Getting Comfortable with Roboto Serif

A Modern Handbook for Optimizing the Reading Experience
Introduction

You look at a lot of words every day—why not be more comfortable while you read them? For example, how do you feel right now? Are you in a hot tub while you read this? Do you wish you were? How tight are your pants? How loose is your belt? How clean are your glasses? Where’s your teddy bear? Where’s your mom? What about cookies? How many cookies are in your hand?

This book is for anyone who reads words and likes to be comfortable whilst reading them. You deserve more reading comfort in your everyday life! And this book, brought to you by Roboto Serif, is filled with information on how to get it.

Godspeed, and here’s to getting comfortable!

This book is secretly a type specimen for Google’s latest addition to the Roboto superfamily. You can learn all about it—and what makes it so comfortable to read—on pgs 11-18.
Pleasure Reading

It’s likely you’ve been living your whole life without a strategy for reading comfortability. So, congratulations! You’ve made it this far on pure talent alone. Imagine how comfortable reading is going to get now that you have a roadmap.*

*WARNING: Always remember to exercise these principles in moderation; radical comfort may that lead to sleepiness, a force too powerful for even the most seasoned reader.

1. Comfortable is a state of mind.

Believing you’re comfortable is half the battle. Close your eyes, take a deep breath, and think your way to the ultimate reading experience. (Then open your eyes again because you can’t read with your eyes closed. [Unless you’re reading Braille, in which case, carry on]).

Need help getting in the mood? Why not try:

- Lying on a bed of marshmallows
- Hugging your mom
- Changing into a track suit
- Singing to a plant
- Painting some happy clouds
- Climbing into a pile of puppies
- Relaxing with a pillow and a blanket
- Reading in a cozy nook
- Drinking a warm beverage
- Listening to calming music
- Taking a short nap

*This page: Optical Size 22pt, Weight 600 Regular, Width 100%, Grade 0. Optical Size 14pt, Weight 600 Regular, Width 100%, Grade 0. Optical Size 10pt, Weight 300 Light, Width 70%, Grade 0. Optical Size 8pt, Weight 300 Light, Width 50%, Grade 0. Optical Size 28pt, Weight 300 Light, 300 Light Italic, and 500 Medium; Width 100%; Grade 0. Size 7pt, Optical Size 8pt; Weight 500 Regular; Width 70%, Grade 0.
2. Lighting is your friend.

Now that you’re in the mood, it’s time to get set up. Lighting is crucial; you need to optimize your ambiance and to actually see words:

**DO** supplement natural light with lamps as needed.

**DON’T** rely on the moon for anything more than mood lighting.

**DO** use candles liberally.

**DON’T** fall asleep and let the candles burn your house down.

**DO** consider anti-glare protectors for your device screens.

**DON’T** forget to do your eye yoga exercises after long periods of screen time.

3. Enhance the experience with snacks.

Not all great “comfort foods” make great “comfortable-reading foods,” but necessity is the mother of invention. If you can figure out a way to turn mashed potatoes and gravy into a finger food, you should 100% do that. Otherwise, opt for a simpler (and just as comforting) snack like shortbread. This classic version will go great with whatever you’re reading, but if you’re feeling adventurous, try a classics-inspired variation like the ones below.

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**CLASSIC SHORTBREAD**

| 2 | cups (250g) all-purpose flour |
| 2 sticks (226g) butter, cold, cut into 1" pieces |
| ½ cup (150g) sugar |

{1} HEAT oven to 325°.

{2} COMBINE flour and sugar.

{3} ADD butter and combine until crumbly.

{4} PRESS dough into an ungreased 8” pan. Use a toothpick to poke holes all over.

{5} BAKE 45 min or until golden. Cut into squares (or whatever shape you want) while still warm.

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**VARIATIONS:**

- **Gullivers Travels:** Add ½ cup mini chocolate chips
- **Charlie and the Chocolate Factory:** Add ½ cup fresh Snozberries (or ¼ cup dried if fresh aren’t available)
- **A Wrinkle in Time:** Add ½ cup chopped raisins
- **Roots:** Add ½ cup minced crystallized ginger root
- **A Clockwork Orange:** Add 2 tbsp orange zest
- **Lord of the Flies:** Add 2 tbsp minced, freeze-dried, edible locusts
- **The Hunger Games:** Double recipe
4. Take a comfy seat.

If you think this one is obvious, fair point. But even if you've already found the absolute most perfect reading chair in all the land, why not test out a few more to make sure?

Settle in for the long haul into the deep seat of a buttery leather LC2 armchair, and finally get around to finishing War and Peace.

You don't have to be a baby or a 19th century ghost to enjoy The Velveteen Rabbit from the gentle embrace of a rocking chair.

Don't be fooled! Not all seating options are ideal for reading e.g. Dentist's chair → Chair of nails → Iron Throne → Toadstool → Electric Chair → Silverchair (this is a 90's Australian band, not an actual chair)

It's time to finally hang that hammock you had to buy on the beach in Mexico and spend a Sunday swinging in the breeze with Dune.

Channel your inner 70s teenager by sinking into a beanbag chair and revisiting your old issues of Mad magazine.

Just because there's a magazine rack in the bathroom doesn't mean you should touch anything in it. Catch up on Twitter from your own, non-porous, alcohol-swabbable phone instead.
5. Soothe with sounds.

Why read in silence when there’s a whole universe of auditory comforts out there to read by?
Try Googling one of these classic SFX options:

- Calming Sounds of a Fluffy Blanket
- Distant Trains Echoing in the Rain
- Soothing Grill Sounds w/Sizzling Meat
- 20 Hrs of Kittens Purring
- Mystical Bamboo Forest Winds
- Crackling Holiday Fireplace

Prefer music?
These tracks should get you in the comfort zone:

1. “HAPPY HOUSE”
   Shuggie Otis
2. “LICENSE TO CHILL”
   Billy Ocean
3. “EASY STREET”
   Sister Sledge
4. “FANTASY”
   Earth, Wind & Fire
5. “FEELIN’ THAT
   THE FEELING’S GOOD”
   Minnie Ripperton
6. “BREEZIN”
   George Benson
7. “SAILING”
   Christopher Cross
8. “SUNDOWN”
   Gordon Lightfoot
9. “LOVELY DAY”
   Bill Withers

Reading in Bed

Oh, what could be better
Than reading in bed,
Or thinking about
All the books that you’ve read?
With someone who loves you,
A father, a mother,
A doll, or a pet,
Or a sister or brother,
A grandma, a grandpa,
An uncle, an aunt—
(Can you think of anything better?
I can’t!)
While outside the sky
Is all twinkling with light,
From stars that shine down
As we sleep through the night.
Oh, what could be better
Than sleepin in bed,
When the books that you love
Fill the dreams in your head?

—Helen H. Moore
not only is a pirate a more comfortable person to read about than a pessimist, but in many respects he is a more comfortable person to read about than a philanthropist. The minute the philanthropist is introduced, the author begins to show his own cleverness by discovering flaws in his motives. You begin to see that the poor man has his limitations. Perhaps his philanthropies are of a different kind from yours, and that irritates you. Musical people, whom I have heard criticise other musical people, seem more offended when some one flats just a little than when he makes a big ear-splitting dis- cord; and moralists are apt to have the same fastidiousness. The philanthropist is made the victim of the most cruel kind of vivisection,—a character-study.

Here is a fragment of conversation from a study of character: “That was really heroic,” said Felix. “That was what he wanted to do.” Gertrude went on. “He wanted to be magnanimous; he wanted to have a fine moral pleasure; he made up his mind to do his duty; he felt sublime,—that’s how he likes to feel.”

This leaves the mind in a painful state of suspense. The first instinct of the unsophisticated reader is that if the person has done a good deed, we ought not to begrudge him a little innocent pleasure in it. If he is magnanimous, why not let him feel magnanimous? But after Gertrude has made these subtle suggestions we begin to experience something like antipathy for a man who is capable of having a fine moral pleasure; who not only does his duty, but really likes to do it. There is something wrong about him, and it is all the more aggravating because we are not sure just what it is. There is no trouble of that kind in reading about pirates. You cannot make a character-study out of a pirate,—he has no character. You know just where to place him. You do not expect anything good of him, and when you find a sporadic virtue you are correspondingly elated.

For example, I am pleased to read of the pirate Gibbs that he was “affable and communicative, and when he smiled he exhibited a mild and gentle character.” But immediately Gibbs has been a philanthropist, it is doubtful whether these social and literary graces would follow certainly bears out this assertion.
Minimal and highly functional, Roboto Serif is intended for use almost anywhere (even interfaces). And while the new typeface is optimized to work well across the wide range of sizes and resolutions we have today, it’s just as comfortable in print.

**An experimental design process**

Roboto Serif carries over the clean simplicity of the original Roboto, without actually being derived from it. Instead of merely altering the sans face to incorporate serifs, Commercial created the Roboto Serif from scratch. They “atomized” the letterforms and—in an experimental and pragmatic process—rebuilt them one-by-one to find the best solutions. In this way, Gazdowicz reexamined basic assumptions about the elements of type design. “Do ball terminals need to be balls?” Gazdowicz asked. “Do serifs need to be serifs? Which shapes could work well here, brackets or not? What level of contrast works well? We’re not just looking at the highest quality screens, or developing for lower quality ones, but asking what is native to reading on screen.”

The resulting aesthetic is refined but functional, with just a “whisper of a serif.” Curves are anchored to decisive terminals, and optical sizes are precisely matched to the original Roboto. Its design harmonizes with the rest of the Roboto superfamily, and sometimes echoes them, but the serif has its own, distinct voice. Roboto Serif may serve in places that are rarely entrusted to serifs. “If you pick Roboto Serif for a project, you can use it ‘on the side’ of your UI for infographics or even menus,” Gazdowicz says. “Interface design has really followed a path of minimalism, just stripping things away more and more.” Roboto Serif is inherently minimal, which makes it amenable to those contexts where serifs are rarely used. “It will be interesting to see what the expressive possibilities will be.”

**Versatile and flexible for today’s wide range of needs**

In order to support the versatility and flexibility of the new typeface family, Roboto Serif is available (in addition to the static font files) as a variable font. A recent addition to the OpenType font format, variable fonts technology is becoming widely supported across mobile platforms, all the latest web browsers, and even desktop design applications.

Variable fonts enable designers to continuously interpolate a font across different weights, widths, or other axes that are conventionally bundled as separate files. This allows for granular control over a typeface across the full expressive range of the family, but safely within bounds that are set by the type designer. It can also mean smaller file sizes, and reduced loading latency. Commercial Type designed Roboto Serif in six optical sizes, which is uncommon in fonts made for screens. With variable fonts technology, Roboto Serif can be programmed to automatically optimize for readability according to the size chosen.

Even the boldest features of Roboto Serif can easily pass unnoticed. Look at the tooth attached to the upper terminal point of characters like the a, c, s, 2, and 3: it is nothing more than an upright rectangle, unadorned, yet so exact that it may serve its function and pass unnoticed in a highly legible stream of text.
About Roboto Serif

This axis allows you to set the glyph weight anywhere along the scale (i.e.; between the named instances).

**Weight**

- **Thin**
  - Roboto Serif might just very well be ideal for keeping quick readers zooming through lengthy text.

- **ExtraLight**
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- **Light**
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- **Regular**
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- **Medium**
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- **SemiBold**
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- **Bold**
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- **ExtraBold**
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- **Black**
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**Width**

This axis allows you to set the glyph width anywhere along the scale (i.e.; between the named instances).

- **Condensed**
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- **Regular**
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- **Extended**
  - Roboto Serif might just very well be ideal for keeping quick readers zooming through lengthy text.
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This axis allows you to fine-tune the overall weight of text within the confines of your current line breaks. For example: A lighter grade can compensate for the heaviness of dark text on a white background, while a heavier grade can add contrast between text and background.

“Outside of a dog, a book is a man’s best friend. Inside of a dog, it’s too dark to read.”

—Groucho Marx

Roboto Serif is free to download under the Open Font License from Google Fonts: fonts.google.com/specimen/Roboto-Serif
Passy, May 23. 1785.

Dear old Friend

By Mr. Dolland’s Saying that my double Spectacles can only serve particular Eyes, I doubt he has not been rightly inform’d of their Construction. I imagine it will be found pretty generally true, that the same Convexity of Glass through which a Man sees clearest and best at the Distance proper for Reading, is not the best for greater Distances. I therefore had formerly two Pair of Spectacles, which I shifted occasionally, as in travelling I sometimes read and often wanted to regard the Prospects. Finding this Change troublesome and not always sufficiently ready, I had the Glasses cut, and half of each kind associated in the same Circle, thus By this means, as I wear my Spectacles constantly, I have only to move my Eyes up or down as I want to see distinctly far or near, the proper glasses being always ready. This I find more particularly convenient since my being in France, the Glasses that serve me best at Table to see what I eat, not being the best to see the Faces of those on the other Side of the Table who speak to me; and when one’s Ears are not well accustomed to the Sounds of a Language, a Sight of the Movements in the Features of him that speaks helps to explain, so that I understand French better by the help of my Spectacles.

Excerpt from a letter from
BENJAMIN FRANKLIN to GEO. WHATLEY ESQUIRE

[Fig. 1]
READING
HOROSCOPES
DURING A
SOLAR ECLIPSE

A
HEAD LAMP
for hands-free illumination

B
ECLIPSE SHADES
on glasses chain for intermittent eclipse viewing

C
HIGHLIGHTER
to capture important horoscope info

D
LOTUS POSITION
to maximize oneness with the universe

E
YOGA MAT
for barrier against ants
**Reading Sandwich Boards while Blading**

**[Fig. 3]**

**A** VISOR-HELMET COMBO to block sun, absorb sweat

**B** SPORTY SHADES to minimize squinting while maximizing image

**C** HAIR TIED BACK to prevent vision blockage from wind

**D** INCREASED SPACE between bladers in case of unexpected braking

**E** RUBBER DAISY APPLIQUES on shower floor for extra traction

**[Fig. 2]**

**READING SHAMPOO BOTTLES IN THE SHOWER**

**A** BRIGHT LIGHTING to minimize eye strain

**B** HEAD tilted back slightly to prevent deluge in eyes

**C** BOTTLE held at eye level to allow head tilting

**D** STANCE firm and wide for maximum balance

**E** BOTTLE held at eye level to allow head tilting

**READING SHAMPOO BOTTLES IN THE SHOWER**
[Fig. 4] **READING MORTGAGE REFINANCING DOCUMENTS IN SPACE**

**A**
- **Giant Balls of Fire (E.g. The Sun)** positioned to optimize brightness while preventing cornea disintegration

**B**
- **Tight Grip** on device to prevent floatage

**C**
- **Space Suit** to maintain ability to live

**D**
- **A.I. Robot Friend** to help with legal jargon, navigation back to the ship

**E**
- **Tether to Ship** in case of robot malfunction

[Fig. 5] **READING MOVIE SUBTITLES IN A HAUNTED HOUSE**

**A**
- **All Lights On** to eliminate dark corners, shadows (including exterior lights)

**B**
- **Older Siblings** (as many as possible) for protection

**C**
- **Upright, Alert Posture** to maximize spinal comfort, illusion of confidence

**D**
- **Turtleneck** to minimize icy chills

**E**
- **Surround Sound System** installed, volume on high to drown out chain rattling, moaning

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Reading Ergonomics
Eye Yoga

Start by blinking your eyes as quickly as you can for 10 seconds. With a friend? Try butterfly kisses instead.

Then, following the arrows, trace the outlines of the characters on these pages.

Practice daily for maximum reading comfortability. Nam-eye-state!
Afterword

Google Fonts’ mission is to make web typography better for everyone. One of the ways we invest in this (and the typography community at large) is by commissioning outside typographers and studios to create new fonts.

For Roboto Serif, we were thrilled to collaborate with Commercial Type for the first time. This latest addition to the Roboto superfamily fills a need we saw in our existing library for a highly readable serif that pairs well with Roboto Sans. In order to create a true serif for Roboto, (not just a ‘serif-ized’ version of Roboto Sans), Commercial used the vertical proportions of Roboto Sans as a starting point—to make sure the two families could be mixed harmoniously in running text. The result is an elegant, functional typeface that complements Roboto Sans, but can stand on its own as a beautiful, modern face. Expanding Roboto with a serif allows for greater flexibility and variety…which means better functionality and tonality across many, vastly different products and brands.

Roboto Serif is offered as an open-source, variable font (the static files are available, too). Variable fonts are well known for saving font download bandwidth online, but that’s just one of their benefits. For example, designers can set Roboto Serif to automatically adjust optical sizing on browsers and other products like Sketch. We’ve invested heavily in variable font typefaces, as well as in tools for their production, testing, and use, and we’re excited to see what creative designers and developers do with this technology. What would you want on an axis?

We hope you enjoy getting comfortable with Roboto Serif! Let us know.

—The Google Fonts team

Roboto Serif was designed by Commercial Type with Google Fonts
This print specimen was written by Sarah Daily and designed by Studio Elana Schlenker with illustration by Kyle Platts. Additional writing contributed by Charles Berret.
Thank you to the teams at Google Design and Google Fonts for their support.
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Pleasure Reading.
Mastering the Basics of Comfortable Perusal. How to excel in lighting, seating, and more.

Snacks.
For comfort. Comfort snacks.

Ergonomics.
From everyday scenarios to extreme situations. From analog media to digital domains. From your bathroom to outer space.

Eye Yoga.
Expert exercises to keep you at the top of your reading game.

PLUS:
Even more content, like a letter from Ben Franklin, a poem about reading in bed, and a bunch of font stuff!