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Fonts

To ensure readers are able to experience your intended design features, it is important to choose fonts that are readable by a variety of machines, operating systems, and web browsers. *Web safe fonts* are those that, because they are already installed on a computer or device's operating system, are rendered on screen by the device without any necessary file download. *Web fonts* are those that are contained within the site files or linked to in the CSS. These fonts must be downloaded by the browser before they can be displayed. Although this download occurs automatically, it can slow down the site's performance as it must query the server or an outside source for the font files before the text can be displayed properly.

WEB SAFE FONTS

The following *web safe fonts* and font families are common on multiple operating systems and thus the most likely to be read and rendered consistently across multiple environments:

Serif: Times, Georgia, Palatino

Sans-serif: Arial, Arial Black, Verdana, Trebuchet MS, Tahoma

Monospaced: Courier New

WEB FONTS

When using *web fonts*, it is preferable to use open access fonts, such as those available from Google Fonts. Google Fonts provide templates for embedding fonts into a page's or site's CSS and host the font files on its own servers. As in all design choices, you should consider the sustainability of a font. Although Google Fonts are widely supported and accessible now, you should consider whether or not they will still exist on Google or third-party servers in the distant future. Even if they do, the more information a project must pull from external sources and third-party servers, the more likely the project will not look or function in the future like it did in its original state.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In all cases, but especially when the preferred font is a web font, it is recommended you establish fallbacks so if the first choice is not available on the server or the operating system, the font will default to a second or third choice that is available. Any CSS should include at the very least the desired font (e.g. "Times New Roman," "Arial Narrow," etc.) or font family (e.g. Times, Arial, etc.) as well as generic family (e.g. serif, sans-serif, etc.) values. When rendering a font on screen, the browser will display the first choice as long as it is accessible on the reader's device (if a web safe font) or the server (if a web font). If the first choice is unavailable, the browser will instead render the second choice. If both fail, the

third choice, ideally a general family like serif or sans-serif, will be rendered using the browser's default font selections.

EXAMPLES

CSS for paragraphs using "Times New Roman" web safe font as first choice, Times family as second choice, and serif as failsafe third choice:

(in <style>)

```
p {
    font-family: "Times New Roman", Times, serif;
    font-size: 1em;
}
```

CSS for paragraphs using "Arsenal" web font from Google:

(in <head>)

```
<link href="https://fonts.googleapis.com/css?family=Arsenal" rel="stylesheet" type="text/css">
```

(in <style>)

```
p {
    font-family: "Arsenal", sans-serif;
    font-size: 1em;
}
```

ANTI-ALIAS

While anti-aliasing or font-smoothing scripts can appear to make fonts more legible, on some displays including the ever more common high resolution monitors, these scripts have a negative effect on the readability of a font. The best approach to determining if a font is legible at different resolutions and specs is to view the project on multiple displays. Usually, you can avoid issues with fuzziness or pixilation in a font by employing a standard font like those listed above and ensuring the size is 10 pixels or greater. If a reader wishes to see more text at once in a display, they may choose to zoom out in their browsers.

RESOURCES

For more information on fonts and lists of common fonts and font families, see the following resources:

- Dan's Tools CSS Fontstacks: <http://cssfontstack.com> (list of web safe fonts; CSS generators for font stacks)

- W3Schools' CSS Web Safe Font Combinations:
http://www.w3schools.com/cssref/css_websafe_fonts.asp (lists and examples of commonly used web safe font combinations)
- Google Fonts: <https://fonts.google.com/> (list and examples of web fonts; CSS generators for all available fonts)