

Microsoft Word for Writers

A Few Tips

Don't lose your work

- Save early and often; you will never lose more than the work you've done since the last save.
- Never leave an unsaved file open unattended.
- Enable automatic backups (<http://wordfaqs.ssbarnhill.com/SaveOptions.htm>)
- Learn what provisions your version of Word offers for recovering unsaved files.
- Be cautious about using OneDrive; saving to the hard drive is safer.
- Never save directly to a removable drive; save to the hard drive and then copy/send to USB.

Don't lose your cool

- Don't freak out over revision markings or nonprinting characters (<https://shaunakelly.com/word/sharing/howtrackchangesworks.html>, <http://wordfaqs.ssbarnhill.com/NonprintChars.htm>)
- Don't panic. **Undo (Ctrl+Z)** can get you out of almost any jam.
- If you have made a complete mess and **haven't saved the file**, close and reopen it to start from scratch.
- As a general rule, however, don't close a problem file; you won't be able to Undo after the file is reopened.
- As long as a file is open, you can Undo even after a save, but you can't Undo a save.
- If you have closed the problem file and you have saved it only once, you can revert to the backup file (the previous version) provided you have automatic backups enabled.

Don't waste your time

- Don't waste time doing things manually that Word can do for you automatically.
- AutoText (<https://wordmvp.com/FAQs/Customization/AutoText.htm>)
- AutoCorrect (<http://wordfaqs.ssbarnhill.com/AutoCorrect.htm>)
- Headers and footers and page numbers (<http://wordfaqs.ssbarnhill.com/HeaderFooterRibbon.htm>)
- Fields, including date and StyleRef fields (<http://wordfaqs.ssbarnhill.com/datefields.htm>, <http://wordfaqs.ssbarnhill.com/StyleRef.htm>)

Don't reinvent the wheel

- Use styles (including headings with auto numbering) for repetitive paragraph formatting (<http://wordfaqs.ssbarnhill.com/ManageStyles.htm>, <https://shaunakelly.com/word/styles/applyastyle.html>, <https://shaunakelly.com/word/styles/modifyastyle.html>, <https://shaunakelly.com/word/numbering/numbering20072010.html>)
- Use templates for consistent document formatting (<http://wordfaqs.ssbarnhill.com/CreateTemplate.htm>)

Don't mess with the Normal style

- Most desired modifications (font, paragraph spacing) can be made using the Set As Default button in a dialog (<http://wordfaqs.ssbarnhill.com/CustomizeNormalTemplate.htm>)
- Content should never be added to the Normal style (<http://wordfaqs.ssbarnhill.com/NormalVsBodyStyles.htm>)

Don't waste your bits

Avoid clutter in your documents: don't use multiple paragraph breaks or tab characters; set custom tab stops, use Spacing Before/After, and incorporate both in styles.

Don't get too fancy

Word offers myriad ways to gussy up your document, but you don't need them for a simple manuscript. Use only one or at most two fonts and a simple structure. Use of color is even less appropriate for a printed book or ebook (aside from illustrations).

Use the tools Word provides

- Display and use the ruler to set tabs and indents (<http://wordfaqs.ssbarnhill.com/UsingRulers.htm>; <http://wordfaqs.ssbarnhill.com/SettingTabs.htm>)
- Use the Ribbon and Quick Access Toolbar (<http://wordfaqs.ssbarnhill.com/CustomizeQAT.htm>)

Bend Word to your will

- Customize what you can (toolbars, Ribbon, QAT)
- Change margins, fonts, spacing (<http://wordfaqs.ssbarnhill.com/CustomizeNormalTemplate.htm>)
- Hide or display white space (<http://wordfaqs.ssbarnhill.com/WhiteSpace.htm>)

Useful shortcuts

- **Ctrl+Z** – Undo
- **Ctrl+Y** or **F4** – Redo or Repeat
- **Ctrl+C** – Copy
- **Ctrl+X** – Cut
- **Ctrl+V** – Paste
- **Ctrl+S** – Save
- **Ctrl+N** – Open a new Blank Document
- **Ctrl+Spacebar** – Remove direct font formatting
- **Ctrl+Q** – Remove direct paragraph formatting
- **Alt+Shift+P** – Insert a page number field

Where to find help

- To ask questions: Microsoft Community forums: <https://answers.microsoft.com/en-us/>
- For reference (simple steps): Microsoft Office Support: <https://support.office.com/>
- For reference (more depth): my tutorials and those of other Word MVPs (on my Useful Links page): <http://wordfaqs.ssbarnhill.com/>
- Copy of slide deck and this handout: <http://wordsintotype.ssbarnhill.com/Speaking.htm>