

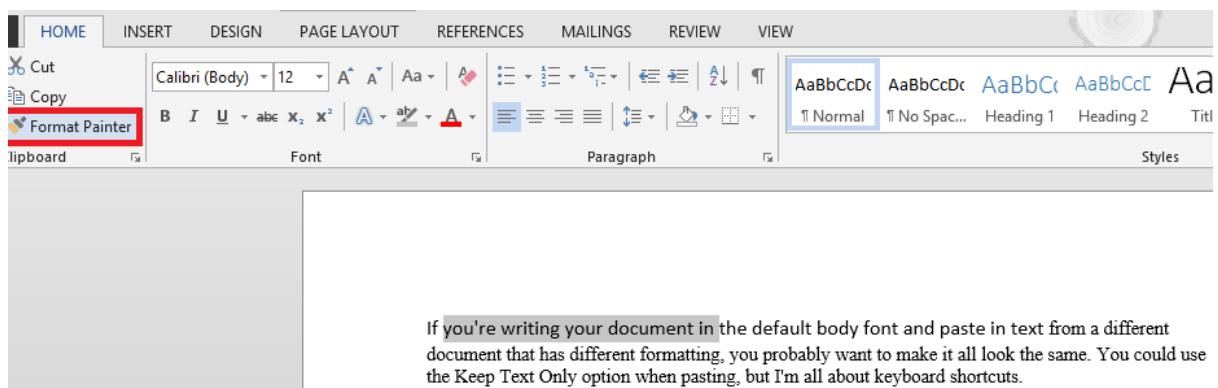
9 Microsoft Word Tips to Help Writers Save Time and Increase Efficiency

1. Clear formatting

When importing text from another document, you might find that it has different formatting to your main document.

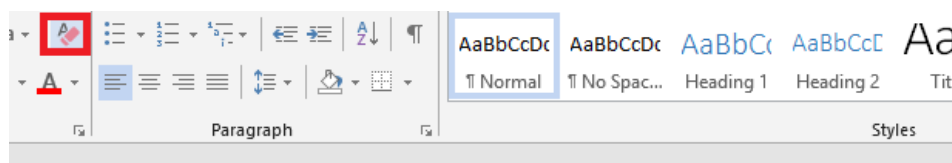
If you're writing your document in the default body font and paste in text from a different document that has different formatting, you probably want to make it all look the same. You could use the Keep Text Only option when pasting, but I'm all about keyboard shortcuts.

You could use the Format Painter:



Highlight the formatting you want to keep, click the Format Painter, then highlight the text you want to change.

Or you could use the Clear Formatting function to revert everything to the default body style:



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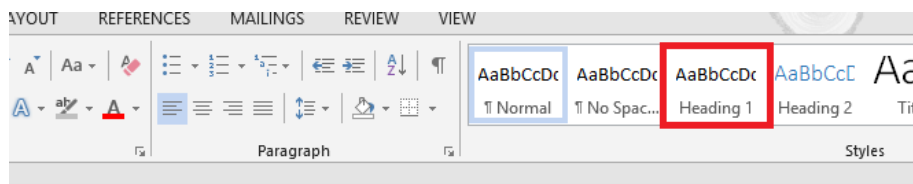
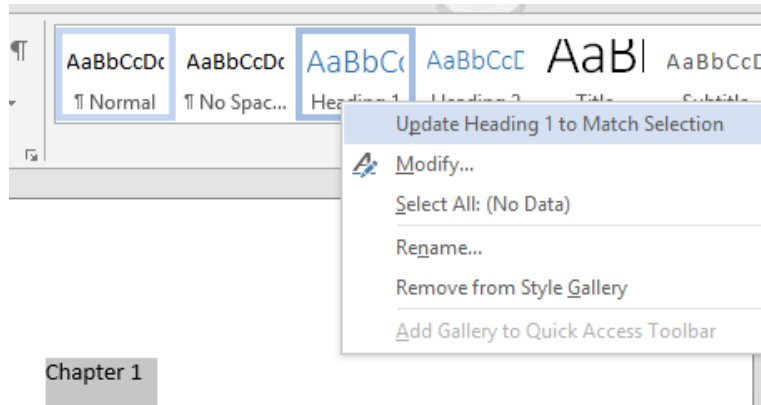
The same effect can be achieved with the ctrl+space shortcut. It saves you the time it would take to highlight and change everything with the mouse. (Zoom out as far as possible to highlight your entire document quicker.)

2. Use styles to minimise sections of your story

It can be daunting and confusing to work on a document containing tens of thousands of words. Some writers use software like Scrivener but it doesn't work for everyone. If you're finding it difficult

to work in a single word document, try using styles to separate your writing into sections that can be minimised.

Format your chapter headings or titles the way you want them, then right-click Heading 1 in the Style Gallery, which is found in the Home tab, and select Update Heading 1 to Match Selection.



 Chapter 1

You'll notice that the formatting for Heading 1 has changed to match the text you highlighted. If you hover over your chapter title or heading now, you'll notice a triangle on the left. Clicking this triangle will hide and expand the text between this heading and the next.

Chapter 2

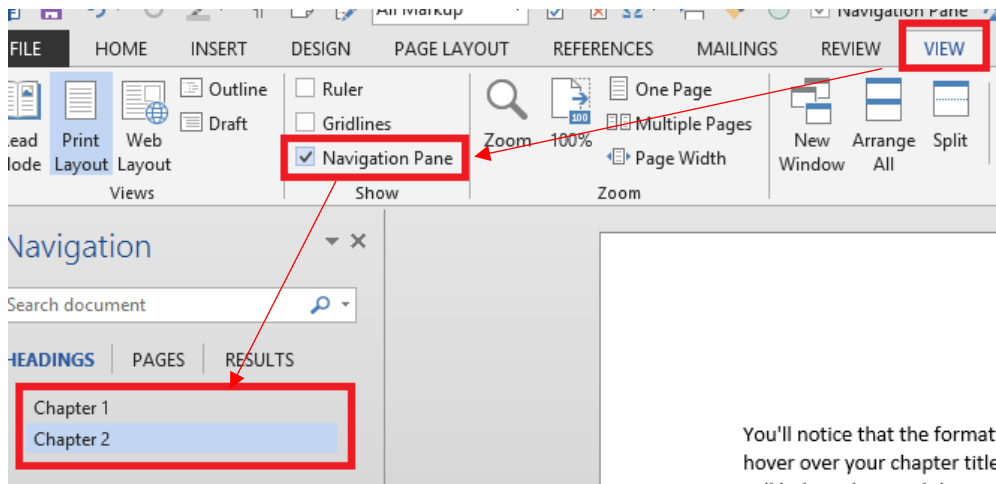
Write your next heading as normal, then highlight it and select Heading 1 from the Style Gallery so that your next section follows the same format.

▸ Chapter 1

Chapter 2

Write your next heading as normal, then highlight it and select Heading 1 from the Style Gallery so that your next section follows the same format.

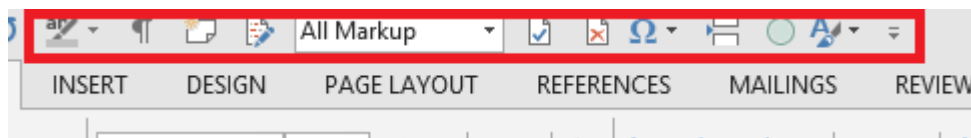
For quick access to your sections, you can select them from the Navigation Pane.



This will save you the headache of having to scroll through hundreds of pages to find what you're looking for.

3. Add your most frequently used functions to the Quick Access Toolbar

Constantly switching between tabs to access different functions can waste a lot of time. Things are much simpler when you add your frequently used functions to the Quick Access Toolbar. Right click the function and select the option.



4. Move text without copying and pasting

When the text you need to move is close to the place you need to move it to, it can be quicker to drag it there than to copy and paste it. Simply highlight the text and drag it to where you want to move it to.

5. The many uses for Find and Replace

Find and Replace can be used in many ways to save time.

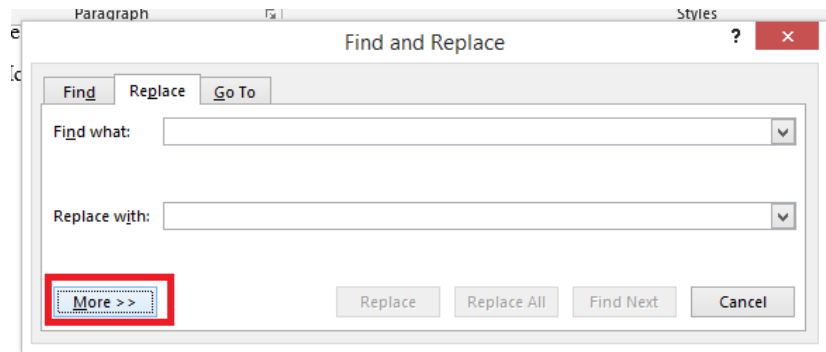
If you frequently forget what style you're using for dashes, for example, use a place holder and then insert the dashes later.

I can never remember if I'm using spaced en dashes – or unspaced em dashes —

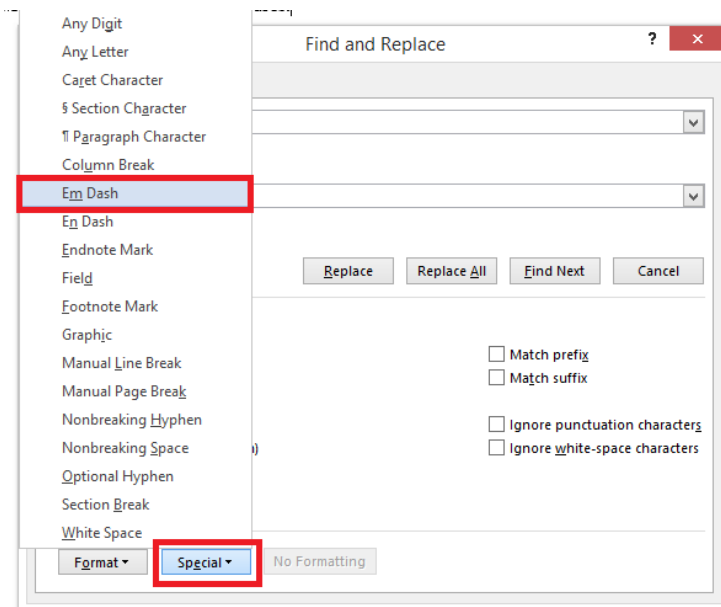
Using a placeholder*means I don't waste time scrolling back and trying to remember*I can just keep writing*and replace the placeholder with my dash of choice later.

To do so, use the keyboard shortcut ctrl+H to bring up the Find and Replace dialogue box.

Select the More option to access more features.



I put my placeholder (in this case *) in the Find What box, then select Special and Em Dash for the Replace With box (if you want a spaced dash, put spaces around the shortcut in the Replace With box).



Hit the Replace All button and receive your dashes.

I can never remember if I'm using spaced en dashes – or unspaced em dashes —

Using a placeholder—means I don't waste time scrolling back and trying to remember—I can just keep writing—and replace the placeholder with my dash of choice later.

To do so, use the keyboard shortcut ctrl+H to bring up the Find and Replace dialogue box.

Select the More option to access more features.

This function can be used in many more ways. Rather than stopping the flow of your writing to spend three hours on a baby names website to name a new character, just put in a placeholder and keep writing.

'I'm new around here,' said character 1.

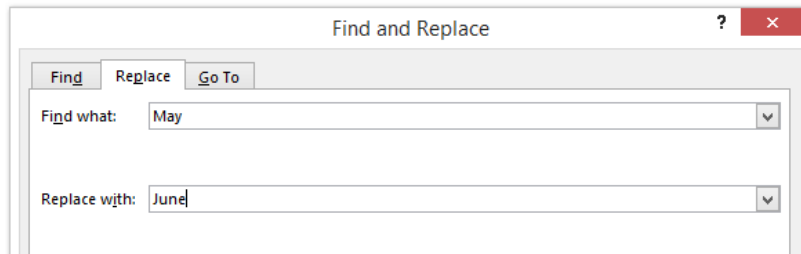
'I wonder what they'll name you,' replied character 2.

Don't interrupt your flow. You can figure out their names some other time.

Another example of a Find and Replace use is for words that you use often but have trouble getting the spelling consistent (like made-up fantasy words) or other words that you don't want to type over and over. Again, use a placeholder and fill them in later.

When using the Find and Replace function you have to make sure what you've entered in the Find What box is unique to what you want to change or you'll end up with something like this:

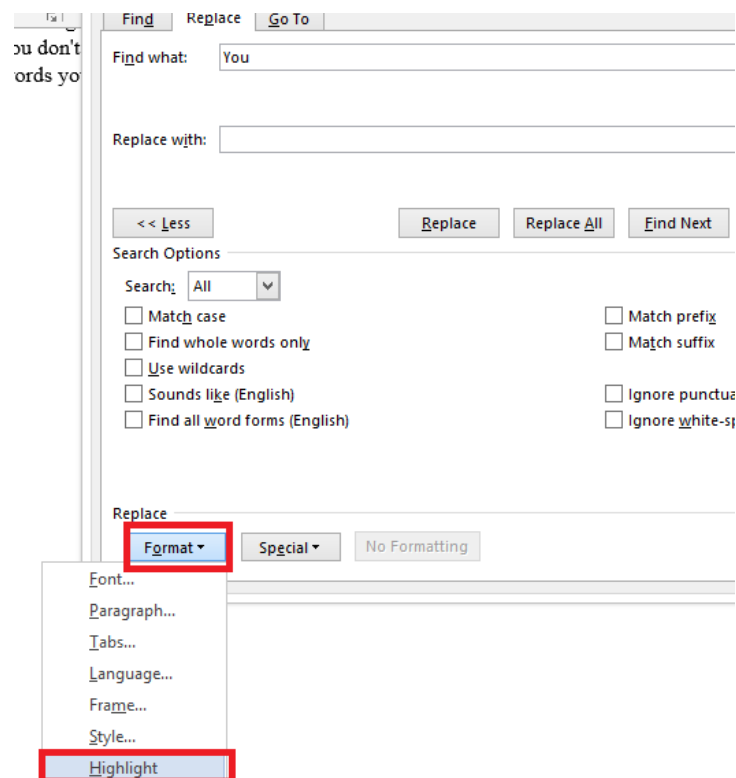
'Would you like a biscuit, May?' Sally asked.
'Maybe,' May replied.'



'Would you like a biscuit, June?' Sally asked.
'Junebe,' June replied.'

6. Highlight particular words to assess their frequency

If you're concerned about overusing a particular word, such as 'very' or 'really', use the Find and Replace function to see how often it shows up. Use ctrl+H to bring up the Find and Replace dialogue box and enter the word you want to check in the Find What box. Then, making sure you've selected the More option, use the Format menu to select Highlight for the Replace With box.



You might not realise as you write that you use a lot of the same words or you use words that you don't want to or you don't need to. The quickest way to see how often you use these words you don't want to use is for you to highlight them all in one sweep.

In just a few seconds you'll see just how frequently you use certain words. If you see a lot of highlighting, then you have quite a bit of editing to do.

7. Highlight passages to map particular moments in your story

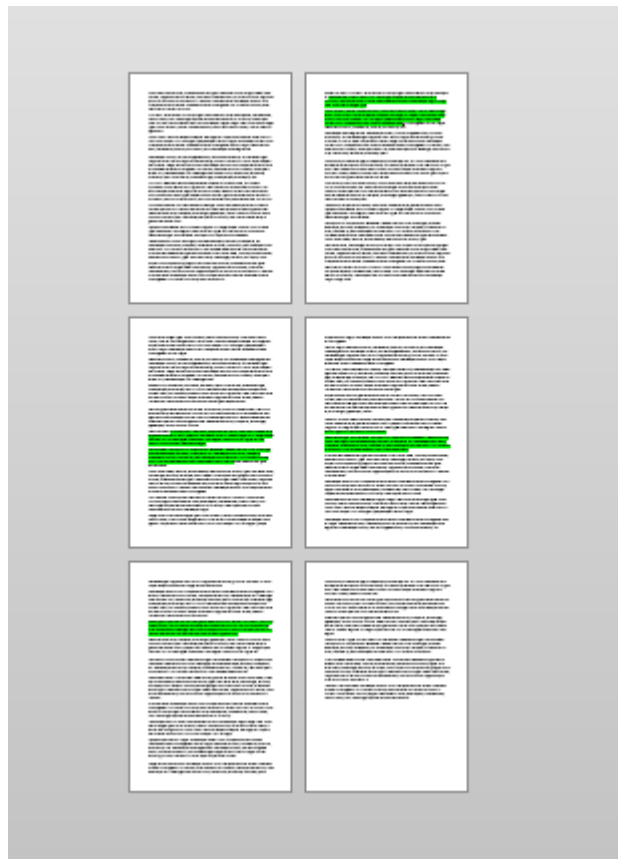
If you want to know how much space you have between plot points or how often a certain character shows up you could sit there for centuries counting scenes and pages, or you could just highlight them. Skim through your story and highlight the moments you want to assess, then zoom out and assess.

For example, if you want to know how much of your story is dialogue, highlight all the dialogue, she said. They all nodded.

Timothy raised his hand. How will this help us again?

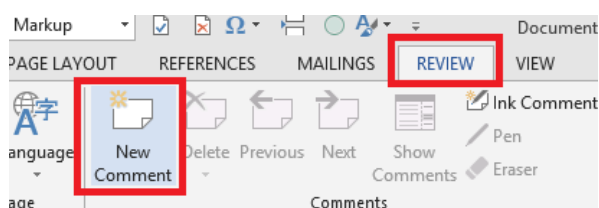
Well, Timothy, she said. You don't want all of your story to be dialogue. If you're concerned that there isn't a balance between dialogue and exposition, you highlight all your dialogue and then zoom out. If the highlighted text greatly outweighs the non-highlighted text, then you might want to consider removing some dialogue or adding more description.

You can even, she went on, highlight moments when your plot takes a leap forward so that you can see clearly where the boring parts are and whether or not each chapter furthers the story. There are plenty more ways you can use this technique, too.



8. Use comments to note revision ideas

Editing as you write slows you down, so to save time, just avoid doing it. If there's something you want to change, just make a comment about it and move on.

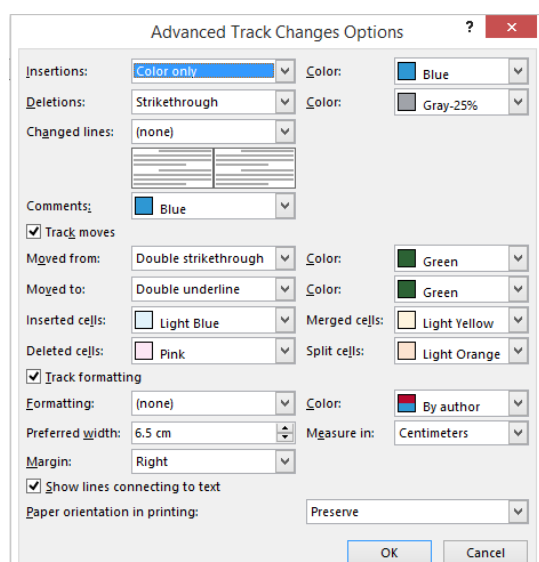
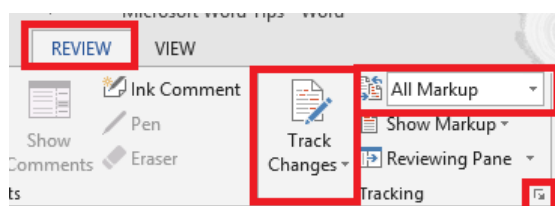


There's a blog post on my website jackalediting.com that goes into more detail about why you shouldn't edit as you write and how to stop doing it.

Louise
Add link

9. Use Track Changes

Keeping track of the changes you make when revising means you don't need to go digging through previous files to find content you have second thoughts about deleting. Use the Review tab to turn the function on and off and toggle the mark-up view, then personalise your Track Changes options.



You can choose to hide markup in the markup dropdown menu which means it will appear as if you are really changing the text will hide the changes, but if you decide you want to keep the original after all, you can simply reject the change.

Bonus Tip!

If you want some sample text to play around with, one of these options will do the trick:

- Type `=lorem(1,1)` then hit enter for lorem ipsum text
- Type `=rand(1,1)` then hit enter for random text



- Type `=rand.old(1,1)` for the quick brown fox pangram

The first number in the brackets refers to how many paragraphs will be generated, the second number refers to sentences.

`=lorem(1,1)`

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit.

`=rand(1,1)`



Video provides a powerful way to help you prove your point.

`=rand.old(1,1)`

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.