

The Secret Code of Journalists

Pixels, points and picas... Oh my! Overcoming your fear of converting from inches

1. Gutter: the space between two pages of a spread where the pages fold in a yearbook, magazine, or newspaper.
2. Alley: the space between column guides within a composition used to separate components on a spread.
3. Column guides: Non-printing guidelines running from the top of a page to the bottom to help a user align components within a composition. Column guides are set by the user and should be uniform throughout a publication. Column guides also allow users to create components of equal width throughout a composition (e.g. captions).
4. Grid guides: A non-printing graph used to align components of a spread. Unlike column guides, grid guides allow users to align the top, bottom and sides of a component. Blue graphing design paper has preset grid and column guides already included. Computer software allows users to define grid guides to fit the needs of the composition. Some programs allow different grids to be used such as baseline or document grids.
5. Pixel: pixel has two meanings in journalism: a) the resolution of the monitor or display where a composition will be seen, b) the number of dots that make up an image or photograph. For monitors, the dimensions of the monitor or display are the pixel values, also called resolution. For example, on my MAC, I have a 11.7 inch screen, with my resolution 1366 x 768. This means that my screen shows 1366 pixels across, and 768 down. For images, pixels often refer to the resolution of the camera. To get this value, multiply the number of pixels wide by the number of pixels high, then divide by one million (mega= million). For my monitor, that would convert to 1.05 megapixels.
6. Pica: an often used unit of measurement in journalism. 6 picas equal 1 inch, or 1 pica equals 1/6 of a inch.
7. Point: The most used unit of measurement in journalism, design and typography. 1 pica equals 12 points, and 1 inch equals 72 picas. Also, fonts are measured in point sizes, but can vary based on the size used by the creator.