

Crabby's Font Facts 103: Designing with fonts



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Crabby Office Lady

In my first two fonts columns, I gave you basics and best practices. Now let's have some fun with using fonts as a design technique. All you need is Office and your imagination.

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In [Crabby's Font Facts 101](#) you learned some basic facts about fonts. Then in [Crabby's Font Facts 102](#) I tossed out some best practices about how and when to employ certain fonts in certain ways.

Now let's put what you've learned to good use with some of the more fancy-schmancy ways you can make your fonts stand up and be noticed.

Design idea #1: WordArt

You say you're looking to add a little excitement, a little dimension, a little va-va-voom to your documents, Web pages, or publications? Then WordArt might be just the feature for you. It's easy to add, and its special effects can make you the life of the party (without that unfortunate lampshade-on-the-head business).



Accessing WordArt in Office 2007

- On the **Insert** tab, in the **Text** group, click **WordArt**, and then click the WordArt style that you want.

Using WordArt in Office 2003, XP, and 2000

Different programs have different ways of accessing WordArt.

- In Word, PowerPoint, FrontPage, and Excel, **Insert WordArt** is on the **Drawing** toolbar.
- In Publisher, **Insert WordArt** is on the toolbar.

NOTE If the **Drawing** or **Objects** isn't showing, on the **View** menu, point to **Toolbars** and click **Drawing** or **Objects**.

With WordArt you can add text effects like shadowing, rotating, stretching, and coloring. You can make text any size you like, and you can even include three-dimensional effects. The programs that have WordArt — PowerPoint, Word, Excel, Publisher, and FrontPage — come with 30 built-in effects.

So if you ever find yourself dozing off while reading your own stuff, WordArt may be just the kick in the pants you need.

Design idea #2: Drop caps

When you're working with a text-rich document in Word or Publisher, it's nice to call attention to the start of a paragraph with a drop cap.

Drop caps are those large, initial letters or words at the start of a paragraph. You know, like those old-fashioned fairy tales where the first letter was in this really cool font that told you that this story was "olde."



Drop caps probably wouldn't look so great in an Excel spreadsheet, but they're really designed to work well with Publisher and Word documents.

Add a drop cap in Word 2007

1. On the **Insert** tab, in the **Text** group, click **Drop Cap**.
2. Click **Dropped** or **In margin**.

Add a drop cap in Publisher 2007

1. Select the letter you want to make into a drop cap.
2. On the **Format** menu, click **Drop Cap** and either select a style or create your own style.

Add a drop cap in Publisher 2003, 2002, and 2000

- On the **Format** menu, click **Drop Cap**. From there you can choose the type of drop cap you want (lower case, upper case, color, font, style, etc.), the size (4 lines high, 3 lines high, etc.), and even how many letters you want dropped.

Add a drop cap in Word 2003, 2002, and 2000

- In Word, on the **Format** menu, click **Drop Cap**, and you get a similar set of choices, but frankly, not quite as rich.

NOTE The fact that Publisher has more drop cap choices than Word may be because Publisher is more of a marketing and publishing solution than Word, and therefore might make better use of the drop cap. This is just me talkin' though, so please, Word lovers, don't take it personally.

Design idea #3: Orientation within a text box

As a youngster, I was very involved in gymnastics. Consequently, I spent much of my formative years upside down, bouncing around, or hurtling myself through space. (This may explain a little bit about how my mind now operates.)

If you're like me, you may also like to see things upside down, on their side, flipping, or rotating freely just for the fun of it. And that's the beauty of this next designing-with-fonts tip: when you insert text into a text box, a table, or a text block, you can get it to do almost anything you want!

Below is an example of text in a text box I created in Word that I've colored purple and that is performing a left-handed cartwheel:



Note that you rotate text in different ways in different programs. Below are just some examples

Office 2007

- [Position text in a shape or text box in Word 2007](#)
- [Position text in a shape or text box in Excel 2007](#)
- [Position text in a shape or text box in Outlook 2007](#)
- [Position text in a shape or text box in PowerPoint 2007](#)

Office 2003 and 2002

- [Change the orientation of text in Word](#)
- [Rotate text in tables in PowerPoint](#)
- [Rotate, move, or resize a text block in Visio](#)

So stand your text on its head (or its side) and spiff up your documents. Then wrap your shin splints in some tape and reminisce about your days on (or, in my case, falling off) the balance beam ...

Design idea #4: Emboss, engrave, outline, and shadow

You already know you change the color, size, and style of your font to make it stand out. You can also utilize some depth-adding features (emboss, engrave, shadow), or use an outline so that your font stands out but doesn't shout at you.



Add some depth to your fonts in Office 2007

- On the **Home** tab in the **Font** group, click the arrow in the lower-right corner and make your selection(s).

Add some depth to your fonts in Office 2003 and 2002

1. In Word, Publisher, FrontPage, or PowerPoint: on the **Format** menu, click **Format**, and under **Effects**, make your selection(s).
2. Be creative, go wild. (But please: not too wild. We need to be able to read what you've written.)

Design idea #5: Borders and shading

Remember the highlighter pen you used in school to mark up those text books? Remember the satisfaction you got from a nice, straight, even highlight? Well, you can get that feeling again (without the toxic smell) by using the font shading feature. And similarly, you can add borders around a word, a letter, or an entire paragraph to separate it from the pack.



- 1 Yellow shading
- 2 Double-line border

Add border and shading in Word 2007

1. On the **Home** tab on the **Paragraph** group, click the arrow next to the **Borders** button.
2. Click **Borders and Shading** and then make your choices using the three different tabs.

Add borders and shading in Word 2003, 2002, and 2000

On the **Format** menu, click **Borders and Shading**. From there you can experiment with various colors of shading as well as different types of borders such as:

- Shadowed borders
- 3-D borders
- Borders on just one part of the word or paragraph
- Double line borders
- Dotted line borders

And there you have it: 5 ways to jazz up your documents, Web pages, presentations, and more with built-in font design effects. Now wasn't that fun?

Tip of the week

Today's tip comes from Tim T. Fulton, who also had a comment about last week's font column:

You mentioned in your font series how serifs help reading comprehension in printed materials. However, one highly neglected factor in typesetting today is line length. Because the Web flows text forth to fill a given page width, lines can be too long to easily digest.

Shorter lines (in relation to font size)

like these are much easier to read

than long ones which span the screen.

Good point, Tim.

Thanks for that.

"See first that the design is wise and just: that ascertained, pursue it resolutely; do not for one repulse forego the purpose that you resolved to effect." — William Shakespeare

About the author

[Annik Stahl](#), the Crabby Office Lady columnist, takes all of your complaints, compliments, and knee-jerk reactions to heart. Therefore, she graciously asks that you let her know whether this column was useful to you — or not — by entering your feedback using the **Was this information helpful?** tool below. And remember: If you don't vote, you can't complain.

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