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# TABULAR COMPOSITION

*By*  
**ROBERT SEAVER**



NEW YORK  
OSWALD PUBLISHING COMPANY  
1913



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## TABULAR COMPOSITION

IN THE good old days of hand composition, the man who understood how to set tables was a high and mighty individual who took orders from nobody, not even the boss, wore a straw hat without a crown during working hours, chewed large quantities of tobacco in good-sized lifts, and spit where he darn pleased. He was looked up to and envied by the other journeymen and fairly worshipped by the devil.

Even the foreman himself regarded the tabular expert with respect, for in the beginning of printing was it not written that only the chosen few should have the ability to throw together miscellaneous assortments of figures and box-heads, separate them with odds and ends of brass rules, and in the course of time produce a conglomerate mass that would lift, and that was good for double price when pasted up on the weekly dupe?

In referring to the "good old days" in this connection let it be understood that the writer desires his readers to go back no further than the days before machines that set tables like straight matter were invented. It was humiliating enough for the cocky compositor to have a machine invented that could set more type in an hour than he could all day, but his discomfiture was nothing compared to the chagrin of the tabular artist when machine tables arrived.

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### *Casting-up a table*

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Tho it is true that considerable tabular work is done by machine, a good deal continues to be done by hand, and even in the case of machine work a skilled workman is needed to insert rules and finish the table. So the tabular compositor, tho slightly battered, is still in the ring. The remarks that follow are written not for his instruction, but rather for his approval. They are intended more for the benefit of those who are to be the tabular men of the future. To the straw-hatted and well-posted one they may seem elementary, even obvious, but others may find something of value that will be a help in their daily work.

#### CASTING-UP A TABLE

The face and the size of type decided, the next step is to cast-up the columns. The conventional table usually consists of a stub, so called, which may be a column of reading matter, names or the like, and two or more columns of figures with headings over the whole. With a stick set to the proper measure, the compositor first sets enough quads for each figure column to accommodate the largest amount that it will contain, always making the space even multiples of the body upon which the figures are cast. Whatever space is left after the several figure columns have been provided for is then thrown into the stub.

If space allows, the figure columns may be set off from the rules an en quad or even more. Between the quads repre-

*A sample table*

senting the columns of figures short bits of rule of the body to be used are inserted. The stub is generally lead-ered out to the first rule to carry the eye across to the

**THE MAIN HEADING**

THE FIRST SUB-HEADING IN SMALL CAPS

*The Secondary Sub-heading is usually set in Italics*

THE STUB HEADING, SET IN CAPS AND SMALL CAPS IS CENTERED IN SPACE OPPOSITE BOX HEADINGS	PRIMARY BOX HEADING		A TABLE DOUBLED ON ITSELF IS DIVIDED WITH A DOUBLE RULE
	Secondary Box Heading Set in Caps and Lower Case	Set this way to save space	
This is .....	1234567890	1509	4218123.45
Called .....	2345678901	232	32894.3597
the Stub .....	3456789012	1845	132.8898
Leader it.....	4567890123	175	157831.09024
Out for .....	Block of Old Style Figures	1178	Modern Figures en leaders for decimal point
Legibility .....			

Rules Run Full Length, Cross Rules Cut

proper row of figures. The width of the box heading will effect the casting-up of the figure columns. In general, if this would not make too great a variation in the amount of white space, it is well to make the figure columns as nearly equal in width as possible. In order to accomplish

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### *Alignment of figures and decimal points*

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this, and especially in order to save space, a particularly wide head box may be turned to read up and down, or a little extra space introduced into an especially narrow column. A long and narrow table may often be doubled upon itself, that is, set in half measure with a heavy face or a double rule in the middle to indicate the division. Good judgment will have to be used in deciding all these points, and the skill of a compositor in this as well as in any other style of composition is shown not only in knowing the best method, but also in knowing what necessary modification to make.

Figure columns should all line at the right-hand side, except in a column containing decimals, in which case the decimal points should line. Because it is the same body as the figures, it is better to use an en leader instead of a period for a decimal point when space allows. A period cast on a three em or four em space body necessitates cutting cross rules to odd lengths. In columns composed of sums that vary greatly in lengths, it sometimes happens that considerable white space will show at the left. In such a case, it is well to set off the figures an em quad or so from the rule at the right.

Not only should the width of the columns be adjusted to even multiples of the figures used, but the length of the table also should be cast up to multiples of six points in order to fit the labor-saving rules. The necessary variation in space is easily secured by varying the space be-

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### *Large tables and legibility*

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tween figures and cross rules at top and bottom and in the box heads. For the convenience of the reader, it is better to cast up a table to read the ordinary way of the page. When it becomes advisable to turn the table to read the long way of the page, the head of the table should be toward the back margin, if the table falls on a right-hand page and at the outer margin when it comes on a left-hand page. Tables too large to be handled in this way may be arranged to read across two facing pages or turned to read across two pages from outer margin to outer margin. If this last is done, it is not necessary to repeat the box head on the right-hand page. A table too large to be handled by any of these methods may be cast-up to make what it will, printed separately, and then tipped into the book as an insert. This, of course, involves extra expense for presswork and binding.

Legibility should be the first consideration in selecting type for setting a table. Any proofreader knows that there is nothing so hard to read correctly as a solid mass of figures. In general, the face of type should match the type of the text, that is, old-style figures should be used with old-style letters, and modern with modern. Experiments have shown that old-style figures are rather more legible than modern because of the variations in alignment, and that fairly open-faced figures are more legible than those with a heavier face. The old-style figures are not quite so pleasing as the modern because of their ragged

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### *Importance of the type-size*

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appearance. In order to attain the desired legibility without the irregularity of the ordinary old-style figures, the new lining figures are a compromise, and these are often used with both old-style and modern text letter. In some special cases, figures cast upon two-thirds of an em body are used. These wider body figures are used more frequently in newspaper, catalog and similar work, while the figure on an en-quad body is generally used for book work.

#### THE SIZE OF TYPE

Following out the same idea of securing maximum legibility, the rule generally followed is to put a table in type as large as possible, tho always one and sometimes two sizes smaller than the text letter. For example, when the text is set in ten-point or smaller the tables should go in nine point or smaller. For an eleven- or twelve-point text a ten-point table is allowable. Sometimes to avoid putting a table in too small type it is cast up to read the long way of the page across facing pages, or from the outer margin of one page across to the outer margin of the other page. It requires some judgment to decide which will cost the reader the least annoyance, a table set in small type, or one so placed in the page that he is obliged to turn the book when he wishes to refer to the table. Tables occurring in eight-point matter or smaller may be set in the same size as the surrounding matter. A distinction is sometimes made in tables occurring in

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### *How to lead a table*

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footnote type, those that are separate footnotes themselves being set in the same type as the footnote, and those that are a part of the footnote set in one size smaller.

#### LEADING A TABLE

A leaded table set by hand is expensive and a cause of much annoyance, loss of temper, waste of material and various other undesirable things. In machine-set tables leading is easy because it is accomplished by casting the figures on a larger body. Even with the most careful planning, however, it sometimes becomes necessary to lead a hand-set table. When this occurs, the columns, so far as possible, should be cast-up to multiples of six-point in order to utilize labor-saving material.

Leads are used between rules and headings and between figure columns and bottom rules. The usual amount of space allowed in these places equals one-half the body of the type used. That is to say, an eight-point table set solid would take four points in these places; if leaded with a two-point lead, five points of space is better at top and bottom. This space may be increased or decreased to make up the total length of the column to even multiples of six points, but in no case should the space allowed exceed an em of the type.

#### HEADINGS

These are of various kinds and are referred to as the

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## *Headings and footnotes*

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main heading, which goes outside the rules, the first sub-heading and other subordinate heading that also go outside the rules and box headings, which may be in several stories, enclosed in rules just above the figure columns.

✓ The main heading is usually set in caps, the first sub-heading in caps and small caps and the second and any other sub-headings either in caps and small caps, italic or even in plain caps and lower-case. These headings should be in a uniform size of type regardless of the type used for the body of the table. The box heads are also graded in importance, the main head being set in caps and small caps and the secondary box heads in lower-case. They generally are set one or two sizes smaller than the body of the table, tho not as a rule in a smaller size than six-point. Where box headings consist of several stories and have the main headings in caps and small caps, the stub-heading should be set in caps and small caps also, and centered in the space opposite the heads over the figure columns.

### FOOTNOTES

These are usually set in type one size smaller than the table itself when the type is larger than six-point, but notes of the same size are allowable in six-point tables. While the use of the asterisk, dagger and other reference marks is now practically obsolete for text references, having been replaced by superior figures, this does not apply to note references in the body of a table, for here the

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### *Rules for tabular work*

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superior figures may cause confusion and reference marks are preferred. Footnotes to tables that occur on the same page with text matter should be placed at the foot of the table itself rather than at the foot of the page.

#### THE SELECTION AND USE OF RULES

Without rules no well regulated table is really a table at all, and without a bountiful supply of well-selected rule profits disappear and costs roll up to an alarming extent. Not more than two faces of rule are necessary, but these must make up in quantity what they lack in variety, and should be cut accurately to labor-saving lengths. The standard fonts of rule are cut to multiples of six points and this is good so far as it goes. But besides this standard equipment, it will be found of immense advantage to also equip in lengths of forty-eight points or under with rules cut to multiples of points in possibly the following sizes: 6, 8, 10, 12, 16, 18, 20, 24, 30, 32, 36, 40, 42, 48. This will enable the compositor to cast up narrow columns to multiples of 6, 8, or 10 point, the sizes that are most commonly used. If 7- or 9-point tables are to be set, it is well also to include rules of 7, 9, 14, 21, 27, 28, 35 and 45 points in width. While it is possible to buy rules in full length strips and cut them down, this work can be done more accurately and economically by the type found-ers. Each of these short pieces of rule should be stamped with its width in points as an aid to the distributor. The

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### *The face of the rule*

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first cost of an equipment of this kind is not excessive, and such a rule font will pay for itself over and over again. If desired, the shorter pieces may be omitted from the font and type metal space rules in 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12 and 14 point sizes may be cast on the monotype on a two-point body and used instead. It should be remembered that space rules wear more quickly than brass rules and they should be replaced as soon as they become battered. The sizes of rule above forty-eight-point may be cut to multiples of six points and the number of sizes needed will, of course, vary with the nature of the work in hand.

The rule most used in tabular work is a hair-line face on the center of a two-point body. In very crowded tables a one-point rule may be used, and this has the advantage of enabling the compositor to make very close joints with the cross rules, but the one-point rule is so thin that the slightest inequality in the justification of a column will throw it out of alignment. It is also difficult to secure a good lock-up with very thin rule and hard to electrotype properly.

Besides the hairline face, a rule of somewhat heavier face is desirable for boxing-in and for indicating the division when a table is doubled upon itself. Books consisting entirely of tables are frequently improved in appearance by boxing-in, and this is also done often in catalog and similar work. Usually boxing is not considered

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*Rules should be in good condition*

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necessary to book work, where a rule across the page at the top and bottom of the table proper is considered sufficient.

#### THE CARE OF RULES

The beauty of the finished table will depend somewhat on the condition of the material used. A broken or battered rule should be discarded at once. It should be remembered that more time is lost in patching an old rule than would pay for many new ones. The distributor should clean all rules carefully and scrape off all accumulations of ink or wax on their sides. The larger pieces may then be put away in a regular rule case, while the smaller sizes may be dropped into the boxes of a regular type-case properly labeled with their size.

#### PRACTICAL POINTS IN MAKE-UP

Column rules as a general thing should run from top to bottom of the table in one unbroken piece, and all cross rules, except at top and bottom, consist of short pieces across the columns. This plan is sometimes changed where a series of tables with the same box heads are used and the columns run to the head of the figures only, as the compositor is thus enabled to lift off the box head, and place it on a new table.

It is a bad plan to break a table. It is far better to adjust the text matter to avoid this or leave a page a few lines short if necessary. ✓

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### *Joints should be avoided*

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The easiest way to insert rules in a table, especially in machine-set matter, is to turn the galley to a vertical position. A knife or bodkin may then be run down the column opening it enough to allow the rule to drop into place. A strip of wood furniture at the side loosely wedged into place will avoid all danger of "pi."

It might be advisable to repeat what has been said in a previous paragraph: Column rules should never be pieced. The joints are almost sure to show, and pieced rules make the table difficult to handle into lock-up. Where the use of pieced rules is unavoidable they should be arranged to break joints, that is, a short piece at the head of one column should alternate with a long piece at the head of the next column.

All rules used should be new or nearly so, and all corners perfectly joined. In electrotyped jobs the finisher can touch up the corners with solder, but the careful compositor will make up his pages so carefully that this added labor and expense will not be necessary.

### A SUBSTITUTE FOR TABLES

Having described tabular composition, to proceed to describe a substitute is suggestive of Punch's advice on marriage: "Don't." The fact remains, however, that often the compositor comes across a particularly annoying and difficult bit of tabular work that set in the ordinary way would consume much time and material. Then the

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*When wax plates should be used*

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best advice is "Don't." Send the copy to the map-maker and get a wax plate. By this process, rule work of the highest grade is secured with perfect joints, splendid printing quality, with the type stamped in with absolute precision and the whole delivered all blocked and ready for the press in less time and at less expense than by any other process.



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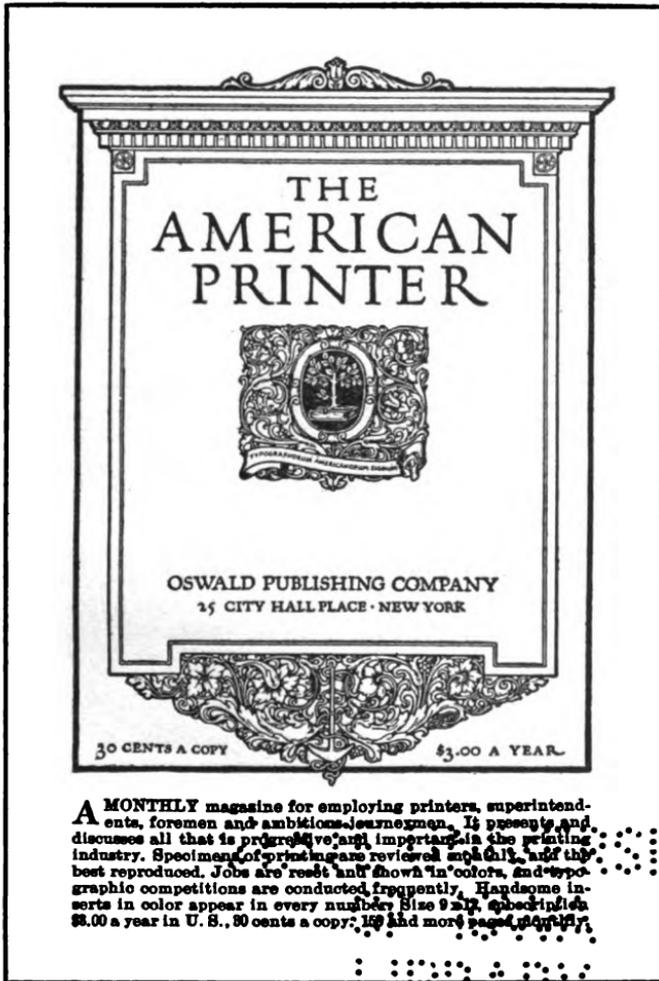
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