

Designing Your Own Font

Sara Linsley

Why you should listen to me



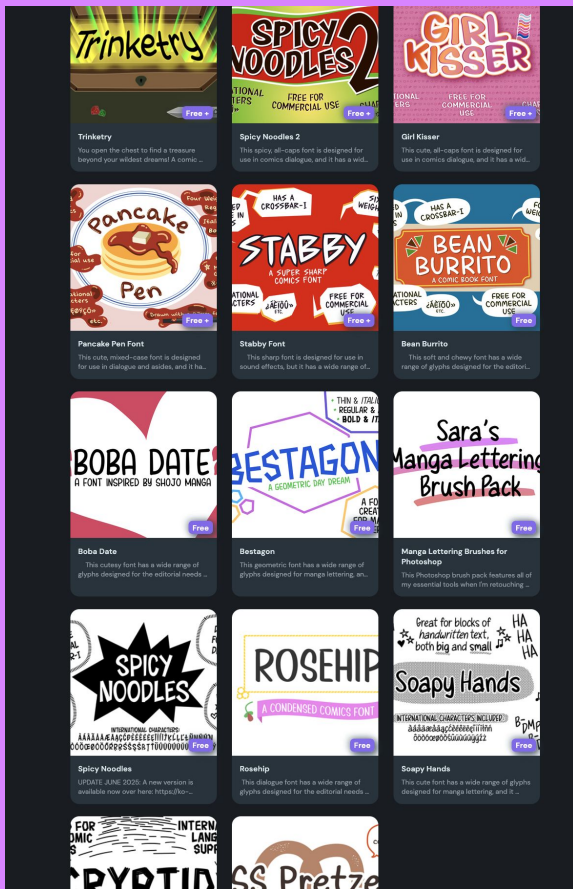
Sara Linsley

- she/her
- Manga Letterer since 2012
- OGN Comics Letterer since 2022
- Font Designer since 2019
- Senior Software Engineer, Publishing Specialist at VIZ Media

Lettering

- *Worlds Beyond Number: The Official Graphic Novel*
- *Phoenix*
- *Dandadan* (lettering and logo)
- *Sweat and Soap*
- *39 Clues Graphic Novel #1: The Maze of Bones*
- *Fushigi Yugi: Byakko Senki*
- *Revolutionary Girl Utena: After the Revolution*
- etc, etc

Why you should listen to me



Fonts

- I've made 13-ish fonts
- Designed for use in comics
- All have SIL Open Font License, which allows free use in commercial works
- My fonts have been:
 - published in both print and digital books
 - used by publishers big and small
 - used in mobile apps (Focus Friend by Hank Green)
- <https://sara.pizza/fonts>

Disclaimer!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

- Consider your specific situation before making your own font
 - If you're working with a publisher, **check with your editor** first!!
- You're probably better off using someone else's font

Comicraft:

- <https://www.comicbookfonts.com/>

Blambot:

- <https://blambot.com/>
- Some fonts are **free for indie use!**

My Fonts :)

- <https://sara.pizza/fonts>
- All completely **free** for commercial use

Fando Fonts

- <https://fandofonts.com/>
- Paid, pay-what-you-wish, and **free** fonts
- You'll likely be wrestling with it more than you need to.
- Designing a font while meeting your deadline is like building the airplane while flying it
 - Expect to spend a couple days on this at least

Overview



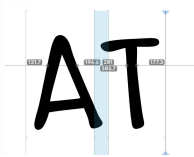
Get Source Material



Create Vectors from Source Material



Place Vectors into Font Software



Adjust metrics and kerning

THE QUICK BROWN FOX

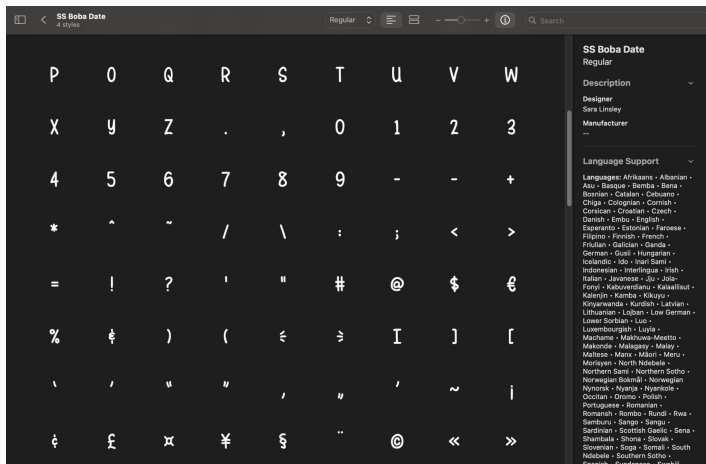
Regular

Export, test, adjust

Distribute??

General Advice

- If this is your first time making a font, I would recommend making an all-upercase font for simplicity
 - You only need to design 26 (A-Z) good characters, as opposed to 52 (a-z and A-Z)
 - Mixed case is more complicated to adjust font metrics and kerning for
- If you don't know what characters to include, it's okay to check other fonts for reference (PLEASE use mine!!)



Get Source Material

If you have your own hand-lettered pages, use those!!

OR

Hand-letter a couple pages on pen & paper

- Harder to convert to vectors
- More organic feel

OR

Hand-letter a couple pages digitally

- Easier to convert to vectors
- Less organic feel

- ★ Create a template with guidelines, and draw letters as vectors
- ★ The characters are already vectors and don't need to be vectorized

notes	she	cookie	microwave	every
soft	baking	hope	effervesce	
home	café	bunny	same	seam
y con	Café	toast	best	kt ta
	CAFÉ	ye o	ata	tt
	POR TI		towel	
	WXYZSS	P	tortilla	orange
	AAAaaa		code	pen
	BBBbbb		several	
	CCCcccc			
	DDDddd			
	EEEeee			
	FFFfff			
	GGGggg			
	HHHhhh			
	IIIIiii			
	JJJjjj			
	KKKkkk			
	LLLlll			
	MMmmm			
	NNnnnn			
	OOoooo			
	PPpppp			
	QQqqqq			
	RRrrrr			
	SSssss			
	TTtttt			
	UUuuuu			
	VVVvvv			
	WWWwww			
	XXXxxx			
	YYYyyy			
	ZZzzzz			

be doing for this demonstration

- [illegible]

Get Source Material from Pen & Paper

Materials:

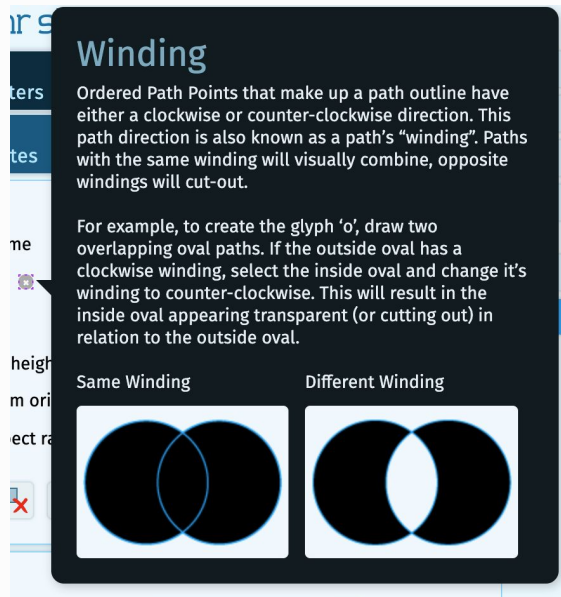
- ★ Ruled paper
- ★ Good pen
- ★ Phone Camera or Scanner
- ★ Inkscape or Illustrator

Steps:

1. Write out as much text as you can!
 - a. Use comics, books, etc for reference
 - b. Try to include as much punctuation and special characters as possible
 - c. Throw a couple J's, X's, Z's in there
2. Digitize the page, either by taking a picture with your phone, or with a scanner
3. Open the page in Inkscape
4. Trace as many characters as possible
 - a. Use fewer points for performance
5. Catalog all the characters you have
6. Identify the characters you're missing, and repeat steps 1-5 so you have a complete set
 - a. It's easier to do this now than later!!!!!!

Put Vectors into Font Software

- ★ Now that you have vectors of all your characters, open up Glyphr Studio: <https://www.glyphrstudio.com/>
 - (normally I use Glyphs)
- ★ Copy and paste your characters one by one into their place
- ★ If a hole isn't appearing where it should, check the Attributes of the paths, and make sure the Windings are opposite----->



Adjust metrics and kerning in font software

- ★ Set metrics
 - Side bearings
 - Ascent/Descent
 - Etc
- ★ Name it something unique
- ★ Glyphr Studio has great documentation:
<https://www.glyphrstudio.com/help/tutorial/>
- ★ Use your source material as reference to adjust spacing and placement
 - Not sure how high to put the period? Check where you naturally drew it!

Export, Test, Adjust!

- ★ Export the font file as an OTF, install it, and open it in the software where you're going to letter your comics
- ★ Be aware of **font caching**
 - Your computer and typesetting software will cache font data for performance reasons
 - You may need to delete the font from your computer, restart, and re-install the font

Distribute??

- ★ If you choose to distribute the font, you might want to pick a license
- ★ Fonts can be licensed by device (desktop, website, etc), number of seats, and type of publisher (indie vs trad pub)
- ★ Be aware your font may be uploaded to font aggregator websites regardless of the license type you choose
 - Please don't use these websites!! They make a WHOLE lot of ad money off of designers' unpaid labor
- ★ I give my fonts SIL font licenses because this isn't a source of income for me, and they're really only used by comic artists and letterers who make very little money
- ★ Read more about font licensing here:
<https://www.monotype.com/font-licensing-explained-designers-and-brands>

Questions?

Thank you!