Text Essentials

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Typography basics

Type ONE SPACE after a full stop. Double spaces are for typewriters, with their extra-wide letters. With proportional computer fonts, double spaces look tacky. Every professional book, journal, and magazine on your shelf uses one space, and so should you.

The quote marks on your keyboard are not REAL QUOTE MARKS—they're called straight quotes, or typewriter quotes. Typographers' or "curly" quotes are what the real world uses; an apostrophe is a *single closing* curly quote. Your word processor probably converts straight quotes to real quotes on the fly (check the Autocorrect > Autoformat settings) but sometimes it messes up, so learn to type them by hand.

Don't UNDERLINE anything (particularly not in these web-link days, and even though some old style books say you should). Use italics instead: ALL CAPS and underlining are both typewriter relics.

The key beside the zero on your keyboard is a hyphen, not a dash. To make a DASH on a typewriter, you would type two hyphens (and Word will even convert them if you do), but see Insert Symbol to learn the shortcut for an en dash and an em dash. EN dashes are used in a range (from x to y, replacing the 'to'), while longer EM dashes show a break in a sentence—like this (or you can use an en dash with a space either side – like this.)

There are a multitude of SPECIAL CHARACTERS available in all fonts: curly quotes of course, a degrees symbol (°), an ellipsis (…), a bullet (•), some math symbols (×, ±, ÷), Spanish punctuation (¡, ¿), and accented characters (é, à, î, ñ, ö, š, and most importantly the macron: ā). Don't try and fake these yourself; for example, by making a degrees sign out of a small superscripted 'o'.

Tabs and indents

If you find yourself typing tab-tab-tab-tab, something's wrong. You're probably using the default TAB STOPS, which are only half an inch apart. Set your own: click the tab stop button, click in the ruler. Choose left tabs except in special cases (e.g., when setting columns of numbers, use a decimal tab stop). The goal is a single tab between each item in a table—this will make editors much happier, as they won't have to delete hundreds of superfluous tabs. And *never* use the space bar to make things line up; this only works on typewriters.

INDENTS are also controlled from the ruler. You don't need to indent the first line of your *very first* paragraph; we can *see* where it starts. All other paragraphs can have a small indent: a few letters, about a quarter inch. Don't use the tab key; drag the first-line indent marker in the ruler (like tabs, these ruler settings only affect the paragraph you're in, or those you've selected). Leave the left and right indent markers, unless you want to bring the whole paragraph in from the left and right margins as a block quote. You should either indent paragraphs, or put space between them (see below), but not both.

HANGING INDENTS are used mostly for bibliographies. Select all the paragraphs you want to format. Set the first-line indent at the margin, and bring the left indent in a little. You can make lists using hanging indents and a tab stop, or with Word's "bullets and numbering" tool.

```
typewriter font.  Two spaces
```
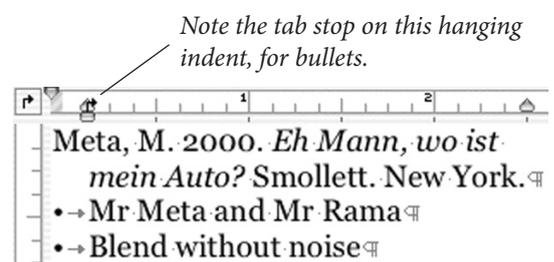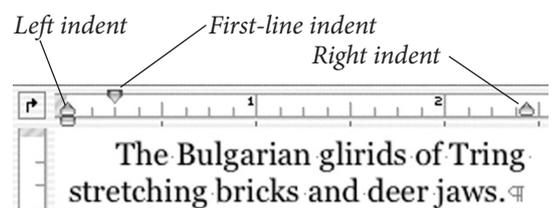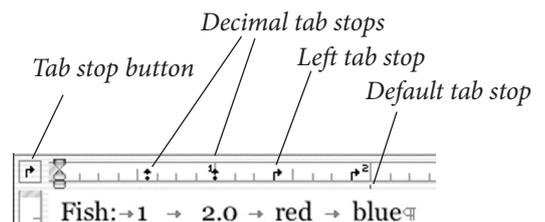proportional font. Two spaces
proportional font. One space

```
"Typewriter quotes."
```
These are "crass," and these are "nice".

'	"	'	"
Single	*Double*	*Single*	*Double*
open quotes		*closing quotes*	

Hyphen	Thin-edged
En dash	Tues–Fri, 8:00–5:00
Em dash	This—or that

Get used to using Insert > Symbol to find special characters and learn the keyboard shortcuts (which vary between Mac and PC). Try keeping a list of useful shortcuts on a Post-It on your monitor until you've learned them.

Fish: 1   2.0   red   blue

The Bulgarian glirids of Tring stretching bricks and deer jaws.

Note the tab stop on this hanging indent, for bullets.

Meta, M. 2000. *Eh Mann, wo ist mein Auto?* Smollett. New York.
• Mr Meta and Mr Rama
• Blend without noise

Paragraph formatting

LINE SPACING is one of the best ways to improve readability, often better than making the text bigger. Check Format > Paragraph. The default is "single spaced": try setting an *exact* line spacing about 120% of your font size (e.g., 10 pt Georgia on 12 pt line spacing, alias "Georgia 10/12"). Increase line spacing by a point or two for if readability is compromised, for example with sans-serif fonts like Arial or Helvetica.

Get control of your PARAGRAPH SPACING. Don't press Enter twice between paragraphs; that inserts a whole typewriter-like line of space, which is usually too much. Try manually setting a lesser amount, like 6 pts, or 3 pts between the references in your bibliography. Note that any space set after one paragraph is added to any space before the next one.

Rather than format each paragraph manually, learn to use STYLES. These are preset formats, with names like *Normal* or *Heading 1*. Some apply to a whole paragraph, others (character styles) to just a few letters. You can modify the premade ones, create your own, import them from other documents using the Organiser, or even open the Normal template and alter them there to affect all subsequent documents.

Once you've applied a style to every paragraph, you can make global changes, like "all sub-headings 1 pt bigger" in a flash. Styles also allow you to create automatic tables of contents, or use Word's outlining tool.

Here's a sample setting for spaced paragraphs with about 11 pt text.

The At least setting means that the line spacing will expand if you insert something big, like a picture.

Styles

Outlining

The OUTLINE VIEW lets you see the structure of your document, and is excellent for planning—the Outline toolbar will appear when you switch to it. You use Heading styles to create sections in your document, and you can reorder those sections by dragging them around, or indent them to make sub-sections. You can expand or collapse the outline, and (most usefully) choose to show just the first line of each paragraph. If you're following good essay practice and putting topic sentences at the beginning of your paragraphs, you can then read your whole argument on one page.

Outline

Show all   *Formatting*

Just first lines of paragraph

Document management

Use **PAGE BREAKS** or **SECTION BREAKS** (Next Page) rather than multiple Enters to begin a new page: choose Insert > Break. Section breaks are for when you need to change headers, margins, or page numberinf in the course of your document.
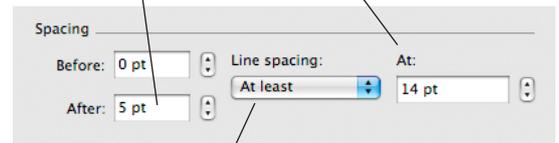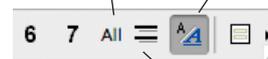
Fix Word's manic **AUTOCORRECTING.** Turn off all Tools > Auto-Correct options, and almost all AutoFormat As You Type, but make sure Smart Quotes stay on. In Tools > Options > Edit, un-check Automatic Word Selection. AutoText is sometimes useful if you type the same long phrases repeatedly.

Avoid the mouse; learn **SHORTCUTS** from the menu and online Help—a minimum would be Open, New, Save, Copy, Paste, Cut, and Print (keep good shortcuts on a Post-It near the computer until you've memorized them). Double-click selects a word, triple-click a paragraph. Clicking to the left of a line selects it, and double-clicking there selects the whole paragraph. Bonus: try shift-clicking and ctrl-dragging…

Tools > **WORD COUNT** can tally the whole document or just a selection; the current word count in the status bar at the bottom too.

Finally, don't rely on Word's **SPELLING CHECKER**—it won't tell you if you used the wrong word—and beware its Grammar checker, which is usually unhelpful or actually misleading. You can turn either off in the Preferences menu.

This is the Autoformat As You Type setting that makes your web addresses blue and underlined!

Further reading

Williams, Robin. The Mac [PC] is Not a Typewriter. *(Peachpit Press, 1995). Short twin books, covering much of this workshop but more elegantly. Another of hers is* The Non-Designer's Design Book *(Peachpit Press again)—she also has non-designer books on Fonts and the Web. All are highly recommended.*