

ABCDEFGHIJKLMN

OPQRSTUVWXYZ

abcdefghijklmn

opqrstuvwxyz

0123456789

hamburgefonstiv127

One cannot be
forever innovating.
I want to create
classics.

COCO CHANEL

ABCDEFGHIJKLMN

OPQRSTUVWXYZ

abcdefghijklmn

opqrstuvwxyz

0123456789

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Irrational ideas
should be followed
absolutely and
logically.

Sol LeWitt

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My success

symbolizes loyalty;

great friends;

dedication; hard

work. Routine builds

character.

Nas

Fontly Speaking

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By Doug "Benguiat" Bendek Font Talk From The Font Of Wisdom

Hey, as much as I hate to preach, now is the time when I have to get on the old soapbox: No more Futura Bold Condensed! I mean, really! It's such a precocious little font. I know it seems chic and irresistible, but show some restraint! People are using it everywhere, from Surgeon General's warnings to children's arithmetic books, and it really bugs me to see it used when a simple, moderate 18-point Helvetica Narrow Oblique would fill the bill without the pretension. Please, don't fall in the trap of using inappropriate fonts to make up for unimpressive material.

Okay, I've stopped shooting my six-shooters. You can bring the kids back into the room. My first letter comes from California in the form of a limerick:

Dear Font O' Wisdom,
The stork came flapping his wing,
Now my wife and I are expecting,
What font should we use,
To send the news,
About this glorious thing?
New Baby in Burbank

For a new baby, I always recommend a baptismal font! But seriously, font-wise, a classy Brush Script at a moderate four picas should announce the blessed event nicely. But for a lighthearted approach, try one of the popular Crayon fonts, or something with a spring appeal, like a Stone Serif Italic with a low pitch. However, for twins, an extravagant font like Greco Adornado or Oz Handicraft may be what you need. (Besides therapy, that is!)

A lot of you out there have been badgering me to tell you how long I've been advising readers on the wondrous subject of fonts. Well, let's just say a certain pharaoh needed decorating tips, and I said, "Hey, about some Hieroglyphs?" Enough said!

But all kidding aside, fonts have a rich and fascinating history, dating back thousands of years. The Empires of the Mediterranean were built on fonts, like Cuneiform and the Phoenician script. Fonts had their destructive power, too, playing a part in the eventual fall of the Ottoman Empire. When the Turks presented Sultan Suleiman with a scroll written in Reverse Cooper Black, the Sultan went berserk, ordering that all their heads be chopped off and displayed on his mantle. It's true! But there I go again, railing against the ignorance and indifference most people feel toward fonts.

Now, on to our next letter:

Dear Font Dork,
How many of the letters you print do you actually write yourself And if it is actually less than 100 percent, then what kind of loser needs advice on fonts
Not Falling For It In Falls Church

Well, Falls Church, those are some pretty big accusations. But first, let me say that the tracking and leading of your letter were off by a country mile. I'll also point out that the Bodoni you used, with a cap height of a mere 11 points, is probably the most inexpressive font around. And if that weren't enough, demi weight moderns have been out of style since the early '80s! Maybe if you spent less time mocking what you obviously don't understand, and a little more time trying to comprehend the subtle science of font usage, your letter wouldn't look like it had been typed by a chimpanzee!

Font Watch: Have you ever noticed that the font for Jurassic Park is the exact same one as the font for the television show Martin? Come on, Mr. Spielberg! Show some originality! When Jaws came out, the poster featured a snappy Franklin Gothic Heavy—a bold font choice at the time—and people were lining up around the block!

Next Week: the "Semibold" controversy—what you need to know!

Doug "Benguiat" Bendek's syndicated weekly column, Fontly Speaking, appears in over 400 newspapers nationwide.

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