

BASKERVILLE

1706–1775

This font was founded in Birmingham, England.

Classification Transitional serif

Designer(s) John Baskerville

Foundry Deberny & Peignot Linotype

Baskerville is classified as a transitional typeface, positioned between the old style typefaces of William Caslon, and the modern styles of Giambattista Bodoni & Firmin Didot.



The Folio Bible printed by Baskerville in 1763

The Baskerville typeface is the result of John Baskerville's intent to improve upon the types of William Caslon. He increased the contrast between thick and thin strokes, making the serifs sharper and more tapered, and shifted the axis of rounded letters to a more vertical position. The curved strokes are more circular in shape, and the characters became more regular. These changes created a greater consistency in size and form.

Baskerville's typeface was the culmination of a larger series of experiments to improve legibility which also included paper making and ink manufacturing. The result was a typeface that reflected Baskerville's ideals of perfection, where he chose simplicity and quiet refinement. His background as a writing master is evident in the distinctive swash tail on the uppercase Q and in the cursive serifs in the Baskerville Italic. The refined feeling of the typeface makes it an excellent choice to convey dignity and tradition.

In 1757, Baskerville published his first work, a collection of Virgil, which was followed by some fifty other classics. In 1758, he was appointed printer to the Cambridge University Press. It was there in 1763 that he published his master work, a folio Bible, which was printed using his own typeface, ink, and paper.

The perfection of his work seems to have unsettled his contemporaries, and some claimed the stark contrasts in his printing damaged the eyes. Abroad, however, he was much admired, notably by Pierre Simon Fournier, Giambattista Bodoni (who intended at one point to come to England to work under him), and Benjamin Franklin.

A a B b C c D d E e F f G g H h I i J j K k L l M m N n O o P p Q q R r S s T t U u V v W w X x Y y Z z
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

A a B b C c D d E e F f G g H h I i J j K k L l M m N n O o P p Q q R r S s T t U u V v W w X x Y y Z z
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

A a B b C c D d E e F f G g H h I i J j K k L l M m N n O o P p Q q R r S s T t U u V v W w X x Y y Z z
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10