

Optical Alignment

Art & Design

Why measured alignment looks wrong, and the adjustments that correct it.

The eye aligns shapes, not bounding boxes. Round and pointed forms must overshoot a flat edge in order to appear level with it.

OVERSHOOT

round and pointed forms

HANG

the punctuation

- Round letters overshoot the baseline and cap line.
- A triangle needs more overshoot than a circle.
- Quotes and hyphens hang outside the text edge.
- A capital T at the margin looks indented.
- Centre a shape by its area, not by its box.
- Icons need optical, not mathematical, centring.

LOOK FOR IT

A play triangle centred in a circle has to be nudged right before it looks centred.

Type designers build overshoot into every round letter. If you scale a mark against type, respect the same convention.