



Keep your type as type

Most plotting tools turn your labels into drawings of letters when they write an SVG. The picture is identical and the type can no longer be measured, searched or corrected. Here is the setting that stops it, and the check that tells you which kind of file you have.

The check, on a file you already have

Search the SVG for `<text`. Not for your axis label: the label is often written into a comment beside the outlines, so searching for it passes either way.

```
grep -c "<text" figure.svg
```

A number above zero means your type is real. Zero means every letter in that figure is a drawing, and nothing in the file records what size or font it was.

The setting, per tool

matplotlib · checked against 3.11.2

Ships as path

```
plt.rcParams['svg.fonttype'] = 'none'
```

none is not free. The file then depends on the font being present wherever it is opened, which is the failure PLOS warns about.

R

Ships as `svg()`, which is cairo-backed

```
svglite::svglite("figure.svg", width = 5.2,  
height = 3.6)
```

The same trade as matplotlib's, described in the same terms by a different project.

sci-vis.com/type-card

Not checked here

These are not on the card as advice, because the setting was never tested on this machine and a figure specification invented from memory is the problem this site exists about.

Julia, Plots.jl. One figure drawn with Plots was measured here and contained no text; every glyph was a `<path>`. Julia is not installed on the machine this site is built on, so no setting has been tested and none is quoted.

Inkscape and Illustrator. Both keep text as text unless you convert it deliberately. Not tested here. PLOS's own figure guidelines give the Illustrator keystroke for converting text to outlines, which is evidence that it is a deliberate action rather than a default, and is quoted in `plos-eps-text.json`.

When outlining is right

Outlining is a finishing step, not a default. It makes a figure immune to a font going missing in production, which is why some publishers ask for it. Do it last, to a copy, to a figure whose type you have already checked, and keep the version with text in it: that is the one you will edit at revision.