

Unit 39: Typefaces and Letter Forms

Unit code:	J/502/4982
QCF Level 3:	BTEC National
Credit value:	10
Guided learning hours:	60

● Aim and purpose

This unit aims to develop learners understanding, knowledge and skills of how typeface and letter forms communicate messages to different audiences. Learners will have the opportunity to research, analyse and create design work that explores typefaces and letter forms.

● Unit introduction

Type and letter forms have been integral to communication between people for centuries. Artists, craftspeople and designers have used the printed word and letter forms as a central part of their creative work. Artists have used type and letter forms in paintings as a pictorial element, graphic designers use them in advertising and people use them daily in everyday situations, for pleasure and to communicate.

This unit focuses on both theory and practice. The study of others' use of typefaces and letter forms is an integral part of our understanding of contemporary developments in graphic design. As typefaces and letter forms have evolved, so too has graphical communication. Issues such as legibility, production and changes in language, communication technologies and social organisation have also affected this evolution.

Learners will have the opportunity to explore and work with typefaces and letter forms, and will learn the correct names and terminology for the various parts of a letter. This unit will be invaluable for learners wishing to pursue a career that involves typography in graphic communication such as publishing houses, web design, illustration or font design. This unit provides underpinning knowledge for other specialist graphic units which all provide useful supporting material for this unit.

This study of theory and practical exploration of typeface and letter form structure can then be applied by learners in developing personal practical work through experimental design. The design tasks will challenge learners to exploit the potential for experimentation in a variety of materials. They will also have the opportunity to consider alternative methods for developing designs in type. This might include working with found objects or using 2D or 3D making techniques to produce innovative design work. It can also involve technology such as printers, digital camera, photocopier, scanner or ICT software.

● Learning outcomes

On completion of this unit a learner should:

- 1 Understand historical and contemporary developments of typefaces and letter forms
- 2 Know how typeface styles and letter forms communicate a message
- 3 Know correct terminology for typefaces and letter forms
- 4 Be able to create design work that explores typefaces and letter forms.

Unit content

1 Understand historical and contemporary developments of typefaces and letter forms

Historical and contemporary development: origins eg early forms, writing, pictograms, communication needs, writing tools, signs, symbols, languages; developments eg scripts, clay, papyrus, parchment, paper, letterpress, printing, moveable type, metal type, classification of typefaces, fonts, digital, screen-based

2 Know how typefaces and letter forms communicate a message

Communicate a message: specific need eg letterforms, typefaces, fonts; readability eg visual barriers, page design, layout; legibility eg distortion (condensed, expanded, weight, embellished), type size, reading distance; communication eg styles, forms, words, language, construction, abstract meaning, signposts, ascenders, descenders, space, decoration, function; word recognition; reading eg scanning sentences, scanning words, recognising shapes, patterns, text areas; contexts eg comic strips, nutrition labels, safety notices, children's book, advertising, road signs, fine art, instruction manual, newspaper column, web page, hand held device

3 Know correct terminology for typefaces and letter forms

Correct terminology: typographic eg font, type, family, italic, bold, light, sans-serif, serif, text, display; type eg body, x-height, serif, ascender, descender, counter, caps, lower case, upper case, en dash, em dash, symbols, stress, clarification

4 Be able to create design work that explores typefaces and letter forms

Explore typefaces and letter forms: eg calligraphy, hand-generated letter forms, computer-generated letter forms, scripts, writing, printed letter forms, type reference books, newspapers, magazines; found letter forms, typographic errors, packaging.

Create design work: eg ideas, primary sources, secondary sources, formal elements, visual language; tools, techniques eg pens, pencils, markers, inks, acrylics, sticks dipped in ink; printmaking; making techniques eg cutting, bending, distorting, rubbing, scratching, constructing; digital techniques eg software, printer, scanner, photocopier

Assessment and grading criteria

In order to pass this unit, the evidence that the learner presents for assessment needs to demonstrate that they can meet all the learning outcomes for the unit. The assessment criteria for a pass grade describe the level of achievement required to pass this unit.

Assessment and grading criteria		
To achieve a pass grade the evidence must show that the learner is able to:	To achieve a merit grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass criteria, the learner is able to:	To achieve a distinction grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass and merit criteria, the learner is able to:
P1 discuss historical and contemporary developments of typefaces and letter forms [IE, SM, RL]	M1 show an individual approach when investigating historical and contemporary developments of typefaces and letter forms	D1 demonstrate an independent and informed approach when investigating historical and contemporary developments of typefaces and letter forms
P2 describe how typeface styles and letter forms communicate a message [CT, RL, SM]	M2 compare how diverse typeface styles and letter forms communicate messages	D2 evaluate how typeface styles and letter forms communicate messages
P3 identify the correct terminology for typefaces and letter forms	M3 describe the correct terminology for typefaces and letter forms	D3 define the correct terminology when working with typefaces and letter forms
P4 produce design work that explores typefaces and letter forms. [RL, IE, CT]	M4 produce experimental design work that explores typefaces and letter forms effectively.	D4 produce imaginative and original design work that explores typefaces and letter forms.

PLTS: This summary references where applicable, in the square brackets, the elements of the personal, learning and thinking skills applicable in the pass criteria. It identifies opportunities for learners to demonstrate effective application of the referenced elements of the skills.

Key	IE – independent enquirers	RL – reflective learners	SM – self-managers
	CT – creative thinkers	TW – team workers	EP – effective participators

Essential guidance for tutors

Delivery

For this unit learners should have access to appropriate materials and equipment. Established business links from the design industry would also be useful. Assessment will be portfolio evidence either an e-portfolio or presentation of work.

This unit can be delivered through a balance of practical sessions and presentations.

Learning outcome 1 can be delivered through short presentations or lectures covering the origins and development of typefaces and letter forms. Learners should make notes in their sketchbooks or work journals and use this information to support their practical work. Where possible learners should be exposed to specific examples that have been influenced by factors such as technology and communication needs. In this way learners will gain an understanding of how these factors play a part in influencing design and its application.

Learning outcome 2 is linked to learning outcome 1 and could use the same delivery model of short presentations. This should provide learners with clear information on how different typefaces and letter forms have imparted a certain meaning or message, often through their style. Learners should be taught how communication needs have had a direct influence on the design of the typefaces and letter forms used. This learning outcome can also be delivered by engaging learners in practical tasks, where they might evaluate examples of typefaces by considering their meaning and style.

Learning outcome 3 builds on from learning outcomes 1 and 2 by developing learners' understanding of typefaces and letter forms. This is to be achieved through learners being taught the correct typographic terminology used to describe the various parts of typefaces and letter forms. Although some of this outcome could be delivered through presentations, learners could benefit from working through practical tasks where they draw up and label the various parts of typefaces.

Learning outcome 4 should bring together learners' research and visual recording of typefaces and letter forms, in exploring forms to produce experimental designs. These should challenge learners to produce creative examples that use a range of different media including conventional tools such as pens and unconventional such as sticks, inks, combined found objects and twisted wire. Learners should be encouraged to be as innovative as possible, whilst still considering factors such as legibility, effects of enlargement and reduction, purpose and intended message or meaning. Learners should be taught how to consider these aspects and to record their findings in an appropriate manner when evaluating their final outcomes.

Outline learning plan

The outline learning plan has been included in this unit as guidance and can be used in conjunction with the programme of suggested assignments.

The outline learning plan demonstrates one way in planning the delivery and assessment of this unit.

Topic and suggested assignments/activities and/assessment

Introduce unit to the class.

Explain the importance of studying type styles and letter forms and its impact on communication. Discuss why such skills are needed and what employers look for in the design industry. Describe careers that need such skills such as font designers, graphic designers and publishing – teacher to whole class.

Present and explain to the class what are type styles and letter forms, Show examples from different contexts – teacher to whole class.

Topic and suggested assignments/activities and/assessment

Explain and show to the class the correct terminology used to discuss and identify typefaces and letter forms – teacher to whole class.

Assignment 1: Research and analyse typefaces and letter forms

Independently research and collect examples of historical and contemporary typefaces and letter forms.

Analyse typefaces and letter forms using the correct terminology.

In groups discuss chosen examples.

Discuss social or cultural events that have made an impact on typefaces and letter forms for example technology. Explain the relevance of typefaces and letterforms to communicate.

Find and discuss examples of typefaces and letter forms used in film and new media.

Present in sketch book or use interactive media such as video or a podcast.

Present to the class.

Assignment 2: Identify How Typefaces and Letter Forms Communicate a Message

Use design ideas and research collected to explain what ideas are communicated through typefaces and letter forms; how does the typeface and letterform affect the message? Present in sketch book – in groups.

Examine how the typeface and letter forms are used in different contexts for example on a comic or on a banks' logo – in groups.

Look at where typefaces and letterforms are found for example the side of a bus, shop front or a restaurant menu; collect examples and present to the group through documentary style video or podcast.

Keep a diary or journal and take note of when and how you use typefaces and letter forms for example using your mobile phone, laptop, pen and paper, school timetable; Consider their meaning and style. Are there concerns regarding legibility, mass production, changes in language? Explain findings and discuss with class. How have communication needs had a direct influence on the design of the typefaces and letter forms? – Explain, discuss and present to class.

Assignment 3: Create Design Work That Explores Typefaces and Letter Forms

Explore typefaces and letter forms using 2D and 3D media.

Describe health and safety when using tools and media.

Independently create design ideas using typefaces and letter forms using different media.

Explain and discuss design ideas using correct terminology.

Describe where the designs might be used and by whom.

Discuss and note if working for a client what conditions might have to be put in place eg budget, meeting deadlines, methods of presentation.

Present or create an E-Portfolio.

Trip to a printing specialist, design museum, a local newspaper print warehouse or a university that provides courses in graphics or design – whole class.

Invite a specialist from the industry such as a graphic designer, illustrator, font designer to give a talk or workshop- whole class.

Interview a designer or specialist in the industry and prepare a number of questions regarding communication through typefaces and letter forms – whole class.

Final critique of projects – whole class.

Assessment

For P1, learners will investigate the historical development of typefaces and letter forms, and show some understanding of the development of type.

For P2, learners will show some understanding of communication needs, at a basic level. The needs identified will show a limited grasp of communication issues and factors. There will be some discussion of these factors but the range of ideas discussed will be limited.

For P3, learners will demonstrate the use of a basic level of knowledge of the parts of letter forms. They will be able to identify the basic elements of typefaces.

For P4, learners will show their ability to create basic experimental designs using techniques demonstrated/discussed. They will show limited skills in manipulating media and explorations will be at a basic level. There will be some understanding of factors such as legibility, but this will not be in depth.

For M1, learners will show skill in explaining the impact on communication by referring to a range of specific examples. They will be able to proficiently discuss aspects of typeface and letterform development, and be able to reach coherent conclusions.

For M2, learners will use correct terminology in a confident manner, and describe how some of the conclusions from their research may impact upon design decisions.

For M3, learners will demonstrate the ability to produce thoughtful and creative work evidencing a proficient level of skill using manipulation of media, exploration of a considered range of ideas and of investigations carried out to influence the production of final design outcomes.

For M4, learners create original design work that explores typefaces and letter forms.

For D1, learners will show an individual approach to investigations that show in-depth understanding of meaning and communication. Learners will show an informed understanding of communication needs.

For D2, learners will show an individual approach to producing creative and dynamic experimental designs that show in-depth understanding of meaning and communication. Learners will show an in-depth understanding of communication needs.

For D3, learners will explain and discuss the correct terminology when working with typefaces and letter forms.

For D4, learners will produce imaginative and original design work that explores typefaces and letter forms.

Programme of suggested assignments

The table below shows a programme of suggested assignments that cover the pass, merit and distinction criteria in the assessment and grading grid. This is for guidance and it is recommended that centres either write their own assignments or adapt any Edexcel assignments to meet local needs and resources.

Criteria covered	Assignment title	Scenario	Assessment method
P1, M1, D1	Assignment 1: Research and analyse typefaces and letter forms	A small group of designers discuss and analyse typefaces and letter forms for their client brief.	Portfolio of evidence consisting of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> collected research information analysis of research collected presentation.
P2, M2, D2 P3, M3, D3	Assignment 2: Identify how typefaces and letter forms communicate a message	Designers examine typefaces and letter forms from different contexts and analyse the message communicated, to aid their work in meeting a client brief.	Portfolio of evidence consisting of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> written notes and annotation recorded discussions documented images/examples correct terminology used.
P3, M3, D3 P4, M4, D4	Assignment 3: Create design work that explores typefaces and letter forms	Brief from a design company to produce a variety of different design ideas that are aimed at a target audience for a specific context.	Portfolio of evidence consisting of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> designs that show development from preparatory studies to final ideas health and safety notes when using equipment/tools documentation on techniques and processes used correct terminology used notes and research on target audience and context design work may be found presentation.

Links to National Occupational Standards, other BTEC units, other BTEC qualifications and other relevant units and qualifications

This unit forms part of the BTEC Art and Design sector suite. This unit has particular links with the following unit titles in the BTEC Art and Design suite:

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Explore Drawing	Contextual References in Art and Design	Ideas and Concepts in Art and Design
Explore Printmaking	Working with Graphic Design Briefs	Typographic Design
		Words and Images in Graphic Design
		Graphic Image Making

National Occupational Standards

This unit also provides development opportunities for some of the underpinning skills, knowledge and understanding of the following National Occupational Standards:

CCSkills Sector Skills Council

Design (revisions in draft form June 2009)

- DES1 Apply research on the history and theory of design to your own design activities
- DES2 Apply design industry knowledge to inform your own design work practice and work
- DES5 Follow a design process
- DES7 Contribute to the production of prototypes, models, mock-ups, samples or test pieces
- DES8 Explore the use of colour in a creative environment
- DES9 Research, test and apply techniques for the design of products
- DES10 Create visual designs
- DES23 Create 2D Designs using a computer aided design system.

Essential resources

Learners must have access to specialist studios and workshops which will need to be equipped with photocopiers, scanners and Mac or PC facilities. They will also need access to general studio/s suitable for research, presentations and paper-based design activities. Depending upon the available resources, learners may also wish to experiment with hand printed letterforms, so access to a suitably supervised printmaking facility would be useful.

Learners will need to be sufficient library resources, including specialist texts on the history and evolution of type and letterforms. Access to photographic resources may also be useful, although not essential.

Employer engagement and vocational contexts

Centres should develop links with practising artists, craftspeople and designers, to deliver assignments to learners or to provide work experience.

Links with employers are essential to the delivery of the programme for work experience and future employment.

Vocational learning support resources:

- Learning and Skills Network – www.vocationallearning.org.uk

Business and finance advice:

- local and regional Business Links – www.businesslink.gov.uk

Assignments should be vocationally relevant; centres should consider the delivery of 'live projects' for example to support the vocational content of the unit and programme.

Creative and Cultural Skills (www.ccskills.org.uk), the sector skills council for arts, crafts and design have launched the web portal Creative Choices (www.creative-choices.co.uk). This portal has a range of information about careers in the arts, crafts and design sector, including job descriptions.

Skillset, the sector skills council for creative media (www.skillset.org), provide details on their pages (www.skillset.org/careers) about careers advice and industry information, plus a regularly updated news and events page.

Skillfast-UK, the sector skills council for fashion and textiles (www.skillfast-uk.org), provide details on their careers web pages (www.skillfast-uk.org/justthejob) about careers advice and industry information, plus regularly updated news and events pages.

Indicative reading for learners

Textbooks

Baines P and Haslam A – *Type and Typography* (Portfolio Series) (Laurence King, 2005)
ISBN 978-1856694377

Blackwell L – *20th Century Type* (Laurence King, 2004) ISBN 978-1856693516

Elam K – *Typographic Systems* (Princeton Architectural Press, 2007) ISBN 978-1568986876

Harvey W – *1,000 Type Treatments: From Script to Serif, Letterforms Used to Perfection* (Rockport, 2005)
ISBN 978-1592531592

Heller S and Thompson C – *Letterforms Bawdy Bad and Beautiful: The Evolution of Hand-drawn, Humorous, Vernacular and Experimental Type* (Watson-Guptill, 2000) ISBN 978-0823004645

Heller S and Ilic M – *Handwritten: Expressive Lettering in the Digital Age* (Thames & Hudson, 2006)
ISBN 978-0500285954

Heller S and Anderson G – *New Vintage Type: Classic Fonts for the Digital Age* (Thames & Hudson, 2007)
ISBN 978-0500241370

Kane J – *A Type Primer* (Laurence King, 2002) ISBN 978-1856692915

Krause J – *Type Idea Index: The Ultimate Designer's Tool for Choosing and Using Fonts Creatively* (How Design Books, 2007) ISBN 978-1581808063

Lupton E – *Thinking with Type: A Critical Guide for Designers, Writers, Editors, and Students* (Princeton Architectural Press, 2004) ISBN 978-1568984483

Neuenschwander B – *Letterworks: Creative Letterforms in Graphic Design* (Phaidon Press, 1995)
ISBN 978-0714829098

Squire V, Willberg H and Forssman F – *Getting it Right with Type: The Do's and Don'ts of Typography* (Laurence King, 2006) ISBN 978-1856694742

Journals

Artists & Illustrators (Quarto Group)

Graphics World (Graphics World Publications Ltd)

Association of Illustrators Journal (Jo Davies)

Typographic (The Design Press)

Visual Studies (Taylor & Francis Informa PLC)

Websites

www.dmoz.org/Arts/Graphic_Design/Typography/

Open directory of links to typography resources

www.ilovetypography.com/

Typography site run by a graphic designer

www.microsoft.com/typography/default.mspx

Microsoft typography website

www.rsub.com/typographic/

Timeline, history and examples of typography, not attributed

www.typography.com/home/index.php?affiliateID=

Typography site run by Hoefler & Frere-Jones

www.webstyleguide.com/type/index.html

Site dedicated to usability of websites

www.wpdfd.com/issues/23/typography/

Web page design for designers, not attributed

Delivery of personal, learning and thinking skills

The table below identifies the opportunities for personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS) that have been included within the pass assessment criteria of this unit.

Skill	When learners are ...
Independent enquirers	researching information on historical and contemporary developments of typefaces and letter forms exploring techniques and processes when working with type and letter forms
Creative thinkers	developing ideas and responding to the brief experimenting with design ideas for type and letter forms using media creatively and appropriately exploring problems and identifying different ways of tackling it
Reflective learners	evaluating own work and the work of others through each stage of learning refining and developing work as it progresses
Team workers	working and sharing a studio space working safely when using materials and equipment
Self-managers	working towards a given brief keeping to deadlines and targets ensuring work is presented to a high standard
Effective participators	discussing examples of type and letterforms with peers and tutor explaining and presenting work and ideas to peers and tutor.

Although PLTS are identified within this unit as an inherent part of the assessment criteria, there are further opportunities to develop a range of PLTS through various approaches to teaching and learning.

Skill	When learners are ...
Independent enquirers	researching the local design industries and seeking out contacts to work with or interview
Creative thinkers	using materials in a new and original way
Reflective learners	considering how designs may work in industry reflecting on constraints that effect production of design such as time, resources, budget and business needs
Team workers	managing discussions to solve problems and gain new insights to a problem
Self-managers	seeking out advice when needed.

● Functional Skills – Level 2

Skill	When learners are ...
ICT – Use ICT systems	
Select, interact with and use ICT systems independently for a complex task to meet a variety of needs	selecting appropriate methods of presentation for project researching information to develop ideas
Use ICT to effectively plan work and evaluate the effectiveness of the ICT system they have used	
Manage information storage to enable efficient retrieval	setting up and managing folders saving images from the internet, photographs and text
Follow and understand the need for safety and security practices	responsible for using the internet in a safe and appropriate manner
Troubleshoot	
ICT – Find and select information	
Select and use a variety of sources of information independently for a complex task	exploring historical and contemporary developments in type faces and letter forms
Access, search for, select and use ICT-based information and evaluate its fitness for purpose	analysing and refining collected information to develop own ideas
ICT – Develop, present and communicate information	
Enter, develop and format information independently to suit its meaning and purpose including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • text and tables • images • numbers • records 	using images to illustrate artists work using photographs to document techniques and processes using text to explain thoughts and ideas
Bring together information to suit content and purpose	
Present information in ways that are fit for purpose and audience	selecting appropriate methods to present work such as producing a podcast, video, power point or word document for sketchbook
Select and use ICT to communicate and exchange information safely, responsibly and effectively including storage of messages and contact lists	communicating information and ideas to peers and teacher

Skill	When learners are ...
Mathematics	
Understand routine and non-routine problems in a wide range of familiar and unfamiliar contexts and situations	using estimation and calculation to work out size and shape of letterforms and type size
Identify the situation or problem and the mathematical methods needed to tackle it	
Select and apply a range of skills to find solutions	
Use appropriate checking procedures and evaluate their effectiveness at each stage	
Interpret and communicate solutions to practical problems in familiar and unfamiliar routine contexts and situations	
Draw conclusions and provide mathematical justifications	
English	
Speaking and listening – make a range of contributions to discussions and make effective presentations in a wide range of contexts	group discussions on the developments of typeface styles and letter forms presenting and discussing ideas and finished work
Reading – compare, select, read and understand texts and use them to gather information, ideas, arguments and opinions	reading and analysing information on the developments of letterforms and typeface styles selecting and comparing examples of letter forms and typeface styles
Writing – write documents, including extended writing pieces, communicating information, ideas and opinions, effectively and persuasively	writing up research notes on the developments of letterforms and typeface styles writing up notes on techniques and processes when creating design ideas.