

# Inkscape Tutorial #2: Text and Simple Styling

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Web Site: <http://troy-sobotka.blogspot.com/2008/04/inkscape-tutorial-2-text-and-simple.html>



## **Goal**

The following tutorial will attempt to illustrate a simple set of techniques and tools to stylize text. It will attempt to demonstrate how simple, quick, and effective it is to modify text stylings in Inkscape.

## **Inkscape Version**

Inkscape 0.46+devel, built Apr 9 2008. Lower versions should suffice, but your mileage may vary.

## **Optimal Audience**

This tutorial assumes that you are an intermediate Inkscape user. A basic knowledge of Inkscape's functionality will be useful to speed through the tutorial. It is assumed that you are relatively familiar with Inkscape's various tool positions and how to use them.

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## **Background**

Typography and typesetting are everywhere -- children's magazines, hot chic publications, and all over the web. If there is a common thread among them, it is that they all attempt to present the casual viewer with style and flair.

Inkscape has a number of tools that are not widely known to accomplish some sophisticated tracking, as well as character rotation and line spacing. If you aren't aware of these little known tricks, you are forever bound to be converting your characters to paths, cutting out their bowls, and manually manipulating them. This tutorial will attempt to free you from that tedious process and open up a larger realm of flexibility.

## **Variations**

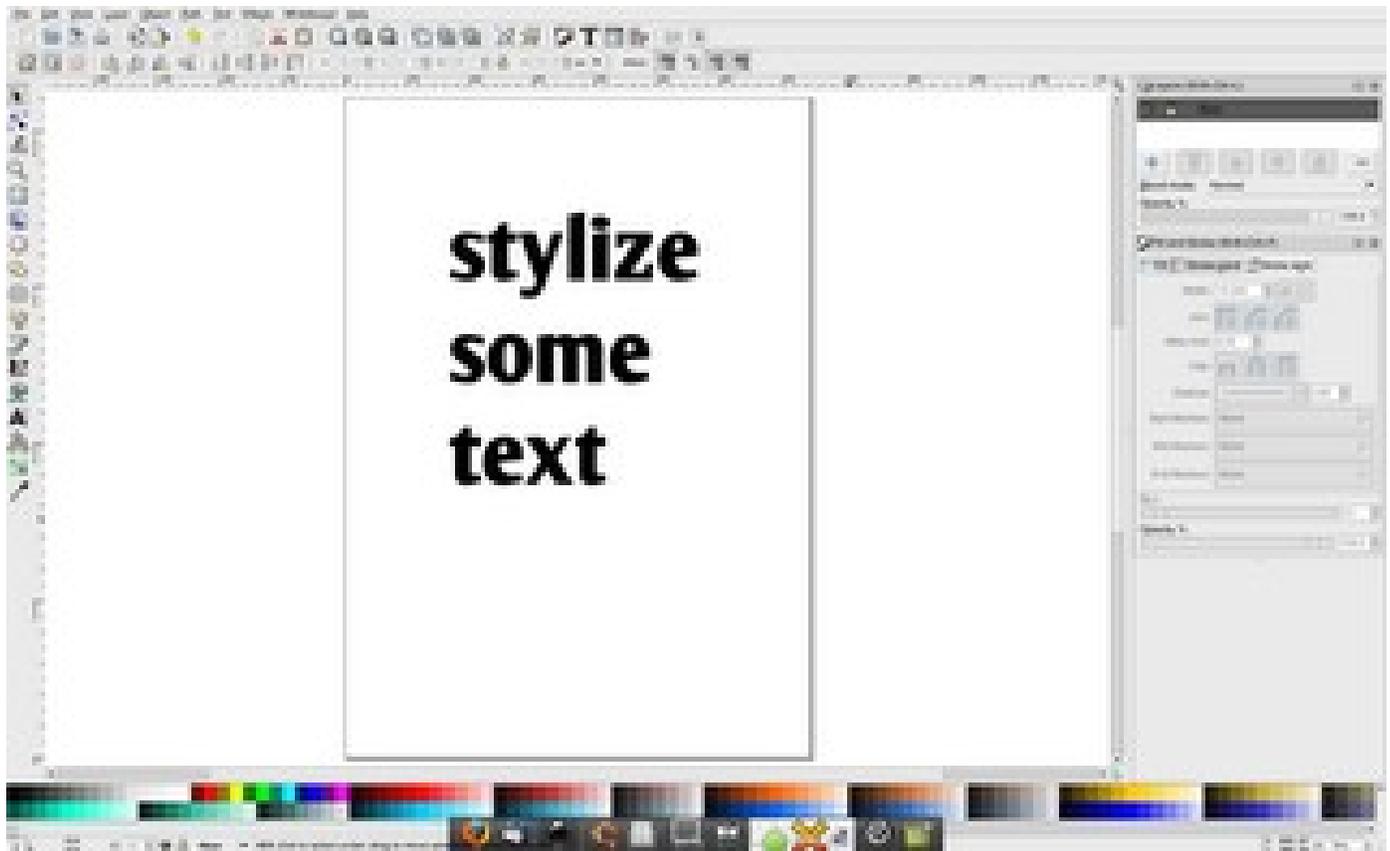
Obviously there are hundreds of approaches to end up at a particular style. The chosen approach is based upon a commonly seen technique utilized in children's magazines or pop culture presentations. Feel free to apply the techniques to whatever style you desire.

## Technique

### Step 1 - Choose your font and add the copy.

As with most headline-esque approaches these days, a heavier font is easy to shape into a useful product. This tutorial uses [OliJo](#) from the prolific and amazing designer [Manfred Klein](#). If you wish to read more about this genius of type, you can find more about him [here](#).

We will start with the place that a typical person might stop -- choose a font and type the text **A**. Here we have a sample of the text and our headline. Put it on a custom layer named "Base". Notice how unbalanced the line spacing feels. Even the tracking feels a little broad at points.



## Step 2 - Track and rotate the individual characters.

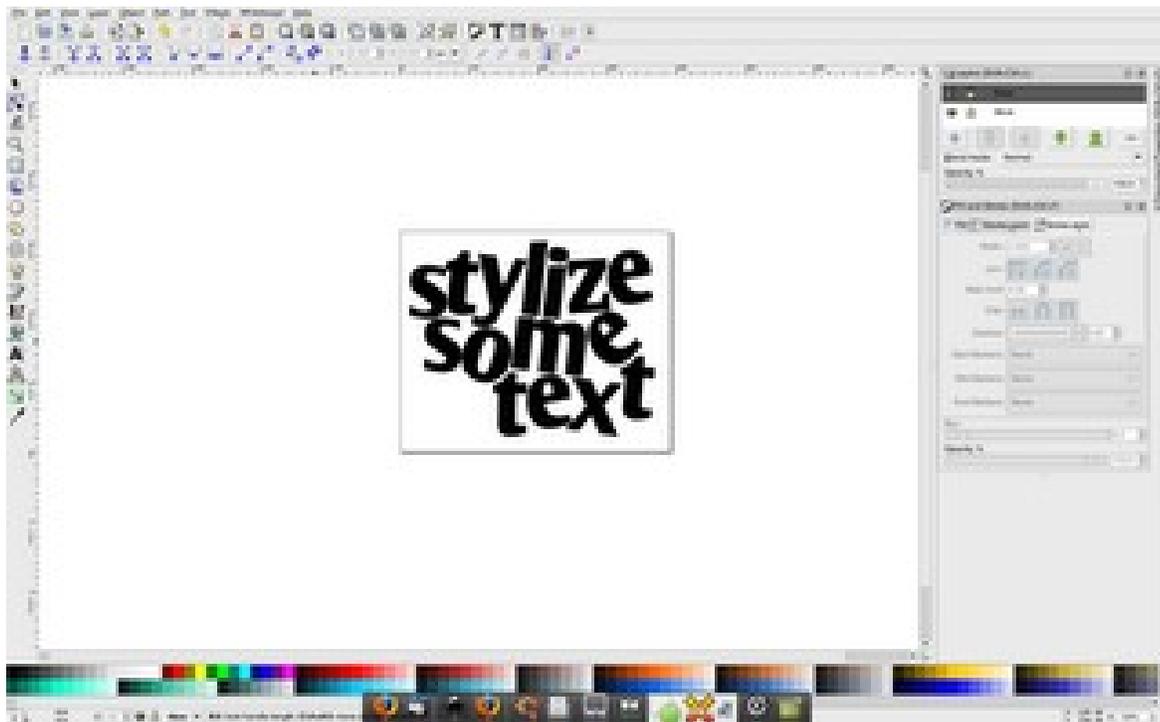
**Moving letters Left or Right:** The tracking present in most font sets will be proportionally set to the sizes of the individual characters. In Inkscape, we have a simple keystroke to accomplish manual tracking within a text block. *Alt-Right* or *Alt-Left* will **apply a shift** of one unit left and right. *Shift-Alt-Left* and *Shift-Alt-Right* accomplish the same with a granularity of ten units.

**Rotation** can also be easily accomplished with *Alt-[* and *Alt-]* for counter and clockwise rotation about the lower left character anchor point. The *Shift* modifier will increment the adjustment as above.

**Moving Letters Up or Down:** Adjusting baselines is accomplished via the *Alt-Up* and *Alt-Down*. Note that your anchor will be the first character in the text, and as such, adjusting the first character will shift the entire line up or down accordingly.

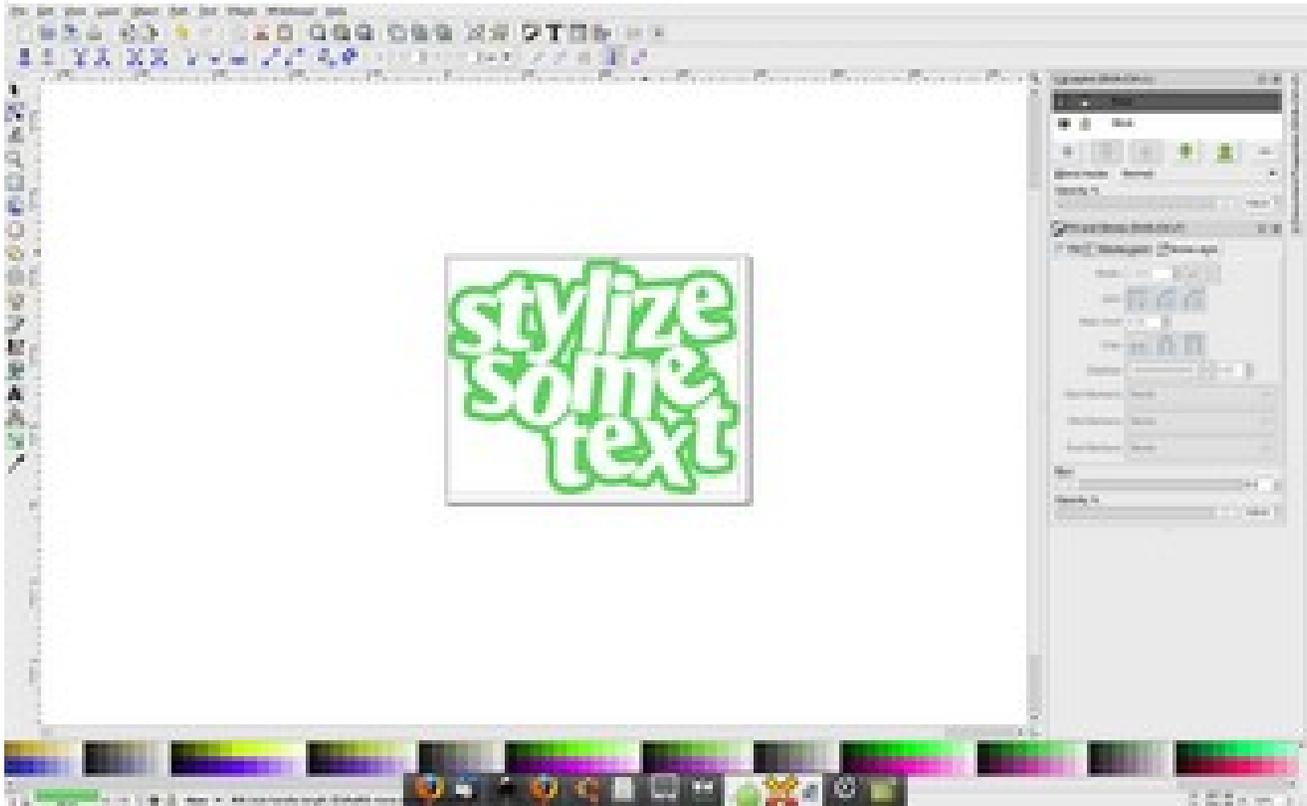
It should be noted that on my installation, only the *left Alt key invokes the tools*. Strange, but true.

We will use these techniques to adjust the composition of our base layer. Go crazy and try some jazz on your own. Look to flow lines between the various text elements to see if you can arrive at an interesting compositional flow.



### Step 3 - Add a text envelope.

Using the "Linked Offset" tool (*Path* → *Linked Offset*), select our base text. This will create the single node handle (*It looks like a diamond*). Now, drag it outward. Change to a color of your choosing. Now select the base text and convert it to white.



## Step 4 – Drop Shadows

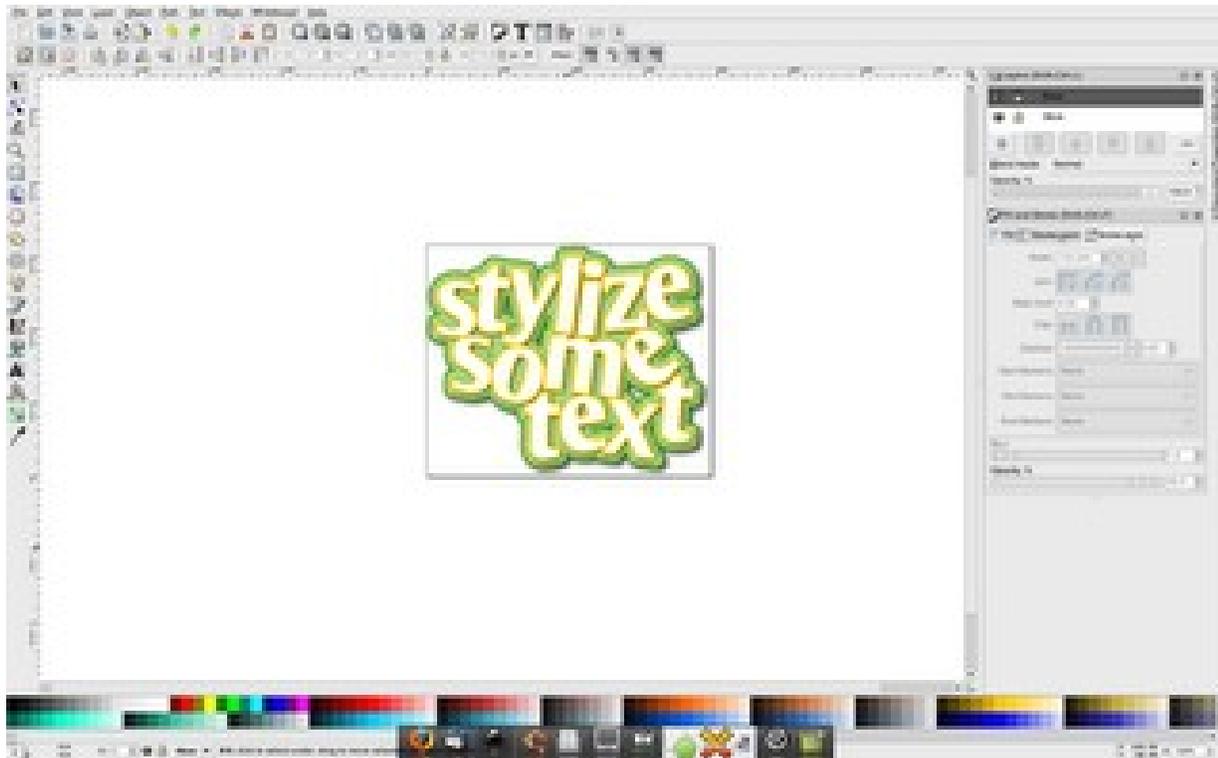
Select the envelope object and give it a stroke via a **Shift-Left Click** of a color from your swatch bed. The example uses a darker valued version of the fill color.

Select the base text object and give it a stroke of another color that works with your palette. The example uses an analogous yellow, but a compliment or a split compliment would work just as well.

Once again, select the base text object and choose **Path → Linked Offset**". Choose black, and roll your mouse wheel or the slider to a blur of your liking. With the blurred black object selected, translate it down and right slightly using the selection tool. This can easily be accomplished by choosing the **"Select and Transform Objects"** tool (or pressing the F1 key) and using the arrow keys to move the object.

For a final time, select the base text object and choose **Path → Linked Offset**.. Make the object black by choosing it from your swatch list and drag it out so that it covers the lower envelope object. Hit **"Page Down"** twice -- once to lower it below the text base drop shadow and once more to lower it below the envelope object. Adjust the blur to a value of your liking. Finally, as above, choose the "Select and Transform Object" tool from the palette and use the arrow keys to translate the object down and right.

As a final twiddle you may wish to **adjust the opacity of that drop shadow**. The example uses a value of 80%.



## In Closing

As you can see from the above attempt, adding style and flair to your headings isn't a difficult task with Inkscape. Further, doing complicated text manipulations is relatively painless, albeit obscure, via the keystrokes provided.

I would like to take the time to thank [Frank Schoep](#) for his blog tips and exposing some of the underlying tools.

If you found the above tutorial at all useful, please drop a comment on the blog. Thanks for your time, and happy Inkscaping!



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Dribbled by Troy James Sobotka at [Sunday, April 27, 2008](#) [83 Comments and 1 Reaction](#)

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