree trunk—logo first, a phantom vertical, then phone numbers. This is the key information; the open space allows the eye to settle and take it in.

#### Back



Same thing on the back but with a smaller tree and no name, so it's not confused for the front. Line-by-line presentation is easy to read and suggests an appropriately tree-like outer contour. Tree, typeface, layout and colors are now unified in a single look.





## Article resources



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8

8a — Harry & Sons  
8b — Tree Service

10

11

8c

Tel: 916.555.5723  
Cell: 916.555.9296

9



8d



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Trimming,  
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### Typefaces

- 1 [ITC Franklin Gothic Book Comp](#)
- 2 Porsche logotype
- 3 [Shelley Andante Script](#)
- 4 [Rosewood Regular](#)
- 5 [Futura Medium](#)
- 6 [Times Roman](#)
- 7 [Bauer Bodoni Roman](#)
- 8 (a-d) [Gargoyle Medium Oldstyle](#)  
[Figures](#) | a) 14 pt, b) 22 pt, c) 11/13 pt,  
d) 10/11 pt

### Colors

10 C8 M8 Y22 K6

11 C25 M0 Y45 K75

### Images

- 9 [CSAimages.com](#)



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### For presentation format

[Print: \(Specify pages 1–13\)](#)



### Print

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Page Size: Fit to Page

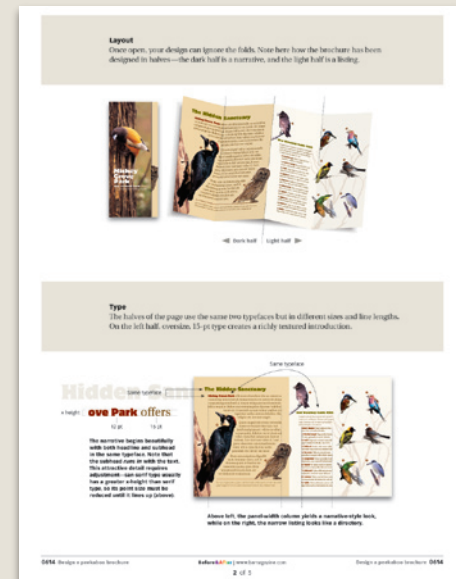


### Save

Presentation format or  
Paper-saver format

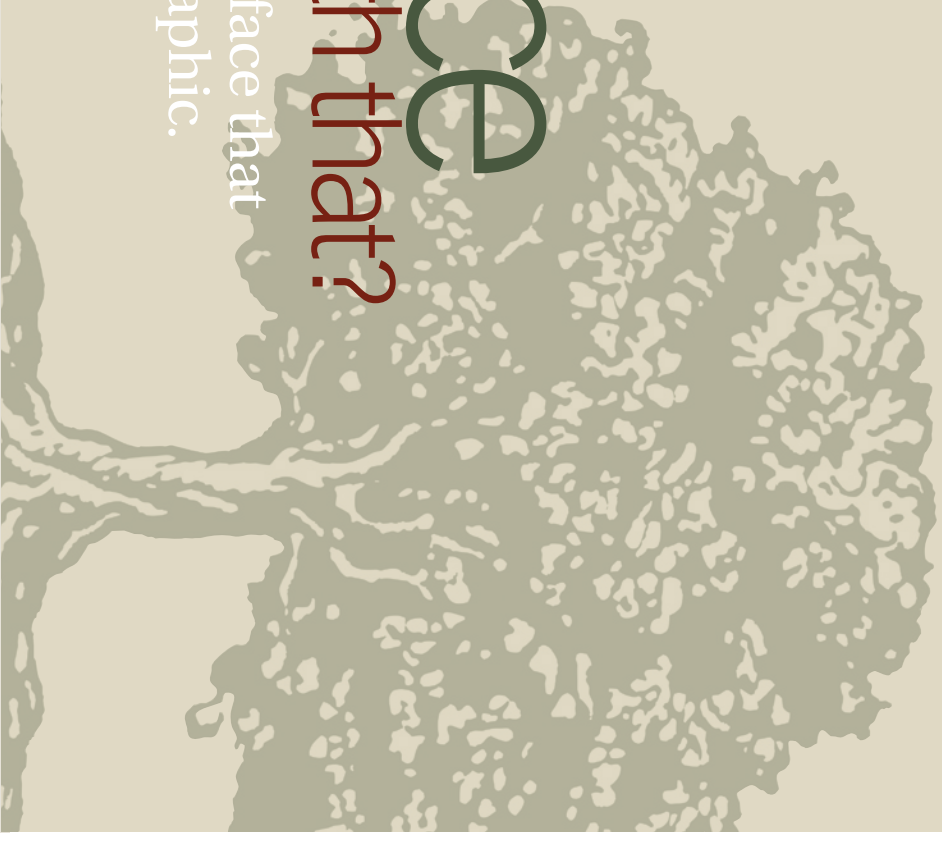
### For paper-saver format

[Print: \(Specify pages 15–21\)](#)



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**HARRY & SONS**  
**TREE SERVICE**  
Pruning • Topping • Removing  
Mistletoe Removal • Stump Removal  
Palm Clean-ups • Trimming • Free Firewood

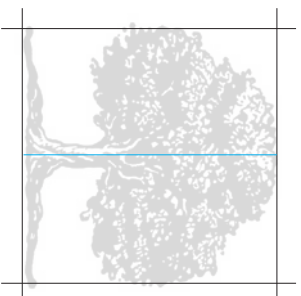
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Before

## Evaluate the image

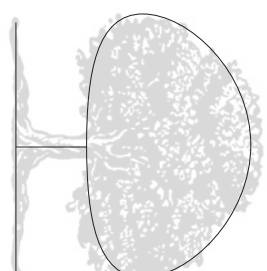
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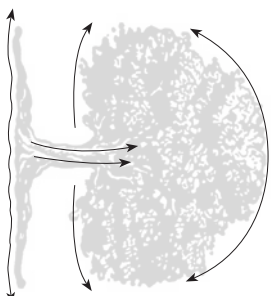
- square
- symmetrical
- upright



### Shape

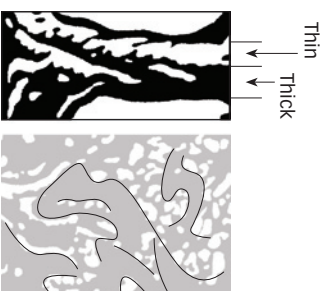
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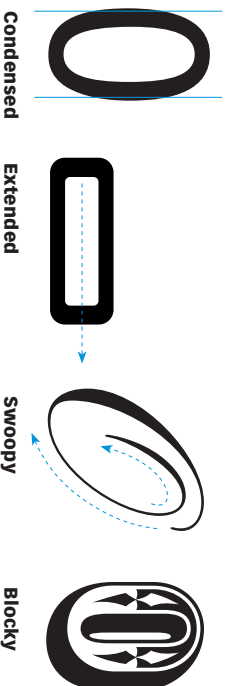


### Texture

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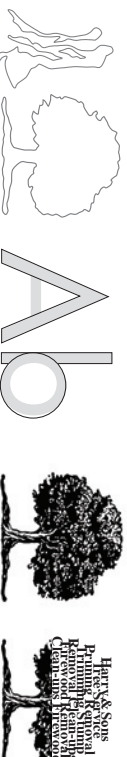


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Ab Ab Ab

Near Lines and edges



Tree  
Service

Middle Shape and pattern

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Clean-ups Firewood

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Removal Trimming  
Stump Removal  
Trimming

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# Abetis



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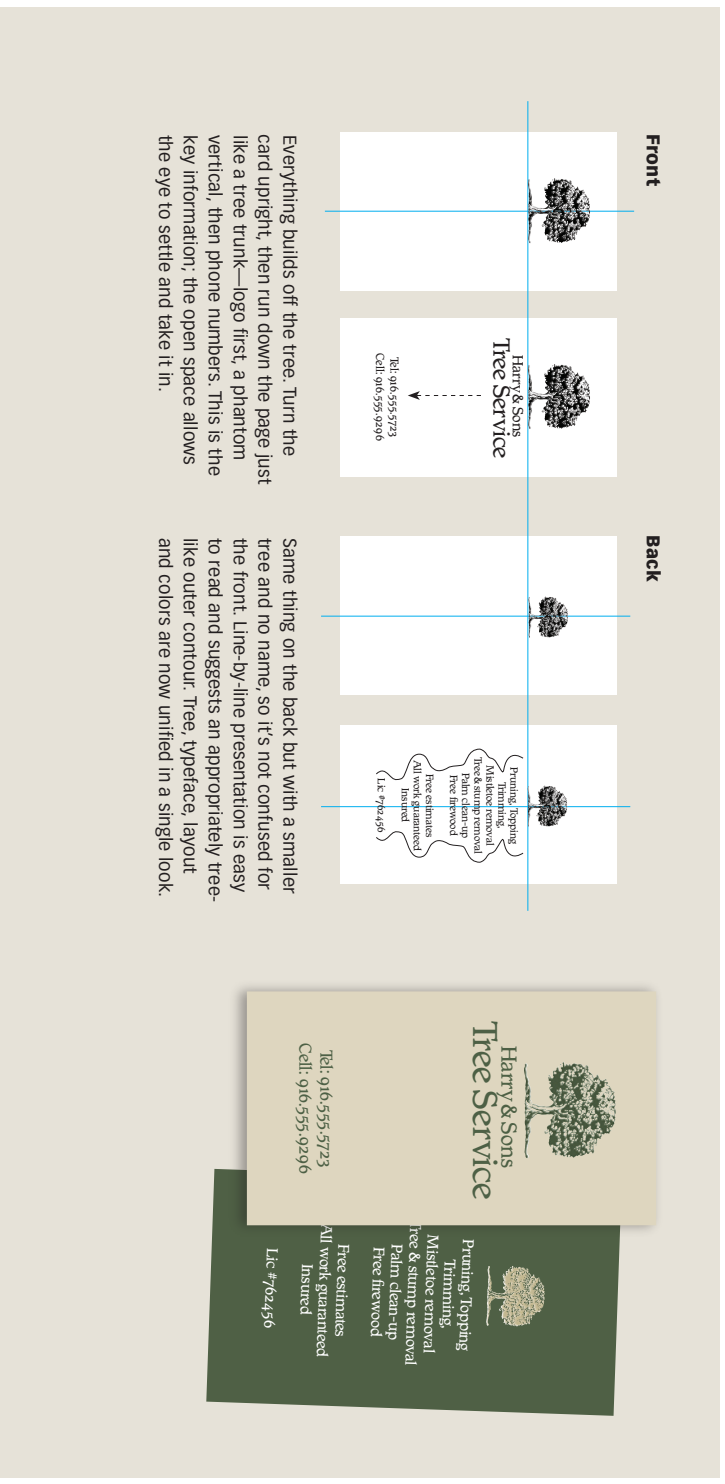


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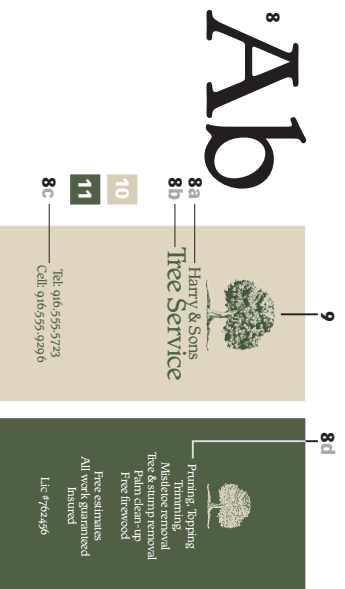
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## Article resources



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- 2 Porsche logotype
- 3 [Shelley Andante Script](#)
- 4 [Rosewood Regular](#)
- 5 [Futura Medium](#)
- 6 [Times Roman](#)
- 7 [Bauer Bodoni Roman](#)
- 8 **(a–d)** [Garzoye Medium Oldstyle](#)  
Figures | a) 14 pt, b) 22 pt, c) 11/13 pt, d) 10/11 pt

### Images

- 9 [CSAimages.com](#)

### Colors

- 10 **C8 M8 Y22 K6**
- 11 **C25 M0 Y45 K75**

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