

# Do You Really Need Microsoft Word?

## WordPad Does More than You Think!

This article shows you how to:

- ✓ Write documents and design reusable templates in WordPad
- ✓ Include pictures and check the page-count
- ✓ Work faster by using quick key combinations

Although Microsoft Word is the undisputed king of word processor programs, it’s expensive, and its wealth of features make it complicated to learn. A much simpler alternative is a program you’ve already got (although you may never have paid much attention to it) – WordPad.

WordPad is included with all versions of Windows, and it’s a far more capable word processor than you might expect. Read on to discover how to make the most of this useful free program.



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Every version  
of Windows  
includes  
WordPad

## Meet WordPad, Your Built-in Word Processor

WordPad made its first appearance about 25 years ago in Windows 95, and it's been included in every version of Windows since. In fact, until the arrival of Windows 7 in 2009, WordPad remained completely unchanged (some might say neglected), looking and working just the way it did in that original 1995 version.

In Windows 7, WordPad was given a brush-up to make it look more modern and appetising. In particular, it was given the same type of Ribbon toolbar you find in Word and other Microsoft Office programs (as well as the built-in Paint program). However, whereas the latest versions of Word have 10 tabs on their Ribbon, WordPad sports a mere three.

Much easier  
to use than  
Microsoft Word

Essentially, WordPad is Microsoft Word's little brother, and its tiny number of tabs tells you it has far fewer features and options. It's a basic word processor designed for typing any sort of text documents such as letters, reports, essays and so on, and presenting them in an attractive way.

While it doesn't have the mind-boggling array of options found in Word, it does offer almost everything you need to create attractive documents, and without the complexities of its big brother. With WordPad, you won't be forever scratching your head, wondering what's just happened and how to put it right!



There are some useful features missing from Word-Pad. It doesn't provide any way to create ready-to-use templates, it doesn't show you how many pages you've written or which page you're on, and it doesn't include a spell checker. I'll explain how to work around the first two drawbacks over the course of this article. For the third, unfortunately, you have to keep an eye on your spelling yourself!



Our intention is to create a letter template that looks something like the screenshot on the previous page. To create this template, follow these steps:



1. Begin by typing your name on the first line, pressing **Enter**, and typing your address on the next line. Press **Enter** again and type your telephone number, and then press **Enter** a final time to type your email address on the next line.
2. Press **Enter** two more times and then type the word **Address**. (This is just a placeholder: whenever you use this template to write a letter in future, you'll double-click this word to select it and type the recipient's address in its place.)
3. Press **Enter** to move to the next line and type the word **Date**. (Once again, this is a placeholder which you'll replace with the date whenever you use this template to write a letter.)
4. Press **Enter** two or three more times, and then type the word **Dear** followed by a space. As you can probably guess, whenever you use this template, you'll type the recipient's name after the space.
5. Press **Enter** four times, type **Yours sincerely**, and press **Enter** three more times and type your name.
6. The result at this point will look similar to the screenshot on the right: it's not quite what we were aiming for, but it's a good start. Now we'll format this to make it more attractive.

Mick Sterbs  
14 Kiss Chase, Unmade, Beds. UM8 4TC  
01234 567890  
micksterbs@example.com

Address  
Date

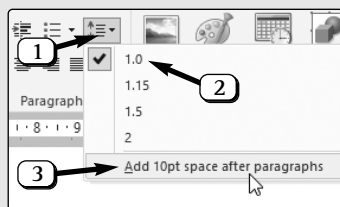
Dear

Yours sincerely,

Mick Sterbs

The bare text of  
your letterhead

7. Press the key combination **(Ctrl) + (A)**, which highlights all the text you've typed into the document.
8. You may have noticed that WordPad has put large spaces between each line you've typed, and these look rather odd! To put this right, make sure the **Home** tab on the Ribbon is selected, locate the **Paragraph** group and click the **Line spacing** button in the top right corner of this section (1). On the menu that appears, click **1.0** (2). Click the same button again, and this time click **Add 10pt space after paragraphs**



after paragraphs (3) to remove the tick beside it, thus switching it off. Those unnecessary gaps between the lines will disappear.

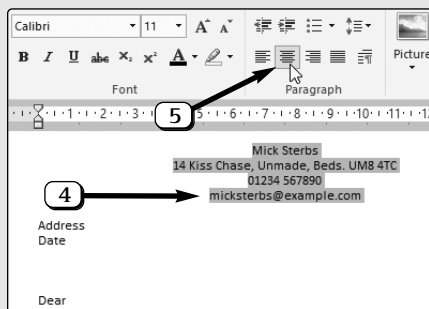
9. All the text in your document should still be highlighted (if it isn't, press **(Ctrl) + (A)** again), and now is a good time to choose the font you want to use in your letter. On the **Home** tab of the Ribbon you'll find one drop-down list containing all your available fonts, and another beside it containing a list of text sizes. Select the font and size you'd like to use from these lists, and (because all your text is highlighted) it will immediately be applied to the entire document.
10. When you've chosen a font style and size you're happy with, click a blank white space in the window to deselect all the text.
11. Now let's add some sorely-needed design touches to this letterhead. First, we'll align the lines containing

Remove the  
extra line  
spacing

Choose your  
preferred font  
and text size

Centre your name  
and address

your own name and address to the centre of the page. Highlight the first four lines (4) and click the Center button on the Ribbon (5) (or press (Ctrl) + (E)).



Align the date  
to the right

12. Next, we'll align the date to the right of the page: select the word 'Date' and click the **Align Right** button (which is to the right of the Center button we just used) or press (Ctrl) + (R).
13. While we've got the date highlighted, let's make it italic. To do that, either press the button showing a capital I on the toolbar or press (Ctrl) + (I).

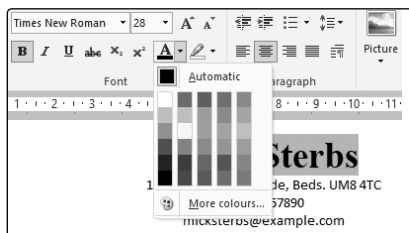


If you align text to the centre or right and later wish you hadn't, it's easy to change. Just highlight the same text again and click the **Align Left**, **Center** or **Align Right** button (depending on the alignment you want). Similarly, if you make something bold or italic and change your mind, select the same text again and click the bold button to remove the bold style, or the italic button to turn off the italic style.

Format your  
name

14. Now we'll smarten up the name on the very first line of the document, so select that line. I've chosen a

slightly fancier font, 'Times New Roman', at a size of 28 by choosing them from the drop-down lists on the Home tab of the Ribbon. I've also made the name bold by clicking the **B** button (or pressing **Ctrl** + **B**) while the name is selected. Finally, I've made the name a different colour by clicking the Text colour button and choosing a deep blue.



## Saving the result as a reusable template

That's it – your document should look similar to the screenshot on page 3, and it's ready to save. Follow these steps:

1. Click the blue File tab to the left of the 'Home' tab on the Ribbon, move the mouse down to **Save as** and click **Rich Text document**.
2. In the Save As dialog that appears, you'll be in your 'Documents' (or 'My Documents') folder, which is obviously the ideal place to save your own documents. However, perhaps you'd like to go a stage further to help keep things organised, and create a new folder for this template (and any other WordPad templates you create)? If so, right-click a blank white space in the dialog, move the mouse to **New** and click **Folder**; type the name **WordPad Templates** for this folder and press **Enter** to confirm it, then double-



Type a name for the template

click this newly-created folder to open it so that your new template will be saved inside it.

3. In the **File name** box at the bottom of the dialog, type a memory-jogging name for your file, such as **Letter Template**. Next, click the **Save** button to save it.
4. Finally, close WordPad by clicking the **x** button in its top right corner.

A little, later I'll explain how to use this template whenever you want to write a letter, but there are a few more steps I suggest taking first.

## Protect Your Template from Accidental Changes

The point of a template is that it should never change: you'll load it into WordPad and use it to write a letter, and you'll likely want to save the finished letter, but you don't want to replace that template with a complete finished letter.

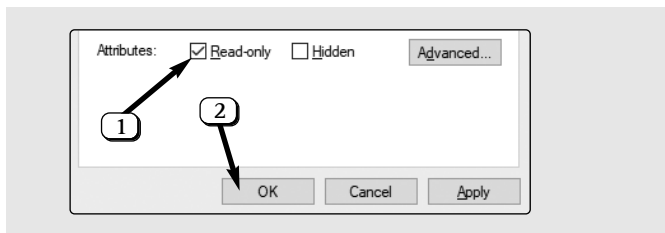
'Read-only' template



Fortunately, there's a way to protect your template from unwanted changes. Just follow these steps:

1. Make your way to the folder in which you saved the template. For instance, press **(Windows)** + **(E)** to open File Explorer and then double-click your **Documents** (or **My Documents**) folder to open it. If you followed my earlier tip to create a 'WordPad Templates' folder, double-click that to open it.
2. Right-click the template file you just saved and choose **Properties**.
3. At the bottom of the dialog that appears, tick the box beside **Read-only** **(1)**.
4. Click **OK** **(2)** and then close the File Explorer window.





If you ever do want to edit your template (perhaps because your address, phone number or email address has changed, or you simply want to redesign it a little), here's how. Begin by following the four steps above again, but remove the tick you added in step 3. Open the template in WordPad to edit as you like, pressing **(Ctrl) + (S)** to save it when finished and closing WordPad. Then follow the four steps above once more to replace the tick beside **Read-only**.



## How to Use Your Letter Template

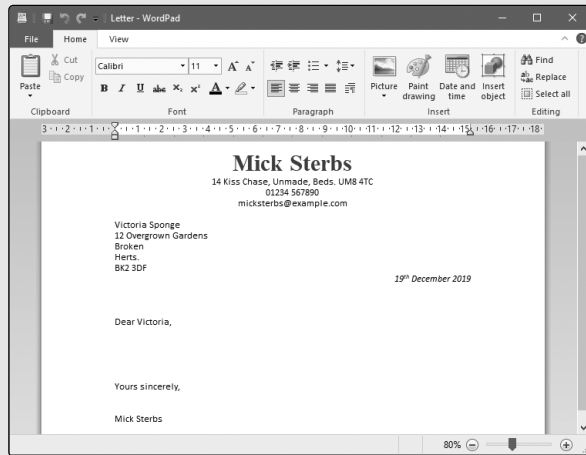
Whenever you want to write a letter in WordPad using this template, just follow these steps:

1. After starting WordPad, press **(Ctrl) + (O)** to display the Open dialog, find and select your letter template file and click the **Open** button.
2. Double-click the word **Address** in the template to select it and type the recipient's name and address in its place (pressing **(Enter)** between each line).
3. Next, double-click the word **Date** and type today's date in its place. (As an alternative to typing, you can click the **Date and time** button in the 'Insert' group on the Ribbon and then double-click the date format you'd like to use.)



Just fill in the blanks and start typing

4. Click after the word Dear and type the recipient's name. You can then press the down-arrow key a couple of times to move the cursor into the blank lines preceding the 'Yours sincerely' line and begin typing your letter. There's no fiddly formatting to do, as you've done all that already, and the letter you type will automatically use the font and style you chose when you created the template.



What happens when you save your letter

5. At an early stage, you'll probably want to save the letter you're working on. Out of force of habit, you may find yourself simply pressing **(Ctrl) + (S)** to save it, and ordinarily that would mean that your bare-bones template is replaced with this half-written letter: very annoying! However, if you took my earlier advice and protected your template, that can't happen. Instead, you'll see a Save As dialog prompting you to type a name for this new document and choose where to save it.

## Tips & Tricks: Going Further with WordPad

The tutorial on the previous pages should give you a head start in using WordPad to create some neatly-formatted documents, and to create any ready-to-use templates you need. Along the way we've used different fonts and sizes, aligned paragraphs in various ways, and used several other formatting options.

However, there's more to WordPad than this, so let's run through some of the other useful (and, occasionally, hidden) features you can use.

### Turn off page numbering

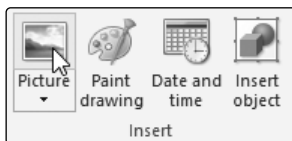
By default, WordPad adds page numbers to the bottom-centre of each page of your document, including the first page, although you don't see them until you print. You probably wouldn't want this for a one-page document, and you may not want it at all.

To switch off page numbering, click the blue File tab at the left of the Ribbon and choose **Page setup**, remove the tick beside **Print Page Numbers** and click **OK**.

Each page is currently numbered

### Include pictures in a WordPad document

WordPad isn't limited to text: if you'd like to, you can include pictures in your documents. After positioning the cursor at the point you'd like the picture to appear in your document (usually at the beginning of a new paragraph), click the upper half of the **Picture** button in the 'Insert' group on the Ribbon.



Insert a picture

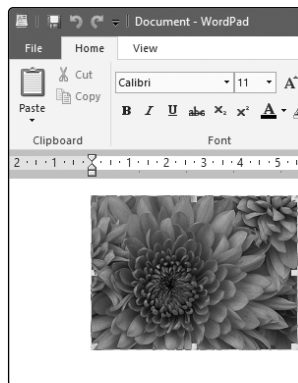
When the picture appears, you'll find eight little blobs around its edges. (They'll disappear if you click elsewhere in the document, but you can make them reappear by clicking

Resize it as needed

the picture.) You can click-and-drag these blobs to adjust the size of the picture.

Position it like  
a paragraph  
of text

You don't have a lot of choice about the position of the picture, unfortunately. You can use the three alignment buttons on the Ribbon to align it to the left, centre or right of the page, and that's all. However, if you want to nudge it a little further to the right than it currently is, you can place the cursor at its left and type several spaces before it.



### Use Print Preview to check how many pages you've written

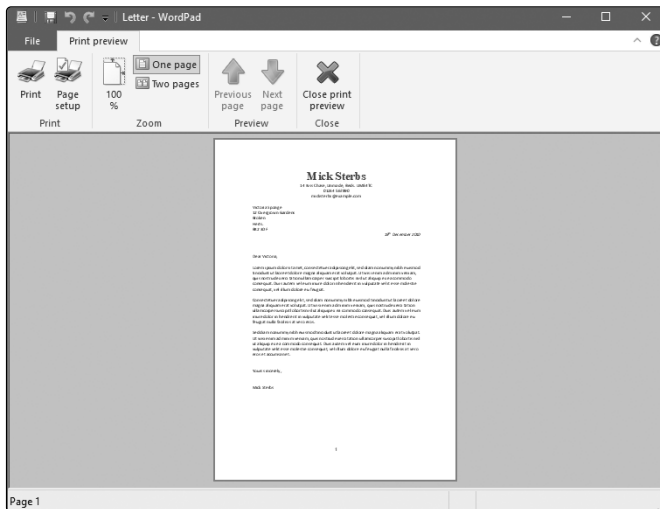
No page-by-  
page layout

As I mentioned at the beginning of this article, WordPad doesn't give you any clue about how many pages your document contains. You could easily print out a letter and find that the 'Yours sincerely' has landed on a second page!

Fortunately, there is a way to check. Click the blue **File** tab at the left of the Ribbon, move the mouse down to **Print** and click on **Print preview**.

Use Print  
Preview to see  
and count pages

The window that appears will look similar to the following screenshot. It shows your document as laid out on paper, and you can use the **Next Page** and **Previous Page** buttons to move between pages. (If those buttons are 'greyed out' and can't be clicked, your document clearly consists of just one page.) When you've reached the final page, check the page number shown in the bottom-left corner of the window and that tells you the total number of pages in your document. To close the preview and return to your document, click **Close print preview** at the right of the toolbar.



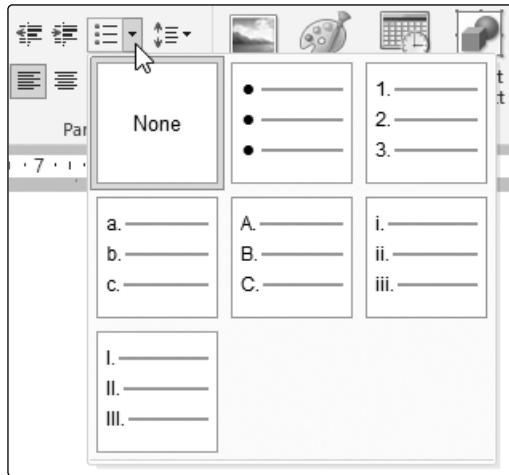
If your document almost fits on to a single sheet, but not quite, you may like to reduce the widths of the margins (which are quite generously-proportioned) to squeeze more text on the page. In this Print Preview, click the **Page setup** button near the left of the Ribbon. You can then type new, smaller figures for any or all of the four margins and click **OK**, then see straight away how this affects the document's layout.



## Create a bulleted or numbered list

WordPad can help you create a neatly laid-out list using bullets, numbers, letters or roman numerals. Position the cursor at the beginning of a new paragraph, then click the little arrow to the right of the **Start a list** button on the Ribbon. On the panel that appears, click the type of list you want to make. WordPad inserts the first bullet (or number or letter) and you're ready to type the first item in your list. Press **Enter** afterwards, and your list is continued automatically.

Choose between several styles of list



How to stop making a list

When you've typed the final item in your list and press **Enter**, you'll find that WordPad adds yet another bullet or number (since it obviously doesn't know you've finished!). Just press **Enter** once more, and it creates a neat paragraph break, ready for you to type an ordinary paragraph.

### Work with Microsoft Word documents

Share documents with a Word user...

You might have noticed that the document we saved was described as a 'Rich Text document' – a file with a '.rtf' extension. That's a standard document format which any reasonable word processor can open, so if you need to share documents with someone who uses Microsoft Word, they'll have no trouble opening your WordPad documents.

...and open Microsoft Word documents

Perhaps surprisingly, the same is true in reverse as well. If someone sends you a Word document (a file with a '.docx' extension), you can open that in WordPad. It will tend to look a little different from the original, but it should still be perfectly possible to read (and edit) its text and see any pictures it contains.

### Useful key combinations to use with WordPad

When you're typing text into a program, it helps if you can do as much as possible from the keyboard. That way you're not constantly having to take your hand off the keys and reach for the mouse. All the most useful WordPad functions are accessible from the keyboard, so let's finish with a quick-reference list of the most useful key combinations:

Avoid reaching for the mouse while typing!

Function	Key Combination	Description
Save	<b>Ctrl</b> + <b>S</b>	Saves the document you're writing, prompting you for a name and location if you haven't saved it previously.
New	<b>Ctrl</b> + <b>N</b>	Starts a new blank document.
Open	<b>Ctrl</b> + <b>O</b>	Displays the Open dialog, allowing you select and open another WordPad (or Word) document.
Print	<b>Ctrl</b> + <b>P</b>	Print one or more copies of the current document, and/or change printing options.
Bold	<b>Ctrl</b> + <b>B</b>	Turns the bold style on or off.
Italic	<b>Ctrl</b> + <b>I</b>	Turns the italic style on or off.
Underline	<b>Ctrl</b> + <b>U</b>	Turns underlining on or off.
Align left	<b>Ctrl</b> + <b>L</b>	Aligns the current paragraph (or selected paragraphs) to the left of the page.

Function	Key Combination	Description
Align centre	<b>Ctrl</b> + <b>E</b>	Aligns the current paragraph (or selected paragraphs) to the centre of the page.
Align right	<b>Ctrl</b> + <b>R</b>	Aligns the current paragraph (or selected paragraphs) to the right of the page.
Justify	<b>Ctrl</b> + <b>J</b>	Justifies the current paragraph (or selected paragraphs) giving straight edges at the right as well as the left.
List	<b>Ctrl</b> + <b>Shift</b> + <b>L</b>	Converts the selected lines into a bulleted list. Press repeatedly to try different list styles.
Super script	<b>Ctrl</b> + <b>Shift</b> + <b>=</b>	Turns the superscript format on or off.
Subscript	<b>Ctrl</b> + <b>=</b>	Turns the subscript format on or off.
Undo	<b>Ctrl</b> + <b>Z</b>	Undoes your last change (such as replacing text you accidentally deleted).
Redo	<b>Ctrl</b> + <b>Y</b>	Cancels the change made by the last use of Undo.
Find	<b>Ctrl</b> + <b>F</b>	Highlights the first instance of a word or phrase you search for.
Find next	<b>F3</b>	Highlights the next instance of the search text.
Replace	<b>Ctrl</b> + <b>H</b>	Finds and replaces text in your document.