Part 1: Experimental body copy

Ideas for experimenting with your layouts, and some legibility issues to consider...

Keep it legal

When it comes to publishing your work, make absolutely sure that you have a licence for the typefaces you're using, and don't just assume that because they were installed on your computer when you bought it that you have. The same goes for fonts you may have downloaded from the web or got from a cover-mounted CD. There are plenty of type foundries that can help you out with font purchasing and licensing, and most, if not all, have websites where you can buy online.

1 It's an age-old dilemma for the commercial designer – how to make your typography interesting while at the same time legible. After all, what we're required to do most of the time is to convey information. Take a look at the example above and it's easy to see why it's often simpler to stick with tradition.

2 Many designers have become synonymous with experimental typography, and perhaps the most consistent in recent times is Neville Brody. Check out his website at [w] www.researchstudios.com to see some of his latest work.
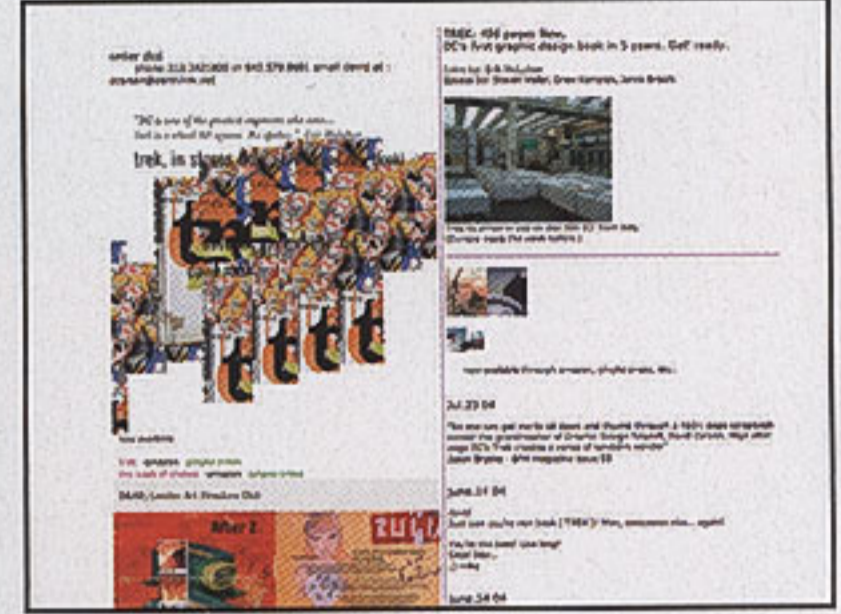
3 Another of Brody's contemporaries across the Atlantic, David Carson, has also been incredibly influential in modern typography. Carson's work on *Ray Gun* and *Surfer* is legendary, and what designer doesn't own a well-thumbed copy of his acclaimed book *The End of Print*.
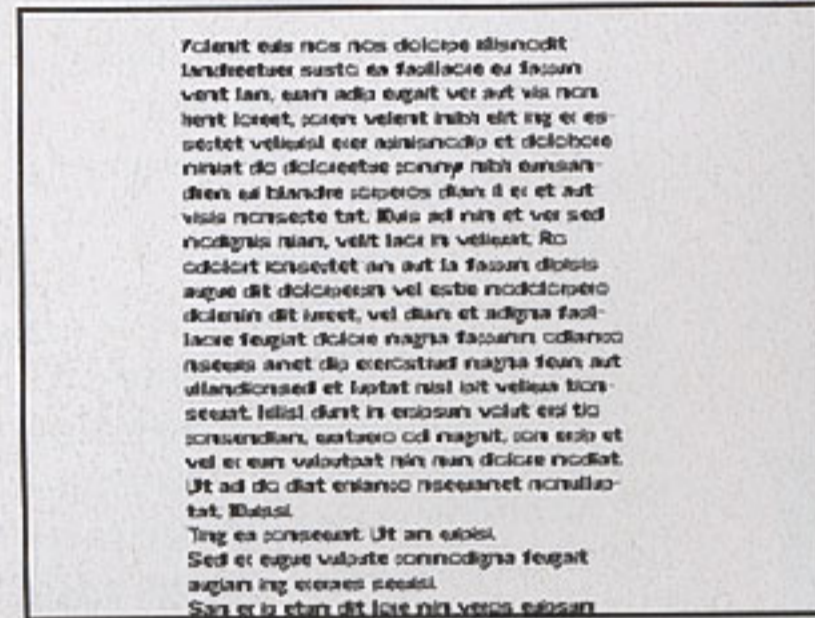
4 It's not just the choice of typeface that can compromise legibility though. Here, heavily tracked body copy combined with tight leading also makes the copy hard to read. Although not to be ignored, body copy is probably the area where least experimentation is possible.
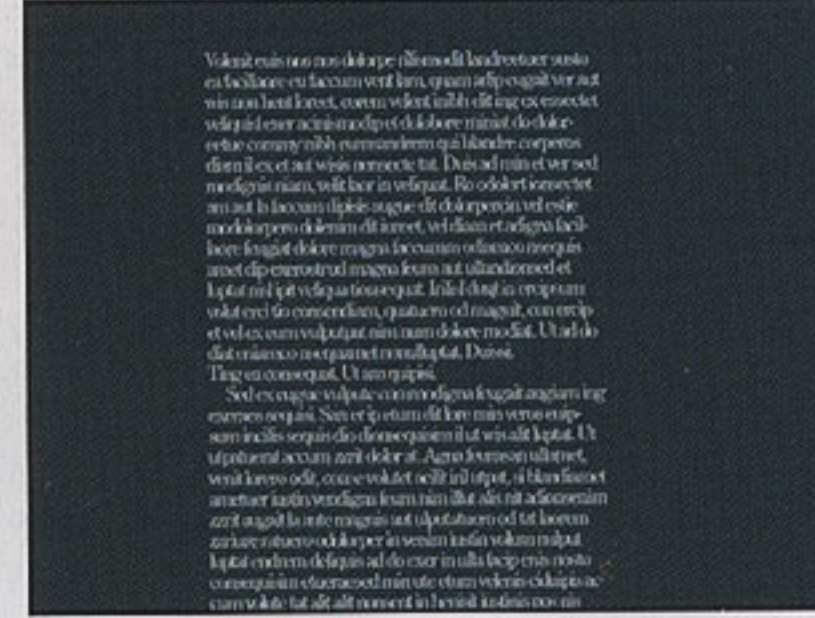
5 Now you need to 'open up' the illustration a little by adding white parts at the edges of some borders. Add a new layer called 'white' and choose the Lasso tool. Select the areas at the top and the bottom of the design. Hold down the Alt key and create straight lines with the Lasso tool.

6 Here are a few examples of how you can experiment with body copy without compromising legibility. First, play around with the alignment of copy or set the columns on an angle. Either of these options can add interest without making the copy harder to read.

7 In this example, rather than using a traditional first line indent to highlight paragraph breaks, we pull the start of the paragraph out of the margin, creating a unique hanging indent effect.
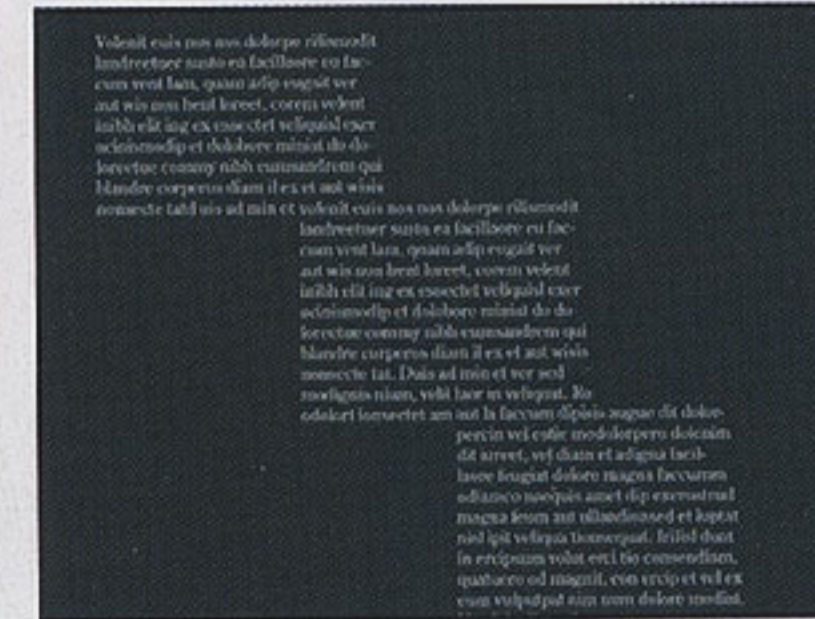
8 Here's a more unusual approach to handling columns of body copy. The bottom line of text reads into the top of the following column, and so on. This approach works best where you have a lot of vertical height to work with, such as on a poster.

9 As well as angling the margins of columns of text, an unusual approach would be to angle the lines of copy themselves. It's worth trying out a few different angles – if you take it too far, once again legibility will suffer.

Experimental body copy continued...

Aspire to the greats

As well as getting inspiration from modern-day typographers such as Neville Brody, Jonathan Barnbook and Jeremy Tankard, its also worth taking a look at what are considered the more classical typographers. Search online for names such as Stanley Morrison, Jan Tischold and Eric Gill.

10 Today's digital type enables effects that would have been time-consuming or even impossible back in the days of metal type or paste up. Here the body copy has been flowed into a letter. The odd widows and orphans this may create can easily be edited manually.

11 Drop caps are a good old-fashioned device used everywhere, but there's no excuse not to experiment with them. Drop caps create entry points to your copy, and, in this example, the drop cap sits outside the margin but still serves the same function as a more traditional one that sits inside.

12 Drop caps don't necessarily have to be letters. A simple bracket device can create an entry point just as successfully as a letter. Other things to try out could be using an image, or something as simple as emboldening the first line or paragraph.

Part 2: Heading further

Having looked at various body copy ideas, here are a few suggestions for taking your headlines further...

1 Headlines are probably the area where you can get the most creative, and where the smaller number of words means that legibility isn't as much of an issue. Here, over-tracked outlined characters are still readable because of their size.

2 Rather than just putting your headline on top of a picture, why not combine the two by putting an image into the headline copy. This technique will obviously work better with bolder type; narrower serif faces would not show enough of the image to create the desired effect.
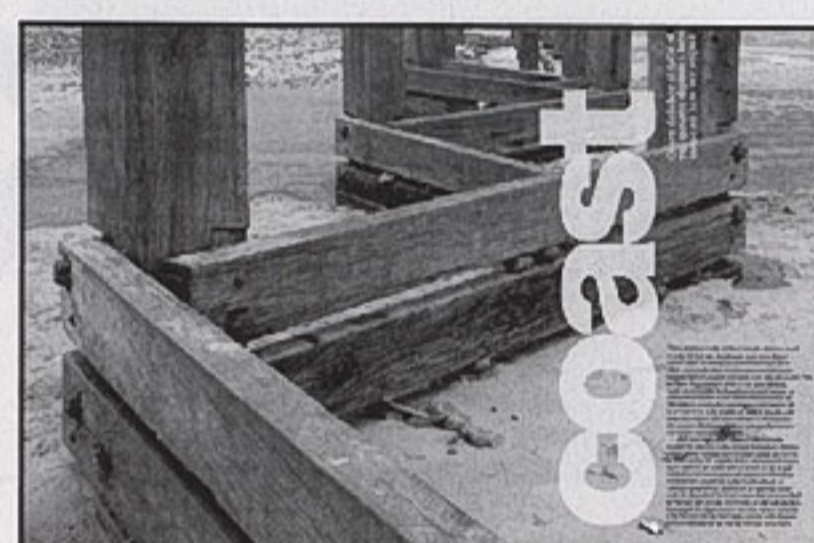
3 Again, when it comes to headlines there's no need to stick with tradition. Running a headline vertically between the columns of body copy creates a unique-looking page, and the bold type and short headline means that again it's easily readable.

4 A different approach with headlines would be to use an enlarged pull-quote or intro to give a feel for the feature, rather than just a traditional headline. This is a technique Neville Brody used to great effect in *The Face* in the 1980s.

5 As well as the style of typography you use, there's no need to stick to the traditional hierarchy of headline followed by standfirst followed by copy. Here, the order of the elements is re-arranged, but the layout still works.

6 To recap, the most important issues when deciding on a typographical approach to your layout is to consider to what degree you can afford to sacrifice legibility for the sake of the design. The real trick is to create a stunning design that still delivers the information clearly and effectively.

Part 3: Changing faces

Now let's look at a few ways of getting creative with the typefaces themselves...

1 First, programs such as Adobe *InDesign* or *Illustrator* enable you to convert type into editable vector shapes. You can then modify type in any way you like, enabling limitless creative options. Here we're editing the points of a character to change its appearance in *InDesign*.
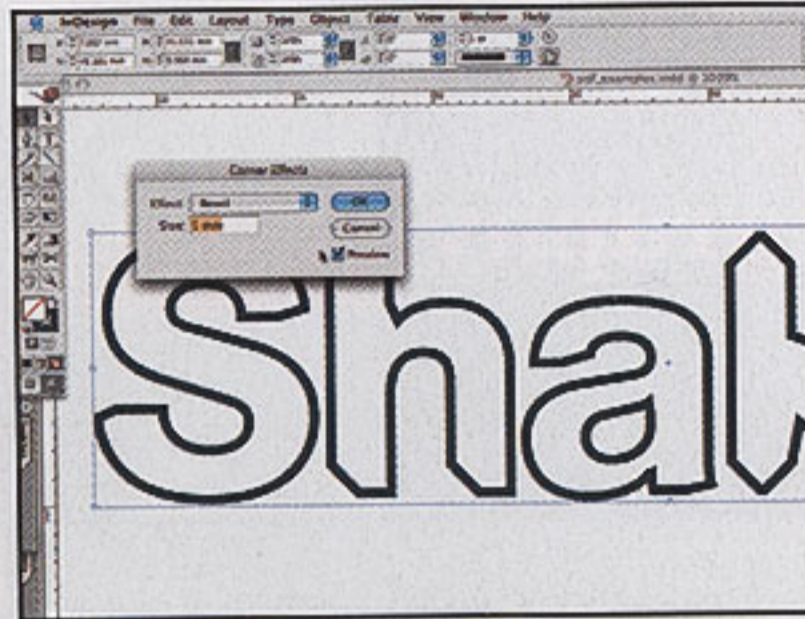
2 Once converted to outlines in *InDesign*, text can have corner effects applied to it. Again, experimenting with different corners and values can create all sorts of unusual effects. The above started life as simple Helvetica.

3 Combining corner effects with different colour strokes and fills can create all sorts of great effects, or design horrors, so use with caution. And a good tip is to get your spelling checked before you embark on this sort of editing, because you won't be able to change it afterwards.
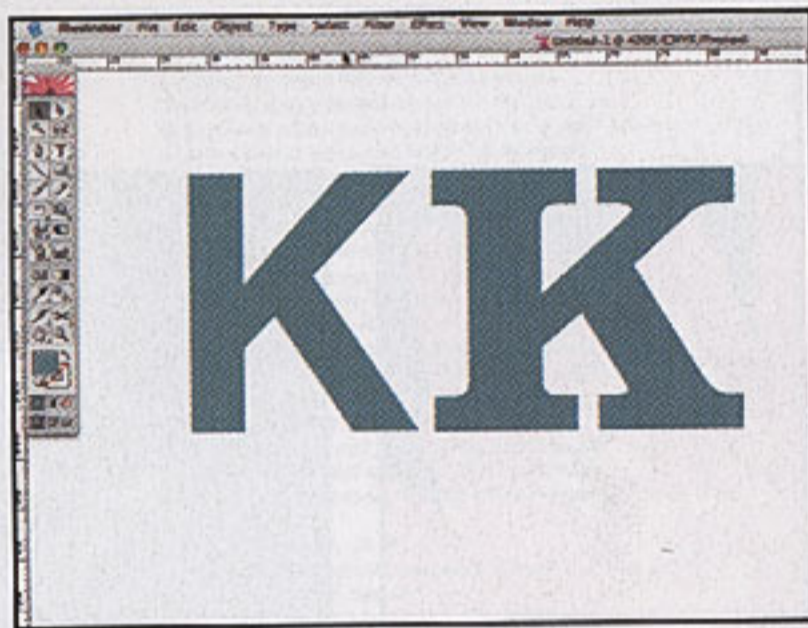
4 *Illustrator's* Blend tool also provides a great way of creating some interesting typographic effects which would be difficult to create manually. Here we're going to create a hybrid character from two base fonts, Olnova and Clarendon.

5 By selecting a start point on the first character, and then a similar point on the second character with the Blend tool, *Illustrator* enables you to create a new character based on a transformation between the two.

6 This technique can create some interesting effects and the results vary dramatically depending on the base characters you use. Needless to say, the most interesting results will be created from two very different starting characters.

7 Sticking with *Illustrator*, some of its many filters that have traditionally been used for illustrations can also be used to create some unusual text effects. Again, most of these filters can only be used on outlined text, so make sure you're happy with the copy before experimenting.
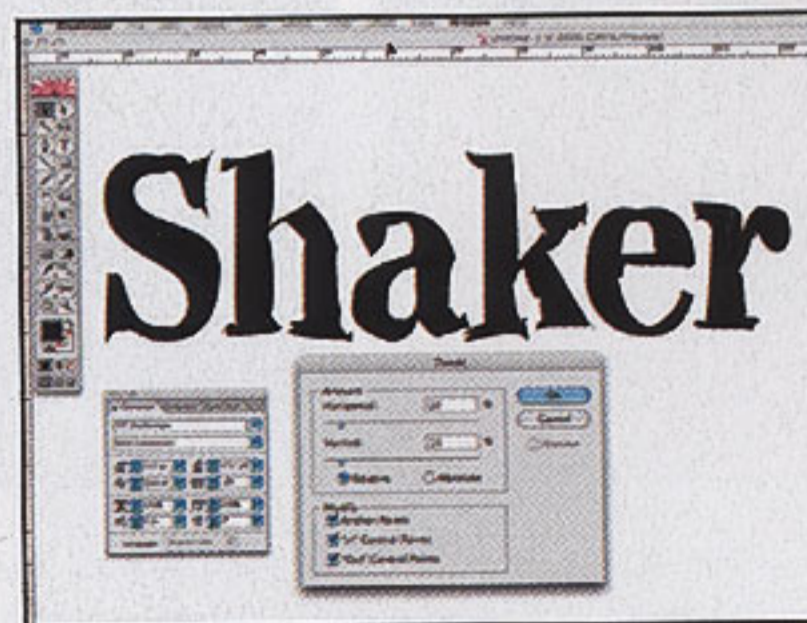
8 Here, the Tweak filter is used to create an unusual distressed effect on our type. With all the filters, the most extreme settings result in something that barely resembles type at all, so be cautious when experimenting in this way because you may compromise legibility.

9 *Illustrator* is great for manipulating type and experimenting with filters, but it also enables you to apply what it calls 'graphic styles' to your type. Although quick and easy to use, most create some truly horrific results that are best saved for Karaoke night posters only!

Part 4: Putting it all together

Now we've talked about various techniques, let's put them all together in our final layout...
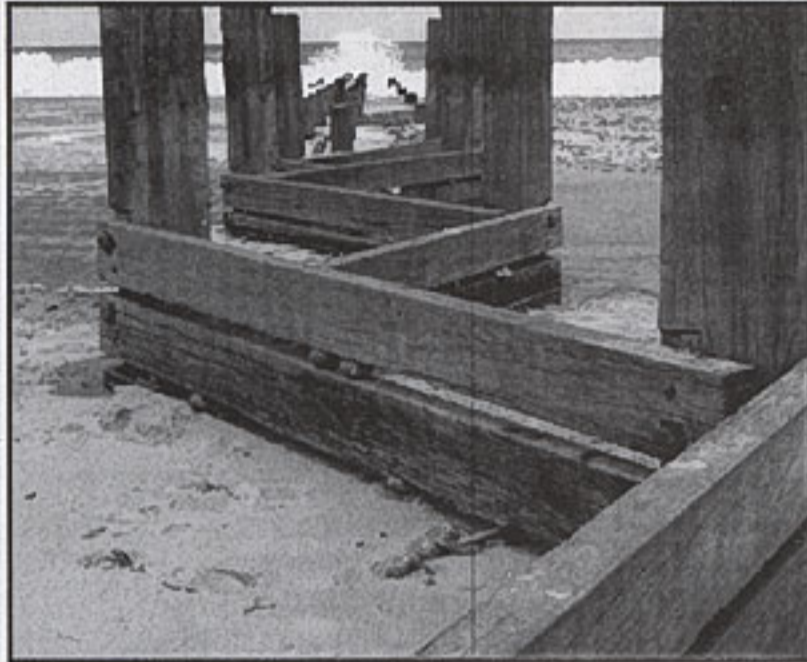
1 Start by choosing a base image for the background. An image like this with good areas of contrast will make it easier to find areas in which to place your type. You can download this beach.tiff image from: ftp://ftp.futurenet.com/pub/arts/cdfiles/cap66_tutorial_layout.zip

2 Next look at the options for headline treatment. The first decision to be made is what typeface to use – we've gone for Clarendon Bold. It's a distinctive font, and its heavy weight should enable us to position it anywhere over the image and retain legibility.

3 To make this layout a bit more interesting, you could make the headline follow the line of the timber in the foreground. Even with the steep angle, the headline is clearly legible.
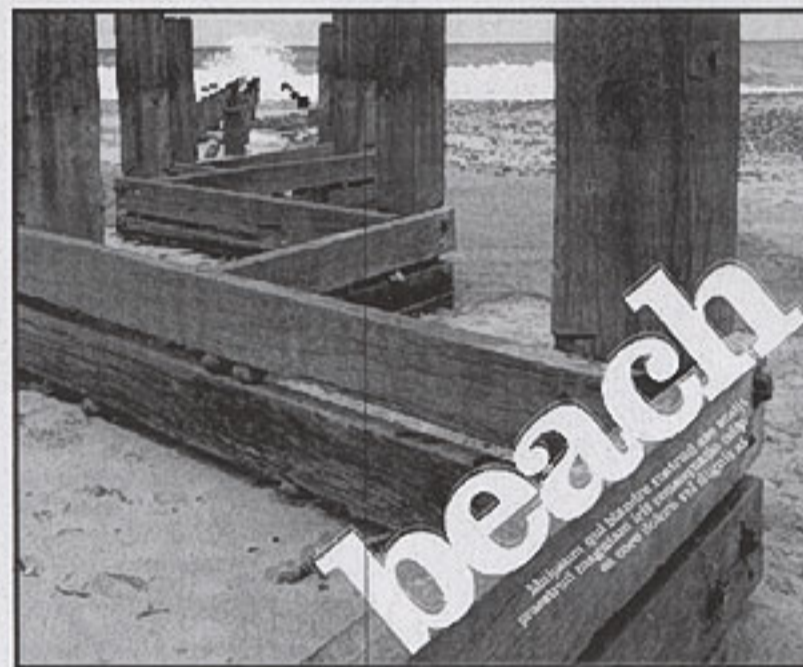
4 Here, we create another version, which has a keyline around it. This gives the headline extra depth, and is also a device which could be continued on other pages of the feature, tying them together.

5 Now add a standfirst. We stick with tradition here and run it below our headline, but to follow the theme of the layout we're going to run it along the second row of timber, leading the eye in. Notice how the right of the standfirst follows the vertical end of the timber.

6 Now add some body copy. We're going to place our copy in the obvious lighter area in the bottom-left of the picture. In keeping with our design, we add a text box that follows the angles of our headline and background image.

7 We've gone for a larger-than-usual font here to help it read over the background image. Not only does the angle of the box fit in with the rest of the design, it also serves as a handy arrow device leading you into the spread.

8 As a final touch we add some of the lines we used earlier, again tying in with the geometric shapes in the background image. It's always worth checking at every stage of the design whether or not what you're doing is adding to or detracting from the whole layout.

9 Here's the completed layout. Using some of the techniques we talked about at the start of this tutorial we have created a spread with a contemporary typographic feel that also works functionally. All the elements, although not traditionally positioned, carry out their function. **ca·p**