

ADOBE ILLUSTRATOR AS KERNING TOOL

Many font editors have autokerning feature, but the quality is not always optimal. Programming of decent Autokerning functionality is demanding task, for example Italian engineer Iginio Marini, creator of iKern, said the task took several years. iKern quality is very high, someone has said it to be even better than quality of Adobe's Optical Kerning, which is used in design programs Photoshop, Illustrator and Indesign. Iginio Marini does not sell iKern as a program, but as a service. If you have money and the proper horizontal letterfitting (spacing and kerning) is essential, go for iKern. If you have some Adobe design tool, consider using it to find kerning values. Adobe Illustrator (and other Adobe tools) has scripting language, which can be used to calculate optimal kerning values for letter pairs, which can be imported to your font.

I have made a script that iterates 6000 letter pairs, adds every pair one by one in textfield, measures width of text when unknerved and when optically knerved, compares widths and calculates the kerning value and finally removes unneeded pairs.

The workflow is simple:

- 1) Install your font (in our example <http://www.royalcomics.org/puhekupla/ScanahandExtended.ttf>)
- 2) Download and save javascript file from <http://www.royalcomics.org/puhekupla/kern.js>
- 3) Modify .js file by replacing font name and em size if needed.
- 4) Open Illustrator and from File / Scripts / Other Scripts... select kern.js.
- 5) The script starts and gathers kerning values. After about 7 minutes script is ready and you should see kerning pairs and values in textfield.
- 6) Click on textfield, select all texts (Select / All) and copy them to clipboard (Edit / Copy).
- 7) Open text editor, paste clipboard content and save as kerning_pairs.txt (in our example http://www.royalcomics.org/puhekupla/ScanahandExtended_optical_kerning_values.txt)
- 8) Open your font with FontCreator and from Format / Kerning... / Import... select newly created kerning_pairs.txt.
- 9) Save font and reinstall it. Now you should have font knerved with Illustrator!

SAMPLES OF KERNING QUALITY

Below are few sample texts with font which I made with Scanahand 3. Scanahand does not make any kerning values, but the spacing (left and right side bearings of glyph) quality is rather good, but because of missing kerning feature, there arises flaws with some letter combinations, which nearly always are problematic. Below we can see, that for example VA, TA, Pa, OT are not beautiful without kerning. The kerning pairs are gathered using Illustrator javascript and Optical Kerning. I was amazed of the quality, although we removed all pairs with kerning values between 50 and -50.

Upper: Kerning disabled

Lower: Kerning values picked from Illustrator. Total 2266 pairs in font. Pair list had 5971 pairs: all of uppercase-uppercase, uppercase-lowercase and lowercase-lowercase from A-Za-zÅÄÖääö and most needed pairs of charset ISO 8859 to support various scripts (The list is here: http://www.royalcomics.org/puhekupla/get_kern.php).

SOUTH-EAST SCOTLAND
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God keep our land glorious and free!
God keep our land glorious and free!

DO YOU READ COMIC BOOKS? BOOOOM!
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THE NEW YORK TIMES
THE NEW YORK TIMES

A WEST GERMANIC LANGUAGE THAT
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INTO WHAT WAS TO BECOME SOUTH-EAST SCOTLAND
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MEDIEVAL KINGDOM OF NORTHUMBRIA.
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PAPER PJONJANG TATTOO VAN AWARE SYSTEM TJOF Let's SPACE!
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