

Numbers and Operations: Graphic Designer

Micron Technology, Inc.

Job Description: Designs and produces various artwork and layouts for publications, presentations, advertising, and Web sites.

Problem:

When a graphic designer formats a document, he needs to make the text as easy to read as possible. The length of a line of text in a paragraph affects the readability. If the line is too long, the reader's eye has trouble tracking back to the beginning of the next line. If the line is too short, the eye shifts too often, and many words have to be hyphenated-also interfering with readability.

For optimum readability, typesetters agree that the length of a line of text in a document should be no longer (in picas) than 2.5 times the point size of the typeface--nor shorter (in picas) than 1 times the point size--unless the line spacing (*leading*) is greater than 120% of the point size, which is the default leading of many desktop publishing programs.

12 points = 1 pica

6 picas = 1 inch

What is the widest and the narrowest column (or line length) in inches the writer should use for optimum readability with 9-point type on 10.5 point leading?

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Solution:

9 point text x 2.5 = 22.5 picas

22.5 picas ÷ 6 picas/inch = 3.75 inches, maximum length

9 picas ÷ 6 picas/inch = 1.5 inches, minimum length

120% leading of 9 point type = 9 x 1.2 = 10.8 points.

Note: Increasing the leading to 12 or 13 points would allow the designer to use wider columns.