Contrast, expression through formal oppositions, is one of the most basic building blocks of typographic design. The aesthetics and legibility of a typeface depend on the combination of contrasting forms: round straight, wide and narrow, large and small, thick and thin, etc. Values combined with equal values result in unrelieved monotony and should be avoided.

Typographic contrasts must be united into a harmonious whole. If the contrasts are violent, such as light and excessively dark, or large and extremely small, one element can be so dominant that the balance between it and the contrasting value is corrupted or never really established.

It is essential that type designers have a profound sensitivity to the subtle shapes and personalities of letter forms and then understand how to use visual contrasts to construct relationships on the page.

Contrasting effects in printed type:
1. Hard - soft / surface - line
2. Line - point / passive - active
3. Concentric - eccentric / closed - open
4. Straight-oblique/ geometric - organic
5. Stable-unstable / asymmetry - symmetry
6. Round-straight / small-large / connected - separate
7. Asymmetry - symmetry / restful - agitated / thick - thin
8. Open-closed / left-right / light-heavy
9. Round-straight / soft-hard / limited - unlimited