

The Times Are Changing

You probably never had to think about the font you were using to create documents and signs until now. I bet most of you just stuck with the default Microsoft Word font (this is Calibri) and called it a day. Why does it matter what type of font you use? Let me explain.

The font used to type this part of the tip is called Times New Roman. Pretty, isn't it? It has little line strokes on the tops and bottoms of the letters (known as a serif typeface). Times New Roman is a much loved font and has been since it was created in the early 1930s. It is still used in many daily newspapers and typesetting devices today and is hailed as one of the first fonts available for personal computers.

Sadly, in the exterior signage world, it is a default font. Research reveals that Times New Roman was designed for newspapers mainly for its attributes of being narrow, allowing for more text per line. But those are not good features for roadside or any type of exterior signage. The further you get away from the letters, the more they look like hieroglyphics. Still, it is a pretty, fancy font and for some, too hard to resist.



When designing a sign or replacing an old one, use the font that can be seen and read from the greatest distance: BLUE HIGHWAY, also known as Expressway, a font based in Canadian/U.S. highway sign lettering that is lauded for its clarity and ease of letter recognition. It's a little boring, isn't it? But it's easy to read.



Pretty fonts are evil, they make your eyes widen and cause your mind to wander to the right hemisphere of the brain where emotion lives. Reason lives across the aisle. Signs need to be read from a distance, for good reason. Stick to the right fonts.

-- Gabe Trahan, NCPA Senior Director of Store Operations and Marketing
NCPA's Front-End Overhaul