In the late 1700s, foundries began to release fonts in families – pairing roman and italic designs that matched each other in style. Later the concept of typeface weights and proportions was added to the typeface family mix. In the 20th century, type families were enlarged even further with the introduction of different designs such as condensed, expanded and outlined.

When Typefaces Were First Invented, the notion of having a family of type hadn’t occurred to anyone. All fonts were simply roman designs. In the early 16th century, cursive – or italic (named after Italy, where the idea was popularized) – type was introduced. There were still no typeface families; romans were one style of type and italics were another – much like serif and sans serif.

In 1957, the Swiss type designer Adrian Frutiger designed a new kind of type family. Because he felt that the traditional system of providing names – “bold,” “semi-bold,” “semi-bold condensed” and so on – was confusing and outdated, he proposed a logical, systematic numbering scheme. In Frutiger’s system, each typeface was given a two-digit suffix. The first digit classified the alphabet weight, with 3 indicating the lightest weight in the family and 9 the boldest. The second digit identified the typeface proportion, with higher numbers for condensed designs and lower numbers for expanded designs. In addition, if the second number was odd, the typeface characteristics of the parent design, but with individual variances. The Cheltenham, Century, Cloister, and Stymie typeface families are just a few of the designs developed under Benton’s watchful eye.

Benton’s original vision has been modified and expanded several times over the decades. Type families have become larger, more diverse and better thought-out.

Planning by the Numbers
In 1957, the Swiss type designer Adrian Frutiger designed a new kind of type family. Because he felt that the traditional system of providing names – “bold,” “semi-bold,” “semi-bold condensed” and so on – was confusing and outdated, he proposed a logical, systematic numbering scheme. In Frutiger’s system, each typeface was given a two-digit suffix. The first digit classified the alphabet weight, with 3 indicating the lightest weight in the family and 9 the boldest. The second digit identified the typeface proportion, with higher numbers for condensed designs and lower numbers for expanded designs. In addition, if the second number was odd, the typeface

Modern Type Families
The person generally credited with conceiving the modern idea of a typeface family is Morris Fuller Benton, director of typeface development for American Type Founders in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Benton’s premise was that typefaces within an individual family would share the basic

### Linex Sans Light
### Linex Sans Light Italic
### Linex Sans Regular
### Linex Sans Italic
### Linex Sans Bold
### Linex Sans Bold Italic

Typical typeface family

### American Type Founders Cheltenham

Cheltenham Oldstyle
Cheltenham Wide
Cheltenham Medium
Cheltenham Bold
Cheltenham Bold Condensed
Cheltenham Bold Extra Condensed
Cheltenham Bold Outline
Cheltenham Oldstyle Condensed
Cheltenham Italic
Cheltenham Medium Italic
Cheltenham Bold Italic
Cheltenham Bold Condensed Italic
Cheltenham Bold Extra Condensed Title
Cheltenham Bold Extended
Cheltenham Extrabold

Cheltenham Inline
Cheltenham Inline Extended

Cheltenham Inline Extra Condensed

About Typeface Families

By Allan Haley
was a roman design; if it was even, the typeface was italic. Thus Univers 39 is a very light condensed roman, while Univers 56 is a medium-weight italic of normal proportions. Neue Helvetica and Serifa are two other type families that use this numbering system.

**Extended Type Families**

Some typeface families are made up of two or more sub-families. ITC Stone is a good example. Its sub-groups consist of Serif, Sans, Humanistic and Informal. Each design has roman and italic versions in three weights for a total of 24 individual typefaces. The four designs share the same cap height, lowercase x-height, stem weight and general proportions. Each typeface, however, is designed to stand on its own as a useful, distinctive communication tool. Thesis and ITC Legacy are two other popular typeface families that are made up of sub-families.

**Size-specific Families**

Another kind of type family has different designs for use at different sizes. ITC Bodoni is such a family. It’s comprised of three size-sensitive variants, named Six, Twelve, and Seventy-Two. These were designed to emulate the differences in the progressively-sized metal punches that Giambattista Bodoni created for his original fonts. The numerical designation indicates

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**Univers 45 Light**  
**Univers 46 Light Oblique**  
**Univers 55 Roman**  
**Univers 56 Roman Oblique**  
**Univers 65 Bold**  
**Univers 66 Bold Oblique**  
**Univers 75 Black**  
**Univers 76 Black Oblique**  
**Univers 85 Extra Black**  
**Univers 86 Extra Black Oblique**

- Univers 39 Thin Ultra Condensed  
- Univers 49 Light Ultra Condensed  
- Univers 59 Ultra Condensed  
- Univers 47 Light Condensed  
- Univers 48 Light Condensed Oblique  
- Univers 57 Condensed  
- Univers 58 Condensed Oblique  
- Univers 67 Bold Condensed  
- Univers 68 Bold Condensed Oblique  
- Univers 53 Extended  
- Univers 54 Extended Oblique  
- Univers 63 Bold Extended  
- Univers 64 Bold Extended Oblique  
- Univers 73 Black Extended  
- Univers 74 Black Extended Oblique  
- Univers 93 Extra Black Extended  
- Univers 94 Extra Black Extended Oblique  

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the optimum point size at which each
design should be set – but, as with
most typographic decisions, there are
no hard and fast rules. FB Californian
and ITC Founders Caslon are two newer
size-specific typeface families.

Size-specific type family