

# Font Hell

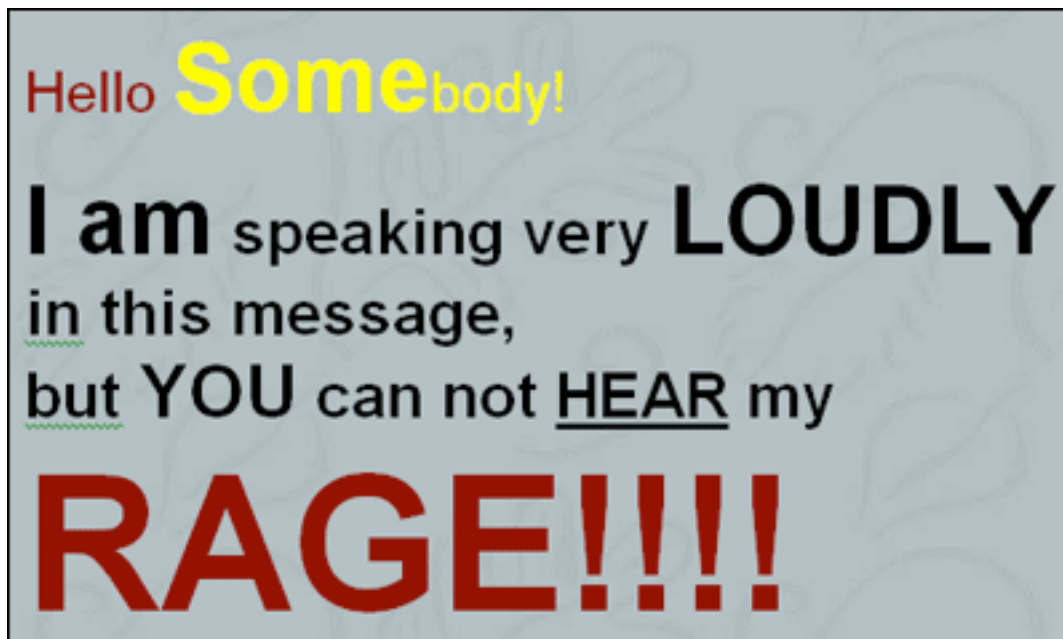
Having the ability to change font styles and colors is a great way to express your self. However, it does not mean that you should.

## Email Expression

There are many similarities between email messages and web pages. They are both based on text. Giving attributes to the text like what font to display in and with what color is called rich text formatting. Another name for it is HTML (Hyper Text Markup Language). These are the same attributes used to design web pages with.

While not recommended for business to business messages you may be aware that you can style your messages by selecting text and changing the fonts and colors. You can even place a background in your message which is referred to as stationery.

You may have seen messages where the sender felt the need to emphasize every other word with a large bold font size. We call this yelling. I would suggest to anyone who feels compelled to yell in their email to remember that emails can be saved and may be used against them sometime in the future.



My point here is that font usage can easily be abused. While you might think that you are being cute it may not win you much respect from the receiving party. It also may interfere with the clarity of your message. For example, a recent contact sent me a message using a strange font. My computer tries to display the message with the closest font it can find. The closest it came up with was a Greek font. I could not make out what his message said. I emailed back and said “Sorry, could not read your email. Try using a standard font.”

Ηελλο Σταν ανδ Καρλ,  
Τηανκς φορ ωορκινγ ωιτη με λαστ ωεεκ ον της  
ιστορε.  
Ι ρεαδ της μανυαλ ανδ πυτ τογετηερ σομετηινγ  
φορ ψουρ το ρεπιεω.  
Αφτερ λοοκινγ ατ χαφεπρεσσ, Καραν ανδ Ι  
τηουγητ ωε χαν δο μορε προδυχτσ ιν-ηουσε.  
Σεε ιφ της ις σομετηινγ τηατ ψου λικε. Ι ηοπε  
σο.  
  
ηττιπ://ιστορες.ινσταντιμπριντσ.χομ/στανσανγελσ  
  
Τραχψ & Καραν

Standard fonts are Times Roman and Arial. Arial is probably the most used and is the cleanest. Arial is a sans serif font which means it does not contain the little ornate serifs at the end of the strokes which make up a text character.

I find that my literary friends like Times Roman which of course is a Serif font and will be the default on Word and maybe also your email program if no other font is specified. Serif fonts do have an advantage in that they can show the small “L” and the number “1” as distinctly different characters. The same is true with the zero and the “O”.

## Web Page Expression

Designers and Writers seem to be more aware of style structure when composing documents than the average joe. It is very apparent when I let a customer loose on a web site that is built to give him/her the ability to edit content.

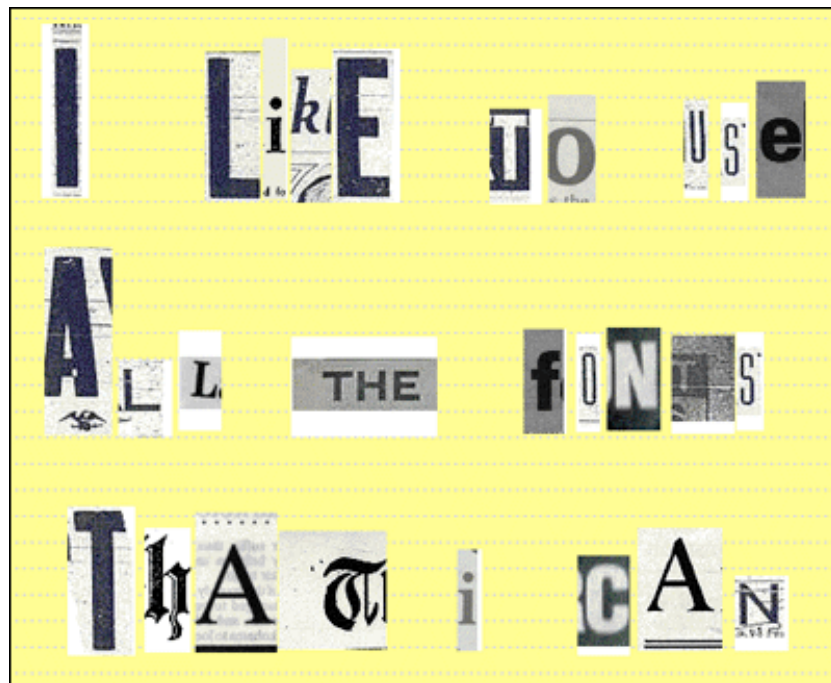
It starts like this; “Oh this is an important point in my sales copy, I will emphasize it by making it really big and bold. Then I will make it red”. This would be OK if that was the main emphasis, but it won’t stop there. They see another point that needs to be emphasized and they make more bad choices. Now it looks like they are yelling on their web page.

I have to laugh when I see this because people think that in order to turn up the volume in text that they just need to make it big and bold. They do it so much that the page becomes loud and unattractive.

There is a place for bold and italic styling. They should be used to finesse a document and not detract from it. Yes, your web site is a document.

## Standards

Look carefully at printed material around you. Can you see the difference between a page from a magazine and a letter from a serial killer?



Whether it is your web site or your brochure, you want to keep your font usage consistent. The best way is to use only one font family. A font family may consist of a bold, italic, thin, black, condensed, extended or semi-bold. These will appear planned and not chaotic when used together.

Styles should be assigned to the elements of your document. If you are using Arial then use a non-bold 12pt or 14pt size for all body copy text. For paragraph titles use an 18pt bold Arial. For page titles use a bigger bold or black at 24pt or 36pt.

For other specific elements like quotes or citations you might consider an italic. Use something in the same font family that will set it off from the page, but yet still be in harmony with the document.

On the web we only have a few fonts that we can use and the reason for that is because Times, Arial, Verdana, Georgia are found on every computer. If you use a decorative or crazy looking font in your Word document or Email or Web Page, the end user won't see your font choice. In fact what they will see may not be your intention.

## **But I See Wild Fonts All the Time!**



Sure you do and you might want to lay off the bottle from time to time. The difference is text versus graphic images. With a graphic image you can set into stone your font choice regardless of what fonts are available on other computers. With text you are at the mercy of what the user has set up for their computing environment.

Here is a way to test whether a piece of text on a web page is a graphic or not. Try to select it by dragging your cursor over it. If you can select it then you can also cut and paste it somewhere else. Of course

that text you can highlight and change to your heart's content. With a graphic you can not.

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