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LetterMat: 143

Capital Letters in Captions

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LetterMat: 143 Capital Letters in Captions

All the previous spacing questions have dealt with lower case letters. Remember that Wizard's FrameShop software sets spaces between items as if everything was a rectangle, and capital letters, with all their overhanging and angled strokes, are bound to create many wider spaces.

It should be no surprise that refining the spacing for capital letters may be the most common use for this manual spacing routine. Names and places, after all, are a frequent part of the captions picture framers will do.

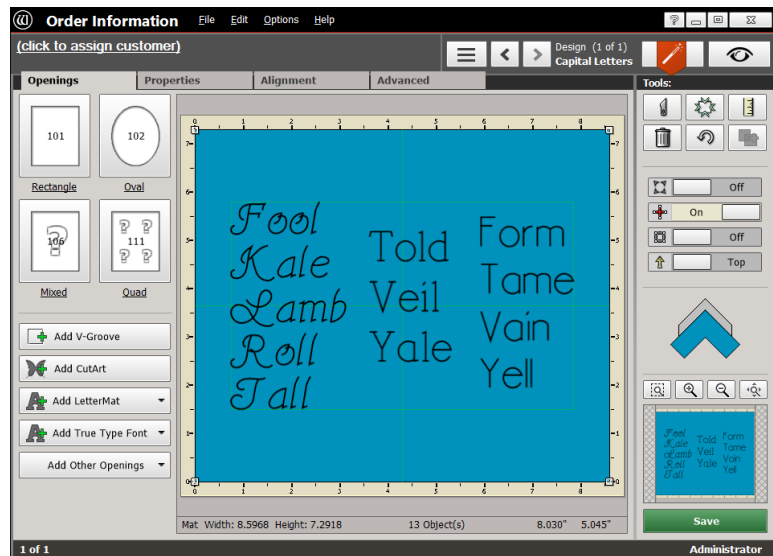
We will look over the single line fonts, point out common spacing problems, and demonstrate how to correct them. Along the way, there will be a few size and spacing suggestions to make the caption more distinctive.

An Overview of Capital Letter Spacing Problems

The illustration shows some of the capital letters in the single line fonts that have angles, flourishes, or overhanging elements that commonly cause spacing concerns—particularly if they are followed by small round letters.

In a block of copy, many of these wider spaces would cause no readability problems, but if the lettering is a name under a picture, it will be read and examined closely.

It should look its best. Spacing refinements merit attention. Every framer will evaluate every caption in its context, though, and decide when corrections are necessary.





A Quick Review

The strategy for correcting the spacing for capital letters is the same as for correcting lower case spacing.

- ▶ Copy and paste to duplicate the caption.
- ▶ Change the text for each copy of the caption. One caption will be only the capital letter. The other caption will be the lower case letters.
- ▶ Select both parts of the caption and click the **Align Objects to Bottom** button under the **Alignment** tab. This lines up the letters' baselines.
- ▶ Use the arrow keys on the keyboard to move the caption's parts horizontally to correct the spacing between the capital letter and the lower case letters.

The Bristol Font

This is the most orderly of the single line fonts, but some of the capital letters still need spacing attention.

This name is a good example to show two capital letters with spacing concerns in the font.

The top line of the illustration shows the name as it is typed.

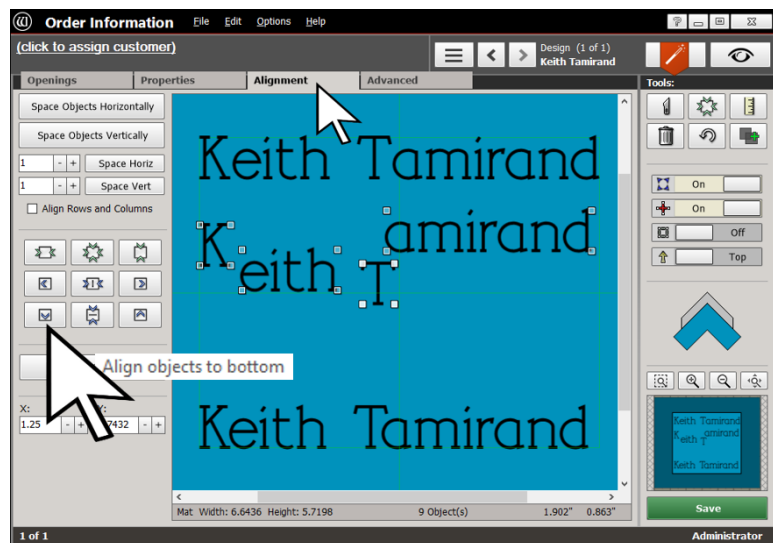
- The Height is 0.42 inch
- The Kerning is set to 0.04 inch
- The Tracking is set to 0.26 inch

It looks fine, but the inset angle of the **K** and the overhanging top stroke of the **T** create spaces that could be improved—especially when they are followed by round letters.

The Divided Caption

As The second line shows the beginning step of how we will resolve the spacing issues. The caption is duplicated. There are now 4 parts and the text has been changed in each one: **K**, **eith**, **T**, and **amirand**.

To simply improve the spacing for the capital letters, it would also be possible to divide the caption into just 3 parts: **K**, **eith T**, and **amirand**.





Note: This is a good idea because it would preserve the **Tracking** adjustment to set the size of the space between **Keith** and **Tamirand**. But this is an exercise showing further options with capital letters, and there is another option that follows.

Alignment

All 4 parts of the second line of the illustration are selected.

- ▶ Click the **Align Objects to Bottom** button under the **Alignment** tab to line up the parts' baselines.

This has been done in the bottom line in the illustration. It also shows the 4 sections of the caption moved horizontally using the arrow keys on the keyboard.

The **e** nestles closer into the angle of the **K**, and the **a** fits closer under the top stroke of the **T**.

More Options for the Capital Letters

While the capital letters are separate LetterMat items, why not emphasize them by changing their size and position?

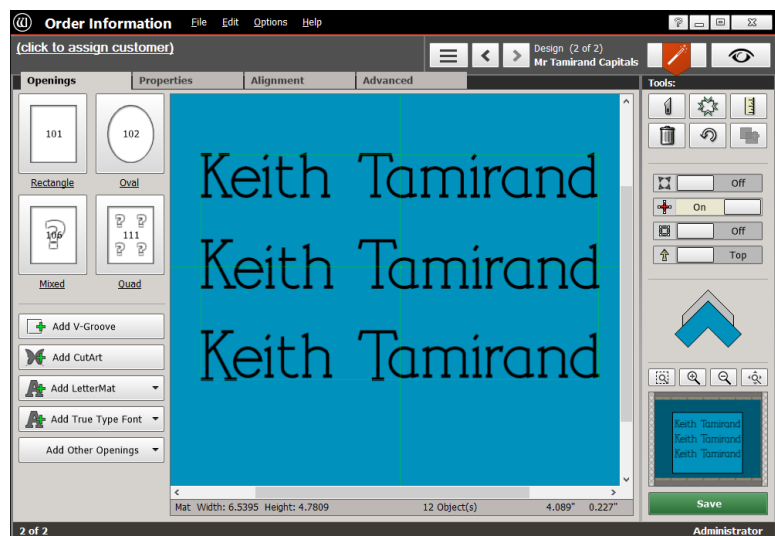
The top version of the name in this illustration repeats the corrected spacing for the capital letters.

In the second version of the name, the capital letters are larger —0.47 inch high compared with the 0.42 inch height of the lower case letters.

And what if the capitals' bottoms were slightly lower?

In the bottom version of the name, the capitals are 0.48 inch high. They are also 0.03 inch below the baseline of the lower case letters.

The small changes in these capital letters are quiet, noticeable touches, but certainly not dramatic. The Bristol font does not lend itself to much that is dramatic. The other fonts, however, show examples where more exaggerated applications of these options help a caption shine.





The Vienna Font

This is the font that appears to be an unadorned geometric font, but there are many strokes that are decorative touches.

The options for changing the size and position of the capital letters shown with the Bristol font can be exaggerated with the Vienna font. The alterations will be delightful additions to captions using the Vienna font.

The first version of each name in this illustration is typed without alteration. It is easy to see that 3 of the 4 capital letters need spacing improvements.

In the second version of each name, the capital letters are separated from the lower case letters, just as in the previous example.

Even Larger Capitals

In all the versions of these names, the lower case letters are 0.6 inch high and **Keep Aspect Ratio** is checked.

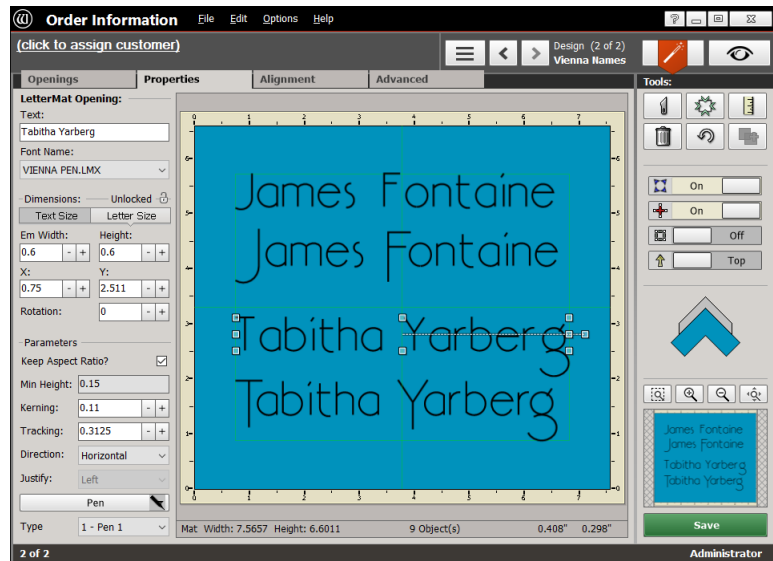
The capital letters of the first altered caption are 0.9 inch high—much more exaggerated than the larger capitals in the Bristol example.

The **Keep Aspect Ratio** button is unchecked for both the capitals, too, so that they are more narrow.

In the altered version of the second name, the **T** is 0.85 inch high and the **Y** is 0.9 inch high. The **Keep Aspect Ratio** is checked for both.

One feature of a sans serif typeface—and these single line fonts in particular—is that the descending strokes are lines with no serif on the end.

The capital letters can be much taller. Their tops can remain in their original positions, and the descending strokes simply continue as longer lines below the baseline for a quiet decorative effect.



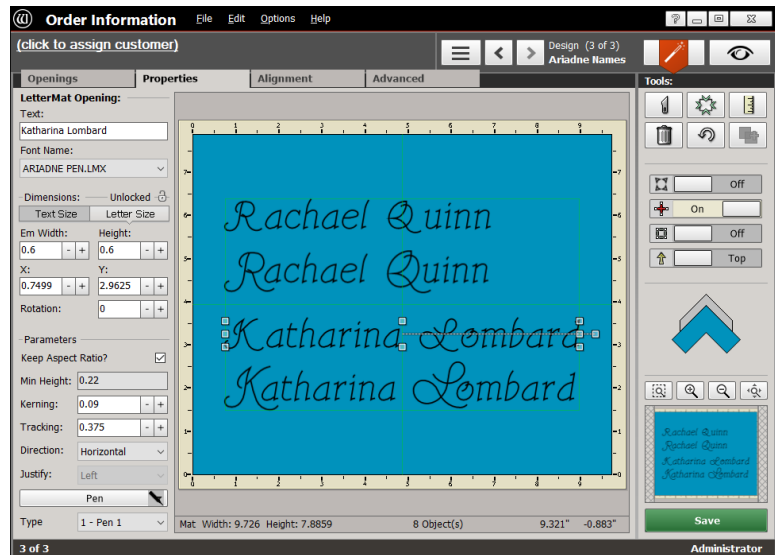


The Ariadne Font

From past examples using this font, it is clear that there will normally be some manual spacing necessary to improve the captions.

This is particularly true using the capital letters of this font. So many of them have flourishes that leave wide voids between letters with the standard LetterMat spacing formula.

Far from being a hardship, changing the size and position of the capital letters is the way that the Ariadne font was meant to be used to make the most artistic and dramatic captions.



All four of the capital letters in these names were chosen for their descending elements that are meant to trail under the next letter.

The first version of each name is typed using the Ariadne font without alteration.

In the second version of each name, the lower case is one LetterMat item and each capital letter is another separate LetterMat item.

In all the versions of these names, the lower case letters are 0.6 inch high and **Keep Aspect Ratio** is checked.

In the altered version of the first name, both the **R** and the **Q** are 0.8 inch high. In all the altered version of the second name, the **K** is 0.83 inch high and the **L** is 0.85 inch high.

Note: The choices of sizes and placement are artistic decisions, but note that all four of the capital letters' baselines are well below the baselines of the lower case letters. Mechanically, this is to allow the flourishing stroke at the bottom to underline the lower case letters. Beyond this observation, a formula for using this font is difficult to quantify. Every designer will have a unique opinion on how to alter the size and position of the capitals to make the caption just right.



Things to Remember

- ★ Captions should look their best. There will always be a few manual spacing corrections that need to be made.
- ★ We see now that nearly half the capital letters need some spacing attention because of their angles or overhanging strokes, and to accommodate the shape of the following letter. We looked at 3 fonts, but the message is that every font you use will have its own capital letter anomalies.
- ★ If the capital letters are separated for spacing improvements, why not take the opportunity to make a few artistic improvements, too?

