Microsoft Word Tips for Writers

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The Lonely Pilcrow

Home Services Hours and Charges Clients Books In Person

Introduction

Before we start, let me say that the text of this presentation has been posted at one of my Web sites, and your handout provides the Web address for that along with the URLs for a lot of other useful sites. So feel free to take notes if you like, but if you don't want to, you can get the information later online. Also, let me make clear that I'm going to be touching on a lot of issues rather briefly because there's no way that I can tell you everything you need to know about these subjects in the time we have. On the handout I have listed a lot of articles that tell more about the topics I'll be discussing today, and I encourage you to look at these articles if you want to learn more.

Let me also say that, despite any evidence to the contrary, I am not a computer geek. If I were a computer geek, do you think I would be using old-fashioned transparencies instead of a slick PowerPoint presentation? But I have no idea how computers work, I don't own a laptop, and I have never used PowerPoint, and having seen dozens of PowerPoint presentations go bad in the hands of presenters who didn't know what they were doing, I wasn't about to risk it. What I am is someone who loves the printed word, and I want to assure you that you don't have to be a computer geek to master your word processor and make it do what you want. You just have to be curious and willing to take some chances and try some new things.

How many of you here use Microsoft Word? [show of hands] Okay, some of what I am going to say today is specific to Word, but a lot of it is applicable to any word processing program—WordPerfect, Lotus Word Pro, the Works word processor—even WordPad—so I hope everyone can benefit. And, although I have experience only with Word for Windows, I believe that most of what I will tell you is also applicable to MacWord (given the appropriate translation of keyboard shortcuts). Finally, some of what I'll be saying is really basic, but there may be some in this room who don't know it. And some of the topics I'll be touching on may be more advanced than some of you want to think about. But I hope that everyone will take home a few useful new ideas.

It's not surprising that the majority of you are using Word, and if you're not now, you may be eventually. If you buy a new computer today, you will very likely find that it comes with some version of Word installed, often as part of Works Suite. You may be given the option of including Office 2003 at minimal extra cost. If you are serious about writing for publication, Word is going to be your first choice because it is the application currently used by most editors and publishers. This hasn't always been true: at one time WordPerfect was the favorite, and I have prepared plenty of manuscripts in WordPerfect in my day. But now, if you want to give your manuscript the best shot at being read, you'll present it in Word format. And if you're using another word processor, chances are that your document will sooner or later be converted to Word format. This is something you need to keep in mind in preparing your manuscript: sooner or later you're going to be asked for it in electronic format. So what is important is not just how it looks on paper but how it is formatted on the computer. You will win plenty of brownie points with your publisher (and stand a much better chance of having your manuscript accepted) if you submit something that is easier for a typesetter to convert to a printed book. This is a matter of sheer economics: more work costs the publisher more money.

So the tips and techniques I'm going to talk about today have one or both of two purposes: to make it easier for you to use Word and to make it easier for a publisher to use your manuscript.

Word vs. a Typewriter

Most of you here probably started writing long before you learned to use a computer, and doubtless many of you started writing before personal computers were invented. I would guess that everyone here probably started writing by hand. But I'll bet a lot of you also used a typewriter before you used a computer. And the first thing you have to learn about a word processor is that it is not a typewriter.

This can be both a good thing and a bad thing. The good part is that you don't have to retype endless drafts: you can edit and revise a single document endlessly. That's sometimes the

In 2005, I presented a similar program to the Baldwin Writers Group. I was surprised to find myself planning to say pretty much the same things today!

Agenda

- Where to get help
- What version of Word do I have?
- Optimizing the Word environment
- General suggestions for the best use of Word
- How to:
  - Set margins and indents
  - Format paragraphs
  - Use tabs correctly
 - Add a header or footer and page number
  - Apply and modify styles
- Q&A

Where to Get Help

- For reference (simple steps, tutorial videos): Microsoft Office Support (https://support.office.com/)
- For reference (more depth): my tutorials (http://wordfaqs.ssbarnhill.com/) and those of other Word MVPs (on my Useful Links page)
- To ask questions: Microsoft Community forums (https://answers.microsoft.com/en-us/)

What Version of Word Do I Have?

When you're looking for help online (either reference or asking a question), you need to know what version of Word you have (the version of Windows may also be important). Here's how to tell.

You've Come a Long Way!
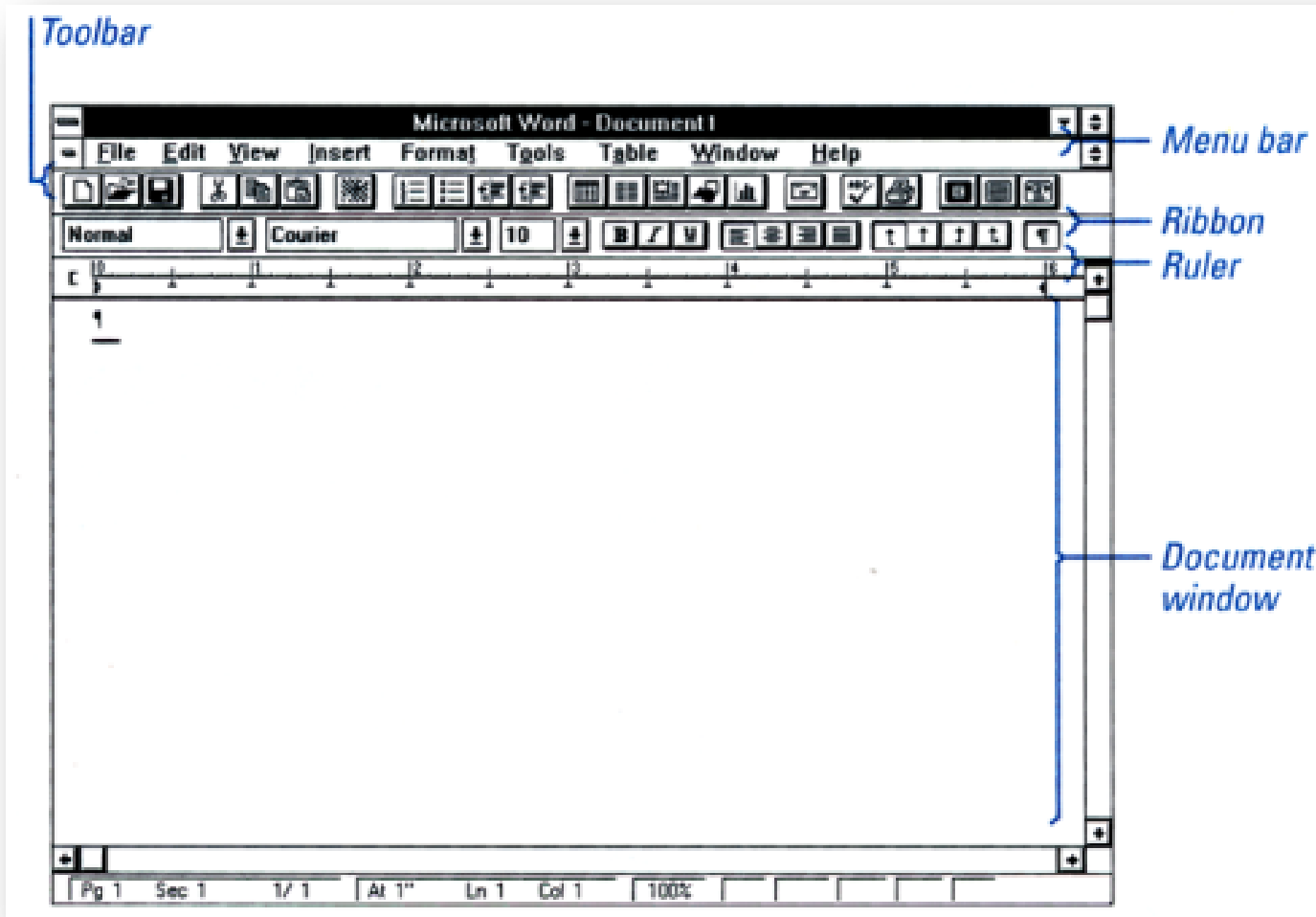
The document window in Word 2.0 for Windows
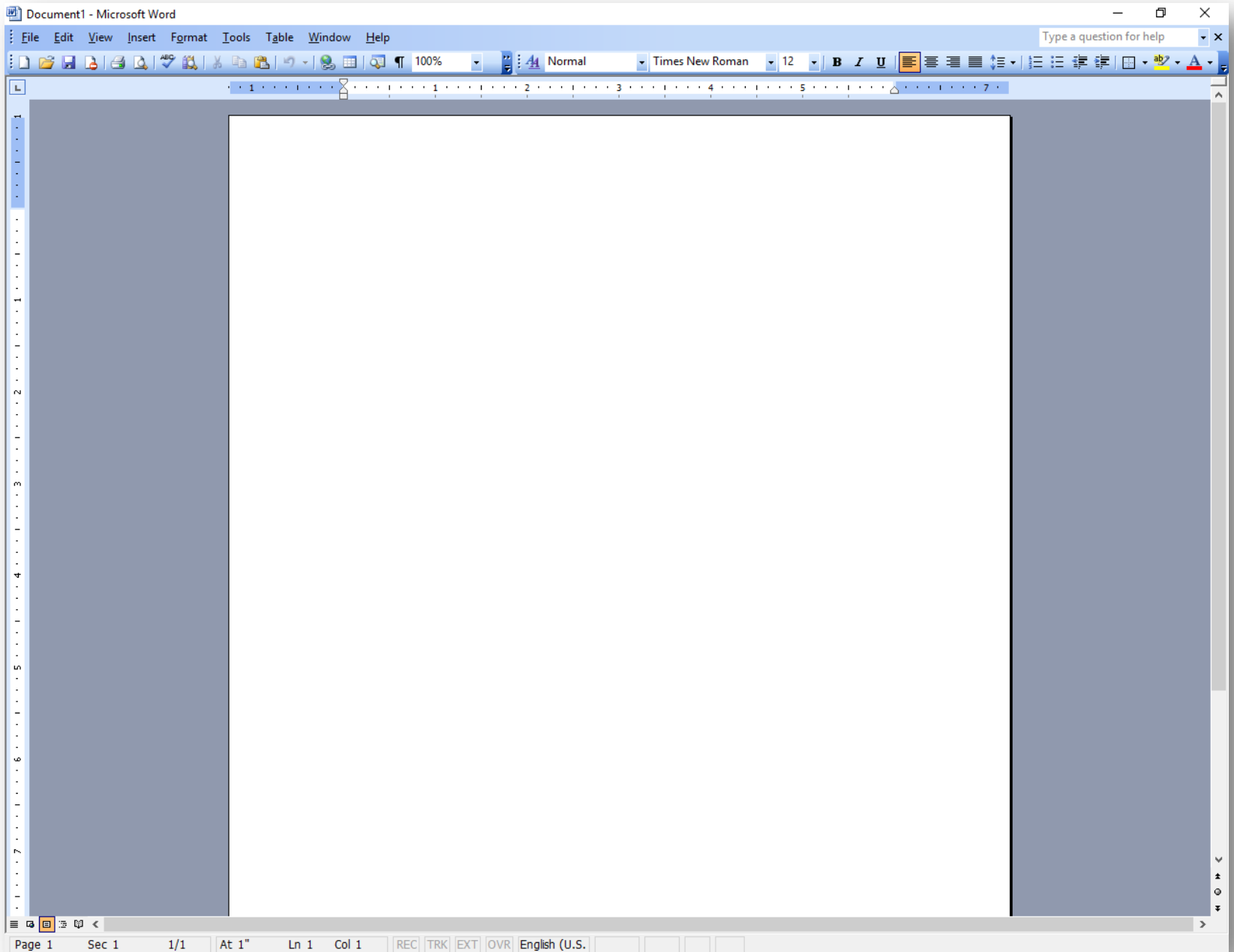
Word 2003—toolbars

Specific Version Information

Word 2003: Help | About Microsoft Office Word
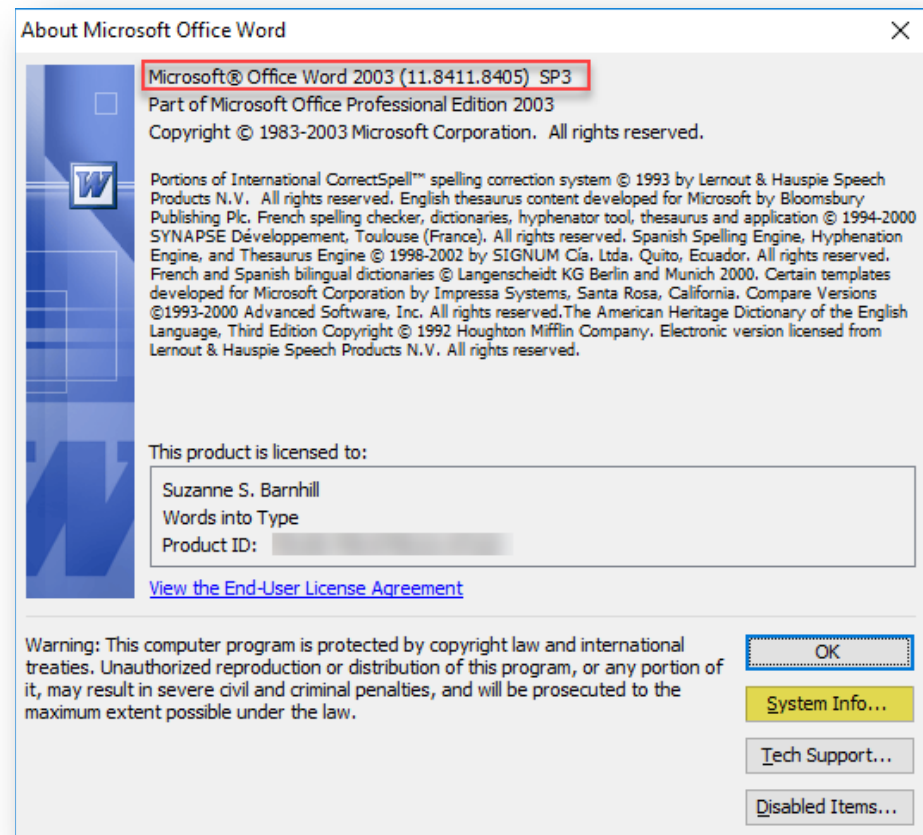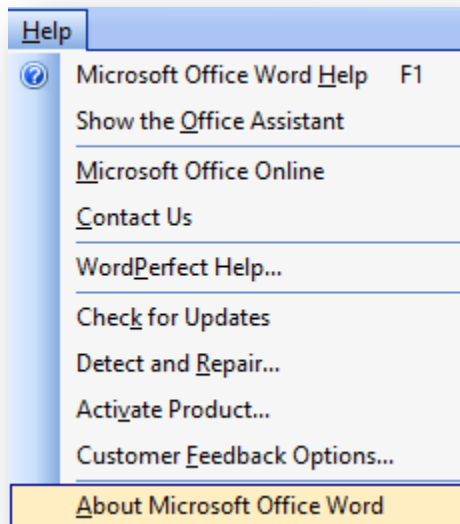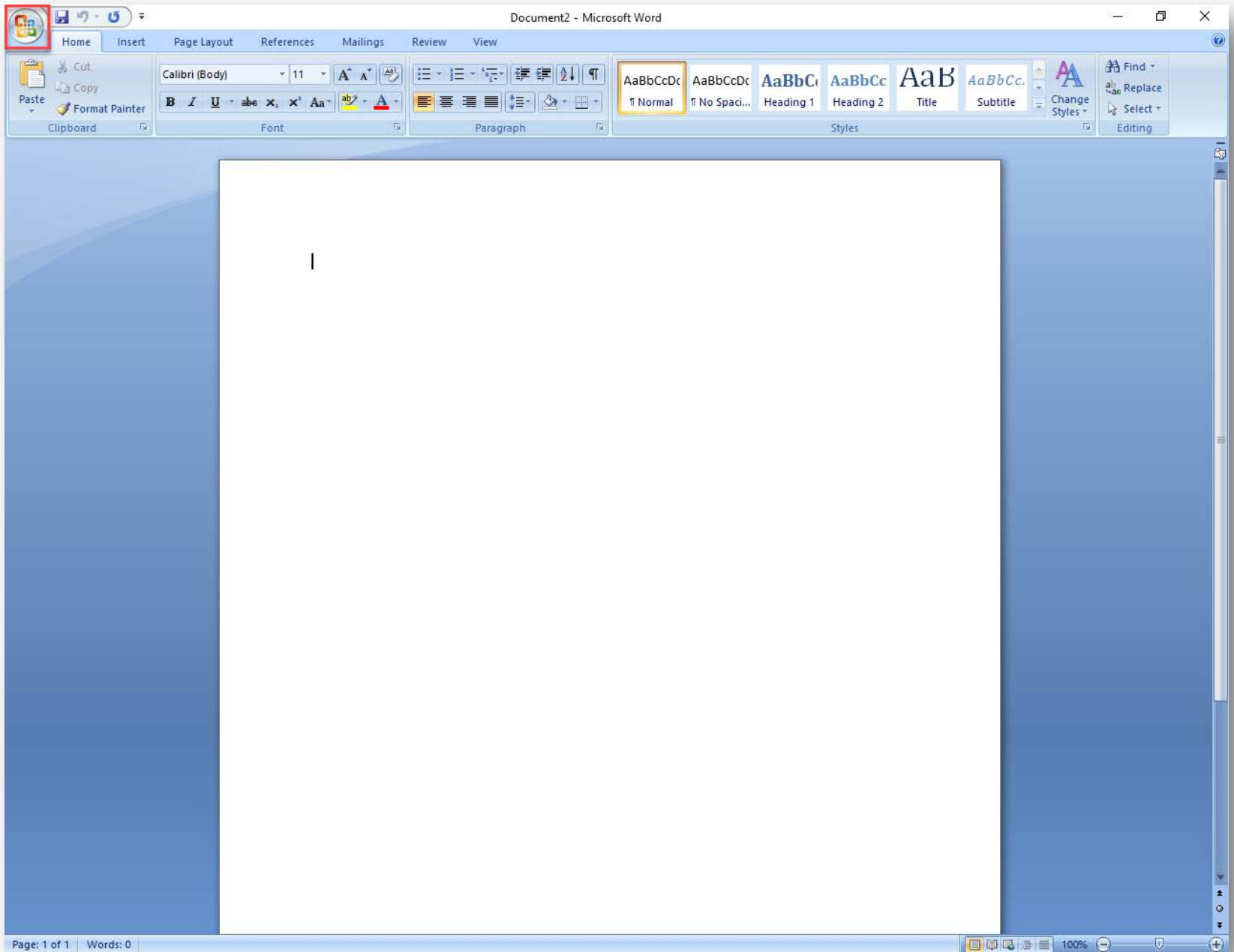
Word 2007—"pizza button" (Office Button)

Specific Version Information
Word 2007

Office Button | Word Options | Resources | About
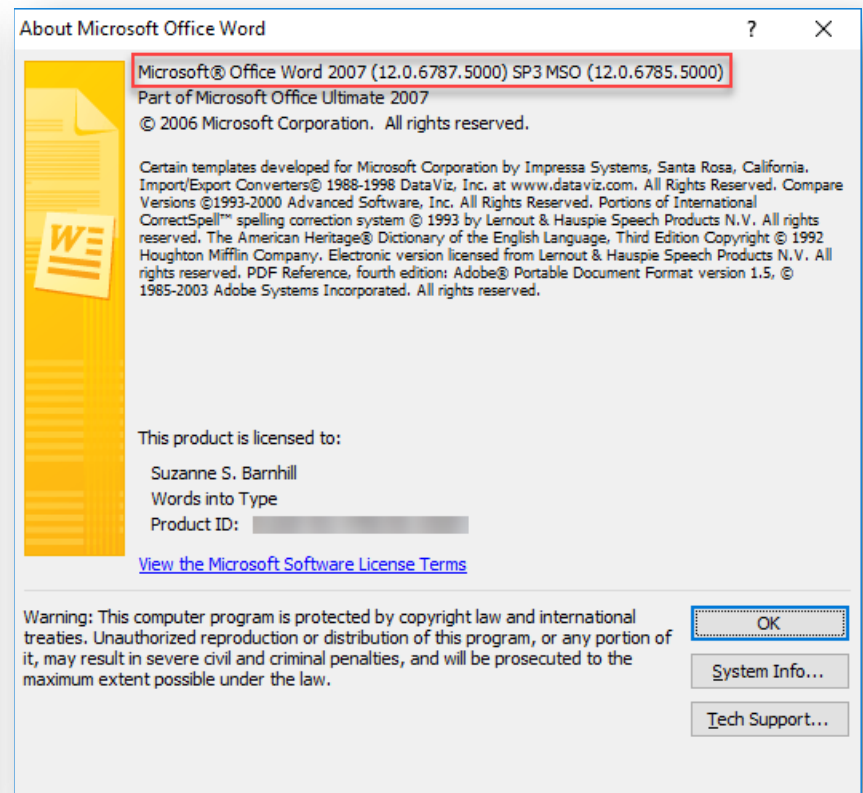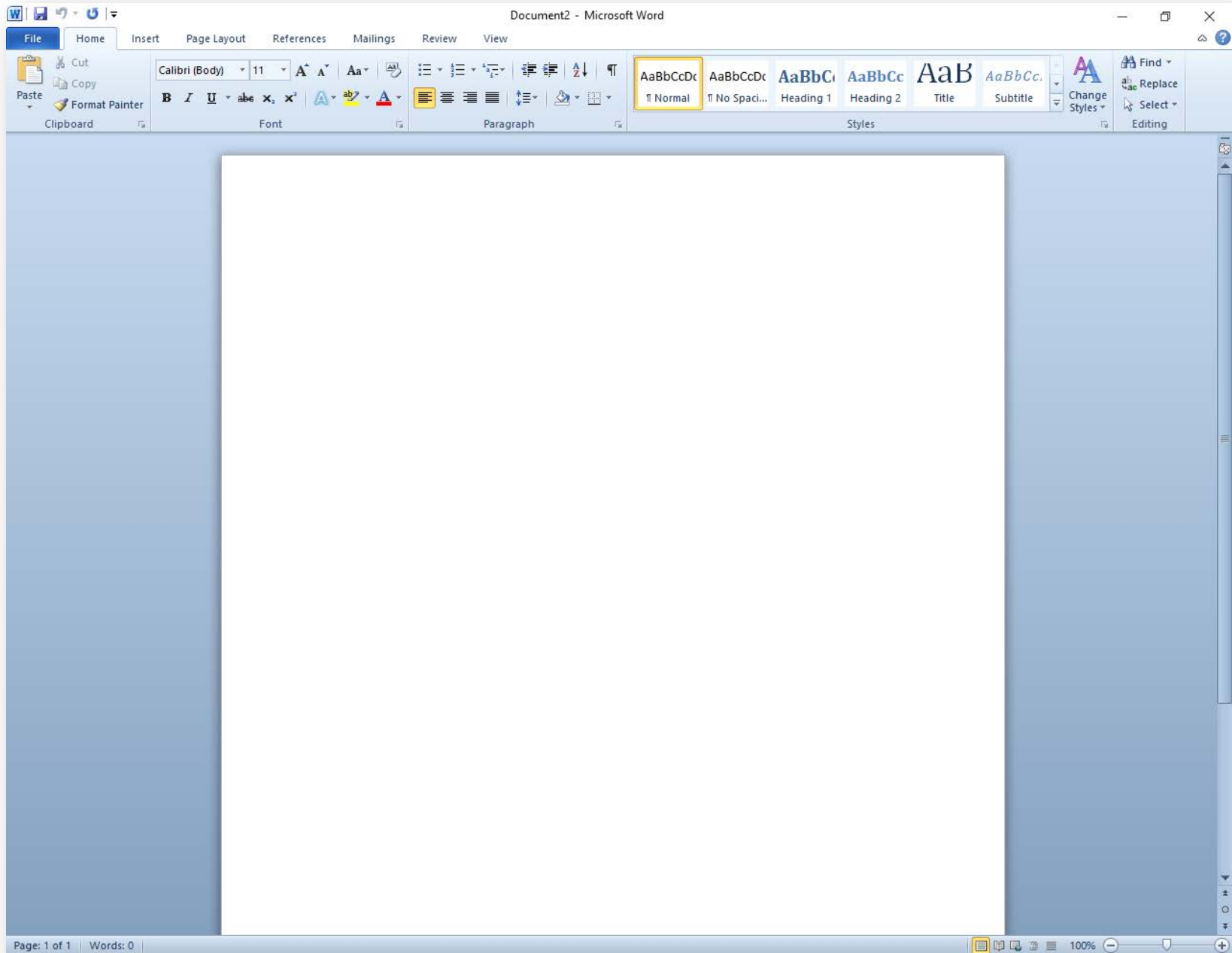
Word 2010—File tab with lowercase tab labels

Specific Version Information

Word 2010: File | Help

Word 2013/2016/2019 (Office 365)—
FILE tab and all caps tab labels in Word 2013, reduced color in all versions

Specific Version Information

Word 2013 and above: File | Account

The Word Environment

- You do not have to use Word out of the box
- You can customize many aspects of the appearance of your Word window and of your Word documents
- Word offers many ways to make your favorite tools more accessible

The Quick Access Toolbar (QAT)

- By default it is above the Ribbon and has only three tools: **Save**, **Undo**, and **Repeat/Redo**. (Only two of those are even useful.)

Click here and choose **Show Below the Ribbon**
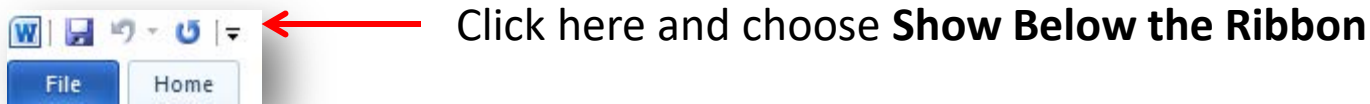
- If you move the QAT below the Ribbon, you can add many more tools and bring them closer:
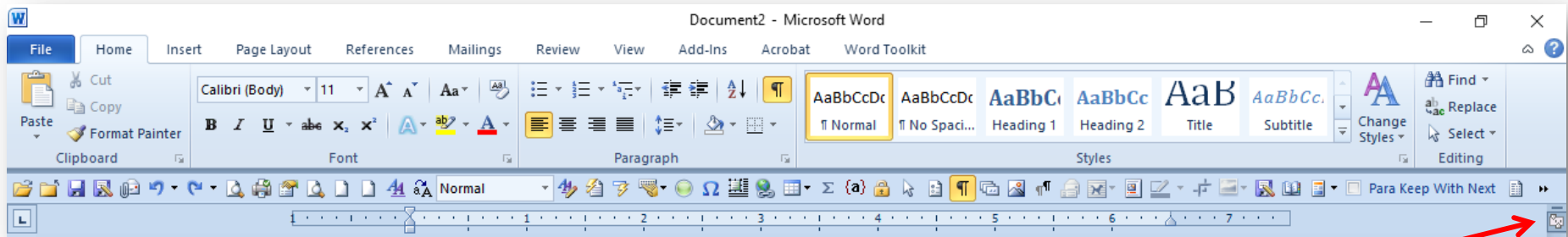
Click here to display the ruler
(in Word 2013 and above: **View | Ruler**)

The Status Bar

- By default, the status bar shows only the page number and the number of words on the left and the View and Zoom settings on the right.
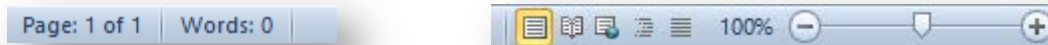
- If you right-click on it , you can get a menu that lets you add many other options:
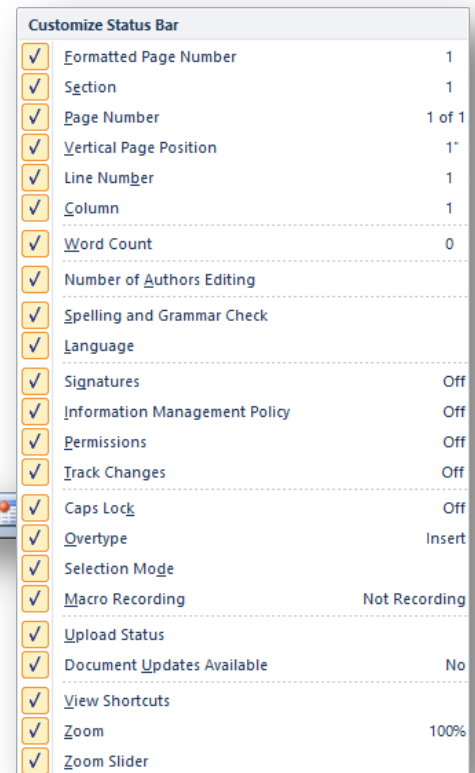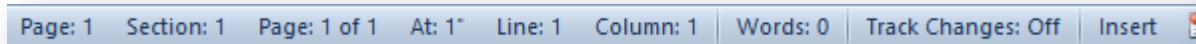
Set Margins and Indents

- Difference between margins (for documents and sections) and indents (for paragraphs)
- Set margins from ruler
- Set margins from **Page Setup** dialog
- Access **Page Setup** dialog by double-clicking on the top of the ruler
- Margins are a section property; if you want to change them for the entire document, make sure "Whole document" is selected

Indents for Poetry
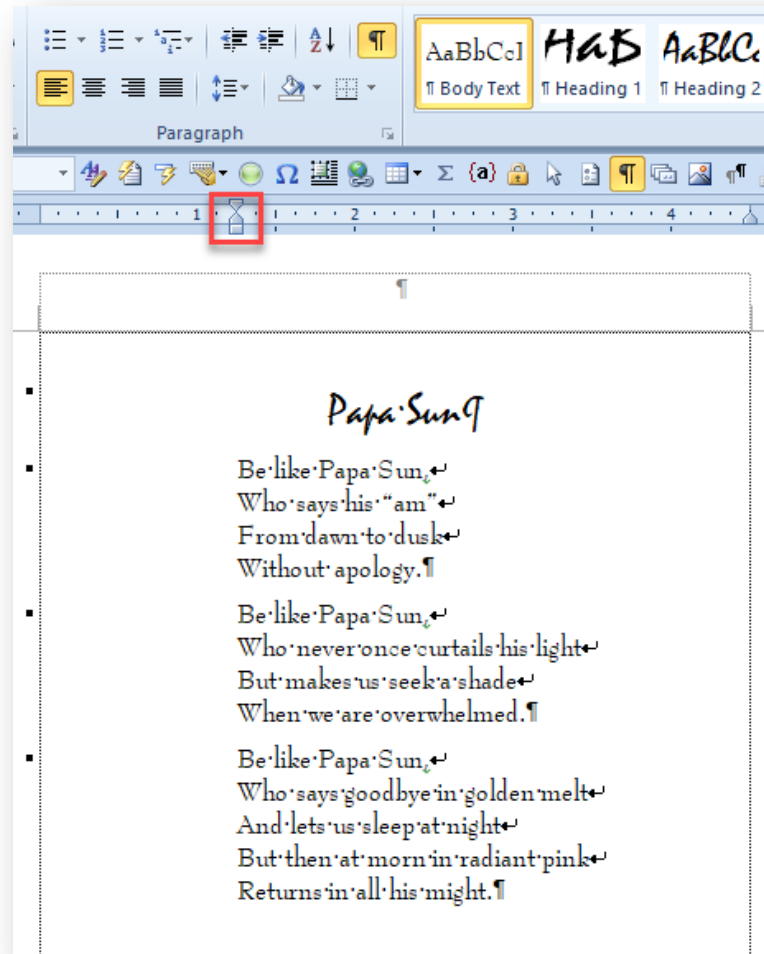
Format Paragraphs

- The ruler and the Home tab offer some ways to format paragraphs.

- For more precise settings, use the **Paragraph** dialog.

- To access the **Paragraph** dialog, right-click in the paragraph and choose **Paragraph...** from the shortcut menu.

- Difference between line spacing and Space Before/After.

How Not to Space Paragraphs

How Not to Use Tabs

Contents

Page Break

Add a header or footer

- Double-click in the header area to open the header pane.
- Type your desired header content.
- Use tabs to position text.
- Use **Alt+Shift+P** to insert a simple page number.
- Scroll down and click in the footer area to add footer content.
- Use **Previous/Next** to navigate between multiple headers and footers.
- Avoid the premade Header and Footer building blocks.

Header and Footer Tricks

- By default, a header or footer in one section will continue in the next section, but you can unlink them.

- You can have up to three different headers/footers in any one document/section.

- You can restart numbering or change the number format without unlinking headers.

- You can use the StyleRef field to change header content.

Why Use Styles?

- They allow you to apply complex font and paragraph formatting with a single click.

- They ensure that paragraphs with the same purpose have the same format.

- They allow you to update all similar paragraphs at once if you change your mind about formatting.

Ways to Display Styles

- Quick Styles gallery (visible only when Home tab is displayed)

- Styles pane (visible when enabled, but can cramp screen; can be torn off and resized)

- Apply Styles dialog (stays open and can float anywhere on screen)

- Style dropdown on the QAT (always visible but has some limitations)

Quick Styles Gallery
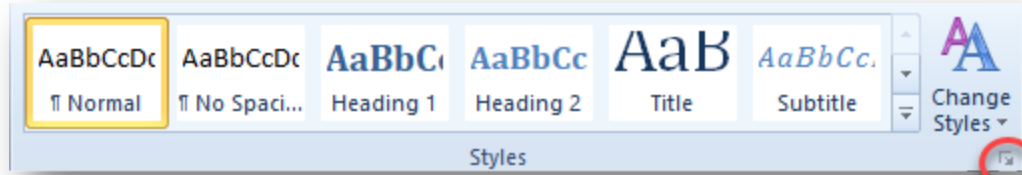
Click here to open Styles pane

More at http://wordfaqs.ssbarnhill.com/ManageStyles.htm

Styles Pane
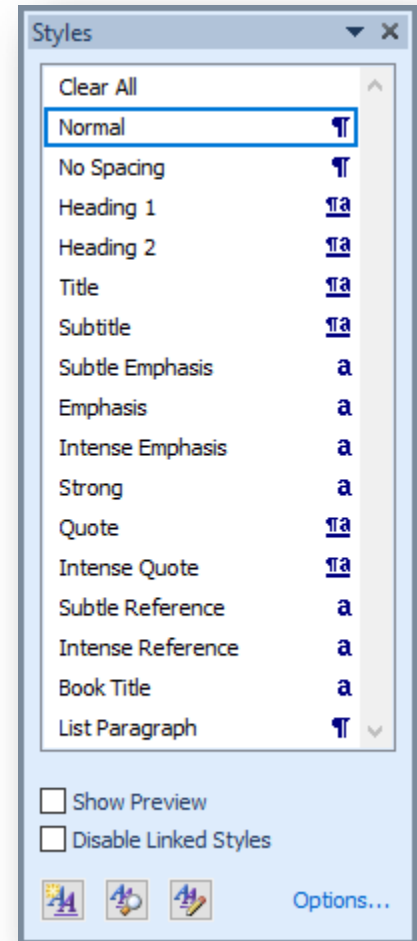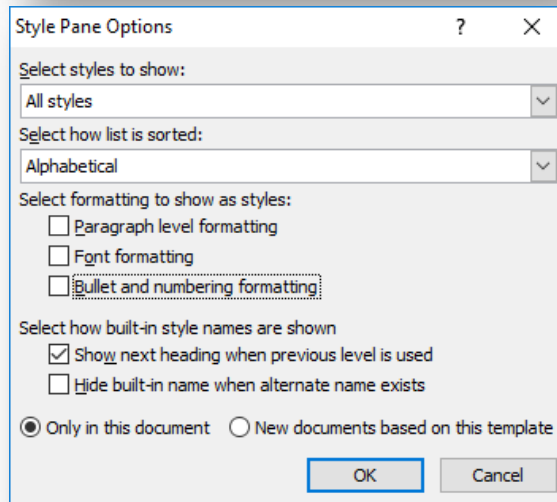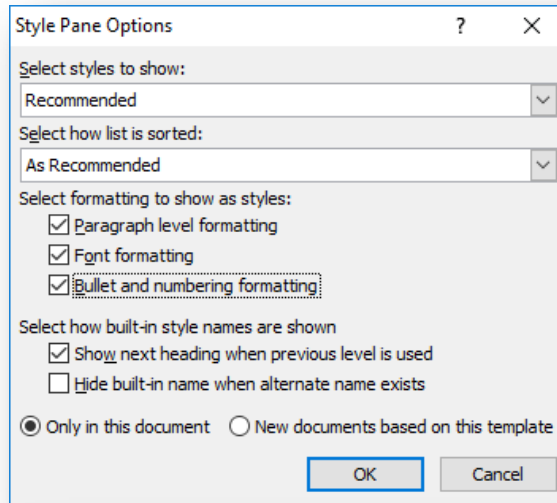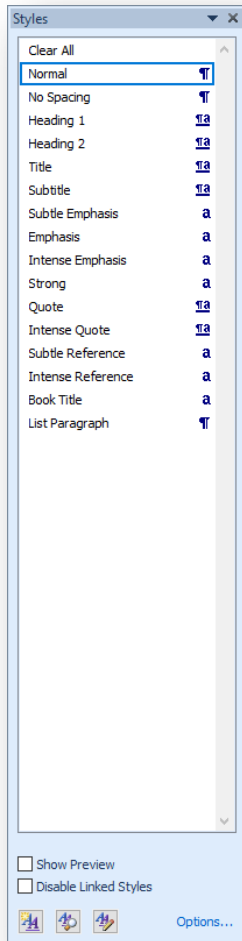
Apply Styles Dialog
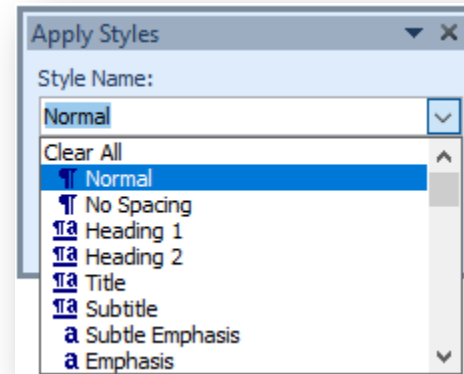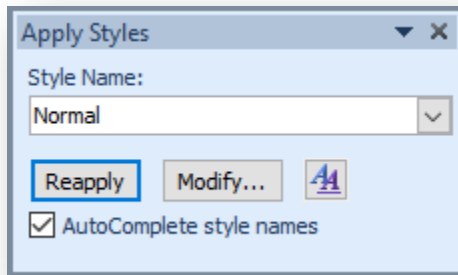
Use **Ctrl+Shift+S** to display the **Apply Styles** dialog

Style Dropdown on QAT
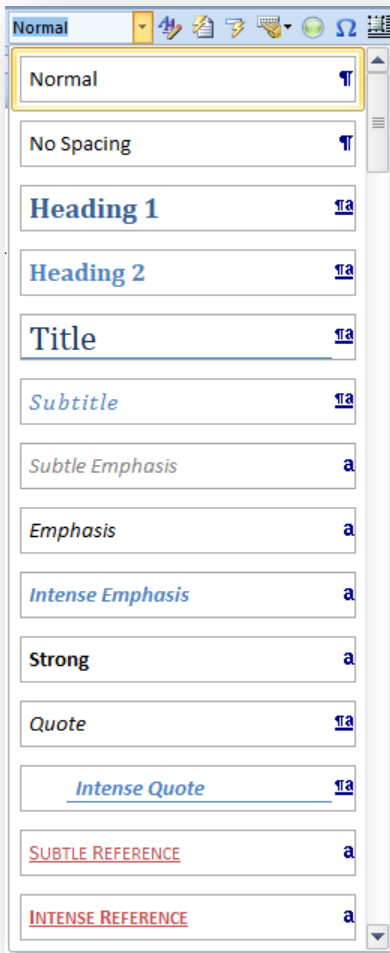
Press Shift while clicking the down arrow to force Word to display All Styles.

Books I've Typeset

http://wordsintotype.ssbarnhill.com/Books.htm