Newspapers measure stories in inches. A short filler item might be just 2 inches long; a major investigative piece might be 200. But since one inch of type set in a wide leg is greater than one inch of type in a narrow leg, editors avoid confusion by assuming all text will be one standard width (that's usually around 12 picas).

You can design an attractive newspaper without ever varying the width of your text. Sometimes, though, you may decide that a story needs wider or narrower legs; those non-standard column widths are called bastard measures.

Generally speaking, text becomes hard to follow if it's set in legs narrower than 10 picas. It's tough to read, too, if it's set wider than 20 picas.

The ideal depth for text is between 2 and 10 inches per leg. Shorter than that, legs look shallow and flimsy; longer than that, they become thick gray stacks. (We'll fine-tune these guidelines in the pages ahead.)

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A lot of math is involved in page design, especially when you calculate story lengths and shapes. To succeed, you need a sense of geometry and proportion—an understanding of how changing one element in a story's design affects every other element.

**SHAPING TEXT INTO COLUMNS**

Text is flexible. When you design a story, you can bend and pour the text into different vertical and horizontal configurations, as these examples show:

- **Suppose you have a 12-inch story:** It can be designed as one leg 12 inches deep...
- **It can also be doubled up into two equal legs, each 6 inches deep...**
- **It can become three legs, each 4 inches deep...**
- **It can be four legs, 3 inches deep...**
- **It can even be spread into six legs, each 2 inches deep.**
- **It can be five legs, each 2.4 inches deep...**

Note how the text seems shorter (and more readable) as it widens.

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Here's that same 12-inch story—but now it wraps around a photograph. Can you see how, if the photo became deeper, each column of text would need to get deeper, too?