

The Atkinson Hyperlegible Font

Developed by The Braille Institute, this award-winning design is helping millions of people read easier

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We have a new issue coming in March 2025 — [Volume 13: Bubble and Pop](#) — and along with our new stories and activities we have also changed up our design a bit by using a new font — The Atkinson Hyperlegible Font.

Before I talk about this font, I want to make sure to shout out Laurette Klier from [Nana's Books](#) who first told me about it. She had discovered it and reformatted her entire collection using the Atkinson Hyperlegible in all of her books. I so appreciate that we have the kind of relationship that values our mutual purpose-driven mission in this work so that we can openly share these kinds of innovations with our readers!



Okay, so, what is the font and why is it so cool?

The Atkinson Hyperlegible font was developed in 2019 at the [Braille Institute](#) along with a team from [Applied Design Works](#), a low vision specialist, and a panel of people with low vision conditions. The Braille Institute developed this font specifically “to improve legibility and readability for individuals with low vision.”

Lead designer Elliott Scott began this monumental task with what’s called a

“grotesque sans serif core.” Grotesque, in this case, is simply a term to define a group of sans serif fonts. Sans serif means “without serifs.” A serif is a typographical term that indicates small decorative lines placed on letters and numerals. Examples of serif fonts are Times New Roman, and Garamond. Here at Mirador, we’ve always chosen a “sans serif” font because the lines are “cleaner” and easier to read. Sans serif fonts were first developed in the 18th century and were not always appreciated by typographers who preferred a more decorative style. (There’s an interesting piece on this term “grotesque” as it is used in typography by [Greta Harding](#) that is worth a read if you’re interested.)

So, back to the Atkinson Hyperlegible. One of the biggest tasks for lead designer Elliott Scott and the team was to make each letter and numeral, (called “glyphs”), distinct from one another as well as eliminating what are called “homoglyphs.” These are letters or numerals that can look very similar but have different meanings and can cause confusion on the page.

An example of homoglyphs is this series: the number 1, a lowercase l and a capital I. When you use a typical sans serif font, like Arial, you get this:

Arial: 1, l, I
Or Roboto: 1, l, I
Or Helvetica: 1, l, I

I have written this essay using the Atkinson font, but now you may notice the differences in these characters:

Atkinson Hyperlegible: 1, l, I

Another problem homoglyph is the numeral 0 and the capital letter O. Again, here are examples from other common sans serif fonts:

Arial: 0 and O
Roboto: 0 and O
Helvetica: 0 and O.

Now, these variations are a little more defined than the previous example, but can still cause confusion on a page. Here again is the Atkinson:

Atkinson Hyperlegible: 0 and O.

Font design is a pretty fascinating subject, with its own lexicon and history. Let's take our example of the 0 and O. You can tell that the capital letter O is rounder than the zero, it's nearly a perfect circle. That space within the "O" is called a "counter" — it's the amount of space within the glyph. All fonts have a specific counter size within the letters and numerals depending on that font. Everything from letters like a, b, and d, to numerals like 4, 6, and 8. Also considered are things like the length and curvature of spurs and tails on letters like g, p, q, and r. (You can learn more about [typographical terms here](#)).

There are other examples, and you can check out more information about how this font was designed on the [Braille Institute website](#). You know what else you can do on their website? Download this family of fonts for free. You can use them personally, professionally, or commercially, absolutely free of charge. Since it was released to the public in 2021, more than 150 thousand people have downloaded this font and it's used on more than 10 thousand websites, and by thousands of businesses across the globe, including us here at Mirador Magazine and Nana's Books! The Atkinson Hyperlegible font also won the prestigious Fast Company "Innovation by Design Award," for Graphic Design and was placed into the permanent collection at the Smithsonian Design Museum.



Finally, the name: Atkinson Hyperlegible — who is Atkinson? They named this font after [J. Robert Atkinson](#), the founder of the Braille Institute and himself a great innovator and advocate for the blind. A fitting tribute and a very cool piece of design work.

One of the things we care about most here at Mirador is keeping our lifelong readers reading as long as possible. We always have an eye out for the best way to design our magazine so we can make each page as accessible as possible. Innovations like this make us super happy!

I also want to mention that you can learn more about designing pages for people living with dementia by checking out the [DEEP Guide](#), developed in the U.K., and what we have used to help us in designing our magazine.

Thanks for reading!



Mirador Magazine is an online and print publication for people experiencing dementia and other cognitive change. Learn more at [MiradorMagazine.com](https://www.miradormagazine.com).

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