The Word on Word

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When writing, you should setup your environment to make writing as convenient as possible for yourself. At some point, your manuscript will need to go to alpha or beta readers, your printer, your agent, or your publisher. There are a few tips for formatting which will ease the transition from your preferred format to a common format. In this article, we’ll look at some features of Word which you can use to structure and format your document.

# Page Layout

Generally speaking, page size and margin are the only features I configure. For me, it is easiest to make my page size and margins reflect what will be used for printing the final book. There are 2 page sizes I use for printing depending on the size of my manuscript. For works of 65k+ words, I use 6"x9" and for all other works, I use 5.5"x8.5". This is not defined by any standards; it is personal preference. We will cover these two formats here.

## Page Size

To setup the page size, go to Layout and click Statement for 5.5"x8.5" or More A screenshot of a computer

Description automatically generatedPaper Sizes… for 6"x9".

A screenshot of a page setup

Description automatically generatedFor 6"x9", change the width and height accordingly.

## Margins

Setting up margins for print books is different than how we normally setup margins. The internal margin needs to be larger to allow for page bend to give the reader A screenshot of a computer

Description automatically generatedthe feel of evenly-distributed text. To set your margins, Go to Layout and click Margins.

Click on Custom Margins at the bottom. Next, change the Multiple pages option to Mirror Margins and set the Top, Bottom, Inside, Outside, and Gutter to .5 and click A screenshot of a computer

Description automatically generatedOK.

Your page is now configured to best represent the printed version of your manuscript.

# Paragraphs

There are many ways to format your paragraphs. To illustrate the methods, we will format our paragraph to be Times New Roman, 12pt with 1.33 line height and a 0.5” first line indent. This is a common format people use in the industry, but don’t hesitate to adjust according to your preferences. By using these methods, changing your manuscript to fit other requirements will be relatively easy.

NOTE: We use formatting to indent the first line, *not* tabs. In general, you should not use tabs to indent your first line.

With your cursor on a line of text, change the font to Times New Roman and the A screenshot of a computer

Description automatically generatedsize to 12 on the Home tab.

A screenshot of a computer

Description automatically generatedNext, select Line Spacing Options… from the menu.

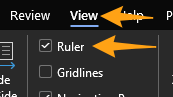
A screenshot of a computer

Description automatically generatedIn Line Spacing Options, change Line spacing to Multiple and At to 1.33.

Set the first line indent by dragging the top icon for indentations to the 0.5” A screen shot of a computer

Description automatically generatedmark.

If you do not see the ruler at the top, turn on the ruler by going to View and checking the box for Ruler.



To ensure this format is applied as the default format, on the Home tab, right A screenshot of a computer

Description automatically generatedclick on the Normal style and choose Update Normal to Match Selection.

Now, *all* paragraphs using the default format will be formatted according to our new specifications.

# Parts, Chapters, & Sections

To add structure to your document which converts into navigation, use the headings feature of Word. Chapters should be Heading 1 and sections should be named Heading 2. A section is a subdivided part of a chapter usually delineated by “\* \* \*” centered on a line. If you have parts to your novel, parts should be Heading 1; chapters, Heading 2; sections, Heading 3.

To apply a heading, just click on the heading type from the Home tab’s Styles A screen shot of a video game

Description automatically generatedmenu.

Tip: If you want to customize a header format, customize one, then right-click on the heading box in the Home tab’s Styles menu and choose Update Heading *X* to Match Selection.

## Creating PDFs with Navigation

If you need to convert your document to a PDF, you can include your headers as A computer screen with a black background

Description automatically generatednavigation by clicking more options on the Save menu.

Click on Options:

A close-up of a bookmark

Description automatically generatedA screenshot of a computer

Description automatically generatedTurn on creating bookmarks by headings:

A screenshot of a computer

Description automatically generatedNow your PDF will have navigation available as shown here:

## Moving Chapters Around

Header-based navigation means you can drag-and-drop sections around in the Navigation menu to restructure your document. This is useful when moving chapters.

[This video](https://bookishnerds.com/articles/Navigation.mp4) demonstrates moving parts of your story around. (Ctrl+Left Click the link to view the video.)

# Spacing

Spacing your document is important. Do not hit return/enter many times to go to the next page. Pressing Ctrl+Return/Enter will add a page break and ensure that future edits do not adjust your page spacing.

If you get stuck trying to figure out why something is spaced where it is, use the A black background with white text

Description automatically generatedA screen shot of a computer

Description automatically generatedpilcrow to display visible space.

# Bonus Tips

1. If you format a section of text and want to apply that format to other text, highlight the text whose format you want to use, then click the format painter and select the text you want to apply the formatting to.

A screen shot of a computer

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1. If you want the first letter of your text to be large, this is called “drop cap”. Highlight the letter you would like to be larger, then go to Insert and choose Drop Cap.

A screenshot of a computer

Description automatically generatedThe resulting text will look like this:

A black background with white text

Description automatically generated

1. If you choose to create a table of contents, go to References and Table of Contents. This will insert a table of contents where your cursor is.

A screenshot of a computer

Description automatically generated

1. To add a page number at the bottom of your page, go to Insert and click Page Number and select the style from the menu displayed.

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