Tips and Tricks for Microsoft Word

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GETTING HELP

The F1 key will bring up the help files in Microsoft Word and most other software.

You can use the Google search engine <http://www.google.com> to find out how to do something in Microsoft Word—just search on what you want to do. For example, if you search on the terms: ms word change default font, Google will direct you to the answer, <http://support.microsoft.com/kb/291291>.

DEFAULT FONT

New editions of Microsoft Word (2007 and newer) make the default font, the Calibri typeface in size 11. The word default means that it automatically uses that font. In college writing, your instructors usually want the font to be the Times New Roman typeface, size 12.

To change the default setting in Microsoft Word, click the arrow just to the right of where it says Font. (pictured above.)

That will open a dialog box. Scroll down the list of fonts and select Times New Roman, Regular, 12.

At the very lower left, click the Default button. That will let you change the default setting.
SMART QUOTES, NOT STRAIGHT QUOTES

Smart quotes look more professional than straight quotes. For more information, see the handout, *Using Quotations and Quotation Marks in College Writing*.

If smart quotes are not the default in Microsoft Word, and you want to change the default, this is how to do that:

Click on the Office button all the way in the upper left.

That will open up a dialog box. Look to the lower right for *Word Options*.

Then, under *Proofing*, you want *AutoCorrect Options*.

Make sure the *Straight quotes* box is check in **two places**: the *AutoFormat As You Type* tab and the *AutoFormat* tab. Check it in **both** places.
The style books for writing papers at Troy University all prescribe the following use of punctuation . . . punctuation that can be checked automatically by Microsoft Word.

In Microsoft Word, push the Office button and select Word Options (as pictured on the previous page). Then, under Proofing, you want the Settings button to the right of the box for Grammar & Style (it might just say Grammar, depending on how you have it set).

![Check spelling as you type]

![Use contextual spelling]

![Mark grammar errors as you type]

![Check grammar with spelling]

![Show readability statistics]

Writing Style: Grammar & Style

Settings...

A good way to set the defaults for college writing in the United States is like this:

![Grammar and style options:]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Require</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comma required before last list item:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punctuation required with quotes:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spaces required between sentences:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Brief explanations of the three choices pictured just above:

**Comma required before last list item:**

The answer is yes. This is known as a *serial comma*, sometimes called an *Oxford comma*, and should always be used in your papers. Example of the serial comma in use: The most common flavors of ice cream are chocolate, vanilla, and strawberry.

Don’t get confused because you see it written without the comma. A lot of advertisements on television, in magazines, and on billboards will leave the final comma off. They are trying to save space and/or the advertising agency likes the way the ad looks without the final comma. While that is an acceptable style for advertising, you are not writing an ad, you are writing a college paper.

**Punctuation required with quotes:**
The answer is that punctuation almost always goes inside.

**Right:** I told that instructor, “I'll turn in my paper on time.”

**Right:** “The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation,” wrote Henry David Thoreau.

**Wrong:** Bob told me, “I liked your hair better the other way”.

In rare instances, the punctuation goes outside, for example:

Did he really say “I liked your hair the other way”?

In this example, the question mark is not part of the information being quoted, so it is not enclosed in the quotation marks.

For more information, see Section 3.2.11 of the *MLA Handbook for Writes of Research Papers* (7th ed.).

**Spaces required between sentences:**
(This means spaces after concluding marks of punctuation (period, question mark, exclamation point). (Do not confuse this with line spacing [the space between lines of text]—as far as line spacing, most college papers are double spaced.)

Use one space. The safest way to go is with just one space between sentences.

One space is the style prescribed by in the MLA, APA, Chicago, and Turabian style manuals. An explanation of why one space is used is stated well in *The MLA Handbook for Writes of Research Papers* (2009):

In an earlier era, writers using a typewriter commonly left two spaces after a period, a question mark, or an exclamation point. Publications in the United States today usually have the same spacing after concluding punctuation marks as between words on the same line. Since word processors make available the fonts used by typesetters for printed works, many writers, influenced by the look of a typeset publication, now leave only one space after a concluding punctuation mark. (p. 77)

Those were very brief explanations of three uses of punctuation in a college paper. As always, seek guidance from your style manual, instructor, and the Troy University Writing Center.