

- ① PAGE MARGINS too small; LINE I
- ② POINT SIZE too big.
- ③ LINE SPACING too tall.
- ④ TIMES NEW ROMAN — snore.
- ⑤ Failure to put ONE SPACE BETWE

Typography For Lawyers

BY GREGORY PETERSON

Why does typography matter to legal professionals?

“I’m not her to tell you that typography is at the core of a lawyer’s work. It’s not. But typography can optimize that work...If you ignore typography, you are ignoring an opportunity to improve both your writing and your advocacy.” Matthew Butterick

Long before he became a lawyer, Matthew Butterick steeped himself in the worlds of typography and visual design. After graduating magna-cum-laude from a visual design curriculum at Harvard, he worked with leading type designers and then created a successful web-design company. Looking for a new challenge, he undertook legal studies — where he soon became aware of the glaring shortcomings in the presentation quality of documents produced by the legal profession. Butterick set out to improve the legibility, readability and — consequently — the persuasive ability of legal documents and correspondence.

Matthew Butterick graduated from UCLA law school, and became a member of the California bar in 2007. He wrote the website and book *Typography for Lawyers*, for which he was awarded the Legal Writing Institute's 2012 Golden Pen Award.



“*Typography For Lawyers*” — the website and book he designed — offers hands-on instruction for legal professionals to improve the appearance and effectiveness of their documents. **As the author explains, his book is based on three core principles:**

1. Good typography is part of good lawyering.
2. Typography in legal documents should be held to the same standards as any professionally published material.
3. Any lawyer can master the essentials of good typography.

Butterick's efforts have met with widespread and enthusiastic acclaim. Legal writing guru (and editor-in-chief of *Black's Law Dictionary*) Bryan Garner describes Butterick's advice as “infallible.” And in 2012, Butterick's work earned him the Legal Writing Institute's Golden Pen Award — along with this comment from the Institute's President, Kenneth D. Chestek:

“Butterick's clear, easy-to-follow website and reference book take the fear and mystery out of document design for legal texts, giving lawyers of all kinds the tools they need to let their polished prose truly shine.”

Butterick urges lawyers to prepare legal documents that put their client's best foot forward. "Or you can submit motions that look like they just rolled out of bed." (Here's a before-and-after sample.) The author also provides examples of numerous other documents — including caption pages, research memos, letterhead and resumes. More recently, Butterick launched "Practical Typography," an online manual.

While not designed exclusively for legal professionals, this site is an excellent way to become familiar with Butterick's approach. Start with the "Typography in ten minutes" section. You'll quickly see how these lessons can improve your documents — and you'll likely want to see more of the legal-industry-specific material that's only available in "Typography for Lawyers."

(Nota Bene: The "Practical Typography" online book content is provided on the honor system. If you choose to take advantage of the site's lessons, be sure to read-and-heed: "How to pay for this book.") If your firm or department is preparing its goals for 2014, shouldn't improving your documents be on that list? Practice the typography recommendations of Matthew Butterick — and it's only a matter of time before people are asking:

"Hey, why do your documents look better?"

"Typography For Lawyers" is available from Amazon.com — both in a paperback edition (\$25.00) and a Kindle edition (\$9.99). Sample pages and table-of-contents also are available via PDF download.

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Gregory Peterson is a writer & communications advisor. Formerly, he was a TED Conferences Project Director, Lecturer at Boston University's School of Communications, Fellow at Harvard Kennedy School, and Governor's Communications Director. Gregory serves on the Board of Directors for "The Durkheim Project" — Predictive Analytics for Detection of Risk.