

Helvetica

Background

The major concepts for Helvetica were designed by Swiss type designer Max Miedinger and president of the Haas Foundry Eduard Hoffmann in 1957 and has been developed and continuously refined by the Haas Foundry and later by D. Stempel AG. The typeface was originally called “Neue Haas Grotesk,” *grotesk* meaning sans serif. In order to appeal internationally, the name was changed to *Helvetica*, meaning “the Swiss.” Neue Helvetica is Helvetica redesigned and adapted for digitization (1983). (*Helvetica*; Neue Haas Grotesk; Strizver; Type Gallery-Helvetica).

Helvetica’s Role in Graphic Design

Helvetica is one of the most popular typefaces in the world and the decision of whether or not to use Helvetica is an important one for a graphic designer or anyone designing a document. The font is everywhere and has been around for 70 years (*Helvetica*).

The Helvetica Typeface and Its Fonts

Linotype <https://www.linotype.com/188/helvetica.html> (Type Gallery-Helvetica).

Ways to talk about this typeface given to us by Williams: size, weight (heavy, light; regular, light, bold, extended, compressed), structure (type category, monoweight vs having thick/thin transition, serif vs sans serif), form (uppercase vs lowercase, roman vs italic) (175-218).

Features Shared by Most Sans Serif Typefaces (Williams 179, 180, 186)

Designed in the early 20th century

No serifs (“without serifs on the ends of the strokes”)

a large x-height (see page 186)

Monoweight: same thickness throughout; “virtually no visible thick/thin transition in the strokes; the letterforms are the same thickness all the way around” (a few do have a slight thick/thin transition)

Specific Features of Helvetica (*Helvetica*; Ilovetygraphy.com; Neue Haas Grotesk)

Monoweight

horizontal ends

Extension at the bottom of the uppercase *G*

Curl on the right leg of the uppercase *R*

According to Fontbureau.com, “The most distinctive features of the new typeface were consistently horizontal stroke terminals, large x-height, and extremely tight spacing. These features together resulted in the typeface’s characteristically dense and vigorous texture” (Neue Haas Grotesk).

Helvetica and Ethos, Pathos, and Logos

Designers who design with the typeface are aware of its rhetorical uses.

Clips from *Helvetica*, the 2007 documentary on the typeface (25:00-29:00 and 40:00-43:06) (*Helvetica*).

Some of the Words Used by the Designers When Discussing Helvetica’s Rhetorical Effects

Ethos: “official,” “accountable,” “transparent”

Pathos: “human,” “bracing,” “thrilling”

Logos: “efficient,” “neutral,” “sober,” “fit in”

Helvetica vs Arial

Arial designed by Monotype was Microsoft’s version of Helvetica.

Ilovetygraphy.com compares Helvetica and Arial.

<http://ilovetygraphy.com/2007/10/06/arial-versus-helvetica/>

Helvetica vs Arial Quiz

Quiz from www.Ironicsans.com

<http://www.ironicsans.com/helvarialquiz/>

Works Cited

Helvetica. Dir. Gary Hustwit. Plexi Productions LLC, 2007. DVD.

Ilovetypography.com, <http://ilovetypography.com/2007/10/06/arial-versus-helvetica/>.

Accessed 23 Oct 2017.

Ironicsans.com, www.ironicsans.com/helvarialquiz/. Accessed 23 Oct 2017.

"Neue Haas Grotesk." Fontbureau.com, www.fontbureau.com/nhg/history/. Accessed 23 Oct 2017.

Strizver, Ilene. "Helvetica: Old and Neue" Fonts.com,

www.fonts.com/content/learning/fyti/typefaces/helvetica-old-and-neue. Accessed 23 Oct 2017

Type Gallery-Helvetica. Linotype, www.linotype.com/188/helvetica.html. Accessed 23 Oct 2017.

Williams, Robin. *Non-Designer's Design Book*. 4th Ed. Peachpit Press, 2015.

Natacha Leonard
10/24/2017