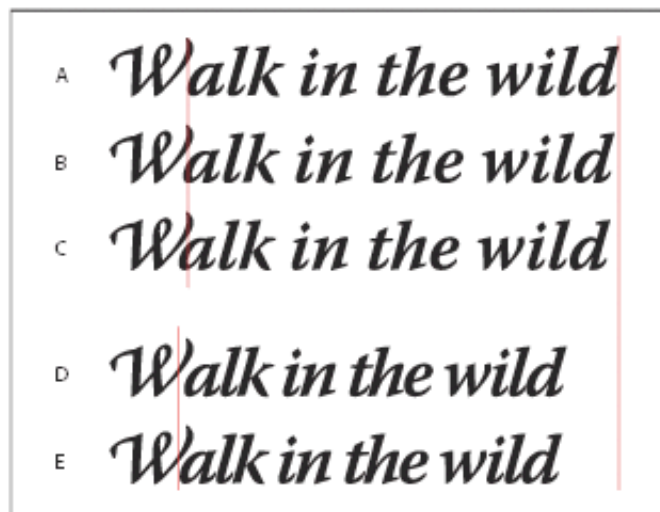


## Kerning and tracking

**Kerning** is the process of adding or subtracting space between specific pairs of characters. **Tracking** tightens the spacing between the characters in selected text or an entire block of text.

You can automatically kern type using metrics kerning or optical kerning. **Metrics kerning** (called pairs, which are included with most fonts. Kern pairs contain information about the spacing of specific letter pairs, such as LA, P., To, Tr, Ta, Tu, Te, Ty, Wa, WA, We, Wo, Ya, and Yo. Illustrator uses metrics kerning by default. Metrics kerning is automatically kerned when you import or type text.

Some fonts include robust kern-pair specifications. However, when a font includes only minimal kerning, you may use two different typefaces or sizes in one or more words on a line, you may want to use the **optical kerning** option. This option adjusts the spacing between adjacent characters based on their shapes.



*Kerning and tracking options*

**A.** Original text **B.** Text with optical kerning **C.** Text with manual kerning between *W* and *a* **D.** Text with tracking

You can also use **manual kerning**, which is ideal for adjusting the space between two letters. Tracking is cumulative, so you can first adjust individual pairs of letters, and then tighten or loosen a block of text by adjusting the tracking of the letter pairs.

When you click to place the insertion point between two letters, Illustrator displays kerning values. For optical kerning, optical kerning values (or defined kern pairs) appear in parentheses. Similarly, if you select a word, tracking values appear in the Character palette.

Tracking and kerning are both measured in 1/1000 em, a unit of measure that is relative to the current font size. In a 10-point font, 1 em equals 10 points. Kerning and tracking are strictly proportional to the font size.

**Note:** Values for kerning and tracking affect Japanese text, but normally these options are used to characters. (See [Working with aki.](#))

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