The upward vertical stem on some lowercase letters, such as ‘h’ and ‘b’, that extends above the x-height is the ascender.

The aperture is the partially enclosed, somewhat rounded negative space in some characters such as ‘n’, ‘C’, ‘S’, the lower part of ‘e’, or the upper part of a double-storey ‘a’.

An imaginary line drawn from top to bottom of a glyph bisecting the upper and lower strokes is the axis.

The imaginary line upon which the letters in a font appear to rest.

The curved part of the character that encloses the circular or curved parts (counter) of some letters such as ‘d’, ‘b’, ‘o’, ‘D’, and ‘B’ is the bowl.

The bracket is a curved or wedge-like connection between the stem and serif of some fonts. Not all serifs are bracketed serifs.

**Typeface Anatomy**

— Basic parts of a typeface
The height from the baseline to the top of the uppercase letters (not including diacritics).

The enclosed or partially enclosed circular or curved negative space (white space) of some letters such as ‘d’, ‘o’, and ‘s’.

The (usually) horizontal stroke across the middle of uppercase ‘A’ and ‘H’ is a crossbar.

Any part in a lowercase letter that extends below the baseline, found for example in ‘g’, ‘j’, ‘p’, ‘q’, ‘y’, etc. Some types of descenders have specific names.

Typically found on the lower case ‘g’; an ear is a decorative flourish usually on the upper right side of the bowl.

Much like a counter, the eye refers specifically to the enclosed space in a lowercase ‘e’.

The stroke, often curved, that connects the bowl and loop of a double-storey ‘g’.

In a double-storey ‘g’, the loop is the enclosed or partially enclosed counter below the baseline that is connected to the bowl by a link. The enclosed or partially enclosed extenders on cursive ‘p’, ‘b’, ‘t’, and similar letters are also called loops.

The descending, often decorative stroke on the letter ‘Q’; or the descending, often curved diagonal stroke on ‘K’ or ‘R’ is the tail.

The end (straight or curved) of any stroke that doesn’t include a serif.

The height of the lowercase letters, disregarding ascenders or descenders, typically exemplified by the letter x. The relationship of the x-height to the body defines the perceived type size. A typeface with a large x-height looks much bigger than a typeface with a small x-height at the same size.

Quick Reference

Further Reading
- FontShop Fundamentals 2
- Erik Spiekermann’s Typo Tips
- Type Glossary
- Type Anatomy

Online Resources
- Fontshop.com
- FontFeed.com
- Spiekermann.com

FontShop Education
Without training the best typefaces can only go so far. That’s why FontShop is more than a shop that sells fonts — we want to help you do great work too. Get more typography tips and tutorials at fontshop.com/education.

About FontShop
Founded by Erik Spiekermann and Neville Brody in 1989, FontShop is the original independent retailer of digital type. We offer more than 100,000 fonts from dozens of expert-selected foundries, including our house brand: FontFont.

Colophon
This document is set in FF Meta Serif for titles, and FF Unit for captions and text.

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