

## RELATED READING

- The Elements of Typographic Style Applied to the Web  
<http://webtypography.net/>
  - Complete Listing of HTML Character Entity References  
[http://www.alanwood.net/demos/ent4\\_frame.html](http://www.alanwood.net/demos/ent4_frame.html)
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## QUICK TYPOGRAPHIC TIPS

These quick generic typographic tips come from Bringhurst’s *The Elements of Typographic Style*. They’re very helpful and tend to be low-hanging fruit.

**OPTIMAL LINE LENGTH** As previously mentioned in our discussion of fluid layouts, the optimal line length is about 45 to 75 characters (including spaces). 66 is the ideal number, but multi-column layouts may require less.

**PUNCTUATION IN THE MARGINS** One general guideline is to try to hang your punctuation (bullets, quotation marks, etc.) in the margins – just like we do in this document. It’s easy to hang your bullets in the margins using CSS (simply mess with the default padding and margins of the `UL` and `LI` elements). However, hanging curly quotes properly is notoriously difficult. We won’t get into that topic.

**USE THE RIGHT DASH** Different dashes have different purposes. The *en dash* (–) is primarily used for ranges (1800–1820), but can also substitute the hyphen in a number of situations (for example, separating relationships between words as in “mother–daughter relationship”). The longer *em dash* (—) traditionally sets off some kind of parenthetical thought—like this. However, modern typography has embraced the en dash as a good substitute (*The Elements of Typographic Style* recommends the en dash instead of the em). The *hyphen* (-) is fairly self-explanatory. You can access the other dashes in HTML by using the following *character entity references/codes*:

- `&#8211;`; (for an en dash: –)
- `&#8212;`; (for an em dash: —)

Just type these codes in where your normal dash would be and the browser

will render them correctly. For a complete list of character entity references, see the link in Related Reading.

**TYPOGRAPHER'S (CURLY) QUOTES** Use “curly quotes.” This goes for ‘single quotes’ as well. The default “quotes” on most keyboards are called ticks. You can use curly quotes in HTML with these character entity references:

- `&#8220;` (for a left double curly: “)
- `&#8221;` (right double curly quote: ”)
- `&#8216;` (left single curly quote: ‘)
- `&#8217;` (right single curly quote: ’)

**SMALL CAPS FOR ACRONYMS** Use letter-spaced small caps to typeset acronyms like CSS or HTML. You can do this by applying `font-variant: small-caps` to all `ACRONYM` tags.

**LETTER-SPACE UPPERCASE** Extend the letter-spacing of capital letters to improve legibility. Let’s say that we have an element something along the lines of `<h2>My heading</h2>`. Applying the following style:

```
h2 {
    text-transform: uppercase;
    letter-spacing: .1em;
}
```

would yield something like **MY HEADING**.

**DON'T LETTER-SPACE LOWERCASE** Frederic Goudy once said that “anyone who would letter-space lowercase would steal sheep.” Don’t steal sheep. There are some exceptions where letter-spacing lowercase can actually increase legibility, but for the most part, not really. Take a look at how hard this is to read.

**USE THE MOST FITTING AMPERSAND** Many serif fonts come with a much nicer looking italicized ampersand. Perpetua’s ampersand, for example, looks like `&`, but the italicized version looks like `&`— needless to say, a bit better looking for titles and headers. Of course, this means you have to wrap individual ampersands with an `<i>` tag or something similar. (By the way, you can’t use `&` legally by itself in HTML because it indicates the start of a character entity reference. Instead, use the character entity reference `&amp;`;) )