

How to Use Bullet Lists in Word

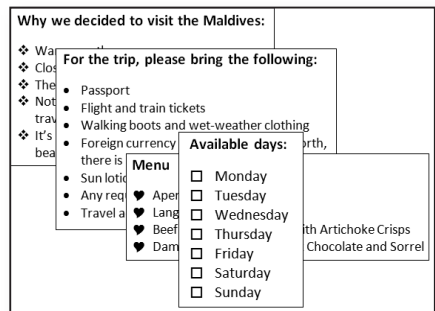
How to Turn Ordinary Text into Smart, Meaningful Lists in a Few Quick Clicks

This article shows you how to:

- Convert your text into a bulleted list
- Use Word's bullets or choose from other symbols
- Use your images as bullets in a Word document

Shopping lists, 'to do' lists, menus, itineraries – all this information can either be simply written down as an ordinary paragraph, with one comma-separated item after another, or it can be arranged into a clear list.

In this article, I'll show you how to create neat-looking bulleted lists in Microsoft Word, how to remove Word's automatic indentation of lists (if you don't like it), and how to choose something more interesting than the plain circular bullet for your own lists. You can even use a picture of your own as a bullet symbol!



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This article covers Microsoft Word versions 2016, 2013, 2010 and 2007.

Quickly Create a Bulleted List in Word

This is one way to create a list...

Let's start with an example. You're arranging a trip for a group of friends and relatives, and you've created a Word document to send to each member of the group providing details. Among these details, you want to note the essentials they'll need to pack. You could do it like this:

For the trip, please bring the following:

Passport, Flight and train tickets, Walking boots and wet-weather clothing, Foreign currency (no more than £50-worth, there is very little you'll have to pay for!), Sun lotion and bug spray, Any required medications, Travel adapters for electronic devices

... but doesn't this look clearer?

The trouble is, it's not easy to use. By using a bulleted list, each item is easy to identify, and anyone reading can easily check off individual items as they pack them:

For the trip, please bring the following:

- Passport
- Flight and train tickets
- Walking boots and wet-weather clothing
- Foreign currency (no more than £50-worth, there is very little you'll have to pay for!)
- Sun lotion and bug spray
- Any required medications
- Travel adapters for electronic devices

The neat thing about these bullets is that Microsoft Word can add them all with a single click. And even if an item in the list extends to more than a single line (such as the 'Foreign currency' item in the list above), Word indents it automatically to match all the other text in the list.

In order to create a bulleted list like this yourself, here's what to do:

1. Start by typing all the required items into your document. At the end of each complete item, press the **Enter** key ② to start the next at the beginning of the line below.



If the text of one of your items is long enough to extend on to a second line, Word will wrap it automatically ①. Only press the **Enter** key when you've finished typing the whole of the item ②.

Leave Word to wrap long items itself!

For the trip, please bring the following:

Passport

Flight and train tickets

Walking boots and wet-weather clothing

Foreign currency (no more than £50-worth, there is very little you'll have to pay for!)

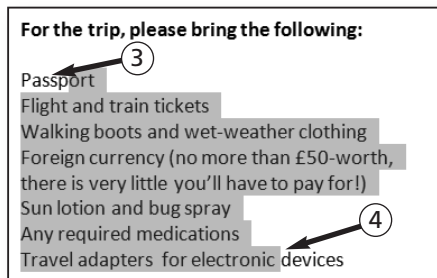
①

②

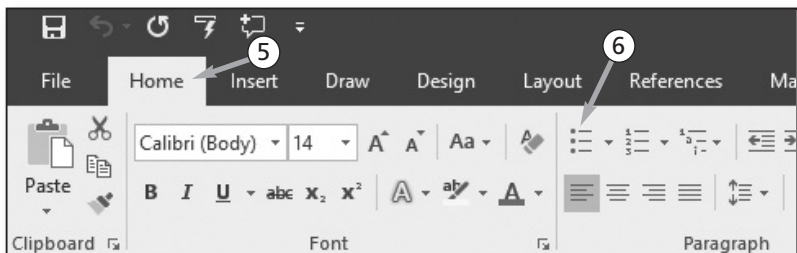
Pressing the **Enter** key at the end of each item is vital. This tells Word to start a new paragraph, and bullet points are added only to the beginnings of paragraphs, not to each individual line of a paragraph. That leads to an extra tip: if you want to break a line at a particular point, but without starting a new paragraph (which would cause Word to place a bullet beside it later on), press **Shift+Enter**. This creates a new line, but without starting a new paragraph.



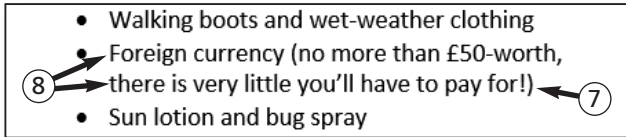
- Highlight your list*
- After typing all your items, you're ready to turn them into a bulleted list like the one pictured at the bottom of page 2. The first step is to highlight the items in your list. Move the mouse to anywhere in the first line of your list ③ (it doesn't necessarily have to be at the beginning of the item), press and hold the left mouse button and then drag the mouse down to any point in the last line of the list ④ (again, it doesn't necessarily have to be the end of that last line).



- Click the Bullets button*
- On the Ribbon, switch to the **Home** tab ⑤, and in the 'Paragraph' group click the **Bullets** button ⑥. (Be sure to click directly on the button itself, not on the little arrowhead to its right.)

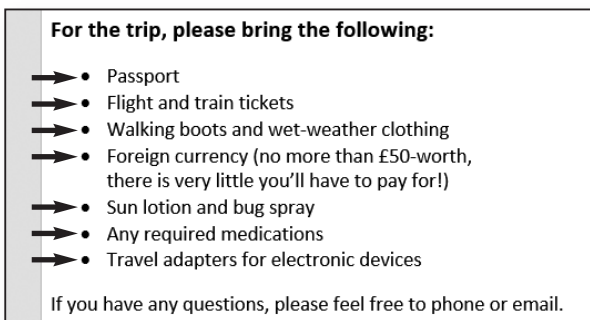


- Word creates a bulleted list*
- Each item in your list immediately gains a black dot as a bullet. Any items which Word had to wrap over two or more lines ⑦ (or which you wrapped manually by pressing **Shift+Enter** somewhere in the item) are indented by the same amount as the first line ⑧.



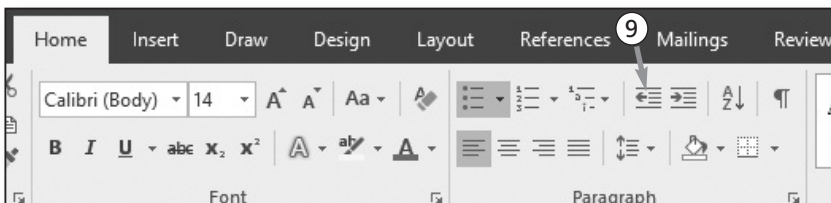
5. Along with adding bullets, Word has done something else. The entire list has been shifted to the right, indented about 6 mm from the left margin:

The bullets are indented from the left margin



Perhaps you're not bothered by this indentation – that's absolutely fine! But if you'd prefer to have these bullets left-aligned in the same way as the ordinary text above and below the list, it's a quick job to remove the extra indentation. First, make sure your entire list is still highlighted (or highlight it again if isn't). Next, on the **Home** tab of the Ribbon, in the 'Paragraph' group, click the **Decrease Indent** button ⑨.

You can remove this indentation



6. Word now removes the extra indentation and aligns all the bullets to the left margin:

For the trip, please bring the following:

- Passport
- Flight and train tickets
- Walking boots and wet-weather clothing
- Foreign currency (no more than £50-worth, there is very little you'll have to pay for!)
- Sun lotion and bug spray
- Any required medications
- Travel adapters for electronic devices

If you have any questions, please feel free to phone or email.

An easy three-step process

To quickly recap, then, creating a bulleted list is a quick three-step job. First, type all your items as separate paragraphs. Second, highlight the items and click the **Bullets** button. Third (if you wish to), click the **Decrease Indent** button to align the list to the left margin.



How do you remove the bullets again if you've changed your mind? Just highlight all your bulleted items and click the **Bullets** button again: Word removes the bullets (and the extra indentation) to leave your text looking just the way you typed it initially.

Adding extra items to a list

Add items to the list

Having created a bulleted list in the way I've described above, maybe you now want to add more items to it – either somewhere in the middle or at the end? If so, that's straightforward:



1. After deciding where you want to add another item, click at the very end of the line preceding it ①.

For the trip, please bring the following:

- Passport
- Flight and train tickets | ← ①
- Walking boots and wet-weather clothing

2. Press the **Enter** key and Word inserts a blank line below this one, prefaced with a bullet ②, and you can start typing the text. *Press **Enter** and type a new item*

For the trip, please bring the following:

- Passport
- Flight and train tickets
- | ← ②
- Walking boots and wet-weather clothing

3. Repeat steps 1 and 2 as often as needed until your list is complete.

Perhaps you're adding new items to the end of a list by pressing **Enter** to create a new bullet, typing the required text, and then pressing **Enter** again. That leads to a common question: how can you ever type ordinary (non-bulleted) text below a bulleted list? As soon as you press **Enter**, you get another bullet!

There's a trick. After you've typed your last bulleted item, you press **Enter** and yet another bullet appears. Rather than typing anything, press **Enter** a second time. When you do this, Word understands that you want to end the bulleted list, so it removes that final unwanted bullet symbol and the indentation before it, leaving you ready to type a paragraph of ordinary text.



Delete an unwanted bullet

Perhaps there's an item in your bulleted list which you want to replace with different text, or remove entirely? If so, there are several ways of doing that, but I'll tell you the method I recommend, which gives you complete control over what you want to do:

Remove an item from the list

1. Begin by clicking at the very end of the unwanted item's text.



- Use **Backspace** to delete the text*
- You can delete the bullet too*
2. Now press the **Backspace** key as often as necessary until you've deleted all the text of this item. This leaves you with an empty bullet where, if you want to, you can type a replacement item.
 3. Did you want to delete the entire bullet rather than replace it? If so, press the **Backspace** key three more times. The first press deletes the bullet but keeps the indentation; the second removes the indentation and moves the text cursor to the left margin; the third removes the now-empty line that this bullet was occupying, thus closing-up the gap in your list.

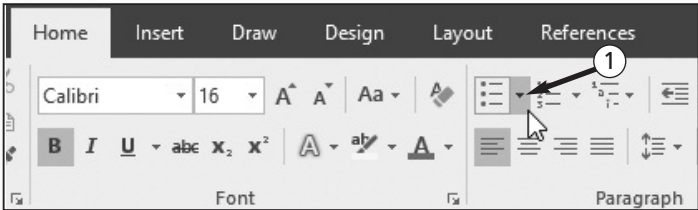
Make Your Lists More Distinctive with Different Icons

Not keen on the circular bullet? Those circular black bullets are good enough in most cases, but perhaps you'd like to make a list look a little more interesting or stylish? If so, you can use different bullet symbols, as in the examples below:

<p>Available days:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Monday <input type="checkbox"/> Tuesday <input type="checkbox"/> Wednesday <input type="checkbox"/> Thursday <input type="checkbox"/> Friday <input type="checkbox"/> Saturday <input type="checkbox"/> Sunday 	<p>Menu</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♥ Aperitif ♥ Langoustine Soup ♥ Beef Cheek in Rosemary with Artichoke Crisps ♥ Damson Mousse with Dark Chocolate and Sorrel
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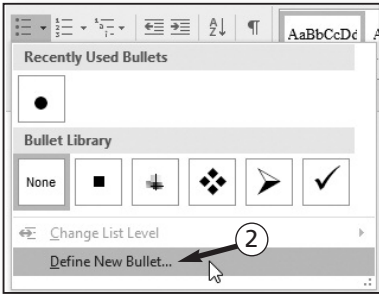
Use different symbols as bullets On the left, the bullets are checkboxes (ideal for a printed form); on the right, hearts for a wedding menu. These are just a tiny sample of the symbols you can use. Here's how to choose different symbols for your bullets:

1. Either type your list of items and then select it (as we did in steps 1 and 2 on pages 3 and 4) or, if you've already created a bulleted list and want to change its bullets, simply highlight the whole list.
2. On the **Home** tab of the Ribbon, in the 'Paragraph' group, click the little arrowhead to the right of the **Bullets** button ①.



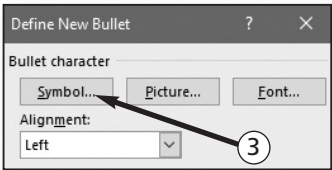
3. On the panel that appears, you'll see a little collection of bullets arranged below headings like **Recently Used Bullets**, **Document Bullets** and **Bullet Library**: if you want to use one of these, simply click it: this panel will close and the bullet you chose will be applied to your list. But let's assume none of these takes your fancy and you'd like a wider choice: click on **Define New Bullet** ②.

Choose a symbol from the 'library'...



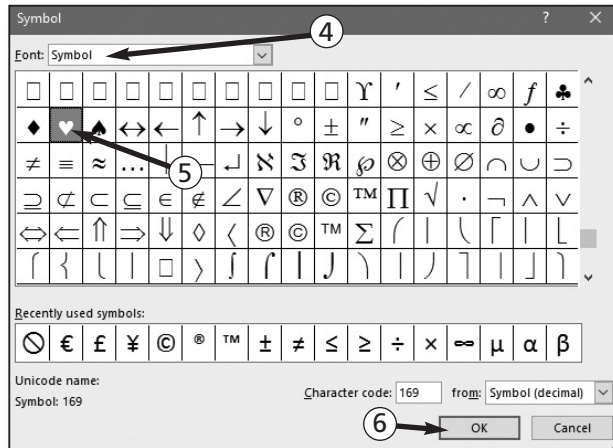
4. This opens a dialog which offers options for creating your own bullet. At the top of this dialog, click the **Symbol** button ③.

... or see a wider selection



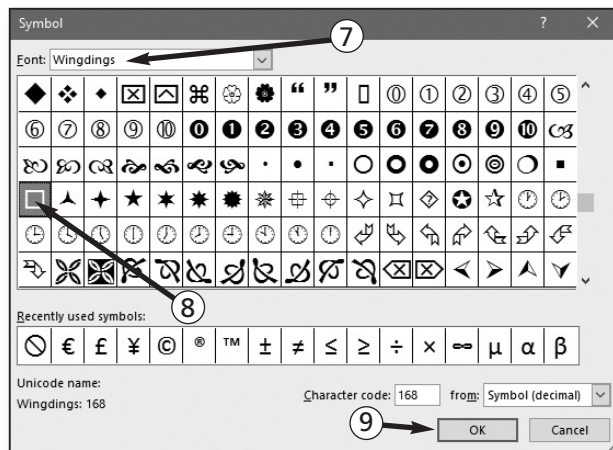
Find the heart symbol...

- Now you'll see the Symbol dialog pictured below. If you'd like to use the heart as your bullet, open the drop-down list labelled **Font** and choose **Symbol** ④. Look through the available symbols to find and click the heart shape ⑤ and then click **OK** ⑥.



... or the checkbox symbol

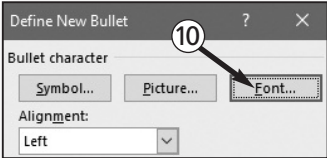
- If you'd prefer to use the checkbox, choose the font named **Wingdings** from the **Font** box ⑦, find and click the checkbox symbol ⑧ and then click **OK** ⑨.



Of course, you can use any of the other symbols you see in this dialog in the same way. Besides the fonts named **Symbol** and **Wingdings**, you'll find more symbols by choosing the fonts named **Wingdings2**, **Wingdings3** or **Webdings**.



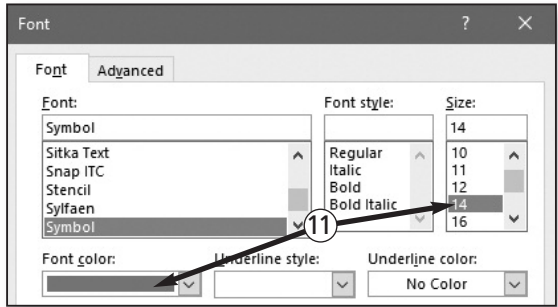
- 7. This takes you back to the 'Define New Bullet' dialog you were using a moment ago. Now click the **Font** button ⑩.



Click **Font...**

- 8. This opens the Font dialog pictured below, where you can choose the font size and colour you want to apply to your new bullet symbol ⑪.

... to choose the bullet's size and colour



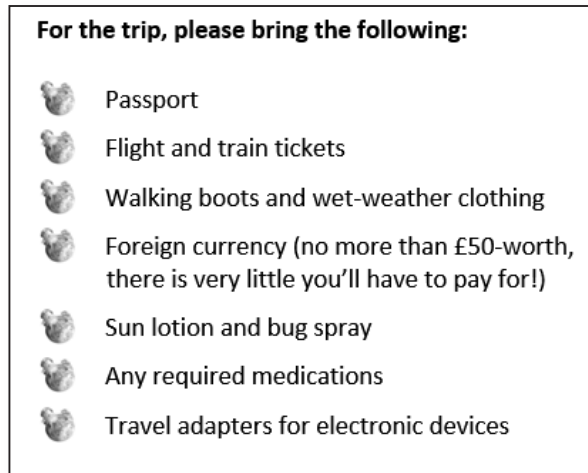
- 9. Click **OK** in the two open dialogs and you've finished: the symbol you chose is applied to your list. You can repeat these steps at any time to choose a different symbol, or to adjust the font size and/or colour of the symbol you're already using.

Use Your Own Images as Bullet Points

Besides using symbols from the pictorial fonts noted above, Word will even let you use a picture as a bullet

Any picture can be used as a bullet

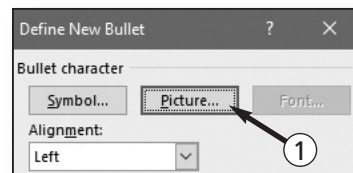
symbol – perhaps a picture from your own collection, one you’ve created and saved in a graphics program, or one you’ve found online:



Follow these steps to use a picture of your own as a bullet symbol:

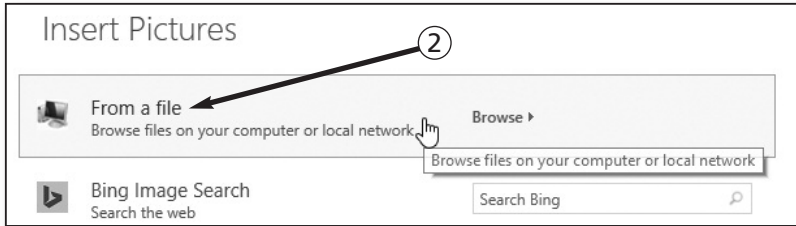


1. Either type your list of items and then select it (as we did in steps 1 and 2 on pages 3 and 4) or, if you’ve already created a bulleted list and want to change its bullets, simply highlight the whole list.
2. On the **Home** tab of the Ribbon, in the ‘Paragraph’ group, click the little arrowhead to the right of the **Bullets** button.
3. In the panel that appears, click on **Define New Bullet**. Then, in the ‘**Define New Bullet**’ dialog that appears, click the **Picture** button ①.

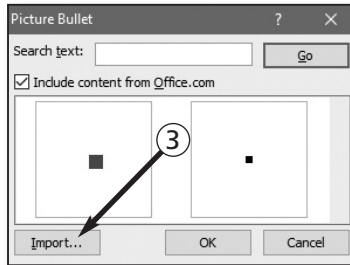


4. This step happens slightly differently according to which version of Microsoft Word you're using:

Word 2016 and 2013: in the 'Insert Pictures' window that appears, click on **From a file** ② to specify that you want to find a picture stored on your own PC.



Word 2010 and 2007: in the 'Picture Bullet' dialog that appears, click the **Import** button in the bottom-left corner ③ to choose a picture from your own PC.



5. **All Word versions:** now you'll see a familiar dialog which shows you the contents of your 'Pictures' folder. In this dialog, switch to the folder containing the picture you want to use, click the picture once to select it and then click the **Open** or **OK** button.

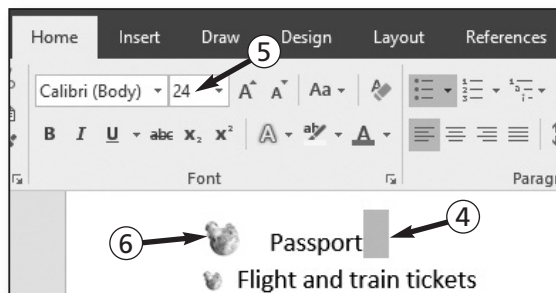
Select the picture you want to use

You can choose any picture at all from your collection, but try to pick something small – or, at least, something that will be recognisable when shown at a small size. Although you could choose a full-size photo, for instance, at normal bullet dimensions it would probably end up as just a colourful rectangular blob!



6. **Word 2010 and 2007 only:** this takes you back to the 'Picture Bullet' dialog where you'll now see the picture you've just chosen: click **OK**.
7. **All Word versions:** now you'll be returned to the 'Define New Bullet' dialog where you'll see a preview of how a bulleted list would look when using the picture you've chosen. Click **OK** in this dialog.
8. This takes you back to your Word document where you'll see that the picture you chose has now been applied to your list as a bullet. However, you'll probably spot a problem: regardless of the size of picture you chose, those bullets look absolutely tiny and it's hard to make out the picture! Fortunately, there's a trick we can use to put this right. Click at the end of the last word in your first bullet, then press the key-combination **Shift+Right arrow**. This selects the paragraph-break at the end of the bullet ④ (although, depending on your Word settings, that mark is probably invisible).

The bullet probably looks tiny!



- This trick enlarges it*
9. Now, on the **Home** tab of the Ribbon, choose a larger font size, such as **24** ⑤. This enlarges that first bullet ⑥ without altering the size of the text.
 10. Finally, just repeat the same two-step procedure for all of the remaining items in your list, selecting the same size for each.