

Letterpress Terms



GENERAL TERMS

Letterpress – A traditional way of printing, where a plate with the image standing proud of the surface is inked and then impressed onto the paper. Traditionally, it was not correct to indent the paper but it has now become fashionable to do so.

Printing Press - A device that applies pressure that transfers ink from a surface to a medium. They revolutionized mass communication, changed the course of history & today call back to simpler times. Put simply, they are magic.

Platen Press – A press with a flat plate which is pressed against a medium (paper) to cause an impression. These have an inking disc up top and a large flywheel on one side.



Proofing Press – A press used to prep a print for production. The bed of this press is parallel to the ground and either a roller moves on top of the bed or the entire bed itself can move.

Type High – The height of type from its base to its printing surface. .918 of an inch or 15/16th.

Type High Gauge – Tool for measuring if type is at the correct height.



Pied Type – Type which is in a jumbled mess.



Handwritten signature or logo.

Letterpress Terms



SETTING A FORM

Form – what you set to print, composed of letters and or images.



Font – Font refers to the typeface, style and size being used and encompasses everything from uppercase and lowercase letters to numerals and punctuation marks.

Typeface – refers to the design of the collection (the way it looks)...so font is what you use, and typeface is what you see. The font is the cookie cutter & the typeface, the cookie!

Serif – is a small line attached to the end of a stroke in a letter or symbol. When a typeface has these strokes it is a serif typeface.

Sans Serif – a typeface that does not have the projecting serifs from the ends of strokes.

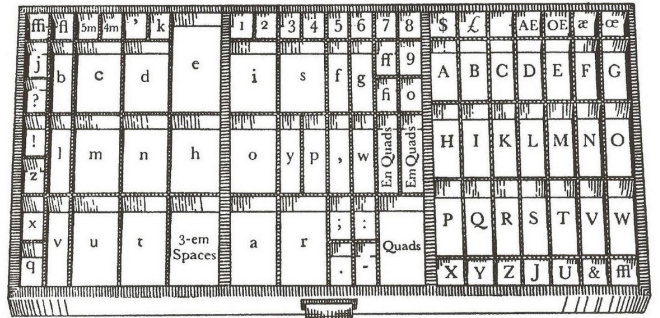


serif



sans-serif

California Job Case – method of organization of the letters in a case. is a kind of type case: a compartmentalized wooden box used to store movable type used in letterpress printing. It was the most popular and accepted of the job case designs in America. The California Job Case took its name from the Pacific Coast location of the foundries that made it popular.



Upper Case vs Lower Case – terms for the different types of letters based of the position of an individual type case above or below the other. Capital letters were stored in the upper case and smaller letters in the lower case.

Metal Type - Metal type is made of lead - a soft metal. It can be melted down and reused if it breaks when too much pressure is applied.

Nick - The groove on the bottom of most metal type. It helps printers ensure letters are all going in the same direction.



Letterpress Terms



Wood type - Wood has been used as type dating back to the first known Chinese prints. Larger letters were made out of wood since metal had a tendency to develop uneven surfaces, or crack, as it cooled. Wood was also used because of its lightness, availability, and known printing qualities. Wood ends up showing great character as it ages and can expand and contract depending on the air temperature and humidity.



Die - engraved plate or block in copper, magnesium or steel (for intaglio printing).

Ornaments - Decorative elements that can make a print look more attractive, but usually having no practical purpose.



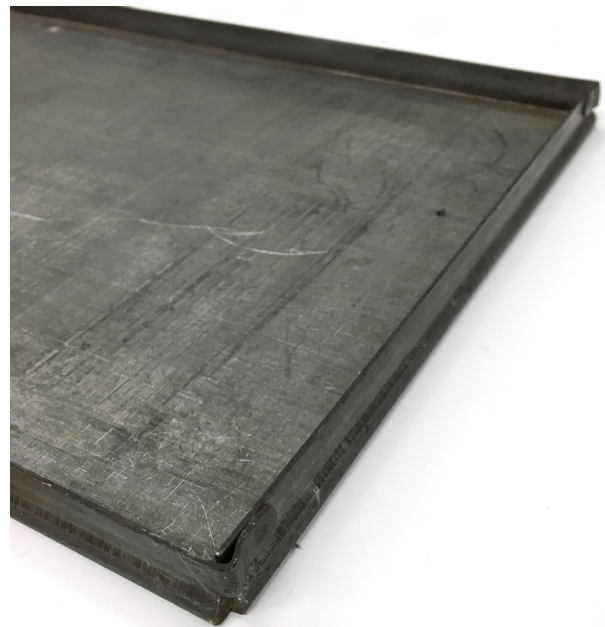
Polymer plate - plate made of plastic that is generally mounted on a aluminum base.



Composing stick - consists of a heavy hook with an adjustable clasp. Used to assemble pieces of type into lines and to fill up the lines with furniture to make up the exact width.

Chase - metal frame into which type and blocks are locked to make up a page or form.

Galley - A lightweight metal tray with three closed sides where you lock up a form for printing on proofing press machines.



Letterpress Terms



Furniture – wood or metal that fills the space around the letters on a galley. Furniture can be wood or metal and it allows us to lock up forms nice and tight. It is lower than type so it doesn't print. Some metal furniture pieces are hollow so the weight of the metal doesn't make carrying around a lock up cumbersome. It can be found in wedge shaped cabinets and organize by width and length.

Line Gauge – Looks like a ruler, but measures in points & picas. The cap at the top grips onto the edge of type for accurate measuring.

Point – unit of measurement used in typography that is equal to 1/72 inch. It is used primarily for representing the height of characters

Pica – unit of measurement equal to 1/6 of an inch or 12 points.

Picas & points get used interchangeably. Divide your points by 12 to find how many picas something is (ex: 24 points = 2 picas)



Leading – refers to the space between each line of type. It gets its name from the lead bar the typesetter used to use to space each line of type.

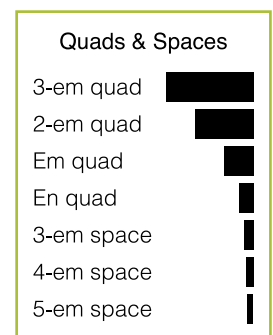
- Leads – 12 or 3 points
- Slugs – 6-12 points

Slug cutter - Tool used to chop pieces of leading shorter. Works a lot like a paper trimmer with guides to show you the length.



Kerning – refers to the spaces between letters.

Spacing – Pieces you put in-between words. The spaces are to be the same size as the type body being set and are less than type high so they will not print. Em quads are a piece of spacing that is the width of the letter M. En quads are half that width.



Letterpress Terms



Quoin – Small mechanical devices that, when used with a KEY expands to lock up a form. Older quoins are wedge shaped. You normally see them looking like a small metal piece of furniture with a hole in the middle where the KEY is inserted.



Key – A tool that is inserted into a QUOIN which control the mechanism inside that allows widen and tighten up a form.



PRINTING

Roller settings gauge – lollipop shaped tool used to check the height of the rollers.



Make ready – process of prepping a job to print after mounting plate or type on press.

Packing - paper that pads a cylinder surface. Part of the make ready used when printing.

Jogging- aligning the edges of paper by hitting or shaking against a flat surface.



Handwritten signature

Letterpress Terms



Deboss – press into a sheet (lowered).

Emboss – press out of a sheet (raised).

Blind deboss – an impression stamped without ink onto paper creating a relief effect.

Registration – position of print on paper.

Ink- Colored fluid used for creating an image on paper. It can be oil based or rubber based.



Ink knife - A sturdy, flat flexible metal piece with a handle used to remove ink from a can or mix it into a desired color.

Varnish - used in offset printing but can work as a sealer. It's clear & used as an ink replacement.

Rollers- Round tubes made of a synthetic rubber that ink type as you print.

Brayer – small hand roller used to distribute ink. The name derives from the word “bray” which means “to break, pound, or grind small.”



Bed - part of a press where the form is placed.

Trip - mechanism for separating the bed and cylinder so no impression is made.

Grippers- Parts on a press that grip and hold the paper while it runs through the machine.

Tympan paper – Outer layer of paper that covers the cylinder or platen of the press.

Drying Rack – A place to lay final pieces out to dry particularly when there is a lot of heavy inking or you need to get paper out of the way.

Horse Haired Brush – a small wooden-handled stiff brush used to clean out letters.

Hellbox - box where cast metal sorts are thrown.
