The ‘world’s most boring typeface’ just got an update for 2019

The days of manually readjusting the font are over as Helvetica gets one hell of a reboot.

Though long ubiquitous with an (in)famous reputation for being the font of choice for brands both big and faceless, Helvetica has proven to be a challenge for designers to use in the multi-platform age. In order to make up for its lack of updates over the years, design folk have gotten used to customising the font for mock ups – altering the spacing and kerning, changing the position and size of the punctuation, converting to outlines and trimming off bits here and there – making for a not exactly elegant solution as we head into the 2020s.

Arriving just in time then is Helvetica Now, the first redesign in 35 years of the font, aimed specifically at improving its legibility for the digital age by providing both large, eye-catching display text and hyper-legible micro type in multi-level information design.

Consisting of 48 fonts and three distinct optical sizes (micro, text and display), the new type is designed to cope with every manner of high-res device, and anything from laptop screens to e-ink, even giant-sized digital prints. Whether that’ll sink Helvetica’s reputation for being the world’s most ‘boring’ font is another thing, but for now designers can rejoice that the days of manually readjusting the type are over.

Breakdown of the new Helvetica font

Optical sizes

The smallest size of the new release, Helvetica Now Micro, offers designers more open apertures, wider forms, a larger x-height, open spacing, larger accents, optical adjustments to the shapes of complex forms, and a number of other changes to produce a highly legible font at the smallest of sizes.

Helvetica Now Display meanwhile offers a range of weights from Hairline to Extra Black, with appropriate spacing, for 14-point settings and up.

Lastly, Helvetica Now Text comes in a range of weights from Thin to Black with carefully combed spacing and kerning, making for easier, pleasing to read text amidst information-rich design environments.

Alternate glyphs and improved legibility

Newly designed alternate glyphs have been added across the entire range of the family, including a single-story ‘a’ and a straight-legged capital ‘R.’ Every weight and optical size offers a host of new glyphs, including a suite of Helvetica arrows.

As you’d expect with a major overhaul of this sort, every letter, number, punctuation mark and symbol in the Helvetica family – nearly 40,000 in all – has been redrawn, analysed and tested by font giant Monotype for improved legibility and performance.

Pricing and availability of Helvetica Now

Single weights of the Helvetica Now typeface are available for $/€35 or £30 each. The complete typeface family is available for $/€299 or £249.

The Helvetica Now typeface can be found in Mosaic®, Monotype's cloud-based font service, and the typeface can be licensed through MyFonts.com at an introductory promotion of 50 percent off through May 24, 2019.

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