InDesign MAGAZINE 41
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†Ĥe $ẇėe‡ §Θund ¤f ¶un¢†u@t!on

†ĥe $weėt‡ §ound ¤f ¶unc¢tu@t!on

While punctuation gives text rhythm, some beats are more familiar than others.

By Yves Peters

FONTS ARE MUCH MORE THAN MERELY LETTERS AND NUMBERS. Scroll down the glyph menu, and you'll discover an eclectic assortment of signs and symbols, punctuation, and more—some familiar, some rather obscure. When playing music the symbols above and between the notes are as important as the notes themselves. Similarly, in typesetting punctuation helps make sense of the words around them. They command the rhythm of the text; tell the reader when to pause, and for how long. They have the power to make the words ask, or shout, or hesitate; they determine what the characters before or after them exactly mean; they alter how letters or words sound. Time to get (re)acquainted with this symphony of glyphs, from the common to the unusual.

Quotation Marks (’ ’ “ ”)

Because it must be one of the most frequently recurring topics in articles on typography, it’s only fair to start with quotation marks. A telltale sign of unprofessional “desktop typography“ is the use of straight quotes. These straight variants stem from the days of typewriters, whose keyboard didn’t provide sufficient room for separate opening and closing quotation marks.

As their name implies, quotation marks enclose a quotation or direct speech, but also a literal title or a name. Another common use of quotation marks is to indicate ironic or apologetic words, and to signal unusual usage of specific words. You can use single and double quotes; the latter are preferred in the United States. Most importantly, you should always match opening and closing quotation marks. When quoting within a quotation, alternate single and double quotation marks. Although you can enter quotation marks with dedicated key combinations, these days most applications—especially text editors and desktop publishing software—automatically convert straight or “dumb“ quotes into curly or “smart“ quotes during text entry.

In InDesign, this control is called Use Typographer’s Quotes and lives in the Type pane of the Preferences dialog box. You can enable or disable this preference at any time by pressing Command-Option-Shift-quote (or Ctrl-Alt-Shift-quote in Windows).

"dumb" quotes
“smart” quotes

Set in FF Suhmo

The Independent mentions: “The ’70s show *Charlie’s Angels* became known as ‘Jiggle TV’.”

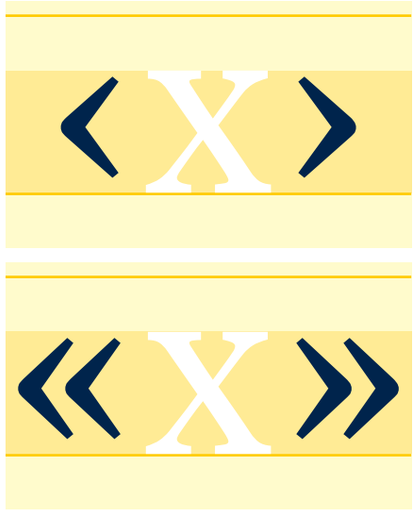
Set in FF Amman

Apostrophe (’)

However, this automatic conversion can produce unwanted results. If a space precedes the quotation mark, it converts to the opening variant. Conversely, if a character precedes the quotation mark, it converts to the closing variant. The shape of the apostrophe—though it has a different purpose—should be identical to the closing single quotation mark. The presence of a space before abbreviated years like ’11 for 2011 incorrectly produces an opening single quotation mark, and is a very common typographical mistake. To produce the correct apostrophe in this situation, press Option/Alt-Shift-].

The function of the apostrophe is the omission of one or more letters; for example, in contractions like "don't" and "isn't", or the marking of possessive case, as in *Charlie's Angels*. (I think I just betrayed my age here.) Sometimes you can see a single prime or an acute accent used inappropriately for an apostrophe, especially in e-mails or online.

Guillemets (’ ’, “ “)



Quotation marks are language-specific. They have a variety of forms in different languages and in different media. The other primary shapes are the guillemets, which are used in Latin languages like French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian, among others. Because their shape reminds us of arrows, these days many a web designer use them for this purpose. However this type of use is improper, and looks plain wrong to Spanish and other nationalities that use guillemets for quotation.

Note that InDesign automatically replaces regular quotation marks with guillemets when your text is set to one of these languages in the Control panel or Character panel. It won't change quotes already there, but it will convert them as you type or copy/paste.

Prime (′, ″, ‴)

Very few people realize the prime symbols are different from the straight quotes, and should not be confused with the apostrophe, quotation marks, or the acute accent or grave accent. Primes designate several different units—including feet, arcminutes, minutes, seconds—and are also used for various other purposes in mathematics, the sciences, and linguistics. Because prime symbols are in only a minority of the fonts, it's acceptable to use straight quotes instead.

Degree (°)

The degree symbol serves, among other things, to represent degrees of arc (e.g., in geometry and geographic coordinate systems) or degrees of temperature. Its first recorded modern use in mathematics is from 1569 where the usage clearly shows that the symbol is a small raised zero, to match the

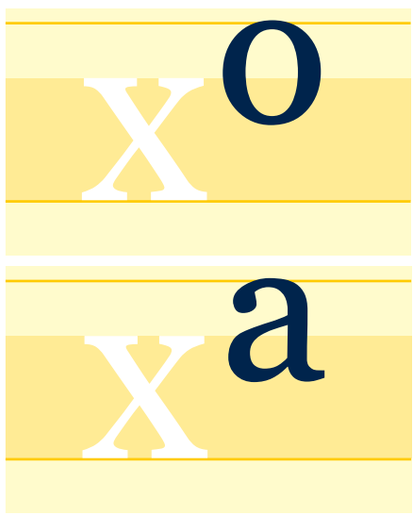
Tracking Down Obscure Glyphs

To enter some of the more obscure glyphs in your InDesign document, you can't simply tap a single key. You may even have to use a particular font. For instructions, see the article "Your Guide to Obscure Glyphs" on page 27.

symbols for minute, second, third; i.e. prime ′, double prime ″, and triple prime ‴.

In some languages the degree sign also indicates the date of birth; for example, Yves Peters (°1969). (See also the dagger.) However, don't confuse the degree symbol with the ordinal º, which also looks like a raised circle. The difference is subtle yet important—the degree symbol is almost always a perfectly round circle, whereas the ordinal º is constructed like a lowercase "o". To type a degree character, press Option/Alt-8.

Ordinal Indicator (º, ª)



Ordinal numbers indicate order, such as 1st and 2nd. In some languages, ordinals are indicated with a single character: o or a. Although few typefaces have a full complement of lowercase characters in superscript, almost all fonts include the ordinal º and ª in their character set. In Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish, they are appended to the numeral depending on whether the number's grammatical gender is masculine or feminine, respectively. They are sometimes underlined as well.

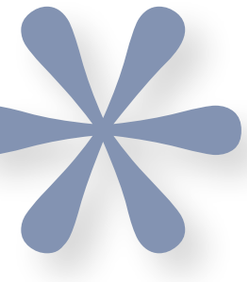
Numero Sign (№)

Besides the ordinal º and ª, some typefaces also offer the numero symbol—a combination of the capital N with the masculine ordinal º, often underlined. This typographic abbreviation of the word "number" indicates ordinal numeration, especially in addresses, names, and titles. If the font you're using doesn't have this glyph, in English it's acceptable to substitute it with the abbreviation "No." including the full stop at the end.

Number Sign/Pound/Hash (#)

In US English the number sign # is frequently used instead of the № sign. Usually called the pound sign in the United States, the symbol is called the hash in most English-speaking countries outside North America. To differentiate it from the sharp in musical notation, the two horizontal lines in the number sign must be truly horizontal, whereas they're slanted to the upper right in the sharp sign.

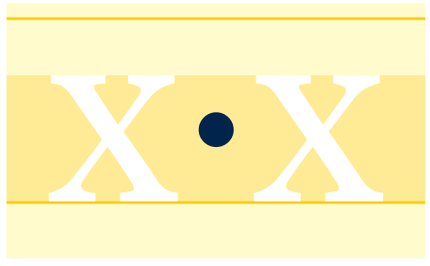
Recently, the hash has acquired an entirely new function thanks to the social networking and microblogging service Twitter. By adding a word or group of words with no spacing preceded by a hash to a post, users can group posts together by topic or type; for instance, #InDesign. These are called hashtags.



Bullet (•)

Despite the aggressive connotations its name may suggest, the typographic bullet is completely harmless. All it does is indicate items in a list. The name most likely originated from its original shape that resembles an actual bullet. Bullets often appear in the dreaded MS PowerPoint presentations as bulleted items, also called "bullet points". Text editors and desktop publishing applications offer them in a wide variety of shapes and colors. As the original round bullet looks quite large and unwieldy in most fonts, designers often substitute another symbol, such as a hyphen, an asterisk, or an interpunct.

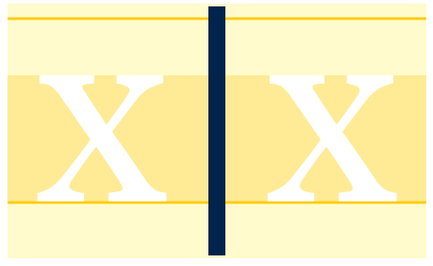
Interpunct (·)



Not many people realize this, but the use of spaces to separate words only originated somewhere between 600 and 800 A.D. In ancient Greek all the letters in a text simply ran into each other, and it was up to the reader to distinguish the individual words. Interpuncts, the first punctuation marks, were regularly used in Latin to separate words. They can still be seen in architectural lettering and inscriptions, where they sometimes assume the shape of a small triangle.

Most dictionaries use the interpunct to indicate the syllables in words. Because its size and weight perfectly harmonizes with the stem weight of the typeface and its punctuation, the interpunct is sometimes used by typographers as a general divider; for example, in dates, subheads, or logos, and to indicate list items.

Vertical Bar, Pipe (|)



Another symbol that can be used as an alternative divider mark in general typography is the vertical bar. The character has various applications in mathematics and programming. It is not to be confused with the broken bar (¦), which, however, doesn't have any clearly identified uses distinct from the vertical bar.

Asterisk (*)

Fans of classic Belgian comics are more likely to mispronounce this "Asterix." The Greek/late Latin roots of its name are derived from its appearance: the asterisk resembles the conventional representation of a star. Its design often differs in sans serif and serif typefaces—commonly five-pointed in sans

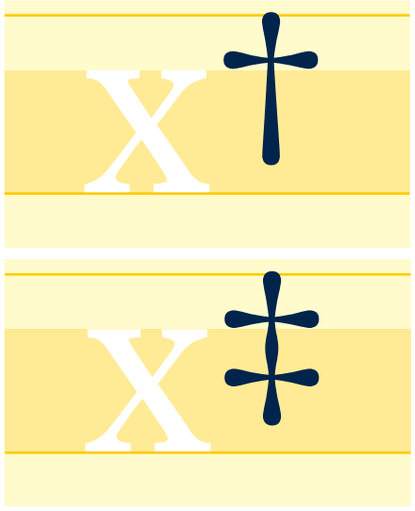
serif designs, and six-pointed in serif designs—yet this is no rule. The symbol originated in feudal times, when printers of family trees used it to indicate the date of birth. It was also used in liturgical music to denote a deliberate pause.

The contemporary applications for the asterisk are manifold. It often calls out a footnote, especially when only one or two are on the page. Asterisks can also replace letters—to avoid offending by obfuscating swear words like f**k or avoid profanation of a holy name like G*d; or to preserve anonymity, as in John S***. They can be an alternative to typographical bullets to indicate items in an unordered list. In textual media, enclosing a word with asterisks *emphasizes* it. This is useful when bold style is not available.

asterisk*
asterisk*

Set in Mrs Eaves (top) and Tarzana Wide (bottom)

Dagger, Double Dagger (†, ‡)



Those same fans of Asterix & Obelix will be delighted to find out that another name for the dagger is "obelisk". Like the asterisk it was originally applied for musical notations in liturgical books of the Roman Catholic Church. Fittingly, it now serves a function similar to the asterisk, namely to indicate a second footnote when the asterisk has already been used. A third footnote employs the double dagger. When dealing with larger numbers of footnotes, simply use superscript numerals.

Because its shape is reminiscent of a Christian cross, in predominantly Christian regions the mark may also appear before or after the name of a deceased person, or the date of death. Therefore, it's not used as a footnote mark next to the name of a living person.

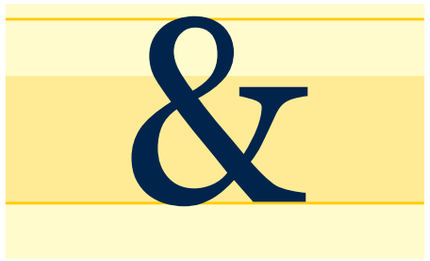
Pilcrow, Section Sign (¶, §)

The unusual English name for the paragraph sign, "pilcrow", may have its roots in the French "pelagraphe", a corruption of the English "paragraph". Its shape evolved from the capital C with double slash—"C" for capitulum, "chapter" in Latin. The pilcrow denotes paragraphs in legal and academic writing. In desktop publishing software, it marks the presence of an invisible carriage return at the end of a paragraph. This last application has caused the pilcrow to be adopted as the universal icon in desktop publishing for hidden characters, such as spaces, tab characters, end of line and page breaks, and so on.

Related to the pilcrow, the section sign mainly refers to a particular section, such as

legal code. The double S shape originated from the Latin “signum sectionis“. Both pilcrow and section sign can also call out footnotes, after the asterisk, dagger, and double dagger. However, this usage is declining in favor of numbered footnotes.

Ampersand (&)



The term “ampersand“ derives from the phrase “and per se and“. More than a symbol, the ampersand is a logogram: the smallest meaningful unit in a written language representing a word. You can trace the ampersand’s origin to the 1st century A.D. and the Old Roman cursive, in which the letters in “et“—Latin for “and“—occasionally were written together to form a ligature. Over time, its form evolved a great deal, which explains why it takes on so many varying shapes.

Generally speaking, there are two basic forms: the roman ampersand, which is virtually identical to that of the Carolingian minuscule, and the italic ampersand, which is originally a later et-ligature. The ampersand has inspired many type designers, and quite a few typefaces, such as FF Thesis and Poetica, include several ampersand variations. Some of these shapes harken back to the original ligature and literally take on the shape of an uppercase E connected to a lowercase t, like the original ampersand in Adrian Frutiger’s Univers.

Nowadays it’s rare to see the ampersand in paragraphs of running text. Instead, it appears in formal names, specifically of businesses and brands, and in titles of films, books, and games. The ampersand has also been widely adopted in computing, programming language, and Web syntax.

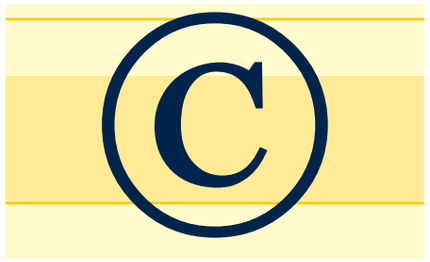
At Sign (@)

The at sign is another logogram. There are several conflicting theories about its origin and shape. It has acquired the most diverse informal names in a variety of languages, from the Dutch “apenstaartje“ (monkey tail) and German “Klammeraffe“ (spider monkey), to the Italian “chiocciola“ (snail) and Russian “sobaka (собака)“ (dog), to the Chinese “little mouse“, and more.

Until the latter part of the twentieth century, the at sign was an abbreviation for the accounting and commercial invoice term “at the rate of“. Then came the personal computer and a remarkable renaissance. The at sign’s function in e-mail addresses and more recently in Twitter has made this symbol one of the most ubiquitous non-alphanumeric symbols in recent years. This success has its downsides too—it has been adopted in

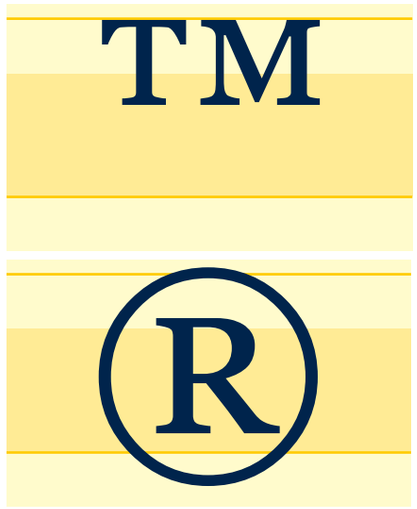
countless names of businesses wanting to sound modern and computer-savvy, and even spawned a typeface completely made up of versions of the at sign with all the different letters and numbers.

Copyright Symbol, Sound Recording Copyright (©, ℗)



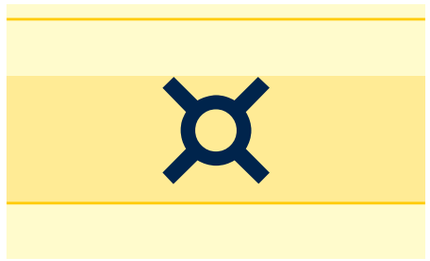
Besides the commercial at sign, there are also a few legal symbols in typography. The copyright symbol, represented by a "C" enclosed in a circle, identifies works other than sound recordings that receive copyright protection. The sound recording copyright symbol is an enclosed capital "P". You should position either before the name of the copyright holder preceded by the year of copyright.

Trademark Symbol, Registered Trademark (™, ®)



The trademark symbol, raised T and M, provides notice that the preceding mark is a trademark. The registered trademark, a capital "R" enclosed in a circle, identifies a trademark or service mark that has been registered with a national trademark office. Always place both symbols after the trademark.

Generic Currency (¤)



One of the more obscure symbols you may have come across is the generic currency symbol ¤. We know the more common currencies—the dollar sign ($), the euro sign (€), the pound sign (£), the yen sign (¥), the rupee sign (₨)—but there are many more, some now defunct. The generic currency sign is useful when the symbol for a particular currency is unavailable. Even when used appropriately, it has an ambiguous meaning, as the specific currency can only be determined by information outside the use of the character itself.

The generic currency sign is a fairly recent symbol—it was first encoded for computers in 1972. Although it was formerly included in the Mac OS Roman character set, it has been replaced by the euro sign € since Mac OS 8.5, two years after the official currency of the Eurozone was originally introduced in 1996.

Interrobang (‽)

The exclamation mark (!) makes a sentence shout, and the question mark (?) makes it interrogate. More than simply determining the intention of the content and coloring its perception, exclamation and question marks also tell us how the words should sound when read aloud. Spanish even goes as far as to add an extra, inverted exclamation or question mark at the beginning of a sentence to avoid any ambiguity.

When you combine an exclamation and question mark, you have the interrobang. When it ends a sentence, it expresses excitement or disbelief in the form of a question, or it signifies a rhetorical question. It's been around since 1962, when Martin K. Speckter, the head of an advertising agency, merged the two symbols into one mark that he believed would look better in advertisement copy. Richard Isbell's typeface Americana, issued by American Type Founders in 1966, was the first to offer the interrobang as one of its characters. From 1968 on the interrobang even appeared on Remington typewriters.

The interrobang never quite caught on. You'll find it in a few typefaces, including Christian Schwartz's Amplitude and Fritz; Nick Shinn's FF Fontesque Sans; the Linotype classics Palatino and Frutiger Linotype; and Lucida Sans Unicode and Arial Unicode.

Who? No way!
He said what‽

Set in Amplitude

Should There Be a Reprise?

There are many more punctuation marks to explore—the various brackets and dashes alone could fill pages. If you'd like a follow-up to this article, email the magazine's editor and let her know.

A little over six years ago, [typo]graphic designer Yves Peters started reviewing type in his Bald Condensed column on Typographer.org. Since August 2008 he edits The FontFeed, a daily dispatch of recommended fonts, typography techniques, and inspirational examples of digital type at work in the real world; and Unzipped, his blog on the FontShop BeNeLux home page. Yves also is an accomplished drummer with British/American/Belgian pop/rock bands Troubleman and Rosa Luxe*. His talent for being able to identify most typefaces on sight is utterly useless in daily life.

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