

Points and Picas

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The basic units of measurement in design are points and picas. You use points to measure type size. Headlines are measured in points. When you dummy a headline on a page, however, you must convert points to picas because pages are dummied in picas and sometimes column inches. A column inch is one inch of type over one column.

There are 12 points in a pica. If you divide the point size of a headline by 12, you get the number of picas. For example, if you have a 48-point headline and want to know how many picas to allow for it, take the following steps:

Because there are 12 points in a pica, divide 48 by 12 to get the number of picas.

$$48 / 12 = 4 \text{ picas.}$$

Dummy 4 picas for a one-line, 48-point.

Sometimes, you have more than one line of a headline. To determine how many picas to allow on your dummy, you first must multiply the size of the headline by the number of lines. If you had a two-line, 48-point headline, you would do the following:

Multiply 48 by 2 because you have two lines.

$$48 \times 2 = 96 \text{ points.}$$

Divide 96, the total points, by 12, the number of points per pica.

$$96 / 12 = 8 \text{ picas.}$$

Dummy 8 picas for a two-line, 48-point headline.

You also can use the headline dummied chart on this Web site when determining the number of picas to allow for headlines of various point sizes and number of lines.

Sometimes, you must dummy a story that is measured in inches. There are 6 picas to an inch. Here is how you would deal with a 10-inch story:

Because there are 6 picas to an inch, multiply 10 by 6 to get the number of picas for the story.

$$10 \times 6 = 60 \text{ picas.}$$

Dummy 60 picas for your 10-inch story.

Text is measured in picas and points. The standard width for one column of text on a six-column grid is 12 picas and 2 points. The fact that points are measured on a 12-point scale, i.e. 12 points to a pica, and picas are measured on a 10-point scale causes problems. But the solution is simple: Convert the points to a decimal when doing math. You convert to a decimal by dividing the number of points by 12, the number of points in a pica. After you have done the math, convert back into points.

Let's try our example with two columns:

Divide 2 points by 12, the number of points in a pica.

$$2 / 12 = .17$$

Add the decimal to the 12 picas: $12 + .17 = 12.17$ picas per column.

To find out the width of the 2-column headline, multiply 12.17 by the number of columns, in this case two, and add the number of gutters, in this case one.

$$12.17 \times 2 \text{ (columns)} = 24.34 + 1 \text{ (gutter)} = 25.34.$$

Convert the decimal back into points by multiplying by 12.

$$0.34 \times 12 = 4.08.$$

Rounding off we get 25 picas and 4 points for a 2-column headline.