

Tips and Tricks for Microsoft Word

Written by trickster, Jay Brandes. Updated 2/27/2012. This material was prepared as part of the workshop, *Writing a Plagiarism-Free Research Paper*, available online at <<http://uclibrary.troy.edu/writing>>.

These tips work for Microsoft Office 2007 and Microsoft Office 2010. For instructions that talk about the “Office Button,” that is how it works in 2007; for 2010, you would go to “File.”

In this handout, references to MLA and APA style, mean the writing style prescribed in the following books:

MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 7th ed.

Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 6th ed.

In addition to this guide, there are 2 other two-page handouts that offer additional tips for using Microsoft Word to improve your college writing. The first one will be of interest to all students; the second one will be of use for anyone writing an APA-style paper. The handouts are:

Hanging indents: Using Microsoft Word to format your documentation
<<http://uclibrary.troy.edu/pdf/hangemhigh.pdf>>

APA-style running head and page numbers: Using Microsoft Word to format your paper <<http://uclibrary.troy.edu/pdf/apa-head-page-number.pdf>>

TIP ONE: RELAX

Some of these tips will be of more interest/use to you than others—take what you need and leave the rest for another time.

Some of these tips aren't just tricks (crafty procedures), but they can also be a little tricky (requiring a high level of skill or knowledge), so just relax . . . some things take time (and practice) to learn.

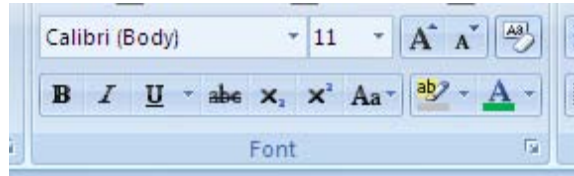
TWO: GETTING HELP

The F1 key will bring up the help tools in Microsoft Word.

You can use the Google search engine <<http://www.google.com>> to find out how to do something in Microsoft Word. Just search on what you want to do. For example, if you search on the terms: *ms word change default font*, Google will direct you to the answer, <<http://support.microsoft.com/kb/291291>>.

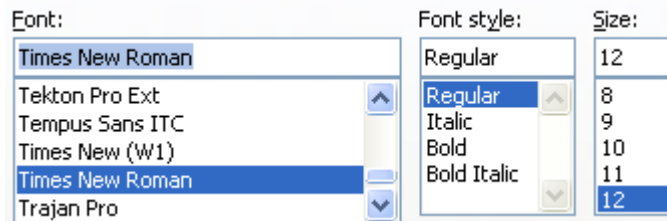
THREE: DEFAULT FONT

New editions of Microsoft Word (2007 and newer) make the default font, the Calibri typeface in size 11. The word *default* means that it automatically uses that font. In college writing, your instructors usually want the font to be the Times New Roman typeface, size 12.

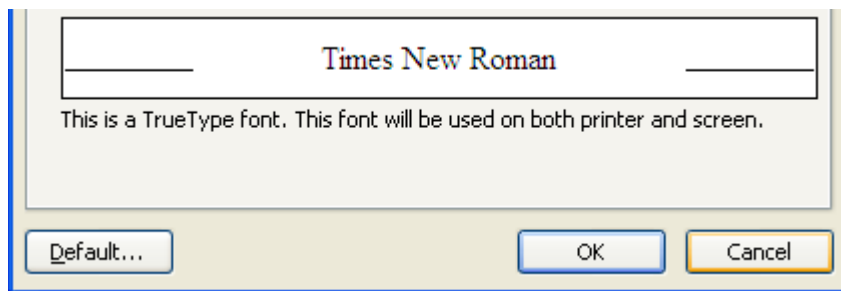


To change the default setting in Microsoft Word, look where it says *Font*, and click the little arrow to the right of that word, pictured just above.

That will open a dialog box (pictured right). Scroll down the list of fonts and select Times New Roman, Regular, 12.



At the very lower left, click the *Default* button. That will let you change the default.



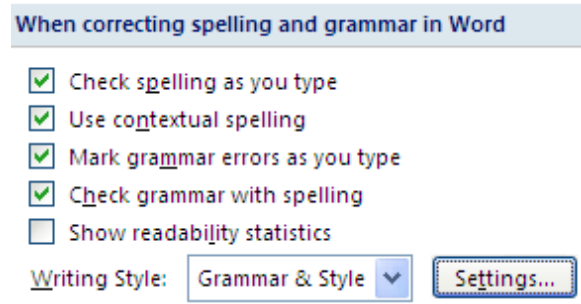
FOUR: HYPERLINKS IN YOUR PAPER

You probably don't want working (active) hyperlinks in the body of your paper, and you rarely, if ever, want them in your list of references. Hyperlinks within documents tend to change the font size and style, and virtually always underline the text. When reference list entries call for the inclusion of an Internet address, they (MLA or APA style) never specify it to be actively linked or underline. You can remove the link by hand (right click on the offending text, and select Remove Hyperlink), or you can set Microsoft Word to not add links in the first place: In Microsoft Word, go to the Office Button (Office 2007) or File (2010), and select Word Options and then select Proofing. Look for the appropriate setting under AutoCorrect/AutoFormat As You Type, options). POINT OF CLARIFICATION: This does not mean you should not have Internet addresses in your paper, e.g., <http://www.troy.edu>, it just means the address shouldn't be a working hyperlink (you shouldn't be able to click on it within the word-processed paper and have it do something).

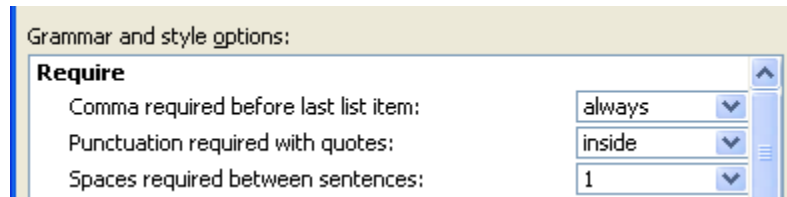
FIVE: WITH OR WITHOUT? INSIDE OR OUT? ONE OR TWO?

The MLA and APA style books both prescribe the following use of punctuation—punctuation that can be checked automatically by Microsoft Word.

In Microsoft Word, push the Office Button (2007) or File (2010) and select Word Options. Then, under *Proofing*, you want the *Settings* button to the right of the box for Grammar & Style (it might just say Grammar, depending on how you have it set).



A good way to set the defaults for college writing in the United States, is like this (explanation provided, beginning on the next page):



Brief explanations of the three choices pictured above:

Comma required before last list item:

The answer is yes, because MLA and APA want you to use the comma. This is known as a *serial comma*, sometimes called an *Oxford comma*, and should always be used in your papers. Example of the serial comma in use: The most common flavors of ice cream are chocolate, vanilla, and strawberry.

Don't get confused because you see lists written without the serial comma. That is a perfectly acceptable style for many styles of writing, but not MLA or APA style.

Punctuation required with quotes:

The answer is that punctuation almost always goes inside the quotation mark. That is the style used in the United States. (This is not an MLA or APA thing, it is how English is written in America.)

Right: I told that instructor, "I'll turn in my paper on time."

WRONG: Bob told me, "I liked your hair better the other way".

Right: "The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation," wrote Henry David Thoreau.

In rare instances, the punctuation goes outside, for example:

Did he really say "I liked your hair the other way"?

In this example, the question mark is not part of the information being quoted, so it is not enclosed in the quotation marks.

For more information, see Section 3.2.11 of the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (7th ed.).

Spaces required between sentences:

NOTE: This means spaces after concluding marks of punctuation (period, question mark, exclamation point). Do not confuse this with line spacing (the space between lines of text)—most college papers are double spaced as far as line spacing is concerned.

Use one space after the end of a sentence. The safest and best way to write a college paper is with one space between sentences. Both MLA and APA do make allowances for using two spaces, but before you use two, check with your instructor.

One space is the style prescribed by the MLA, APA, Chicago, and Turabian style manuals. An explanation of why one space is used, is stated well in the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (2009):

In an earlier era, writers using a typewriter commonly left two spaces after a period, a question mark, or an exclamation point. Publications in the United States today usually have the same spacing after concluding punctuation marks as between words on the same line. Since word processors make available the fonts used by typesetters for printed works, many writers, influenced by the look of a typeset publication, now leave only one space after a concluding punctuation mark. (p. 77)

Those were very brief explanations of three uses of punctuation in a college paper. As always, seek guidance from your style manual and from the Troy University Writing Center.

SIX: SUPERSCRIPTING IS NOT SO SUPER

There are rare occasions when you will desire to superscript text, primarily, if you are using footnotes as your documentation style. For example:¹ By default, Microsoft Word will usually superscript certain types of ordinals, e.g., 1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc. That's fine for some types of writing, but the MLA and APA style guides do not indicate this usage—they want ordinals written as 1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc. You can change the default in Microsoft Word. In Microsoft Word, go to the Office Button (Office 2007) or File (2010), and select Word Options and then select Proofing—then look under the AutoCorrect/AutoFormat As You Type, options.

You may be asking, “What is an ordinal number?” Look in a grammar book—look in a dictionary. Part of what you should learn as part of this workshop is where to go for help. Sometimes the place to turn is your instructor, sometimes it is the Library or the Writing Center, but sometimes it is a book. When you see a term you don't know, look it up! You may also want to know what a cardinal number is. These (ordinal/cardinal) are good vocabulary words to know.

SEVEN: AN ELLIPSIS . . . YOU KNOW . . . THAT DOT, DOT, DOT THING.

An ellipsis can be used to indicate a pause in thought (as in the heading above), but unless you are writing a play or novel for class, you shouldn't be using it that way in a college paper. **This is when you do need to use an ellipsis:** when you are indicating that text has been omitted from a direct quotation. FYI: The plural of ellipsis is ellipses.

The correct way to type an ellipsis (MLA and APA style) is dot space dot space dot. Examples:

In the middle of a sentence: “The word *pelican* comes from the Greek word meaning axe . . . relating to the use of the beak to break wood.” (The three dots of the ellipsis indicate that words were omitted from the middle of one sentence.)

At the end of a sentence: Stewart indicates, “Pelicans can carry a Bengal tiger in their bill. . . .” (The period after the word *bill* is the dot that ends the sentence within your paper. The ellipsis (the three dots) that follows, indicates that words were omitted from the end of the sentence being quoted.)

To indicated that an entire sentence (or more) was omitted between sentences: “The pelican can grow to be 20 feet in length. . . . In the city of Baltimore, people fly to work on pelicans.” (The period after the word *length* is the dot that ends a quoted sentence. The ellipsis (three dots) that follow, indicates that a full sentence [or more] was omitted before the beginning of the next sentence.)

You can also omit text from the middle of one sentence to the start of another, and from the middle of one sentence to the middle of another—if you want to know how to do that, read through the NOTES, below.

Here is where it gets slightly trickier:

In the United States, punctuation usually goes inside of quotation marks (see tip/trick FIVE), but when you need to add a citation to the end of a sentence that ends in a quotation mark, the punctuation goes outside—compare the second example, above, with the one at the end of this paragraph, and see how the period that ends the sentence moves to the very end (the ellipsis stays put, including the space that precedes it): “Pelicans can carry a Bengal tiger in their bill . . .” (Nampor, 2007, p. 33).

NOTES:

Before using an ellipsis to indicate omitted text, it will be best to check your style manual directly—for MLA (section 3.7.5 of that handbook) and for APA (section 6.08 of that handbook).

Even if you are writing an APA-style paper, you may want to look at the MLA handbook, as it does a better job than the APA manual at explaining the various ways text can be omitted: at end of one sentence, between complete sentences, from the middle of one sentence to the start of another, and from the middle of one sentence to the middle of another.

If you really want to know how to omit text effectively (to make your writing a work of art), what you want to read is section 25.3.2, “Omissions,” from the Turabian style manual, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (7th ed.). It provides both excellent explanations and illustrations. Here is an excerpt from Turabian:

If you omit words, phrases, sentences, or even paragraphs in a quotation because they are irrelevant, do not change or misrepresent the meaning of the original quotation. Not only must you preserve words that might change the meaning of the quotation . . . but you must also preserve important qualifications. (p. 354)

EIGHT: A DASH OF ADVICE

Use a hyphen when you need one, but don't use a hyphen when you really need a dash. Dashes come in two flavors, *em dash* and *en dash*, but many writers don't know how to tell Microsoft Word to make them.

Note: This is a guide to using a word processor, it is not a grammar guide. The examples that follow are simply illustrations of use; they are not intended to teach specific usage of punctuation.

HYPHEN

This is the easy one—it's the key between the zero and the equal sign.

- self-respect
- nineteenth- and twentieth-century
- Phone 867-5309
- eye-opener
- chocolate-covered
- one-third of a cup
- un-American
- twenty-seven
- Szalavitz . . . you spell it s-z-a-l-a-v-i-t-z, just like it sounds

EM DASH

The em dash can be used to indicate a pause in thought. Note: The use of the em dash is a choice in writing style, one that often places a greater or different emphasis on the pause than might the equally correct use of a comma, an ellipsis, or multiple sentences (to recast the thought).

- He was the perfect pet—at least until he ate my Gucci shoes.
- This cake—trust me—will be the best you have ever tasted.
- My first three grades—86, 92, and 91—were much better than my last three.
- The em dash can also be used when attributing a quote to someone: “The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.” —Franklin Delano Roosevelt

Here's how:

In Microsoft Word's AutoCorrect/AutoFormat As You Type, Options, select Replaces dashes (--) with dash (—)

Or...

Hold down the Alt key and, on the number pad, type 0151.

Or...

Hold down the Control key and the Alt key, and hit the minus sign on the number pad.

EN DASH

The en dash can be used to indicate ranges, to connect two open-compounds (North Carolina–South Carolina) or to clarify a word more clearly than a hyphen (post–Civil..., hospital–school).

- When I was in high school, 1990–1993, I was on the basketball team
- In Romans 8:28–31, Paul instructs...
- The New York–Boston train leaves the station...
- Mary Smith (1972–) began her career...
- Edgar Allan Poe (January 19, 1809–October 7, 1849)
- At end of the first half, the score was 16–21.
- The vote was 67–54.
- North Carolina–South Carolina border
- The post–Civil war era...
- The hospital–school of medicine relationship...

Here's how: Hold down the Alt key and, on the number pad, type 0150.

FINAL TRICK

Make Microsoft Word do the work for you. Take a look at Office Button (2007) or File (2010)>Word Options>Proofing>AutoCorrect Options. Check out the section for “Replace text as you type.” You can create (and delete any time) clever shortcuts to cut down on your typing time. For example, let’s say you are writing a handout in which you have to write the words *Microsoft Word* a zillion times. You can tell Microsoft Word that when you type the letters *msw* (or whatever shortcut you make up, and then hit the space bar, it should replace your shortcut, in this case, *msw*, with the words *Microsoft Word*. It’s magic!

Just make sure to pick shortcut letters that you won’t type on accident, e.g., make your shortcut for creating the words *Tyrannosaurus rex*, *txz*, not *tyr*—otherwise you might have dinosaurs popping up unexpectedly.

FINAL THOUGHTS

A quote from the 1980 (satirical comedy) motion picture, *Airplane*:

Rumack: Can you fly this plane, and land it?

Ted Striker: Surely you can't be serious.

Rumack: I am serious . . . and don't call me Shirley.

Much of the information in this handout may be new to you, and that is okay. You may be thinking that this is too much for you to learn right now, and that is okay too. Nevertheless, we desire to encourage you to improve your writing skills as you progress through your college career, and we want to provide you with some of the knowledge and tools to do so.

So, if you think that these tips are a bit much, and that we—your workshop hosts and your classroom instructors—surely can’t seriously expect you to know all of this (eventually?), let us state that we are serious . . . and don’t call us Shirley.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0A5t5_O8hdA (Video clip from *Airplane*)