

Word: Hidden Features and Tricks

Discover Some of Word's Lesser-known Features to Help You Work More Easily

This article shows you how to:

- Use quicker ways to edit and format your text
- Easily read and navigate through long documents
- Find useful information about your document

You only have to glance at the Ribbon in Microsoft Word to see that it has an enormous number of tools and options. You probably use the same ones frequently, but there are many others – those you can see, and those you might never notice. In this article, I'll point you towards some of those lesser-known features to help you work more effectively.



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This article covers Microsoft Word 2019, 2016, 2013 and 2010, although – as I’ll point out along the way – some of the tips apply only to one or two of those versions.

Unlike most of our other articles, there’s no particular order to this one! Each tip is self-contained, so you can dip in and out as you like.

Accidental Caps Lock? Fix It Without Retyping!

Have you been typing in capitals?

You’ve been typing away busily for a minute or two, and when you finally pause to look up at the screen you discover something’s gone horribly wrong: in mid-flow, you must have tapped the Caps Lock key, and the last few sentences have been typed in ALL-CAPITALS!

Here’s how to put that right

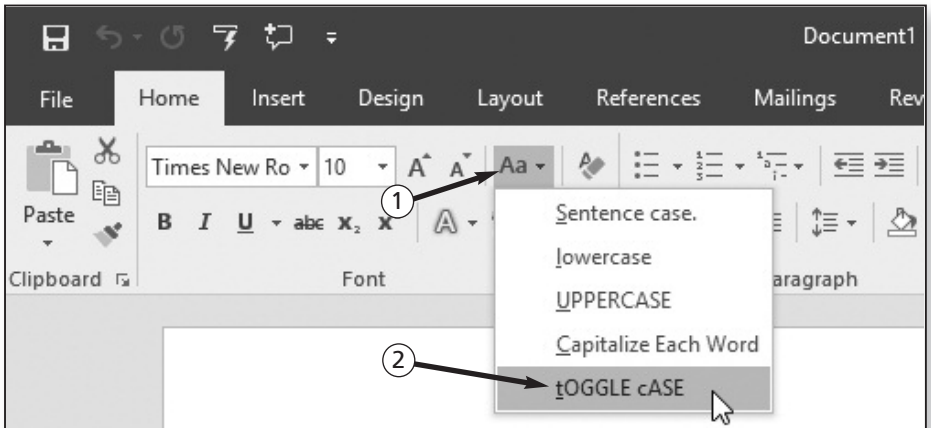
Of course, the first thing you’ll do is press **Caps Lock** again to switch it off, but that doesn’t solve the problem of all the capitals you’ve just typed. Will you have to retype all that text properly?

Not at all – there’s a quick fix you can use:



Tell Word to swap the case of those characters

1. Start by highlighting the text you’ve typed in capitals.
2. Switch to the **Home** tab on the Ribbon (if you’re not already there).
3. In the ‘Font’ group, click the **Change Case** button ①.
4. On the menu that appears, choose the odd-looking **tOGGLE cASE** item ②. In one neat manoeuvre, this switches the case of each character you’ve selected. All the capitals will be switched to lowercase, and anywhere you’ve tried to type a capital letter by holding the Shift key (thus producing a small letter in that sea of capitals) it will be switched to uppercase.



If you have a good memory for key combinations, here's a related one you might like to add to your collection. Highlight some text and press **Shift+F3** repeatedly. With each press, the text you've selected will switch to 'ALL UPPERCASE', then 'all lowercase', then 'All Initial Caps', then back to 'ALL UPPERCASE' again.



Easily Copy Formatting to Other Text

Word allows you to do all sorts of interesting things with ordinary text. Just by using the 'Font' group on the **Home** tab of the Ribbon, you can choose fonts, text sizes, colours, styles and effects, and that's just the beginning! Press **Ctrl+D** to open the Font dialog, and you'll find yet more text effects, such as 'Emboss' and 'Engrave', along with numerous underline styles and colours.

You can combine formatting options to great effect

If you like to make use of these formatting options, that could lead to a problem. You've spent ages formatting a piece of text to look just the way you want it, and now

Can you remember them all to apply elsewhere?

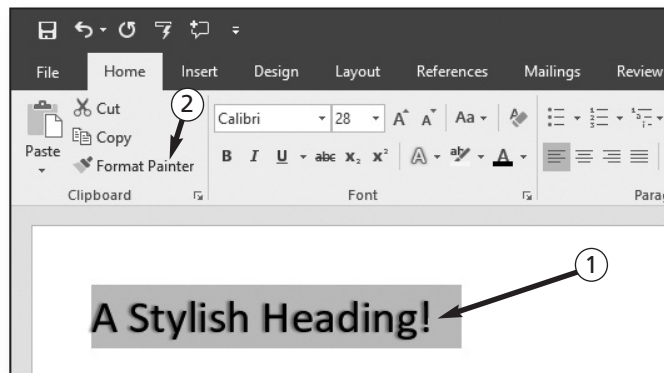
you want to apply the same formatting to other pieces of text in the document. Does that mean you have to work through those pieces of text trying to remember and reproduce all those formatting options for each?

No need: just use the Format Painter!

Fortunately not! A useful tool called the Format Painter can copy the formatting for you quickly and simply. Here's how to use it:



1. Start by highlighting the word, phrase or paragraph that has your carefully-chosen formatting ①.
2. Switch to the **Home** tab on the Ribbon and you'll find the **Format Painter** button ② in the 'Clipboard' group at the far left:
 - If you want to copy this special formatting to just one other place in your document, click the **Format Painter** button once.
 - If you want to copy the special formatting to two or more places, double-click the **Format Painter** button.



The pointer shape tells you the Format Painter is on

3. Move the mouse back into your document and you'll see that the usual I-beam pointer shape has gained a little paintbrush beside it, indicating that the Format Painter is switched on.



4. Now find the other piece of text in your document to which you want to apply your special formatting. If it's just one word, simply click the word. If it's more than one word, press the left mouse button at the end of the last word and swipe the mouse over all the required text. *Click or swipe over the required text*
5. As soon as you release the mouse button, Microsoft Word will instantly apply the formatting of the text you selected in step 1 to the text you've just clicked or swiped. *The same formatting is applied to it*
6. If you clicked the **Format Painter** button just once in step 2, the Format Painter feature will switch itself off automatically now you've used it; you'll see that the mouse pointer now has its usual I-beam shape again.

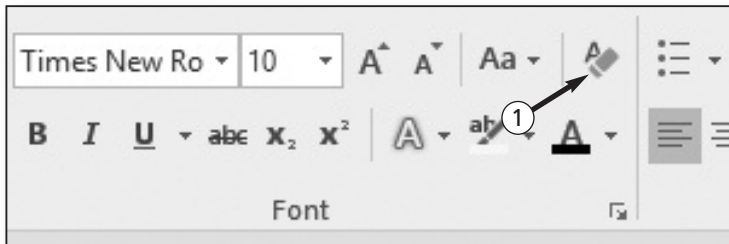
If you double-clicked the **Format Painter** button, the feature is still switched on, and you'll still see the little paintbrush beside the I-beam. You can now find another piece of text in your document and repeat steps 4 and 5 to apply your special formatting to that in the same way. When you've finished using the Format Painter, switch it off by pressing the **Esc** key on your keyboard or clicking the **Format Painter** button again. *Repeat as often as needed*

Remove Unwanted Formatting from Your Text

Do you ever copy-and-paste text into Microsoft Word from web pages, email messages, PDF documents and other sources? If you do, you'll find that Word does its best to match the formatting of the original text: it tries to use the same fonts, text sizes, styles and colours. *If you copy text from elsewhere...*

That original formatting may not be to your taste, and if you're gathering text from a variety of sources, you'll end up with a horrible mish-mash of fonts and styles! *... you can remove its jumbled formatting*

Luckily, though, there's a quick fix. Select the text you've pasted into your document, switch to the **Home** tab on the Ribbon and click the **Clear All Formatting** (or **Clear Formatting**) button ① in the 'Font' group:



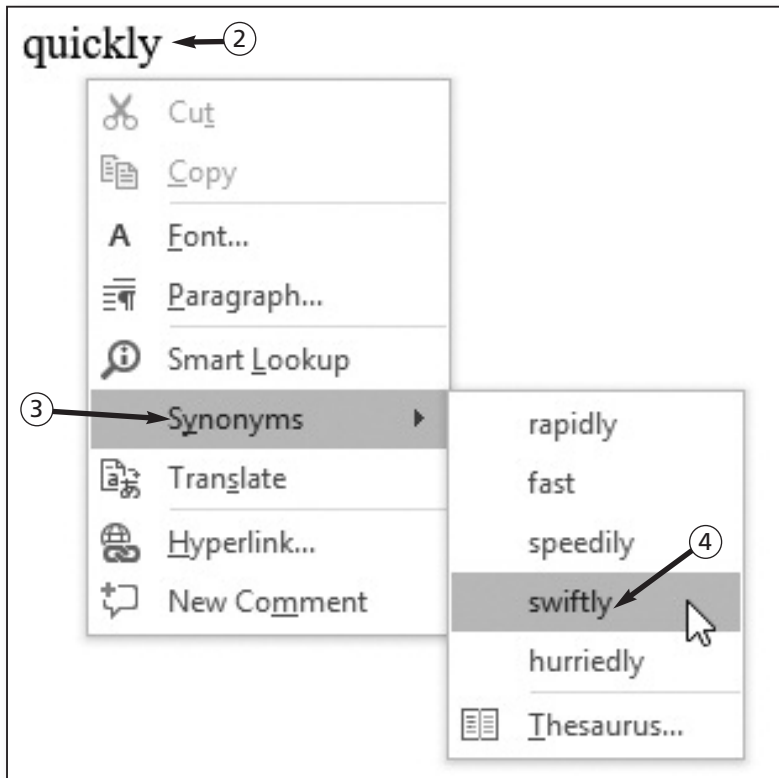
Plain, unformatted text This instantly converts all the text you selected into plain, unformatted text, all with the same font and size, just as if you'd typed it into the document yourself.

Wrong Word? Quickly Find a Synonym

Right-click a word to find a synonym When you're typing a document and you feel you're using the same word a little too often, here's a quick way to find a replacement for one of them. Just right-click the word ②, move the mouse down to **Synonyms** ③, and a menu will pop open showing a list of similar words to the one you right-clicked. If one of these is suitable, just click it ④ and it will replace the word you used.

Can't think of quite the right word? This is also worth remembering if the word you want to use is on the tip of your tongue, but you can't quite bring it to mind. Rather than racking your brain for too long, just type a similar word into your document, right-click it and look at the list of synonyms, and you'll quite likely see the word you were trying to remember. (If you don't, you could try picking one of the suggested

words and then doing the same again to look at the synonyms for that.)



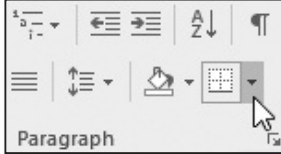
Add Style with Horizontal Dividing Lines

Horizontal lines provide an easy way to add a touch of style to a document. You might use one to separate your name and address at the top of a letter from the rest of the text, or to divide a long document into sections.

Split documents into sections

Here's one way to produce a horizontal line in your document:



1. Position the insertion point at the beginning of a new line (to avoid having the line splitting a paragraph in two!).
2. Switch to the **Home** tab on the Ribbon, and in the 'Paragraph' group click the little arrow beside the **Borders** button.
 
3. Near the bottom of the menu that opens, click on **Horizontal Line**. This places a dark-grey embossed line across the full width of the page.

A choice of six line styles, just by typing

Not keen on that embossed line style? No problem, there's another way to produce horizontal lines. This involves typing the same character three times at the beginning of a blank line and then pressing **Enter**. The style of line you produce depends on which character you type, and there are six possible styles available (and thus six possible characters you can use):

Type three hyphens (---) for a thin line:

Type three underscores (Shift+hyphen: ___) for a thick line:

Type three equals signs (===) for a double line:

Type three hash signs (###) for a triple line:

Type three asterisks (Shift+8: ***) for a dotted line:

Type three tildes (Shift+#: ~~~) for a wavy line:

So, if you want to place a thick line across the page, for example, click at the beginning of a new line, type three underscores in a row and press **Enter**. The horizontal line

appears at the point you clicked, and the insertion point moves below it ready for you to continue typing.

Get to Work Faster Without the Start Screen

In Word 2010 and all previous versions, as soon as you start the program you see a blank A4 page in front of you and you can immediately start typing a new document. In Word 2013 and later, an extra step has been inserted: the first thing you see is the 'Start screen'.

The Start screen can slow you down

The Start screen is intended to be helpful: it contains a list of recently-used documents you may want to reopen, and a choice of templates to use as the basis for a new document. But perhaps you usually ignore all this and click on **Blank document** to start work with a blank page? If so, that Start screen is really just slowing you down! If you'd prefer to skip past it and get straight to that blank page automatically, here's how to do it:

Skip straight to a blank document instead

1. Start Microsoft Word and (one last time!) click on **Blank document** on the Start screen.
2. When the blank page has appeared, click the **File** tab at the far left of the Ribbon and then click on **Options** at the bottom of the left-hand panel.
3. In the 'Start Up Options' section of the Options dialog, remove the tick beside **Show the Start screen when this application starts**.



Disable the Start screen

Start up options

Choose the extensions you want Word to open by default:

Tell me if Microsoft Word isn't the default program for viewing and editing documents.

Open e-mail attachments and other uneditable files in reading view ⓘ

Show the Start screen when this application starts

4. Click **OK** to confirm this change and close the Options dialog.

The same options are still available if needed

In future, each time you start Word you'll arrive at a blank A4 document. For those times when you want to reopen a recent document or use a template, click the **File** tab. You'll see your list of recent documents straight away, and you can click **New** in the left-hand panel to see the list of templates.

Quickly Navigate Around a Long Document

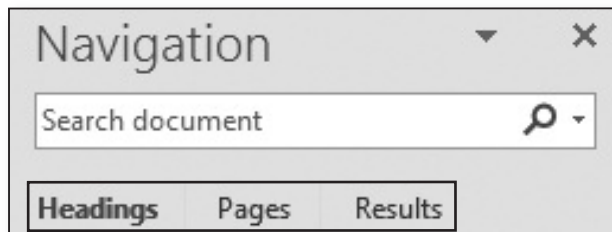
Endlessly scrolling through a long document?

If you ever work on a long document – something of at least a few pages in length – you can find yourself constantly scrolling up and down through it to find the part you want to read or edit. Don't waste time doing that! Instead, let Word's navigation pane help you.

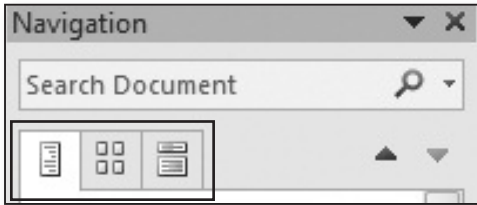
Speed things up with the navigation pane

Switch to the **View** tab on the Ribbon, and in the 'Show' group click on **Navigation Pane**. This opens a sidebar titled 'Navigation' at the left of the Word window. You may recognise this as the panel that appears when you press **Ctrl+F** to search for text in a document, and it has a 'Search document' box at the top for doing exactly that. Immediately below this box is the section we're interested in:

In Word 2013 and later you'll see the items **Headings**, **Pages** and **Results**:

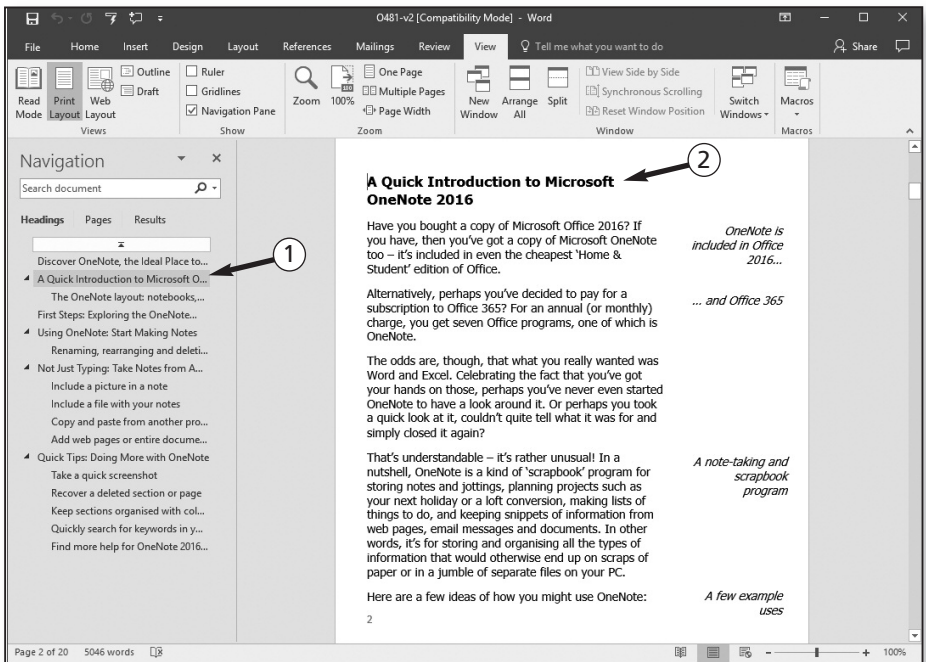


In Word 2010 you'll see three little tabs:



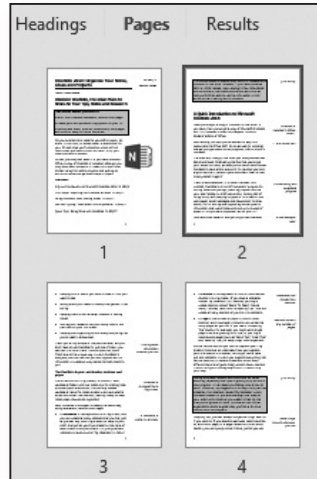
- **Navigate your document using headings:** if you've used headings in your document, you can use those to jump around it quickly. In Word 2013 or later, click the word **Headings** in the navigation pane; in Word 2010, click the leftmost of those three tabs. You'll then see a consecutive list of all the headings in the document: click any heading ① to jump straight to that point in the document ②.

Click a heading to jump straight to it



Click the picture of the page you want to see

- **Navigate your document using pictures of the pages:** click on **Pages** in Word 2013 or later, or click the middle tab of the three in Word 2010, and the navigation pane will change to show little pictures of all the pages in your document. As you'd expect, clicking one of these numbered pictures will take you straight to the top of that page in your document.



Close the navigation pane

When you've finished using the navigation pane, you can close it by clicking the little **x** in its top-right corner, or by returning to the **View** tab on the Ribbon and clicking the **Navigation Pane** item again to remove the tick in the box beside it.



One reason why you might need to jump around between different parts of a long document is because you're editing it – either putting the finishing touches to it or tidying up what you've written so far before you continue. If so, Word has another useful trick up its sleeve to help you.

If you press the key combination **Shift+F5**, you'll jump straight to the point in your document where you last made a change. Press **Shift+F5** again and you'll jump to the part you edited before that.

Word remembers the locations of the last five changes you made, so you can do this several times before you end up back where you started.

Keep Words Together with Non-breaking Spaces and Hyphens

Here's a quick tip on the theme of making things look 'just so'. When you type into a document, Word automatically determines whether the word you're currently typing (or about to type) will fit on to the current line, and starts a new line for it if it doesn't.

That's usually ideal, of course, but there may be occasions when you want to ensure several words stay together on the same line – even though it might leave a blank space at the end of the previous line.

You can do this by separating those words with non-breaking spaces. Rather than simply pressing the space bar between the words, hold **Ctrl+Shift** as you type the space. The result looks no different to any other space in your document, but it's a 'non-breaking' space: Word will never place a line-break at that point.

In a similar way, there's also the non-breaking hyphen. If you're typing a hyphenated phrase like 'all-in-one' and you want to ensure it won't be split over two lines, use **Ctrl+Shift+hyphen** to insert non-breaking hyphens rather than just pressing the - key by itself.

Prevent line breaks between certain words

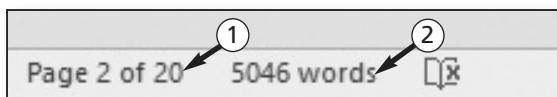
Use non-breaking spaces

Prevent breaks at hyphenated words too

Count Your Document's Words, Paragraphs and Characters

If you look at the bottom-left corner of the Word window, you'll see a note of how many pages there are in the current document and how many words it contains. These are there to provide at-a-glance information, but they actually do more than that – they're clickable buttons.

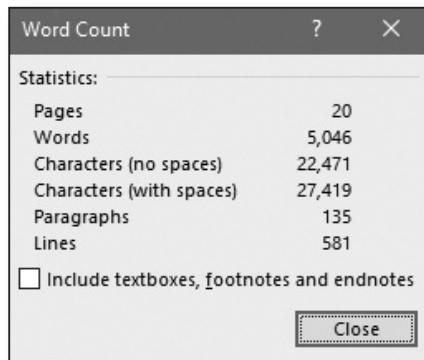
The word count is shown at the bottom



If you click the 'Page' button ① in Word 2013 or later, it opens the navigation pane (which I explained on page 10). In Word 2010 it opens a 'Go To' dialog which lets you jump to a particular page, although the navigation pane is usually a better choice for doing that.

Click the word count for more statistics

More interesting is the 'Words' button ②. Click this and a little dialog will open, like the one pictured to the right, telling you the number of pages, words, paragraphs and lines in your document, as well as the total number of characters (including and excluding spaces). Click the **Close** button or press the **Esc** key on your keyboard to close it.



For many Word users, these figures will just be a matter of vague interest, but you may well need to keep an eye on them if you've been asked to produce a document of a particular length. Something else you might need to know is how much time you've spent working on the current document, and Word can tell you that too. Click the **File** tab on the Ribbon followed by **Info** in the left-hand panel, then look at the right-hand side of this 'Info' page. Among the various details of the document you'll see its **Total Editing Time** in minutes.

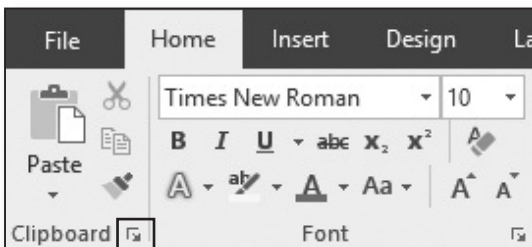
Easy Copy and Paste Using the Office Clipboard

When you're working on a document in Word, you probably use the Windows clipboard a fair amount. You may want to copy some text from one place to another, which you do by selecting it and pressing **Ctrl+C**, or – more likely – move it elsewhere by selecting it and pressing **Ctrl+X**. Having done either of those to copy or move text on to the clipboard, you then click a point in your document and press **Ctrl+V** to paste it there.

There's no size limit to the clipboard: you could copy or move a single character or many pages of text, tables and graphics. But it does have one severe drawback – it can only hold one thing at a time. The instant you press **Ctrl+C** or **Ctrl+X** to copy or move something to the clipboard, it replaces whatever the clipboard was previously holding.

The solution for this is to use the Office Clipboard. This useful feature remembers the last 24 items you placed on the clipboard and displays them in a list, allowing you to paste any of them into your document, rather than limiting you to just the single item currently on the clipboard itself.

In order to use the Office Clipboard, you first have to switch it on. To do that, go to the **Home** tab of the Ribbon, and in the 'Clipboard' group at the far left, click the little embossed arrow:



The clipboard is a vital tool for editing...

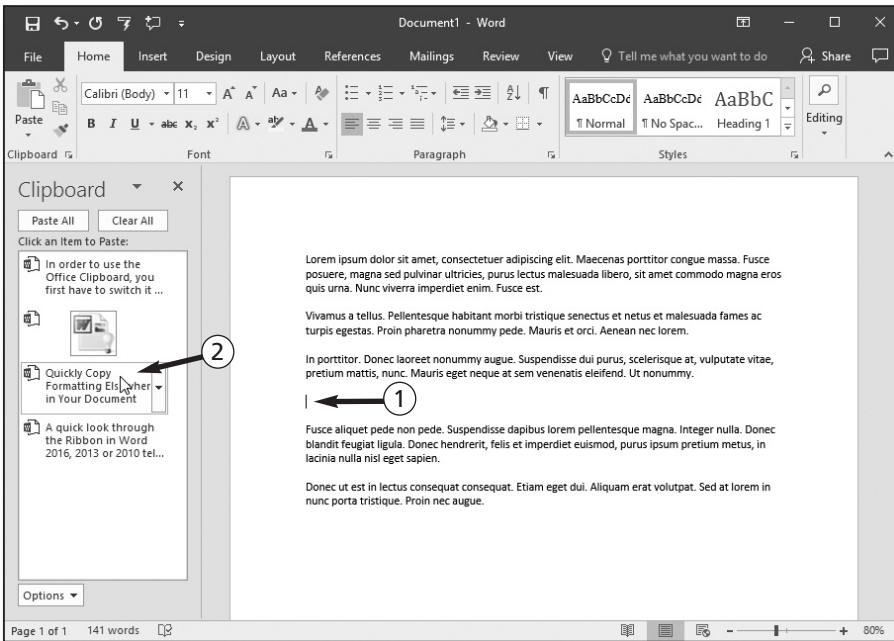
... but it's too limiting

Keep up to 24 clips handy

Open the Office Clipboard sidebar

Everything you cut or copied is listed here

This opens a sidebar titled 'Clipboard' at the left of the Word window, and as long as this sidebar remains visible it will gather and list every item you cut or copy to the clipboard, placing the most-recent items at the top:



Click any item to paste it into your document

Whenever you want to place one of these items somewhere in your document, just click at the required point on the page ① and then click the item in the sidebar's list ②.



Once you've cut or copied 24 items to the clipboard and this Office Clipboard list is full, it will start to remove the bottommost items the next time you press **Ctrl+C** or **Ctrl+X**. If you want to avoid losing those earliest items from the list, you have to remove some others instead. To do that, move the mouse to an unwanted item in the list, click the arrow button

that appears to its right and then click **Delete** on the little menu that opens.

When you no longer need to use the Office Clipboard (and you're happy for it to stop collecting the items you place on the clipboard), you can close it by clicking the **x** in its top-right corner or by clicking that little embossed arrow in the Ribbon's 'Clipboard' group again. When the sidebar is closed, although it will no longer be collecting new clipboard items, it will continue to store what it was already listing, so you can reopen it again later if you want to use any of those items. The list is only cleared when you close Microsoft Word itself (and any other Microsoft Office programs that you might also have open).

Close the sidebar to stop it collecting clips

Open and Edit PDF Documents in Word

If you use Word 2013 or later, it's gained a surprising new skill that Word 2010 sadly doesn't have: it can open PDF documents.

However, it doesn't just open a PDF for reading, in the way that a program like Adobe Acrobat Reader would. Instead, it converts the document into Microsoft Word format, allowing you to edit it in any way you like – exactly as if you'd typed it yourself – and save the result as a Word document.

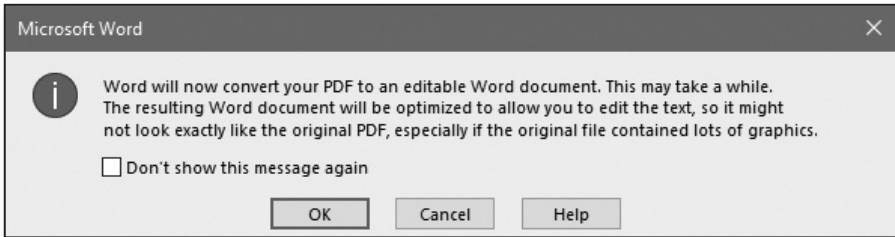
Open a PDF and edit it in Word

Opening a PDF is just the same as opening a Word document: choose **File > Open** (or press **Ctrl+O**), click **Browse** in Word 2019/2016 or **Computer** then **Browse** in Word 2013, and select the PDF file you want to open.

You'll then see the message below, telling you that the PDF will be converted to an editable Word document, which may take a while, and the result may not look identical to the PDF. Click **OK** (after ticking **Don't show this message again** if you don't want to be reminded

Word warns that it may not look identical

about this every time you open a PDF) and after a few seconds you should see the contents of the PDF in Word.



Edit it as you like... You can now make any changes to it you like, just as if you'd created the document in Word yourself (and you may need to do a little tidying if the original PDF had a complex layout).

... and save it as a Word document When you're happy with the result, you can save it as a new Word document: just press the **F12** key to display the Save As dialog, and choose where to save it and what to name it.



A related option in Word is to save a document as a PDF, and that's something you might like to do in this case – effectively editing a PDF and creating your own version of it. To save any document you're working on as a PDF, press **F12** to display the Save As dialog, then open the **Save as type** list near the bottom of the dialog and choose **PDF**. From there, just choose where to save it and what to name it in the usual way.