

## Writing Guide | Use a *serif* font for academic papers

When you write a paper for a class, you want to do everything you can to ensure that the instructor will be able to read it easily, with nothing to distract. An important *formatting* choice that will make your paper readable is to use a *serif* font. Even when your reader doesn't realize it, a serif font is much easier to read. See the explanation below, **from Scribe Consulting** (<http://www.scribe.com.au/tip-w017.html>).

### Scribe Consulting

Writing training for business and government

#### Serif and sans-serif fonts

##### Summary

This article distinguishes between serif and sans-serif fonts and discusses when each is appropriate.

Consider the following characters. The first is set in Georgia, a lovely serif font. The second is set in Verdana, an easy-to-read sans-serif font.



serif

sans serif

Notice the small decorative flourishes at the ends of the strokes in the left character. These are called *serif*. The right character does not have these strokes and is said to be a *sans-serif* font. (*Sans* is the French word for *without*.)

Times New Roman is a commonly used serif font. Arial is a commonly used sans-serif font.

#### Use serif for printed work

Serif fonts are usually easier to read in printed works than sans-serif fonts.

This is because the serif make the individual letters more distinctive and easier for our brains to recognise quickly. Without the serif, the brain has to spend longer identifying the letter because the shape is less distinctive.

The commonly used convention for printed work is to use a serif font for the body of the work. A sans-serif font is often used for headings, table text and captions.