



Typography for Lawyers

Matthew Butterick

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"If Matthew Butterick didn't exist, it would be necessary to invent him." **From the Foreword by Bryan A. Garner**

Based on the popular website, **Typography for Lawyers** is the first guide to the essentials of typography aimed specifically at lawyers. Author Matthew Butterick, a Harvard-trained typographer and practicing attorney, dispels the myth that legal documents are incompatible with excellent typography. Butterick explains how to get professional results with the tools you already have quickly and easily. Topics include special keyboard characters, line length, point size, font choice, headings, and hyphenation. The book also includes tutorials on specific types of documents like résumés, research memos, and motions.

Typography for Lawyers Details

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Author : Matthew Butterick

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From Reader Review Typography for Lawyers for online ebook

Heather says

Way more interesting than it sounds. But his advice on system fonts was internally inconsistent. It also will not work in the jurisdictions I practice in that use page limits rather than word count. But much of the book was interesting and informative.

Cyrus says

i'm a typography nerd.

Sara Baumgardner says

A GREAT overview of how to make legal documents actually pleasurable to read. Butterick gives great how-to tips that make me excited to work on my next project for law school. ? I got this book because I'm interested in beautiful typography, and it was actually interesting and truly enjoyable!

Candis says

adored. made me want to go font shopping.

B says

Boy, I have a lot to say about this.

Virtually each sentence in an (writing?) advice book can be placed in a two by two grid. One side of the grid is labeled ("believed this before reading" and "didn't believe this before reading.") The other side is labeled ("convinced this is the better/best practice" and "not convinced this is the better/best practice").

The most satisfying books (although not necessarily the most useful) are those in which the advice is advice you already believed and advice where you are convinced you have a better practice.

The more useful advice is (advice you didn't believe and is better) AND (advice you did believe that is not better -- which I guess doesn't go on my grid at all.)

Here, I certainly enjoyed having all of my confirmation bias be deployed, as I'm sure you will be when you find stuff that you like.

Then when you disagree, you'll have the same kind of question: "On whose authority?" Buttrick primarily

relies on a few things: (1) his personal typographic background, (2) the opinion of the typographic community, and (3) your ability to make visual judgments that agree with his. As to 1 & 2, a reader without typographic background lacks the ability to assess or confirm hierarchical typographical ability. As to 3, Buttrick says that typography is not a tricky, artsy thing that relies on being a discerning artistic critic. But a lot of his explanations about why things work (particularly comparatively among fonts) seem to rely on the same kinds of adjectives that people mock when they are used for wine tasting. None of this is to say that he's wrong, but it's hard to assess. As is probably true with a lot of advice not based on double-blind studies . . .

Eduardo Santiago says

“Reading Arial is like trying to have dinner on a tippy restaurant table.” To someone like me, who can barely distinguish serif from sans, that seems pretentious. But that's exactly what you want in a book like this—a perfectionist, not a dabbler. Butterick is a perfectionist, and we have much to learn from his book.

It's not just fonts. Actually, very little of it is. It's **typography**: the whole enchilada, the full effect of a printed page. Broad aspects, fine details. Layout, margins, spacing, all those things I knew existed but never really cared much about. I've changed my mind. I'm just taking my first steps, learning, discovering, and changing habits.

I'm not a lawyer. I just have to write occasionally: technical, personal, stuff that needs to communicate. Good typography may help my readers, and it's worth investing some time in.

J. says

This book is essential for anybody that produces documents, especially attorneys. I wish that my previous statement was an exaggeration.

Over the past year, I've been litigating a case against another attorney who has no sense of proper formatting (or coherence, for that matter). His pleadings are comically terrible. But it got me thinking...could my pleadings be better? After reading Butterick, the answer is a clear yes.

This book now sits on my desk right next to Gardner's Modern Usage.

Josh Tatum says

This book sits next to my Red Book, Chicago Manual of Style, and Bluebook (now outdated and replaced by the Bluebook website) as a daily resource. Learn how to make your documents readable and improve your work product. Butterick does a splendid job explaining the basics of typography and the tools word processing software provides that most lawyers don't know about (I assume, because they don't use them). This book is great for anyone, not just lawyers, who produces any kind of document. There are portions that might apply to lawyers more than others, but they do not dominate. Another advantage of being crafted for lawyers is that the book is concise.

Lonestargazer says

This is a superb book on how lawyers (or anyone else who publishes a lot of documents) can dramatically improved the readability of their documents.

The book is geared to the practical - what looks good; why it looks good; how to implement it in the various word processing software we all use, including 2010 and 2007 versions of Word.

Organization of the book is geared toward jumping in and quickly finding advice on various issues, which of course is how I started it, but this subject really deserves an organized approach to understand the importance of making a document a reader is drawn to read.

K. says

This book was a lot of fun. I don't know how much of it I will end up using in my practice, particularly because my office and court have specific formatting requirements. Nevertheless, as a blind attorney I think it is incumbent upon me to at least familiarize myself with the visual aspects of legal writing, and this book was helpful in doing that.

Marco says

This book does an excellent job of showing why lawyers should care about typography and what they should do to improve the visual quality of their written production. Through its many examples, "Typography for Lawyers" manages to show that good typesetting is a powerful tool for retaining a reader's attention and getting the message through. Then, it shows how lawyers can easily bring some of the best typographical practices into their workflows. Thanks to its concise and applicable rules, this book deserves to join the reference collections not only of lawyers but also of professionals in other writing-intensive areas.

Amy Brown says

Matthew Butterick gave a talk at the Write the Docs conference I attended in Portland earlier this year. At the conference he gave out copies of this book, but I didn't get one because I was sitting up in the balcony. I collared the author and he offered to send me a copy, and it arrived a week ago.

I've read quite a bit about typography, and I've done a lot of typography, so a lot of this book covered things I already know. Which can be quite satisfying. The book is full of clever tips and useful resources, like the fact that the ideal line length is between two and three alphabets; if you want to make sure your lines aren't too long, write out the alphabet (no spaces) and make sure it wraps between the second and the third. There's a great list fonts organized in "if you like this font, you'll love these fonts!" form, presented as an antidote for evil system fonts.

The book is written for lawyers, and so presents some information specific to the field, like how to format a

caption page. Do you know what a caption page is? I didn't, but they're a pain to format and people like to make them really ugly. Butterick explains how you can make your documents beautiful while still adhering to court rules about format.

Even though I'm not a lawyer, this book has enough good advice, well-presented, to earn a place on my reference shelf.

Roya says

After reading *Writing to win: The Legal Writer*, this seemed a great part two (note I didn't say part II). Neatly organized into sections including page format, typography and fonts, this book arms you with information to help strike the right balance between form and function. Sprinkled with Dos and Don'ts and historical tidbits, I found myself bookmarking about 20 sections as references (kindle edition). Considering use as reference for our legal support staff.

Joanna says

This book is a fantastic resource. The book was shared with me by one of my colleagues and I liked it so much that I bought my own copy to keep on my shelf at work to consult regularly. He has convinced me to break the long-standing habit of putting two spaces after periods and colons; he has convinced me to revisit the layout of documents filed in my cases. I agree with the person who wrote the forward that Butterick is wrong to suggest that brief headings should be numbered 1.1.1 instead of I.A.1., but I'll forgive him that small error. Though some reviewers suggest that this book isn't just for lawyers, I'll say that I think it wouldn't have much relevance to anyone who doesn't do a fair number of court filings or similarly regimented "publications."

Audrey Knutson says

I'm a graphic designer about to start law school and I was given this book as a Christmas gift last year. I finally sat down to read it and I think it is a great resource to have on my bookshelf going into school and starting my new career!

After my brother gave this to me, it blew my dad's mind that people actually spent MONEY to BUY FONTS. He asked me what was wrong with the fonts that came with Microsoft Word and also what was wrong with the default settings on Word when he was creating documents for work. I had some reasons why all those things were horrible, but I was coming from an artist's perspective. I wanted to read this book to answer his questions and the ultimate question, does typography matter to a lawyer?

Butterick answers strongly in the affirmative. He first states that it matters because typography is the visual component of the written word and thus has a utilitarian function--sure, typography doesn't change the substance of the text at all but it makes it easier/more enjoyable for the reader and thus more likely to be read and understood. Obviously attorneys have to work hard to formulate solid arguments and just like good speaking skills are necessary to help get the message across in oral arguments, good typography is equally as necessary in written ones. Getting one's arguments across is one of the most important jobs of being an

attorney. His second reason for why typography matters is it's demonstrative of the care that is put into their work--why not show up to a client meeting in sweat pants? Why not hold counsel in your garage? Attorneys are professional writers and need to adopt professional writing techniques. So there you go, dad.

Some parts of the book were harder to get through--mainly the text composition and formatting text chapters, just because there was a lot of detailed descriptions of grammar, punctuation, and stuff Microsoft Word does that I've never even heard of in my life. It was all great information though and Butterick presents it in a pedantic yet funny and engaging way so it's way easier to follow along than a textbook or his English Class.

I especially like the chapter on sample documents where he shows a lot of documents/templates that lawyers use--contracts, caption pages, motions, resumes, letterhead, business cards, etc and shows common "befores" and things to optimize them for improved "afters". I'm not an attorney yet but my resume looks a million times better than it did before.

Law is so competitive and I really do believe good typography matters. I would recommend this to any attorney or aspiring one to keep on the reference shelf next to the Blue Book. I actually find that I use a lot of these concepts in my job and everyday life right now so even if you're not an attorney, I would recommend Butterick's other book, "Practical Typography," which is basically the same thing but not dialed in for attorneys.
