# Formatting Text in Word

One of the consequences of the domination enjoyed by Microsoft Office in the productivity suite market (and, by extension, the domination enjoyed by Word in the word processing market) is that people — particularly businesspeople — now have high expectations. That is, because so many users have access to powerful formatting techniques, people have come to expect that the documents they read will have a relatively high level of visual appeal. Send someone a plain, unformatted memo and although they may not delete it out without a glance, they’re likely to look down their nose at such a rag-tag specimen. So, although you need to always ensure your content is up to snuff (accurate, grammatically correct, and so on), you also need to spend some time making sure that the content looks its best.

## Understanding formatting

When you are working with formatting in Word, it helps to remember that there are only three main types of formatting and only two main methods for applying formatting.

Here are the three main types of formatting:

* **character formatting.** Attributes applied to individual characters, including the font (typeface), type size, color, bolding, italics, underlining, case, and special effects such as strikethrough, superscripts, and subscripts.
* **paragraph formatting.** Attributes applied to paragraphs as a whole, including indenting, alignment, line spacing, spacing before and after the paragraph, bullets, numbering, background shading, and borders.
* **document formatting.** Attributes applied to the document as a whole, including margins, headers, footers, columns, page orientation, paper size, columns, line numbers, and hyphenation.

Here are the two main methods for applying character and paragraph formatting:

* **Directly.** With this method, you select individual font and paragraph attributes yourself. If you selected text beforehand, Word applies the formatting to the selection; otherwise, Word applies the formatting to the current cursor position. You use the Home tab’s Font and Paragraph groups to apply formatting directly. In both cases, more options are available in the respective dialog boxes, which you display by clicking the dialog launcher icons in the lower-right corner of each group.
* **Styles.** A *style* is a predefined collection of formatting options. With this method, when you apply a style to text, Word applies all the style’s formatting options at once. Also, if you change a formatting option within a style, all the text that uses that style is automatically updated with the new formatting. You find out more on this feature later in this chapter.

## Word’s formatting buttons

Before moving on to some easier and faster methods for applying formatting, be sure you know the standard procedure, which involves choosing your formatting options using the controls in the Home tab’s Font and Paragraph groups. Table 1 summarizes the controls in the Font group.

**Table 1. Word’s Font formatting buttons**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ***Name*** | ***Description*** |
| Font | Displays a list of font faces |
| Size | Displays a list of font sizes |
| Grow Font | Increases the font size |
| Shrink Font | Decreases the font size |
| Clear Formatting | Removes all font formatting |
| Bold | Toggles bolding on and off |
| Italic | Toggles italics on and off |
| Underline | Toggles underlining on and off |
| Strikethrough | Toggles the strikethrough effect on and off |
| Subscript | Toggles the subscript on and off |
| Superscript | Toggles the superscript effect on and off |
| Change Case | Displays a list of cases |
| Font Color | Applies the displayed color to the text or displays a palette of text colors |
| Text Highlight Color | Applies the displayed color to the text highlight or displays a palette of highlight colors |

Table 2 summarizes the controls in the Paragraph group.

**Table 2. Word’s Paragraph formatting buttons**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ***Name*** | ***Description*** |
| Bullets | Converts the current paragraph to a bullet or displays a list of bullet styles |
| Numbering | Converts the current paragraph to a numbered list or displays a list of numbered list styles |
| Outline Numbering | Displays a list of outline numbering styles |
| Decrease Indent | Decreases the paragraph indent |
| Increase Indent | Increases the paragraph indent |
| Sort | Sorts the selected paragraphs |
| Show/Hide ¶ | Toggles paragraph marks and other formatting marks on and off |
| Align Left | Aligns each line in the current paragraph with the left margin |
| Center | Centers each line in the current paragraph between the margins |
| Align Right | Aligns each line in the current paragraph with the right margin |
| Justify | Aligns each line in the current paragraph with both margins |
| Line Spacing | Displays a list of paragraph line spacing values |
| Shading | Applies the displayed color to the paragraph background or displays a palette of background colors |
| Borders | Displays a list of border styles |
| Format Painter | Applies paragraph styles from one paragraph to other selected paragraphs |

## Easier formatting

To avoid frittering away too much time with Word’s abundant formatting options, having a few formatting tricks up your sleeve can help make things happen more quickly and more easily. The next few sections show you a few techniques that can reduce the amount of time and effort you spend formatting your documents.

### Formatting from the keyboard

When you have a ton of typing to get through, the last thing you want to do is switch over to the mouse to get your formatting chores accomplished. Fortunately, you may not have to bother much with the mouse because Word offers a huge number of formatting shortcuts via the keyboard. Table 3 offers the complete list.

**Table 3. Word’s formatting keyboard shortcuts**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ***Press*** | ***To apply the following format*** |
| Ctrl+B | Bold |
| Ctrl+I | Italics |
| Ctrl+U | Underline |
| Ctrl+Shift+D | Double underline |
| Ctrl+Shift+W | Underline each word in the selection |
| Ctrl+Shift+A | Uppercase |
| Shift+F3 | Cycle case |
| Ctrl+Shift+K | Small caps |
| Ctrl+= | Subscript |
| Ctrl++ | Superscript |
| Ctrl+Shift+Q | Symbol font |
| Ctrl+> | Grow font |
| Ctrl+] | Grow font size by one point |
| Ctrl+< | Shrink font |
| Ctrl+[ | Shrink font size by one point |
| Ctrl+D or Ctrl+Shift+F | Display the Font dialog box with Font selected |
| Ctrl+Shift+P | Display the Font dialog box with Size selected |
| Ctrl+Shift+N | Normal style |
| Alt+Ctrl+1 | Heading 1 style |
| Alt+Ctrl+2 | Heading 2 style |
| Alt+Ctrl+3 | Heading 3 style |
| Ctrl+Shift+S | Display the Apply Styles pane |
| Ctrl+L | Align left |
| Ctrl+E | Center |
| Ctrl+R | Align right |
| Ctrl+J | Justify |
| Ctrl+T | Increase hanging indent |
| Ctrl+Shift+T | Decrease hanging indent |
| Ctrl+M | Increase indent |
| Ctrl+Shift+M | Decrease indent |
| Ctrl+Shift+L | Bullet |
| Ctrl+1 | Set paragraph line spacing to 1 |
| Ctrl+5 | Set paragraph line spacing to 1.5 |
| Ctrl+2 | Set paragraph line spacing to 2 |
| Ctrl+\* | Show/Hide ¶ (formatting symbols) |
| Ctrl+Shift+C | Copy formatting from selection |
| Ctrl+Shift+V | Paste formatting to selection |
| Ctrl+Space or Ctrl+Shift+Z | Clear character formatting |
| Ctrl+Q | Clear paragraph formatting |

You can also use the keyboard to create a quick border between two paragraphs. The official way to do this is to drop down the Borders tool and then click either the Top Border button (if the cursor is in the second of the two paragraphs) or the Bottom Border button (if the cursor is in the first paragraph). From the keyboard, Word has six characters that, when used in a certain way, produce a border across the page. The six characters are the hyphen (-), underscore (\_), equals sign (=), pound sign (#), tilde (~), and asterisk (\*). You create the border by typing one of these characters three times and then pressing Enter. Table 4 summarizes these key combinations and the border types they produce.

**Table 4. Keyboard shortcuts to create borders**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ***Press*** | ***To create the following border*** |
| ---+Enter | Thin |
| \_\_\_+Enter | Thick |
| ===+Enter | Double |
| ###+Enter | Triple (two thin, one thick) |
| ~~~+Enter | Wavy |
| \*\*\*+Enter | Dotted |

### Working with the Mini Toolbar

The keyboard shortcuts in Table 3 are useful for those times when reaching for the mouse will just slow you down. However, if you are in more of a formatting mode than a typing mode, then you’re more likely to be using the mouse. In that case, you can still gain some efficiency by reducing the amount of travel your mouse activities require.

Word helps you out here by providing the Mini Toolbar, a scaled-down version of the Font and Paragraph groups that includes the formatting options you probably use most often. When you select text in Word, the Mini Toolbar appears automatically just above the text. If you want to apply one of its formatting options, your mouse doesn’t have to go far; if not, then the Mini Toolbar will fade away as you continue with other tasks. (If you want to ensure the Mini Toolbar stays onscreen for now, move your mouse pointer over the Mini Toolbar.)

### Using the Format Painter

It can take a fair amount of work to get some text or a paragraph formatted just right. That’s bad enough, but things get worse if you then have to repeat the entire procedure for another selection. The more times you have to repeat a format, the less likely you are to begin the whole process in the first place.

Fortunately, Word has an under-appreciated tool that can remove almost all the drudgery from applying the same formatting to multiple selections. It’s called the Format Painter tool, and you can find it in the Home tab’s Clipboard group. Here are the steps to follow to use Format Painter to apply existing formatting to another section:

1. Position the insertion point within the text or paragraph that has the formatting you want to copy.
2. On the Home tab, in the Clipboard group, click Format Painter.
3. Click the text or paragraph that you want to receive the formatting. Word transfers the formatting from the selected text to the new text.

Where Format Painter really shines is applying formatting to multiple sections of text. Here are the steps:

1. Position the insertion point within the text or paragraph that has the formatting you want to copy.
2. On the Home tab, in the Clipboard group, double-click the Format Painter tool.
3. Click the text or paragraph that you want to receive the formatting. Word transfers the formatting from the selected text to the new text.
4. Repeat step 3 for each of the other areas that you want to format.
5. When you are done, click the Format Painter button to turn it off.

### Applying styles

Word comes with a small collection of predefined styles. These include Body (the default style for regular document text), Heading 1 through Heading 3 (suitable for document headings), Emphasis (italics), Strong (bolding), Subtitle (larger text for the document subtitle), and Title (even larger text for the document title).

To apply a style, follow these steps:

1. Select the text you want to format (or place the insert point cursor in the word or paragraph).
2. On the Home tab, in the Styles group, click More to display the Styles gallery.
3. Hover over a style to see its effect on the selected text.
4. Click the style you want to apply.

If you have a set of formatting options you want to reuse in the future, you can save them as a custom style. Here are the steps to follow:

1. Select the text that contains the formatting options you want to save.
2. On the Home tab, in the Styles group, click More, and then click Create a Style to display the Create New Style from Formatting dialog box.
3. Type a name for the style.
4. Click OK.

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