

GOING TO THE PRINTER'S:  
A DIDACTIC POEM

*for all the Helmskis*

To measure the geography of paper,  
You need small measures: a tad and a hair's-breadth.  
The tad is a **pica**, six picas to the inch.  
The hair's-breadth is a **point**, 72 points per inch.

Now then: the type-style, with dozens or hundreds of **fonts** to choose from,  
Some with serifs and some without.  
Serifs? The hairline strokes that complete  
The top and bottom of certain letters.  
Look at a capital *I*, for instance:  
One stroke or three?  
Sans-serif type makes bolder headlines,  
But serif type is more legible text.  
Next:

How big are the letters? That's **point-size**, in points.  
Look at some samples, see what looks right.

The space between lines, or **leading** (rhymes with "bedding")  
Is not measured in half lines or lines.  
It's any space you specify, measured in points  
From one baseline to the next.  
(Hint: if you're setting 12-point type,  
You'll need at least 12 points space between lines.)

Finally, how wide a column do you need?  
That's **line length** or **measure**, in picas and points.

If you take this poem to the printer,  
I'd like it set preferably in Palatino,  
Or else in Garamond or Baskerville,  
In 10-point type, with 12-point linespacing,  
In a column 30 picas, 6 points wide.