

Five Microsoft Word Rules You Must Follow

By [Barron Henley](#) on November 13th, 2014

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Microsoft Word is a powerful piece of software that conceals many of its most useful features. Unfortunately, using Word over time doesn't improve your skill because you won't stumble across what you really need to know. You can take classes, read a 1,000-page manual, or start reading this series of articles about the rules of Word, which will help you learn to control the most powerful (and maddening) program you may ever use. Here are the first five rules to help you with your next Word document.

Rule One: There Is A Feature For That

This is a very important rule and should be a big red flag when you are working on a document. Essentially, if you have to keep doing something over and over to get the document to look the way you want, you *must* be missing a feature that would make it easier. For example, if you don't like the way your footnotes look so you are "fixing"

them by selecting each one and manually changing its formatting, that would constitute an annoying, repetitive and laborious process for which there must be better approach. In that particular case, you would simply find the style called Footnote Text and change it which would instantly update all of your footnotes to the formatting you want without selecting any of them.

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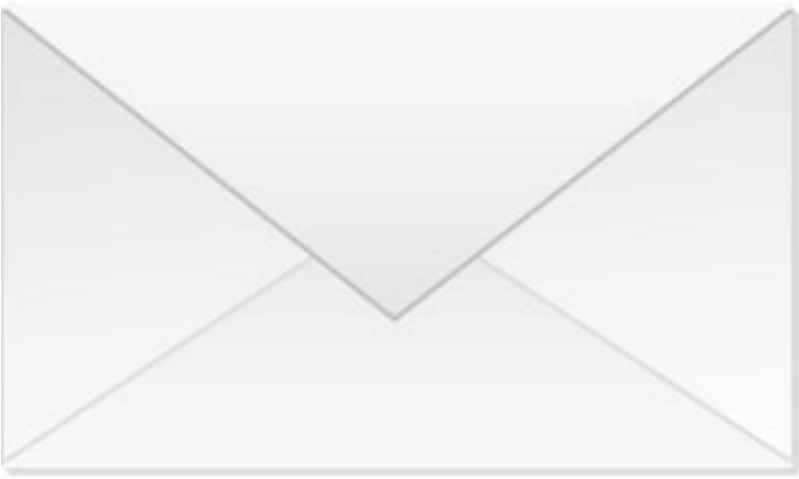
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Rule Two: Never Create Spacing Between Paragraphs By Using Extra Hard Returns

Many legal documents have single spaced paragraphs with an extra blank line between each paragraph. Using additional hard returns to accomplish this is repetitive, annoying, and requires more (rather than fewer) keystrokes. Further, it makes it easy to end up with too many lines between paragraphs or not enough.

In fact, this is one of the things that Word users routinely look for and fix before printing a document. Word has a feature for creating vertical space between paragraphs automatically. It's fast, requires fewer keystrokes, and will never allow you to end up with too much or not enough space between paragraphs. You can get to this setting by right clicking on your paragraph, selecting Paragraph, and going to the Indents and Spacing tab. From here, you have four options to create automatic

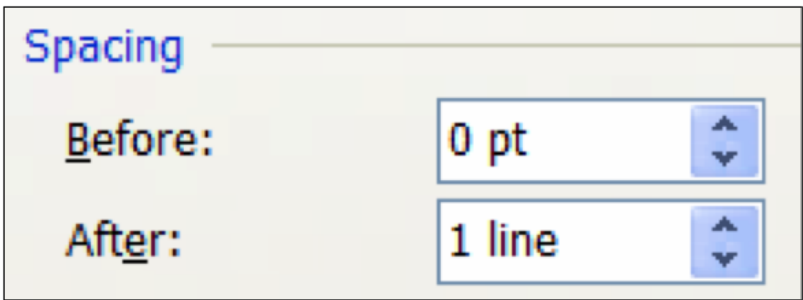
spacing between your paragraphs.

1. Define Spacing Measurements: Generally, 6 points of space is a half line; 12 points is a full line; eighteen points is one and a half lines and twenty-four points is two lines.

2. Define Spacing Before: If you would like Word to automatically insert an extra space above each paragraph, use Spacing Before. Make the Spacing Before 12 pt. This will add a double space above each single spaced paragraph.

3. Define Spacing After: You can do the same thing as above, but the space will occur after each paragraph. Just follow the steps listed for Spacing Before only add the points to Spacing After.

4. Using Lines Rather Than Points: If you find the point system confusing, you can always erase the “pt” measure and type “1 line.” If you switch from points to lines, the up and down arrows will make adjustments in those terms.



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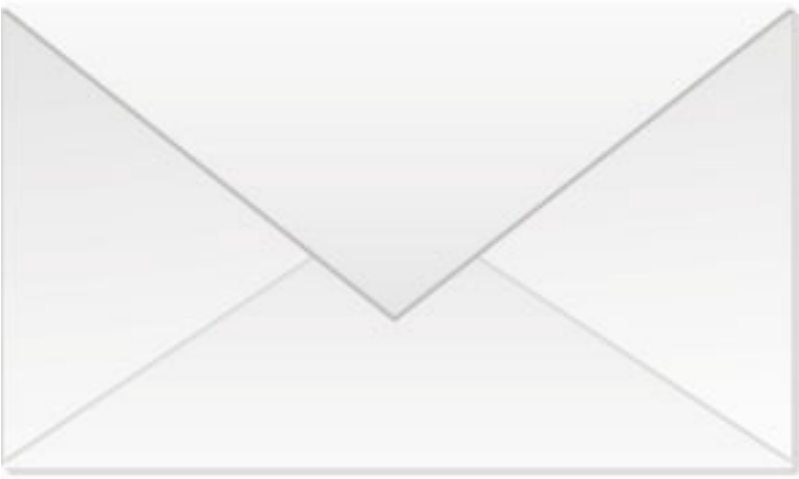


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Rule Three: Never Use Spaces To Line Up Text

Not every character occupies the **same amount of horizontal space** (even the same character like a space). For example, in the screen shot below, exactly five spaces were entered before and after each paragraph number. I inserted a red line into the screen shot, so you can see how misaligned the paragraphs look with the same number of spaces.

ARTICLE IX
MISCELLANEOUS

- 9.1 **Entire Agreement.** This Agreement, as it may be revised, amended, modified or otherwise changed from time to time, constitutes the entire agreement between the parties and supersedes all prior agreements, representations, understandings and undertakings, whether written or oral, between the parties with respect to its subject matter, and shall bind all parties hereto, all third party beneficiaries, and all successors in interest to any of these. Any amendment, revision, alteration or other change to this Agreement can only be made in a writing signed and acknowledged by a person authorized to make such change.
- 9.2 **Irrevocability.** This Trust shall become temporarily irrevocable upon Settlor's lifetime legal disability, until such disability shall be removed, and permanently irrevocable as to the beneficial interests it grants upon Settlor's death.
- 9.3 **Rule Against Perpetuities.** With regard to any provision of this Trust which may be deemed to be in violation of any applicable statutory rule against perpetuities, it is the Settlor's intent that the provision shall not be void, but shall be held for the longest period permissible under the statute, and then distributed, outright and free of trust, to that beneficiary.
- 9.4 **Amendments and Incorporation by Reference.** It is Settlor's intent that any reference to this Trust in any other instrument or document executed by the Settlor shall be deemed to include and incorporate any and all subsequent and future amendments, modifications and revisions to this Agreement under authority granted herein.
- 9.5 **Headings.** Headings or titles which appear at sections or sub-sections are intended to serve as organizational devices only, and are not intended to be construed as part of the Agreement for any other purpose.

Instead of spaces, you want to use tables, tabs, and indents to line up your sentences. These methods will work perfectly and add to the professionalism of your document.

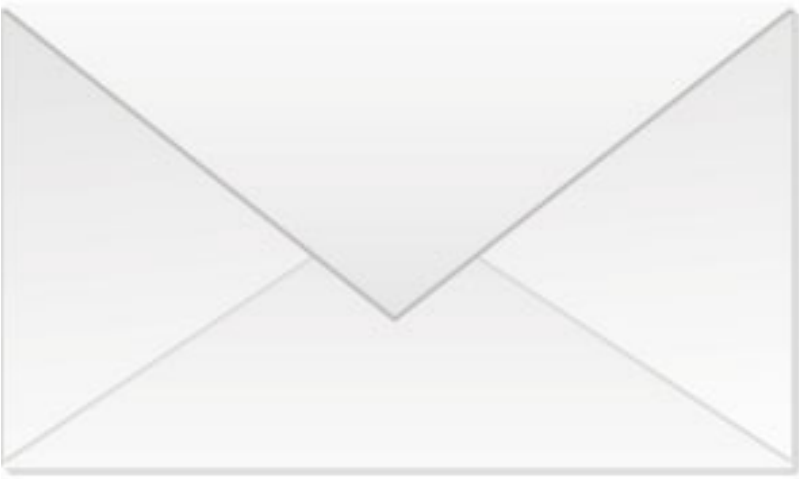
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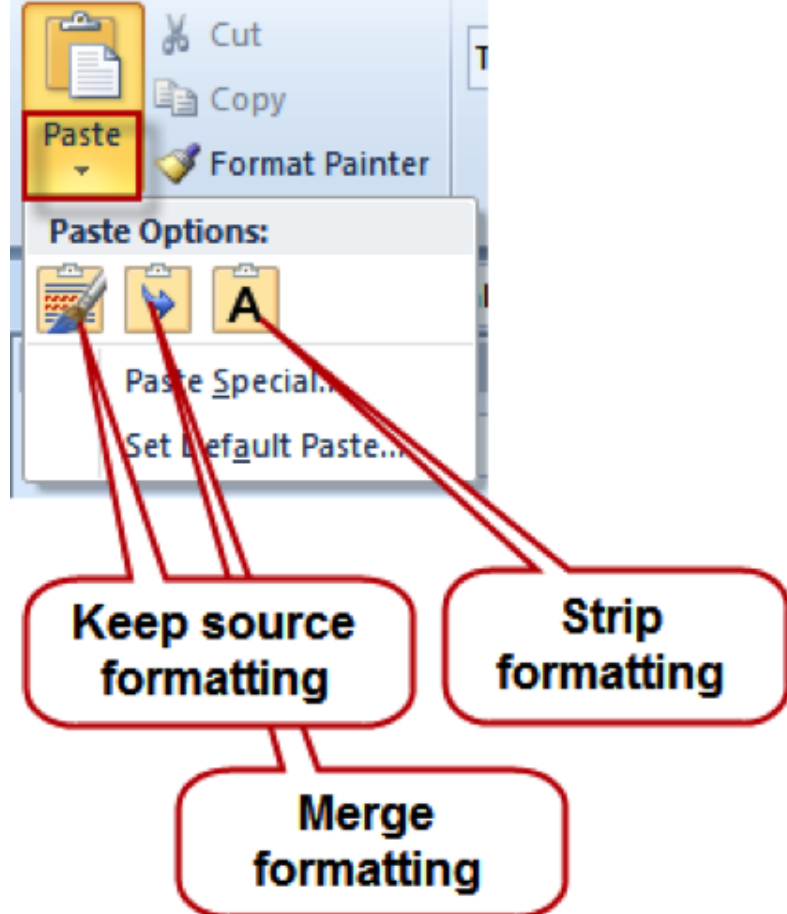
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Rule Four: Strip The Formatting of Pasted Text

If you copy text from one document (or another program), you will often bring along formatting attributes foreign to the document. To avoid document issues, it is best to remove all of the formatting when you paste the text. This will allow the text to absorb the formatting of the document you're pasting into.

The Paste Options button addresses this by giving the user the option to keep the source formatting, match the destination formatting, or strip the formatting (Keep Text Only).



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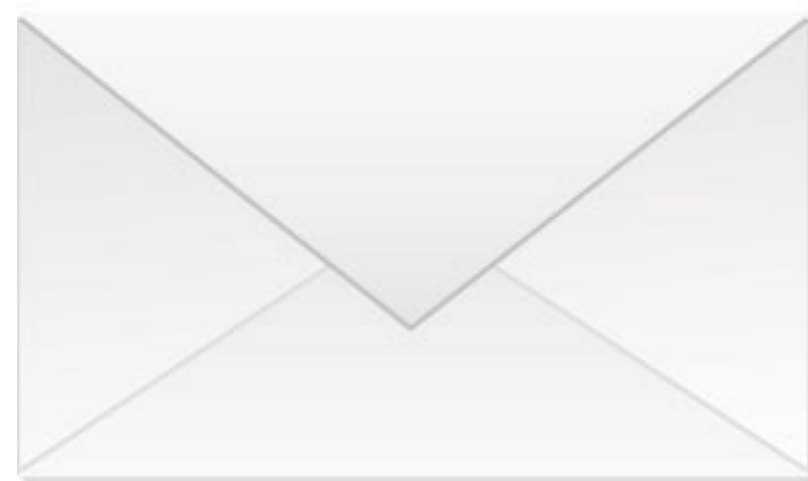


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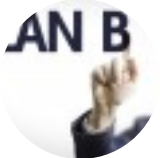
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Rule Five: Don't Violate Outline Rules

Yes, there are specific rules to outline paragraph numbering and formatting which lawyers routinely violate. Here are the big two:

1. Do Not Number Only One Sub-Paragraph: If you do not have a B. paragraph, you cannot have an A. In that case, the paragraph should be un-numbered. If you have an article with a single paragraph below it before the next article, that paragraph should not be numbered. In other words, the following is incorrect. The paragraph numbered 4.01 should be un-numbered because it is the sole paragraph under that article.

ARTICLE IV.
DISTRIBUTION OF TANGIBLE PERSONAL PROPERTY

4.01 Upon the SETTLOR's death, tangible personal property located on real property owned by this Trust and used in connection with said real property shall, unless otherwise provided in this Agreement, pass with the real property. The TRUSTEE shall divide the SETTLOR's other tangible personal property into two parts. The first part shall include all tangible personal property which the TRUSTEE determines should be preserved for the SETTLOR's surviving children, taking into consideration the desires of the SETTLOR's children. The first part shall be divided among the children who survive the SETTLOR as they may agree, or, in the absence of agreement (or if any child is under a legal disability), as the TRUSTEE may determine. The TRUSTEE shall sell (or otherwise dispose of) the assets in the second part and the proceeds shall be added to the Trust residue and distributed as provided in ARTICLE V below. The TRUSTEE's determination made pursuant to this section shall be made by the TRUSTEE in the TRUSTEE's sole discretion and shall be conclusive and binding upon all persons interested in the SETTLOR's estate or any trust created hereunder.

ARTICLE V.
DISPOSITION OF TRUST ESTATE

5.01 **Provisions After the Deceased SETTLOR's Death.** Upon the SETTLOR's death, the balance of the trust property, after payment of or provision for the payments and distributions set forth in ARTICLE IV above, including any accrued and undistributed income

2. Don't Change Numbering Schemes In the Middle of a Document: In other words, if your document employs numbering or lettering, be consistent about its use. If you properly use Word's multi-level list numbering, it won't let you switch numbering schemes in the middle of a document.

Ultimately, how a document looks and its readability impacts how readers feel about you. Following these rules will create the favorable impression you need to make.

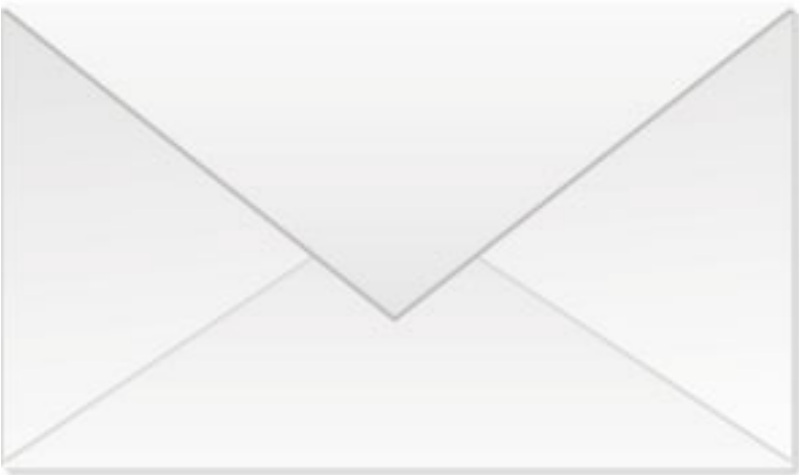
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