**The PC is Not a Typewriter**

The personal computer turns every user into a “desktop publisher.”

Thirty years ago typists could create neat, readable documents, but these typed pages were monotonous and dull-looking. Now every computer user is expected to create visually interesting documents.

About the only thing the PC has in common with a typewriter is the keyboard layout. To be a proficient user of the PC, we need to forget some of the rules we learned in typing and learn to use the many tools provided in word processing software.

Below are some helpful tips for using Microsoft Word 2007 to create professional-looking and visually interesting documents.

### 1 – One Space Between Sentences

On a computer, use only one space between sentences and after punctuation marks (periods, colons, exclamation points, question marks, quotation marks).

Why was it necessary to have two spaces between sentences when using a typewriter? On a typewriter, all the characters were mono-spaced; that is, they each took up an equal amount of space. The letter “1” occupied as much space as the letter “m.” Because characters were mono-spaced, inserting two spaces after periods helped to visually separate one sentence from the next.

Courier is a font that is mono-spaced, like typewriter fonts.

Most fonts on the computer have characters that are proportional. That is, each character takes up a proportional amount of space—the letter “1” takes up about one-fifth the space of the letter “m.” So you no longer need extra spaces to separate sentences. In fact, if you insert two spaces between sentences, you will see unwanted white spaces in a block of text.

### 2 – Special Characters

The characters available on a typewriter keyboard were very limited. On the computer, there are hundreds more characters and symbols available.

On typewriters, quote marks were the same characters used to represent “feet” and “inches.” With computers you can easily insert the correct printer versions of quote marks (curly quotes). In fact, it happens automatically when you type.

If you want to insert the symbols for feet and inches you can find them from the Insert menu: “Insert > symbol > more symbols.”

Microsoft Word creates automatic “en” and “em” dashes, which are wider than a hyphen. To create an “en” dash (which is the same width as the letter “n”), type space-hyphen-space between two words.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>En dash</th>
<th>2 – 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The “em” dash—which is the width of the character “m”—is automatically created by Microsoft Word when you type word-hyphen-hyphen-word, with no spaces between.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Em dash</th>
<th>here—now</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

A superscript character is smaller and slightly higher than normal characters. A subscript character is smaller and slightly lower than normal characters. In some cases, superscripted characters occur automatically; for example, 1st or 2nd.

To create these characters, use font formatting: Font > superscript (or subscript).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Superscript</th>
<th>2ème</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subscript</td>
<td>H₂O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Characters in foreign languages are also available in the menu “Insert > symbol > More Symbols”.

Examples: Ç é ū Å ę Ø

Other useful symbols are also available in the menu “Insert > symbol > More Symbols”.

Examples: ® © € ™ ☺ ♀ ♂
3 – Italic, not Underlining

Don’t underline. Underlining is for typewriters; italic is for professional-looking text. On a typewriter we had no way to italicize so we were taught to underline words for emphasis and for titles of books, periodicals, and movies. On the computer we should follow the professional standard of italicizing these items.

If you want to emphasize a word or two, you have options like the ones shown here:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bold Type</th>
<th>Bold</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Larger Type</td>
<td>Larger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different Font</td>
<td>Different</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4 – Color

With PCs and color printers, our color options are endless! But color is still quite expensive. If you are going to be printing in black and white, create the document in black and white so you can see exactly how it will look.

5 – Tabs and Indents

Learn how to use the first-line indent and hanging-indent. Never use a “tab” to intent the first line.

Never use the space bar to align text. This works on a typewriter because every letter takes up the same amount of space, so five spaces is always the same width. This is not true on a PC. If you want things to align, you must use tabs.

6 – Space Between Lines

By default, Microsoft Word leaves some space between lines.

In the days when type was set in metal to print books and newspapers, type-setters added a narrow strip of lead between lines of type. We still use the term “leading” to describe space between lines.

You don’t have to accept Word’s default line spacing. You can change line spacing and set the size you want in the menu “format > paragraph > line spacing > exactly.”

Here is an example showing 12 point type on 10 point spacing.

It’s difficult to read text that doesn’t have enough space between the lines.

Next is an example showing 12 point type on 14 point spacing.

It’s easier to read text if some space is added between lines.

7 – Space Between Words

You can use the “Character Spacing” tools to increase the width of a word or a line, or to change the space between characters. Click the arrow at lower right of Font formatting: font > character spacing.”

The 18 point type shown below has spacing between letters expanded by 2 points.

WASHINGTON

Below, the same 18 point type shown has spacing between letters condensed by 2 points.

WASHINGTON

The 18 point type shown next is scaled to 130% to make it wide. Space after W and after A is condensed by 1.5 points to make the spacing more even.

8 – Capitals

USE ALL CAPITAL LETTERS VERY RARELY (ALMOST NEVER). Studies have shown that all caps are much harder to read. We recognize words not only by their letter groups, but also by their shapes.

On a typewriter, our only way to make a headline stand out was to type it in all caps or underline it. Now we can make the text larger, or bold, shadowed, outlined, underlined, or any combination of these. (Underline and Shadow are less professional than the other choices mentioned.)

9 – Justified Alignment

It’s so easy to “justify” text on the computer (align it on both margins, like this paragraph) that we’re tempted to do it too often. The only time you can safely get away with justifying text is if your type is small and your line is long. If your line is short (as it is in these columns), justifying creates gaps of white space in some lines. It usually looks awkward. You’ve seen newspaper columns where text is justified, sometimes with a word stretching all the way across the column, or a little word on either side of the column with a big gap in the middle. Ugly! In general, left-aligned text is easier to read than justified text.

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