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Readable type is a system of choices

By Gyata Tabiri · Revised November 2, 2026

A page can fit all its text and still feel tiring to read. I judge typography with the actual content in front of me: its length, hierarchy, line breaks, and the amount of attention the task asks from the reader.

Read a paragraph before admiring the scale

A type scale can look elegant in a specimen while producing long, dense lines on the page. I would read a normal paragraph and a demanding one, then examine line length and leading together. Increasing size may help, but it may also expose a container that needs a different width.

Choose units for a relationship

A rem value relates to the root size; em depends on its font-size context. That distinction matters when deciding what should scale together. I would choose the relationship deliberately rather than treat one unit as a certificate that the layout is accessible.

Protect the quieter text too

Captions, instructions, and form labels often carry the detail needed to complete a task. Making them faint or tiny can leave the page attractive at a glance and unhelpful in use. Supporting text should be quieter in the hierarchy without becoming difficult to read.

Let enlargement challenge the layout

Zoom and larger text expose assumptions that a desktop screenshot can hide. Does a label clip? Does a fixed-height card conceal a sentence? Does a long heading crowd the next action? I would address the container as well as the type rather than reduce the text until it fits again.

Readable typography is a relationship between the words and the space around them. A numerical scale is useful when it supports that relationship, and worth changing when it does not.

Read alongside: Structure beneath the heading sizes · Choosing bounded fluid values.

Reference: CSS length units.

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