

10 Secrets You Should Know to Survive Microsoft Word

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Microsoft Word – Why Is It Difficult To Use?

How often do you dread using Microsoft Word to create or edit a document? Do you get frustrated with layout issues, line spacing, or even inserting an image?

There are several reasons why “Word” seems like an impossible program to the *casual user*. Before I give those reasons, understand that my experience and my “secrets” below come from almost 20 years of using Word in a professional environment.

My first encounter with Word was while working for a large corporate law firm in their word processing center. I was responsible for preparing complex document; some were Securities and Exchange Commission filings with financial tables and frequent margin, font and formatting changes. Others were legal briefs with complex numbering as well as tables of contents and footnotes. Imagine a high-pressure environment with no room for mistakes; an error could cost a client money or mean losing a case in court.

When my firm changed from WordPerfect to Word, I had one of the best Microsoft Office training firms in the United States spend a week with me and my colleagues. While I despised the idea of having to use Word (WordPerfect was great!), at the end of the week I came to understand Word. Actually, Word and I came to an understanding.

So here is why Microsoft Word, in my opinion, is difficult for many of us to use:

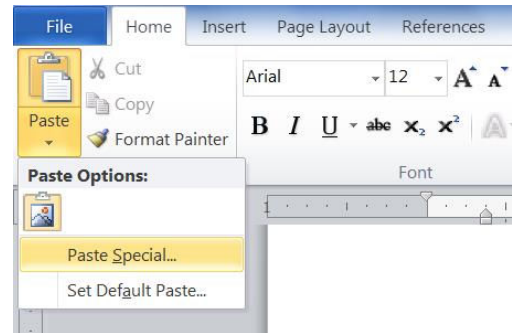
- Word was originally designed for someone writing a book. But as Windows and other Microsoft products gained traction in the corporate world, many realized that what worked for a novelist – like odd and even page layout – was not working to create business documents under pressure.
- Like many Microsoft products, Word tries to “anticipate” your needs when it should just “get out of the way.”
- Many of us don’t come from a print layout background where we need to know line space, padding, font kerning and the like. We just want documents that are easy to create, to edit and to print or send off via email.
- And, sadly, most of us never learned the proper way to use Word.

And, there is a certain *Zen* to Microsoft Word. You need to understand how Word thinks without spending too much on the *why* aspect. Invest some time in learning the most important features, and then get on with your work. Don’t try to tame Word; just get to know its secrets. The secrets below will help you achieve the balance you need for writing family history narratives and even for creating forms and documents for your research clients.

The 10 Secrets of Microsoft Word Survival

1. **Paste Special.** Have you ever copied text from a webpage or another document and then try to paste it into a Word document only to spend lots of time doing “cleanup?” I bet you’re not using Paste Special!

To use: Highlight and copy your text, then place cursor in the Word document where you want the text to appear. On the **Paste** button, **Clipboard** section on the Menu/Ribbon, click the arrow and select **Paste Special**.

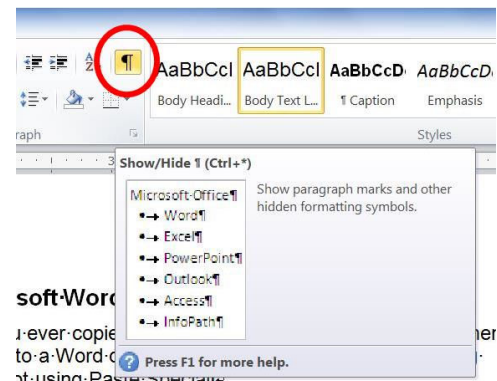


What it does: When you use Paste Special, instead of regular old Paste, you are telling Word to strip out all the formatting from the pasted text. It is the best way to insert text from a website or an unfamiliar source.

2. **Show/Hide.** Remember when you first started using Word and you saw all these “weird codes” and you were happy to find a way to not see them? Well, here’s what they mean and how to turn them back on!

To use: Click the **Show/Hide ¶** button, **Paragraph** section on the Menu/Ribbon.

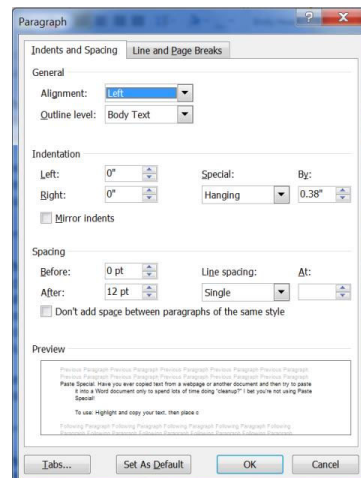
What it does: With the Show/Hide feature enabled, you can see “hidden” items such as paragraph returns, line breaks, whether or not headings have special features enabled (like Keep With Next or Keep Lines Together). Show/Hide is the closest thing to WordPerfect’s Reveal Codes that you’ll find. If you are serious about taming Word, you’ll quickly get used to all the codes and soon learn their value!



3. **Paragraph Formatting.** Instead of hitting Enter a few times to get the spacing you desire, you need to learn how the Paragraph spacing and other formats work.

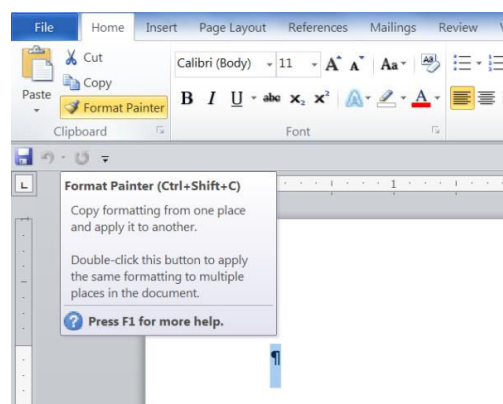
To use: Click the arrow for the full **Paragraph** dialog box on the Menu/Ribbon.

What it does: At a glance you can see if you are using Single or Double Spacing, or that horrible Multiple spacing. Also set the Spacing Before and Spacing After to what you want. Remember that with Single Spacing, 12pts = 1 line. So if you want a line of space after each paragraph, set it here. You can also set Tabs, Indents and a lot more. Your goal should be for a “clean” document without extra “returns.”



4. **Format Painter.** Do you spend a lot of time applying the same formatting to different sections of the document? There’s an easier way: the **Format Painter**.

To use: Select text or be in a segment of text representing the formatting you want to copy and apply to another section. Click the **Format Painter** icon in the **Clipboard** section of the Menu/Ribbon. The cursor changes to a “paint brush.” Move to the section to be formatted and click once; the formatting appears. Note: “double clicking” the Format Painter will let you use the same formatting until you turn it off (hit Esc or click once to turn “off.”)

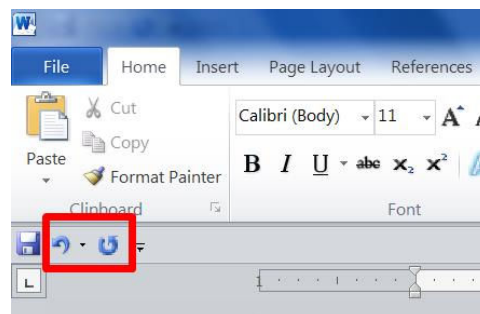


What it does: Basically you are telling Word, “I like this formatting and I want to apply it over here, and over here, etc.” You don’t need to know the specifics of the formatting (font size, line spacing, etc.); it is all based on the visual. Mastering the Format Painter can save you HOURS of time in a large document.

5. **Undo/Redo.** If you’ve ever made a formatting error and want to go back one step, or multiple steps, use the **Under/Redo** feature on the **Quick Access Toolbar**.

To use: Hold down the **CTRL + Z** keys to **Undo**; use **CTRL + Y** to **Redo**.

What it does: You can undo edits as many times as you want, with limits: if you’ve saved the document, you can only undo edits after the last Save action.



6. **Shortcut Keys.** Savvy Word users know that the mouse will slow you down! Try to use Shortcut Keys as much as possible.

To use: Use the **Word 2010 Shortcut Keys** handout for a complete list. .

Word 2010 - SHORTCUTS/QUICK KEYS

Keyboard Shortcuts		Tables	
Action	Keys	Action	Keys
Working with Documents		Selecting	
New document	Ctrl + N	Select Table	Alt + 5 on Numeric Keypad (NumLock Should be off)
Open	Ctrl + O	Select Cell	Shift + →
Save	Ctrl + S	Moving	
Print	Ctrl + P	Move forward one cell	Tab
Close document or window	Ctrl + W, Ctrl + F4	Move backward one cell	Shift + Tab
Close all and exit Word	Alt + F4	Move up one cell	↑
Editing Tools		Move down one cell	↓
Find	Ctrl + F	Move to first cell in row	Alt + Home
Repeat last find	Shift + F4	Move to last cell in row	Alt + End
Replace	Ctrl + H	Move to first cell in column	Alt + Page Up
Go To	Ctrl + G		

What it does: Some of the shortcuts you should commit to memory:

CTRL + B = Bold

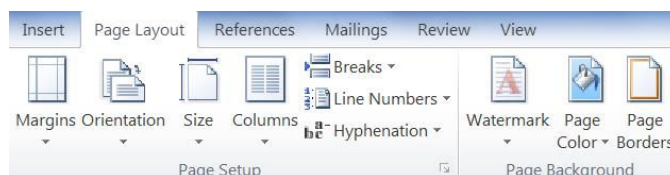
CTRL + U = Underline

CTRL + Shift, Down Arrow = Select the rest of the paragraph forward.

CTRL + Shift, Up Arrow = Select the rest of the paragraph backwards.

CTRL + S = Save

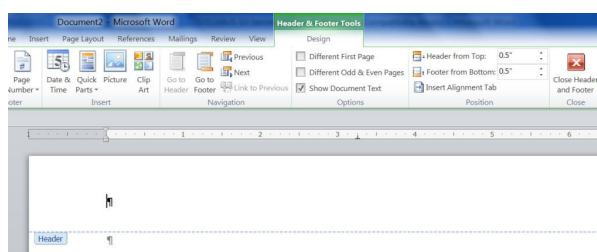
7. **Page Layout.** Think of three levels of formatting when it comes to Word: character (meaning text), paragraph (which we've covered) and page. The Page Layout menu governs items which impact the entire document such as Margins, Orientation (Portrait or Landscape) and more.



To use: Click **Page Layout** on the Menu/Ribbon. Select Margins to set margins; go to Custom Margins (at the bottom) to access the Margins dialog box.

What it does: Control various aspects of the document related to how each page appears.

8. **Headers and Footers.** The Header is a section at the top that can repeat on each page; a Footer is the same type of section but at the bottom of a page. Footers often have Page Numbering or a copyright statement like this document.

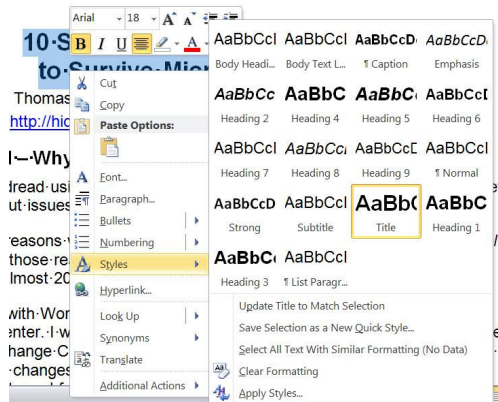


To use: The easiest way to access the **Header** or the **Footer** is to hover near the upper left corner of the document (for the Header) with your mouse until the cursor turns to a large arrow. Then double-click with the mouse. Use the same technique in the lower left corner for the Footer. To return to the document text, just click the greyed-out text in the middle of the page.

What it does: Anything entered into the Header or the Footer will be repeated throughout the document; unless you create a new section (see **Section Breaks** below).

9. **Styles.** How do you describe a function that works like this: You apply it when you want a format you use often. And when you update the formatting for one instance, all those other items that are similarly formatted get the same update? In Word, you'd call it a Style.

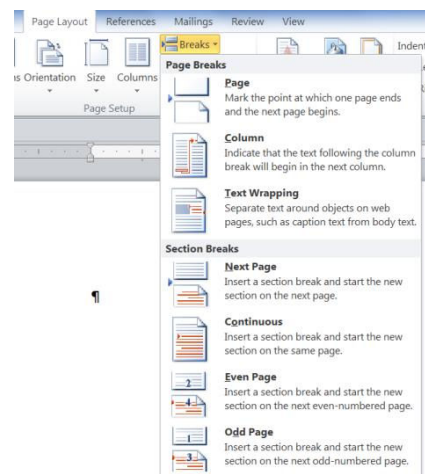
To use: Select a style from the **Style** section of the Menu/Ribbon. To update a **Style**, just format a paragraph with that **Style**, then right-click with the mouse, select **Styles**, then **Update . . . to Match Style**.



What it does: A Style is a set of formats bundled into one name. Let's say you use the Heading 1 Style throughout the document, about 50 times. It makes a paragraph appear in Times New Roman, Bold, 20pt Font with 12pt Space After for Paragraph Spacing. Later, you change your mind and drop the font size down to 16pt. Once you format one instance of Heading 1 Style, you can then update all other instances to copy or "mimic" the new format. It's like dropping a stone in a pond and watching the ripples go out, but the ripples hit specific targets: those other Heading 1 Style paragraphs!

10. **Section Breaks.** If you want different page formats like Portrait, 1 inch Margin page and then the next page would be a chart which needs Landscape and .5" inch Margins. Inserting a Section Break allows you to format each section with its own Page Layout parameters.

To use: Place cursor where you want to change Page Layout. In the **Page Layout** section of the **Menu/Ribbon**, select **Breaks**, then select the break you want.



What it does: Different breaks do different things:

- **Page Break** will not allow you to set different Page Layouts; a Page Break merely forces the page to break (and is better than being lazy and hitting Enter a few times, right?).
- **Continuous Section Break** will allow you to set some formats but on the same page. Example: if you want one section of the page to have two columns (Page Layout, Columns, Two) and then revert back to one column,
- **Next Page Section** is like a Page Break and a Section Break together (and if you've got your Show/Hide turned on, you can see the difference between breaks!). With a Next Page Section break, you can have different page formats for different pages.

The Takeaway

They say knowledge is power and there is so much about Microsoft Word that isn't obvious. There are many secrets that can help you survive your next Word document!

Things to remember:

- Practice makes perfect. You won't always remember all these secrets but take them one at a time, and in order. The 10 Secrets have been organized so that they build on each other.
- If you REALLY don't like the Show/Hide feature and find it distracting, remember to turn it on when you need to check the underlying formatting of a document. Then turn it back off.
- Once you get a document formatted the way you like, why not copy it and use it as a template for future documents?
- The more you use Word and use the 10 Secrets, the easier it will be to be productive in Microsoft Word.

And finally, there are plenty more secrets and surprises within Microsoft Word. I've learned that Word is easy to get along with as long as I know its secrets!