

Franklin Gothic : from Benton to Berlow

The Ideal of Realism

FIRST FRANKLIN DESIGN [\[source\]](#)

The Franklin Gothic typeface was the third in a series of sans serif faces design after ATF (*American Type Founders*) was founded in 1892. In the early 1900s, *Morris Fuller Benton*, who was in charge of typeface development for ATF at the time, wanted to create type designs that would influence American type design for more than 40 years. And as a result, Around 1902, Franklin Gothic was cut, and released as a font of metal type in 1905.

A SMALL FAMILY

Initially, Benton drew only a single roman design for Franklin Gothic. However, this typeface caught the imagination of printers of the time, and ATF was compelled to add more variants to make a small type family. Benton drew a condensed design in 1905 and an extra condensed in 1906. Five years later, Benton finally added an italic to the family, and two years after that a shaded version was offered.

A NEW OLD FRANKLIN

In 1980, under license from ATF, ITC (*International Typeface Corporation*) commissioned *Victor Caruso* to create four new weights of Franklin Gothic in roman and italic: book, medium, demi and heavy. This series was followed in 1991 by a suite of 12 condensed and compressed designs drawn by *David Berlow*.

NOTABLE ADAPTATIONS [\[source\]](#)

Loesje (Literature on education and the arts), an international organization in Arnhem (Netherlands) uses the Franklin Gothic typeface on its posters to promote the idea of democracy. *New York University* standardizes its font to Franklin Gothic for all web communications. *The Bank of America* logo is also designed using the Franklin Gothic typeface. *Starbucks* is another big name that adapted the Franklin Gothic type.

CHARACTERISTICS [\[source\]](#)

The ITC Franklin Gothic type family (*Grotesque sans-serif type*) retains the personality and character of the original ATF Franklin Gothic, with only a slight increase in x-height and character width to distinguish it from the Benton version. Capitals are wide (typographers would call them “square”), lowercase letters share the proportions and letter shapes of serif typefaces, and character stroke weights have a far more obvious thick and thin contrast than most modern sans serif designs. Although somewhat more subtle, weight stress within individual letters also echoes the serif-styled counterparts. Several lowercase letters are also roman designs transformed into serifless types. The ‘a’ is the typical two-storied design found in a *Baskerville* or *Caslon*, and the ‘g’ is of the bowl-and-loop variety also found in most roman types. The ‘t’ has a tail, and the lower diagonal of the ‘k’ attaches almost at the mid-point of the top diagonal. The terminals of character strokes are also cut at a 90-degree angle to the stroke, rather than parallel to the baseline. The result is a design that is square-jawed and strong-armed yet still soft-spoken.

Franklin Gothic as a realist font helps to communicate ideas in a concise and straight-for-ward manner. It paints reality in the exact way as reality would present itself.

GROTESQUE

SANS-SERIF

*“A Design that is square-jawed
and strong-armed,
yet still soft-spoken.”*

VITALITY

franklin GOTHIC

The Ideal of Realism

The Franklin Gothic typeface was the third in a series of sans serif faces design after ATF (American Type Founders) was founded in 1892. In the early 1900s, Morris Fuller Benton, who was in charge of typeface development for ATF at the time, wanted to create type designs that would influence American type design for more than 40 years. And as a result, Around 1902, Franklin Gothic was cut, and released as a font of metal type in 1905. [\[source\]](#)

In 1980, under license from ATF, ITC (International Typeface Corporation) commissioned Victor Caruso to create four new weights of Franklin Gothic in roman and italic: book, medium, demi and heavy. This series was followed in 1991 by a suite of 12 condensed and compressed designs drawn by David Berlow. [\[source\]](#)

STRENGTH

MORRIS FULLER BENTON