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VOL. 2, ISSUE 1

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**DROP
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STOP
SEARCHING

A NOTE FROM TIRSO

For anyone feeling **overwhelmed**, this issue is a reminder to **simplify** and **focus on the fundamentals**.



Hi Friends,

When I first started this newsletter, it was quite ambitious, and when I stopped after issue 2, I felt like a failure, so it was hard to pick it back up again. However, I am a much different person today than the last time you heard from me (unless you follow my YouTube videos, of course). What I've learned since my last issue is that, in a world of constantly looking for the next best thing, we miss a large part of the journey.

Coming back to this newsletter isn't about being more ambitious than I was two years ago. It's my way of picking up my passion again, which is to educate. This newsletter is one of those extensions.

If you're looking to be a designer, there are a lot of things that are a rite of passage. Don't deprive yourself of that experience! With that said, for this first issue back, I removed the command key on the cover. We're disabling the search and focusing on what's already at our fingertips: the basics.

Command + Spacebar on a Mac brings up the Spotlight search. Removing the command key is your invitation to stop searching and start simplifying. By focusing on the fundamentals, you're learning the craft of design. That will serve you more than any technical tutorial ever will.

I don't want to just tell you. I want to lead by example and heart. My approach for simplifying is not to throw everything but the kitchen sink in these newsletters, but instead, be more intentional. Each issue moving forward will have a purpose. That gives me direction for content, and gathers related topics for you in one place to have a reference.

If you're up to the challenge, how will you simplify 2026 so that you can stop scratching the surface and start progressing as a true graphic designer?

FROM THE INBOX

Let's simplify these on the next page.

There are so many
tools. How do
I learn them all?

Which grid
do I use?

How do I decide
on a typeface?

How do I design
from a blank page?

FROM THE INBOX

If you want to submit your own, send an email to hello@tirsogambo.com

Start with only the tools you need.

If it's a screen, learn the basics of Figma. If it's print, learn the basics of InDesign. As you work from project to project, add on a few more skills at a time. This method prevents you from learning things you don't need, like that balloon typography tutorial that never got used.

A grid is meant to help you design, not be an obstacle.

The first question to ask is, do you even need a grid? If yes, consider 2- and 3-column grids. If you think the design can be achieved with a 2- or 3-column grid, there's no need to explore more. Learn how to use more complex grids when you have projects where the content merits it, and you have the time to explore.

Use the design school method.

Work with the classics such as Helvetica, Futura, Garamond, or Caslon... Then, explore different type foundries to find fonts that match the look you're going for. It can be as simple as Apercu from Colophon Foundry, or something with more personality like Maelstrom Sans from Klim Type. This is how you simplify your approach and end the doom search on Adobe or Google.

The full answer can't fit on a flip card...

Since we're talking about simplifying, here's a quick step-by-step.

1. Set up a grid (any will do!).
2. Loosely drop in a hero image or element to anchor the page.
3. Choose 1 typeface and only work with the font weights.
4. Iterate on your layouts.
5. Decide what's working and what's not.
6. Edit and Send.

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MASTER OF One

Typography isn't about how many
typefaces you own. It's about
how many font weights you can master.





Typography is arguably the toughest aspect of design because there's a lot to learn, and it takes an even longer time to implement into your design work. Now, I'm not the most experimental when it comes to choosing typefaces, but I've absolutely mastered just enough to communicate effectively.

The theme of the issue is focusing on the fundamentals, so let me simplify one aspect of typography for you: Stop searching for new typefaces! You can achieve most things by using the same typeface. True story, in design school, I used to purchase one typeface every semester, and I worked only with those fonts the entire semester.

It's not having **what you want.**
It's wanting **what you've got.**

SHERYL CROW

The first fundamental is knowing the difference between a font and a typeface. A typeface is a font family, like Gotham. A font is a weight within that family, like Gotham Bold. This may seem trivial, but understanding the distinction is meant to shift your mindset from searching for new typefaces to working within a system.

I wanted to use Gotham because it's a safe typeface and because it's one of the most ubiquitous typefaces you've seen: Wall Street Journal, Michael Kors, Marc Jacobs, Saturday Night Live, Tribeca Film Festival, Coca Cola, the list goes on...

However, another fundamental is using the right typeface for the medium. This newsletter is largely viewed on screen, so I'll use Proxima Nova, since it's essentially the screen font version of Gotham. To the right are all the weights of Proxima Nova.

PROXIMA NOVA
THIN

PROXIMA NOVA
THIN ITALIC

PROXIMA NOVA
LIGHT

PROXIMA NOVA
LIGHT ITALIC

PROXIMA NOVA
REGULAR

PROXIMA NOVA
ITALIC

PROXIMA NOVA
MEDIUM

PROXIMA NOVA
MEDIUM ITALIC

PROXIMA NOVA
SEMIBOLD

PROXIMA NOVA
SEMIBOLD ITALIC

PROXIMA NOVA
BOLD

PROXIMA NOVA
BOLD ITALIC

PROXIMA NOVA
EXTRA BOLD

PROXIMA NOVA
EXTRA BOLD

PROXIMA NOVA
BLACK

PROXIMA NOVA
BLACK ITALIC

Like most typefaces, the family has all the contrast, hierarchy, and personality you need (if you know how to use it). To get you started, I've laid out some options to demonstrate how versatile a singular typeface, and mind you, without using color.

PROXIMA

Contrast. One of the easiest places to start is working with different weights. This is great if you're working with simple alignments (left, center, right).

PROXIMA
NOVA

PROXIMA
NOVA

Separate your text boxes. A common mistake people make is working with only one text box. One left, I kept the same weights, but with the justified text, "NOVA" became much larger, and one of the fundamentals of typography is that the larger you go, the lighter the weight. Although there's a difference in scale, the version on the right feels more balanced.

PROXIMA NOVA

PROXIMA NOVA

White space is design as well. Tracking out type is a simple convention that makes the font feel different. You see me do this often for labels or smaller text. It's a nice way to make a lighter weight feel even more delicate or balance out the heaviness of a thicker weight.



PROXIMA NOVA

Outline your text. If you're going to do this, do it with purpose. Perhaps it's for readability, or to get more color on the page. This is also great to make a heavier font feel lighter.

PROXIMA NOVA

Try a shadow box. As an extension of outlining your text, you can also add a shadow. This isn't a drop shadow, but a filled-in version of the top layer and shifted behind it.

PROXIMA NOVA

Use texture. No one ever said your type had to be a flat color. Texture can give your font some character that the original typeface didn't provide.

PROXIMA NOVA

Blur the lines. Just to spark your mind, pull inspiration from real life. The blur I'm using here isn't a full Gaussian Blur, but a field blur. The intent is to reflect peripheral vision.

TRY THIS

Simplification Worksheet

Use this page to commit to the fundamentals this month.

What is one fundamental skill you want to see progress in?

What is the one tool you'll commit to this month?

What is the one "distraction" you'll remove from your process?

What is the one typeface you'll master?

What is the one grid you'll use?

What is the one project you'll apply it to?

What will you stop downloading or learning for now?
