

# Helvetica Research....

Fonts or typefaces, can be varied in a number of ways; the proportions, weight of the curves, vertical dimensions, horizontal permeables. The experience of reading something is critical when designing a font. Usually typefaces are specifically chosen to subliminally compliment the message. Helvetica was developed in 1957. It was conceived as a contemporary version of Akzidenz Grotes, a late 19th century sans serif typeface that had become popular with Swiss graphic designers during the mid-1950s. The swiss pay more attention to the background so that the space between the letters says something. It is a letter that lives withing a powerful matrix, you can't move it, it is solid, fixed. It is sans serif; there are no wiggly bits at the end of the letters. It has smooth, clean lines, and an unobtrusive geometry that suggests it was not designed to stand out It initiated a revolution in design and presented a difference between advertising and branding. Before Helvetica, adverts were mostly complicated, cluttered graphics showing a range of confusing typefaces. After the transformation in the 60s, advertising became much more concise, modern and simplicity was the new complexity. Half a century on and it is still the most widely used font around. However, it's dominance has caused some controversy amongst graphic designers. Helvetica is known as the safe choice for businesses. It is said that the choice of font dictates what you think about something before you even read the first word. So perhaps, it is understandable that so many corporations don't want to take any typographic risks, bounds as they are to the bottom line. They want to be a member of the highly efficient, modern world. A designer choosing typefaces is essentially a casting director.

bland, unadventurous,  
unambitious.

"Designers and readers invest so much in the typeface. Letter spacing colours, open interpretation. Helvetica perhaps says everything, that is part of its appeal."

"It's durable. It comes from natural design forms. It doesn't have an expression of fashion. It has very clear lines and characters, it looks like a very serious typeface," says Frank Wildenberg, managing director of Linotype, the German firm that owns the font.

"It has a modern attitude which lines up with the aesthetic premises of the 1950s and 60s. Helvetica is a corporate typeface, but on the other hand it's the favourite of hairdressers and kebab shops. It is the butter on the bread."

reassuring, familiar

*Like all beautifully designed typefaces, Helvetica is a democratic luxury.*

"its neutrality is a platform for daring design."

*"Helvetica delivers a message quickly and efficiently without imposing itself," "When reading it, one hardly notices the letter forms, only the meaning, it's that well-designed. It's crisp, clean and sharply legible, yet humanized by round, soft strokes"*

"Helvetica is a solid, plain and structured font that is incredibly easy to read. That is part of what makes it so useful for logos. It doesn't overshadow the name itself or the logo/colours that accompany it."

UNIFORMITY

Corporate Chic

"Helvetica's message is this: you are going to get to your destination on time; your plane will not crash; your money is safe in our vault; we will not break the package; the paperwork has been filled in; everything is going to be OK."