



H&J (Hyphenation and Justification)

by Ilene Strizver

H&J IS ONE OF THE MORE TECHNICAL OF TYPOGRAPHIC TERMS, referring to the hyphenation and justification settings used specifically to create and control justified type. Hyphenation settings include three variables: the minimum number of characters before and after a hyphen; maximum number of consecutive lines ending with a hyphen; minimum word length that can be hyphenated.

Justification settings consist of minimum, desired, and maximum values for: spacing between letters; spacing between words; and in some cases, how much the glyphs themselves can be stretched or squeezed. (Note that most type and design professionals consider

glyph scaling to be a type crime.) Justification parameters can also include other more specific settings, such as how to treat a partial line or single word appearing at the end of a paragraph – fully justified, flush left, flush right, or centered.

Page-layout software uses a combination of both hyphenation and justification to achieve the best results. While preset H&J settings are intended to work well for general use, they are not one-size-fits-all. These settings can be customized to minimize stretching or squeezing and to maximize readability – as well as to take into account a client's needs and preferences.

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Hyphenation settings can permit multiple consecutive hyphens as well as two-letter hyphenations (left). A preferable treatment minimizes the number of consecutive hyphenated lines, as well as the number of characters before and after a hyphen (right).

Several factors can affect H&J settings. These include the typeface(s) being used, line length and/or column width, as well as the overall design objective. For instance, in the case of newspapers and other publications where there is no time to hand-edit the type or copy, H&J settings might be very liberal, to fit in as much copy as possible, with less attention to readability and aesthetics. On the other hand, a higher-end, less ephemeral publication, brochure, or annual report might follow more rigorous type and design standards, including more conservative H&J settings, to keep the typography as natural, undistorted, and enticing to read as possible. ■

H&J (Hyphenation and Justification) cont.

Such a staircase, with its accessories, in the older and more crowded parts of Paris, would be bad enough now; but, at that time, it was vile indeed to unaccustomed and unhardened senses. Every little habitation within the great foul nest of one high building.

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Justification settings can control whether you allow glyph scaling and squashed spacing (left), or extreme word spacing (center) – both of which are typographically undesirable. Strive for settings that result in more balanced color and texture (right). Note that with the narrow columns shown above, even the best H&J settings will likely result in some uneven spacing.

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Combining good H&J settings with a wider column width with can lead to more balanced typographic texture and greater readability. All excerpts from *A Tale of Two Cities*, by Charles Dickens.