

20th c.

realist sans serif

typically low contrast, thick to thin strokes
vertical stress
typically square, mechanical shapes
large eye with cross-bar near center
medium to tall X-height
narrow to medium set width
sans serif, typically without entasis.

Realist Sans Serif type (AKA *Transitional Sans Serif*) was championed by modernists at the beginning of the 20th century. The grandfather of all realist sans serif typefaces, is Berthold Foundry's Akzidenz Grotesk, created at the beginning of the 20th century. Its simple clarity appealed to modernist principles— design stripped bare of ornament. It comes across very practical— a straightforward documentary-style narration. The voice is one of reason (hence, rational), nondescript in terms of accent (think anchor man), and somewhat androgynous. It is a typeface used by institutions to convey information without the distraction of style. It can also add a matter-of-fact quality to an advertisement, making a statement look factual.

20th c.

humanist sans serif

low to medium contrast, thick to thin strokes
vertical or slightly oblique stress
typically more organic shapes
large eye with cross-bar near center
medium to tall X-height
medium to wide set width
sans serif, sometimes showing a slight flair or entasis to stroke termini

Example is Helvetica Neue Regular

Humanist Sans Serif typefaces were created as a response to the popularity of sans serif type that emerged during the rise of modernity. With more geometric sans serif typefaces on the market in the 1920s and 30s, traditionalists created sans serif type based upon the proportion and harmony of Roman typefaces that hinted at the calligraphic strokes of the scribe (hence, *humanist*). The voice of humanist sans serif is on the feminine side with an air of professionalism. This genre is often used in publications for the health and helping professions, beauty products and any publication that wants to seem friendly and accessible yet professional.

20th c.

geometric sans serif

little or no contrast, thick to thin strokes
vertical stress if any
letterforms based on geometric shapes
large eye with cross-bar near center
medium to tall X-height, variable cap height
medium to wide set width
sans serif, typically without entasis.

Example is Futura Regular

Geometric Sans Serif type also emerged from the school of modernism. The Bauhaus venerated the circle, square and triangle and geometric typefaces were developed that were both geometric and nearly *monoline*, a uniform thickness or lack of contrast in strokes. The combination of geometry and uniformity makes geometric sans almost devoid of humanism, yet nearly perfect in clarity. The voice may be robotic, yet it can also be used to add a level of sophistication to a design. Designers can borrow its precision and lend it to what is being advertised. Engineering and architecture firms use this type for that reason, but it can also be used to add a level of modern austerity and sophistication to everything from art galleries to hair salons.

script

Script typography is based upon hand written type and can take many forms. Example here is snell roundhand.



Example is Snell Roundhand Regular

Script type is as humanist as type gets, in that it is intended to imitate hand written type. *Italics* are one of the earliest examples of printed typography that imitated a specific Roman script. In keeping with the notion that italics is a reference to handwritten Italian type, you may notice that geometric typefaces use the term *oblique* to refer to the skewed versions of those typefaces. Script is effeminate in voice and used exclusively as headers and subheads for publications that may have something to do with beauty, elegance, the arts, or contain romantic content.