

Why two spaces after a period isn't wrong (or, the lies typographers tell about history)

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The topic of spacing after a period (or “full stop” in some parts of the world) has received a lot of attention in recent years. The vitriol that the single-space camp has toward the double-spacers these days is quite amazing, and typographers have made up an entire fake history to justify their position.

The story usually goes something like this:

Once upon a time, typographical practice was anarchy. Printers put in all sizes of spaces in haphazard ways, including after periods. Then, a standard emerged: the single space after a period. Unfortunately, the evil typewriter came along, and for some unknown reason (usually blamed on monospace fonts), people began to put wider double spaces after periods. Typographers railed against the practice, but they could do nothing. Actual printed work used the single space, but the morons with their typewriters could not be stopped. Early computers and printers used similar monospace typefaces, and the evil persisted. Then, in the past couple decades, it became possible to use proportional fonts easily, and finally typographers could step in and save the day again with their single sentence spaces! The only people today who continue to use double spaces are stodgy old typing teachers and ignorant fools, who dare to think that their practice is okay in the face of the verdict of the experts in typography.

A short version of this story is told, for example, by Grammar Girl in her advice on this question. But perhaps the worst offender in the promulgation of such nonsense is a particularly self-righteous piece in *Slate* from earlier this year. We are told, “Most ordinary people would know the one-space rule, too, if it weren’t for a quirk of history,” i.e., the typewriter. And we are told that the one-space rule derives from the expert experiences of publishers developed over many years: “We adopted these standards because practitioners of publishing—writers, editors, typographers, and others—settled on them after decades of experience. Among their rules was that we should use one space after a period instead of two—so that’s how we should do it.” As to why they believe this to be so, it’s because double spaces are “ugly”: “A page of text with two spaces between every sentence looks riddled with holes; a page of text with an ordinary space looks just as it should.”

The author, Farhad Manjoo, is astounded to find so many educated and ignorant people who apparently believe that two spaces are okay. He even polls people over Thanksgiving dinner, just so he can tell them how wrong they are! The author subsequently decides to go on a mission to show them why they are wrong, resulting in the linked article.

Unfortunately, this whole story is a fairy tale, made up by typographers to make themselves feel like they are correct in some absolute way. The account is riddled with historical fabrication. Here are some facts:

- There were earlier standards before the single-space standard, and they involved much wider spaces after sentences.

- Typewriter practice actually imitated the larger spaces of the time when typewriters first came to be used. They adopted the practice of proportional fonts into monospace fonts, rather than the other way around.
- Literally centuries of typesetters and printers believed that a wider space was necessary after a period, particularly in the English-speaking world. It was *the* standard since at least the time that William Caslon created the first English typeface in the early 1700s (and part of a tradition that went back further), and it was not seriously questioned among English or American typesetters until the 1920s or so.
- The “standard” of one space is maybe 60 years old at the most, with some publishers retaining wider spaces as a house style well into the 1950s and even a few in the 1960s.
- As for the “ugly” white space, the holes after the sentence were said to make it easier to parse sentences. Earlier printers had advice to deal with the situations where the holes became too numerous or looked bad.
- The primary reasons for the move to a single uniform space had little to do with a consensus among expert typographers concerning aesthetics. Instead, the move was driven by publishers who wanted cheaper publications, decreasing expertise in the typesetting profession, and new technology that made it difficult (and sometimes impossible) to conform to the earlier wide-spaced standards.

The lies do not just come from random *Slate* writers or bloggers, but also established typographers, who seem to refuse the clear evidence that they could easily see if they examine the majority of books printed before 1925 or so. Even an authority like Robert Bringhurst is foolish enough not to do his research before claiming that double spacing is a “quaint Victorian habit” that originated in the “dark and inflationary age in typography” of the (presumably mid to late) nineteenth century.

The *Chicago Manual of Style* editors similarly show a great deal of ignorance when one of them states on an official question-and-answer page: “I’ve noticed in old American books printed *in the few decades before and after the turn of the last century (ca. 1870–1930 at least)* that there seemed to be a trend in publishing to use extra space (sometimes quite a bit of it) after periods.”

It’s a pity this editor apparently hasn’t bothered to look at most books published for centuries before 1870 or at many published even decades after 1930. It’s an even greater pity that this editor didn’t even bother to look at previous editions of the *Chicago Manual* itself! (As we shall soon see, this was not some minor trend, but accepted practice, as the early editions of the *Chicago Manual* demonstrate.)

Typographers seem eager to dismiss wider spaces as some sort of fad, either something ugly that originated with typewriters, or some sort of Victorian excess that lasted for a few brief decades and quickly petered out. But this is simply not the case. As we will explore presently, the large space following a period was an established convention for English-language publishers (and many others in Europe) in the 1700s, if not before, and it did not truly begin to fade completely until around 1950.

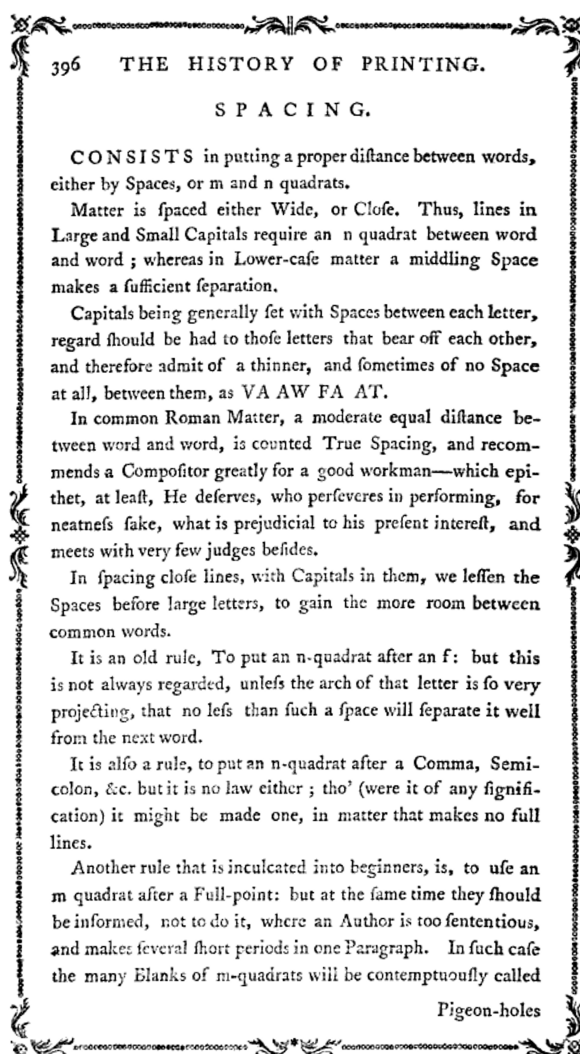
While the modern convention is the single space, it is no less arbitrary than any other, and if you believe that larger spaces after periods look better in some situation, you should feel confident that your choice is supported by hundreds of years of good typographical practice. For the record, before we go further, my preference is not for double-spacing,

but for a slightly larger sentence space, about 1.5 times an interword space for most type-faces. But unlike the modern single-space fanatics, I don't judge anyone's aesthetic preferences, nor will I try to make up fairy tales using fabricated history to convince you.

Early sources (before 1870, i.e., pre-typewriter)

Spacing practices for the first couple centuries of the printing press were quite variable. But they began to coalesce into certain sets of standards in the 1600s, which became accepted conventions in the 1700s. More than a century before our *Chicago Manual* editor's 1870 cut-off date, printers in England and America had relegated the idea of a large space after the period to the standard introductory rules taught to the beginning typesetter.

As an aside, here's my own theory about the *Chicago Manual* editor's made-up date of 1870: that's right about the time that the first commercially available typewriter started to be sold. However, since the practice was standard for over a century before this date, the whole "big spaces after periods come from typewriters" claim is clearly a myth.



Take, for example, the advice given by Philip Luckombe in *The History and Art of Printing* (London, 1771):

“Another rule that is inculcated into beginners, is, to use an m quadrat [i.e., an em-quad] after a Full-point [period]: but at the same time they should be informed, not to do it, where an Author is too sententious, and makes several short periods [sentences] in one Paragraph. In such case the many Blanks of m-quadrats will be contemptuously called Pigeon-holes; which, and other such trifles, often betray a Compositor's judgment, who may be a good workman else.

An *em-quad* (here called an “m-quadrat”) is a relatively large space, the width of an entire M in a particular font. It gets its name from its square shape, the width of an M on all sides. In contrast, Luckombe calls for an *en-quad* (about half the size) after other punctuation, and in normal “Lower-case matter a middling Space makes a sufficient separation” between words.

This quotation is intriguing not only for its early statement of the use of relatively large spaces after periods as a clear and standard rule “inculcated into beginners,” but also for the offering of a solution for one of the biggest supposed bugaboos of the wide sentence space, namely the “Pigeon-holes” (today called *rivers*) that occur when short sentences lead to the joining of these wide spaces on consecutive lines, producing the effect of white holes in the text block. Luckombe simply says: yes, this is a problem, but a good typesetter will realize it is a problem, and in this particular case, he will adjust the spaces to avoid the holes. Indeed. That’s what good typesetting is all about. No “rule” is ever absolute; it must always yield to the aesthetics of a particular case. The single-space absolutists might learn something from their forebears.

And by the way, this is only a short excerpt of the complex rules and special cases that printers considered. Occasionally, modern typographers have asserted that the wide spaces in older books were due to laziness: rather than making all spaces in a line even, typesetters could just add or remove space from the larger sentence spaces. If anything, the reverse was generally the case. Printers’ manuals for hundreds of years gave detailed advice about which spaces (the em-quads after sentences, en-quads after other punctuation, or interword “thick spaces”) to enlarge or reduce when tightening or loosening a line, even discussing which order to make adjustments and by how much. Various options for introducing small kerns around spaces when certain letterforms were involved to change line spacing is also often discussed in detail. (In some of the printers’ manuals cited below, such discussions go on for dozens of pages.) Whether all hand compositors were sensitive to such small details is a matter of dispute, but *skilled* typesetters clearly embraced the much greater complexity involved in tightening or loosening a line when many varieties of spaces were involved.

In any case, Luckombe is but one source. However, even as early as 1728, Luckombe’s rule for beginners was already standard enough to be mentioned by Ephraim Chambers in the first major encyclopedia in the English language, the *Cyclopædia, or An Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences* (a book that was published nearly a half-century before the first *Encyclopædia Britannica*):

“[Spaces] are of several kinds according to the Dimensions of the Blanks, or Intervals to be made by them, viz. *Quadrats*, to fill up a Break at the end of a Paragraph, or the like; **M quadrats, which are square, and of the thickness of an m, serving to make the distance after a Period**, or between Sentence and Sentence, *N quadrats*, of the thickness of an n, to be placed after Colons, Semicolons, and Commas; and thick or thin Spaces, to be used between the Words in justifying. (Vol. 2, p. 876)

There are many, many other sources in guidebooks for printers:

“[I]n regular spacing all points [punctuation marks] should have an n-quadrat after them, except the **full point** [period], which **must have an m-quadrat**, as terminating a sentence.” (Caleb Stower, *The Compositor’s and Pressman’s Guide to the Art of Printing*, London, 1808, p. 10)

“[I]n regular spacing all points should have an n-quadrat after them, except the **full point**, which **must have an m-quadrat**, as terminating a sentence.” (Charles Partington, *The Printer’s Complete Guide*, London, 1825, p. 207)

“In regular spacing, **the full point should have an em quadrat after it**; the semi-colon, colon, and notes of interrogation [question mark] and admiration [exclamation point], should have an en quadrat; but the two latter, where they take the place

of the full point, that is, when placed at the end of a sentence, must have after them an *em quadrat*.” (Cornelius Van Winkle, *The Printer’s Guide*, New York, 1836, pp. 135–136)

“**The best spacing, undoubtedly, is a thick space between every word, an *n quad* after every colon, semicolon, and *f*, and an *m quad* after every period, and point of exclamation and interrogation, when ending a sentence.**” (Theodore Gazlay, *The Practical Printers’ Assistant*, Cincinnati, 1836, p. 22)

“The thick space is, in thickness, equal to one-third of the body of each sized type [i.e., 1/3 em], and has long since been considered the most proper separation for words. . . . A wide-spaced line with only **the usual *em quadrat* remaining after a full point**, admiration, or interrogation, or with only a hair space before these two latter, and before a semicolon or colon, is out of proportion.” (Thomas Ford, *The Compositor’s Handbook*, London, 1854, p. 36)

“The comma requires only a thick space, but the other points should have a hair space before and an *en quadrate* after them, except **the full-point, which should have an *em quadrate***, as terminating a sentence.” (Thomas MacKellar, *The American Printer*, Philadelphia, 1866, p. 113)

The last source given here, the first edition of MacKellar’s *American Printer*, was the standard style guide of its day, running to some seventeen editions before the end of the nineteenth century.

I could go on, since I have not seen a single book on printing in the 1700s or 1800s—English or American—which does not state some form of this rule, if it has any discussion of spacing at all. And one need only pull any book from that period off a library shelf to see that the vast majority of books follow such a standard. There is no source for the single-space after a period rule (which during the nineteenth century was generally only found as a minority practice in some French publishing houses; much of Europe also used wide spaces). The convention was: *put wider spaces than word spaces after punctuation, and put an extra-wide space after a period*. End of story. This had nothing to do with typewriters, or with Victorian mannerisms, since it long predated all of those trends.

The lost history of the *Chicago Manual of Style*

Aside from the typographers, which have now been shown to be unreliable in their historical knowledge, many modern authorities back up the assertion that double-spacing after sentences is wrong with various style guides, the foremost probably being the *Chicago Manual of Style*. The *Chicago Manual* is clearly one of the most common authorities on publishing conventions in the United States, and it has been popular for many decades.

As mentioned above, one current editor implicitly claimed that large sentence spaces was a fad only in the few decades around 1900, and only in the United States. That assertion is clearly false. But it is more interesting to follow the history of the *Chicago Manual* itself, which this editor could have found enlightening in determining how much of a convention the wide spaces actually were.

The first edition of the *Chicago Manual* was published in 1906 (then known simply as *Manual of Style*). It clearly stated the accepted printers’ rule of the time:

an en-quad after semicolons, and colons followed by a lower-case letter; two 3-em spaces after colons followed by a capital; an em-quad after periods, and exclamation and interrogation points, concluding a sentence. If necessary to reduce, begin with commas, and letters of slanting form—i.e., with a large “shoulder” on the side adjoining the space; if necessary to increase, begin with overlapping letters—i.e., with “kerns” protruding on the side adjoining the space—straight-up-and-down letters, and points other than periods and commas (in this order). In a well-spaced line, with a 3-em space between a majority of the words, there should not be more than an en-quad between the rest; this proportion should be maintained in increasing or reducing. To *justify* a line is to adjust it, making it even or true, by proper spacing.

- 246. Do not follow an exceptionally thin-spaced line with an exceptionally wide-spaced one, or vice versa, if at all avoidable.
- 247. Never hair-space, or em-quad, a line to avoid a run-over.
- 248. Do not space out the last line of a paragraph allowing of an em's or more indentation at the end.
- 249. Short words, like “a,” “an,” etc., should have the same space on each side.

rest; this proportion should be maintained in increasing or reducing. To justify a line is to adjust it, making it even or true, by proper spacing. (pp. 83–84)

Note that, as in previous sources, the standard interword space is 1/3 em (or “3-em”) in width. Thus, in ideal spacing, the sentence space should be *triple* the interword space. Again, this rule is more-or-less consistent, going far back into the 1700s, if not earlier. This first edition also gives details on varying spacing to be wider or narrower when necessary, but it makes clear that an interword space should never exceed an en-quad, meaning that the sentence space should always be *at least* double the interword space.

All of this can easily be verified by simply looking at most books published before 1900. Aside from some aberrant French practices, the single interword space after a period is relatively unknown. (Note here that I am not covering the great variety of practices in the very early days of printing, from wide spacing to those such as Nicolas Jenson's first Roman typeface from the 1400s, which he chose to set without *any* spaces around punctuation whatsoever.)

Furthermore, the early editions of the *Chicago Manual* actually had a large appendix containing specimens of common typefaces in use at the time. One can see the common practice not just for wide nineteenth-century faces, but also more restrained eighteenth-century faces like Caslon, which included wide spaces after periods, just as William Caslon himself did when he introduced the typeface in the early 1700s. Many other older typefaces pre-date Bringhurst's Victorian era excess of black and wide spaces, as well as typefaces that resemble many of the most common body fonts used in computer typography today.

“ 245. *Space evenly. A standard line should have a 3-em [i.e., 3-to-an-em, or 1/3 em] space between all words not separated by other punctuation points other than commas, and after commas; an en-quad after semicolons, and colons followed by a lower-case letter; two 3-em spaces after colons followed by a capital; an em-quad after periods, and exclamation and interrogation points, concluding a sentence. If necessary to reduce, begin with commas, and letters of slanting form—i.e., with a larger “shoulder” on the side adjoining the space; if necessary to increase, begin with overlapping letters—i.e., with “kerns” protruding on the side adjoining the space—straight-up-and-down letters, and points other than periods and commas (in this order). In a well-spaced line, with a 3-em space between a majority of words, there should not be more than an en-quad between the*

If the *Chicago Manual* thought it was okay to use large spaces after periods, and it had been common practice among the typographers *who invented these typefaces*, can we seriously claim that the *only* right method to set them is with a single space after a period? I CANNOT BELIEVE THE GALL OF MODERN TYPOGRAPHERS, ARGUING THAT THE PRACTICE OF THOSE WHO CREATED THEIR FONTS IS ABSOLUTELY, UNEQUIVOCALLY “WRONG.”

Might there be other choices? Of course. I see nothing absolutely wrong with single spacing, and it may be more appropriate for fonts that have been designed and created in the past few decades. On the other hand, historical practice of those employing the ancestors of many traditional type families says that modern typographers are all wrong. In the end, it's an aesthetic choice, as is just about anything involving any artistry. But the judgmental idiot typographers should get off their high horses and read some actual history instead of their fairy tales. Perhaps they should look at some actual historical typesetting in their favorite typefaces. I have great respect for typographers, but they have no business passing judgment on someone for being ignorant when they themselves have decided to defy the common historical convention (while muttering something about the bloody typewriters).

Anyhow, back to the *Chicago Manual*. Here are some selected quotations from the subsequent editions:

“ 262. *Space evenly. A standard line should have a 3-em space between all words not separated by other punctuation points than commas, and after commas; an en quad after semicolons, and colons followed by a lower-case letter; two 3-em spaces after colons followed by a capital; **an em quad after periods**, and exclamation and interrogation points, concluding a sentence.* (Fourth edition, 1914, p. 101)

*By “standard spacing” is meant the ideal space between words ending and beginning with letters of the ordinary rounded forms. . . . For example, the standard for composition such as that in the text of this book would be a 3-to-em space, with **an en quad** after colons, after exclamation and interrogation points, and **after periods** ending sentences.* (Tenth edition, 1937, p. 8)

*For example, the standard for composition such as that in the text of this book would be a 3-to-em space . . . , with **the same spacing as between words**, after colons, after exclamation and interrogation points, **and after periods** ending sentences unless special instructions are given.* (Eleventh edition, 1949, p. 8)

Something significant began to happen around the tenth edition in the 1930s. The standard rule that had held for two hundred years was beginning to fail. First, periods were reduced to the status of any other punctuation, merely being granted an en-quad. But, by 1949, the eleventh edition had adopted the modern standard of a single multi-purpose space for all punctuation.

When the twelfth edition arrived in 1969 (which was perhaps the most significant revision to the *Chicago Manual* to date), it no longer mentioned anything about sentence spacing at all. In the brief spacing discussion, everything is about equal spacing, as if there could never be different types of spaces. It was as if nothing else had ever existed (and other style guides followed suit), which perhaps explains why most active typographers today don't realize that a standard that lasted for centuries has been completely forgotten.

Instead, the recent editions of the *Chicago Manual* berate those who try to follow an approximation to the tradition that its own early editions supported, namely the double space after a period.

“ 6.11 *Space between sentences.* In typeset matter, **one space, not two (in other words, a regular word space)**, follows any mark of punctuation that ends a sentence, whether a period, a colon, a question mark, an exclamation point, or closing quotation marks. (Fifteenth edition, 2003)

6.7 *Punctuation and space—one space or two?* In typeset matter, **one space, not two, should be used between two sentences—whether the first ends in a period, a question mark, an exclamation point, or a closing quotation mark or parenthesis.** By the same token, one space, not two, should follow a colon. When a particular design layout calls for more space between two elements—for example, between a figure number and a caption—the design should specify the exact amount of space (e.g., *em space*). (Sixteenth edition, 2010)

Apparently the *Chicago Manual* doesn't get it. People like the double spaces. People want the double spaces. Whereas the twelfth edition in 1969 could just ignore the problem and assume that those in the know would just space equally, the current editions show a marked attempt to chastise anyone who would disagree.

And, looking at these two recent editions, they're beginning to sound desperate. No matter how strongly they word it with however many details, it seems most people still want the double spaces. AND, BY HISTORICAL STANDARDS, THEY ARE RIGHT. They aren't just blindly following some mythical typewriter convention—they sincerely like the double spaces.

Now, I know many typographers are going to say, “That's not true! Almost all published matter today—and for the past 50 years—uses the single space convention. So they might think they like double spacing, but they read it everyday and don't mind.”

That is a valid point. But if true, that would show how invisible such things are to most non-typographers. And if that's true, why the fuss? Let people do whatever they want to do in their personal documents and writing, and when it gets published, let typographers “fix” it. Who cares? What is the admonishing about? It's not like it's hard to run a script to take the extra spaces out of a document, and a publisher would probably have to do that anyway, since manuscripts get submitted with all sorts of extra tabs, spaces, and other junk in them.

Perhaps there is some sort of collective anxiety among typographers. Perhaps there's some secret knowledge passed around when they gather about how there actually used to be a standard for wide spaces that lasted many times longer than the new one, and they don't want anyone to know. They want their single spaces—they want control over their fonts. Who cares what the actual creators of the old typefaces would do? This is their secret way of imposing their aesthetic will on their old comrades, to whom they are forced to defer as they reuse the fonts again and again and again.

Or perhaps they are scared in recent years because more and more people are self-publishing. Many of those “ignorant” people probably double-space out of habit. As typographers lose control, the double-space convention has a resurgence, and where would their arbitrary single-space aesthetic be?

Now then, where did it come from in the first place, if it wasn't typewriters?

The true origins of the single-space standard

First, we need to narrow down the historical period. From the *Chicago Manual* examples, there was a clear trend beginning sometime in the 1920s and 1930s to reduce sentence spacing, and by the late 1940s, equal spacing was standard enough for a style guide to use it. Around 1950, some guides still endorsed the old practice, such as the United States Government Printing Office *Theory and Practice of Composition* (1950):

“ An *em quad* is generally placed after the period at the end of a sentence, although this practice is not universal. (p. 42)

Clearly some around this time were not amused by the emerging practice, as seen in the first edition of *Words into Type* (1948):

“ [Spacing of] Sentences. Until recently the space most used between sentences within a paragraph was the *em quad*, but many books published in recent years have been set with less space, sometimes the same as between words in a line—a justifier. Sometimes a nut space [*en-quad*] or two thicks [$\frac{2}{3}$ of an *em*] . . . plus a justifier is the spacing used between a period and a new sentence.

The tendency of some modern book designers to use only a justifier between sentences is not altogether commendable. While there may be some esthetic advantage to be gained from this close spacing, it leaves little chance for the reader to group words that belong together. A little more spacing between sentences in textbooks and books of reference is generally to be preferred. (p. 110)

The second paragraph also contains a footnote after the second sentence:

“ Educators voice the objection that this practice is helping to break down students' notion of the integrity of the sentence.

Admittedly, the footnote sounds a little strong, like any attempt to blame social decay on some random change in social practice. Nonetheless, this change clearly had detractors, even voices within the typographic community, as in this standard reference book. Of course, around this time, we begin to see more “progressive” typographers lament those conservatives who held fast to the wide spaces.

But why did the change occur? Here, there seems to be no direct historical account, but there are two theories often given. First, there is the obvious benefit to production cost that comes with reduced spacing. Less whitespace means less paper, which means fewer pages, which means reduced costs. Margins became smaller around this time, and standard interword spaces often went from about $\frac{1}{3}$ em to $\frac{1}{4}$ em. Is it not surprising that the wide gaps after sentences would have to go as well?

The other theory is that a single uniform space simply required less expertise (and less time) to set. Before the advent of Monotype and Linotype, hand composition was a complex task that required a real craftsman to solve spacing issues from line to line. But the new machines made the process much faster and easier, again reducing cost of production.

Along the way, however, it also reduced the expertise required to set the type. Operators could punch in the letters very quickly, and worrying about different width spaces required time and training to pay closer attention to syntax. Furthermore, when a line needed to be expanded or compressed, it was easier to simply expand or reduce all spaces in a line, rather than to deal with the aesthetics of how to handle the various width spaces (which had complex rules that can be found in many of the manuals cited above).

The death knell for the large sentence space, still imitated by a few Linotype operators in the mid-1900s with a double space, was more new technology. Further automation developed in the era of phototypesetting led to a situation where line breaks and extra spaces were truly problematic. Automatic line breaks could occur between two spaces, thereby beginning a new line with an undesirable empty space. The solution for programmers was simple: phototypesetters would simply ignore extra white space and treat it as an error. All white space would be collapsed to a single, multipurpose space. Spacing was one area where the 1960s marked a great decrease in diversity. No wonder the subsequent editions of the *Chicago Manual* couldn't imagine a world with different types of spaces: such a world was made impossible within the bounds of current technology.

In sum, the primary rationale behind the shift was probably not aesthetic, since printers had accepted the same conventions for centuries. Instead, it was a move generated by economic concerns. Publishers wanted cheaper books with less whitespace and less time and expertise to typeset, and the technology they developed required simpler and lazier methods of spacing.

The situation today

Nowadays, with computer typesetting, the cost of actually typesetting the text is tiny compared what it was when text was hand-set 150 years ago. Yet typographers cannot be bothered to do a few global search-and-replaces to insert custom spaces that would approximate the old standards. (Unicode implements a couple dozen different types of spaces, and most publication software allows for at least a half dozen or more.) A subsequent proof for special cases would be required, but a few macros could easily take into account many scenarios.

Oh, and by the way, you'll hear some advocates for single-spacing talking about how modern fonts can take into account the extra spacing needed to the period in the font itself. But this is also an elaborate lie. Such kerning after periods would require sensitivity to abbreviations versus ends of sentences, something no font can do by itself. (Some publishing software and word processors do try.) Besides, I've seen no evidence that most professional fonts actually incorporate kerning pairs involving periods and spaces—in fact, it would be ridiculous to do such a thing, because it would interfere with the spacing adjustments that typographers still do. (I've read elsewhere where someone examined over 2000 standard Adobe OpenType fonts and found that only about 20% of fonts kerned period-space combinations, and only about 1% kerned question mark or exclamation points followed by spaces. In *all* cases where there is kerning, it is *negative*, i.e., it actually *reduces* the space after the period, rather than increases it.)

Typographers could actually make good use of all those people who still insist on double-spacing. They could use a find-and-replace to turn those double spaces into custom spaces that provide a nice respite after ends of sentences. Whether it's actually double or 1.5

times or whatever would be a matter of taste, considered with the typeface, leading, etc. But one could argue that it looks better. Most people think it does. Regardless of what they don't notice about standard text, they obviously like how their typing comes out. Typographers could exploit this syntactical information to their advantage.

Instead, they have created an elaborate myth about how people came to think wider spaces were appropriate (evil typewriters!), and they are the bearers of the one, true method of spacing—which just happens to be the laziest method of spacing and the one that reduces publication costs the most.

I just have to say to typographers: you've been had. The publishers wanted to make you cost less and be less relevant, and you fell into that trap. And now you want to go around and kick everyone until they conform to your simplistic, lazy standard? Wow. Just wow.



P.S. For any non-typographers who made it all the way through this article, if you want to double-space, do it. If you want to single-space, fine. Just please don't try to enforce your view on the world. Stop judging people. Because, really, if you're not a typographer, chances are the stuff you're producing in MS Word or whatever has dozens of other worse spacing sins than double-spacing your sentences.

How much do you know about appropriate text-block size and position relative to the page? Do you know anything about appropriate number of characters per line? What do you know about leading? Do you really use MS Word's fake small caps? Do you know how to kern those "cool" drop caps you throw in into the margins properly? Did you even notice that Word couldn't support ligatures until 2010? Do you notice those nasty collisions that still tend to pop up in Word, particularly around parentheses? What's your policy on widows and orphans? Do you know appropriate places to line-break justified text, including the proper way to handle numbers, conjunctions, etc.? Do you know how to use non-breaking spaces and thin spaces properly?

Yeah, typography is an art. Complaining about the way people space their sentences in their own documents is being an ass.