

# Writing a letter with Microsoft Word

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**Equipment needed:** Computer (desktop or laptop) running Microsoft Word 2010 or Microsoft Word 2007 (see Introduction).



**Skills needed:** Ability to use a computer keyboard and mouse (or trackball).



People love to receive letters. Not bills or bank statements, but genuine correspondence from friends and family. In this chapter, I'll show you how you can use Microsoft Word to write a personal letter that will delight one of your friends. It's up to you who you send it to.

Although this is a simple project, it's a great illustration of the power of word processing. Unlike a typewritten or handwritten letter, you can easily change your mind about what you want to say, how you want to say it and how you want your letter to look. You can insert new words, sentences or paragraphs and get rid of any that you're not so keen on when you reread the letter.

You can also add some polish, with Word's sophisticated presentation functions. In this chapter, we'll explore how you can modify the text style and alignment, but the next two chapters in Part I will build on these skills to show how you can create professional looking publications.

## Starting Word

There are several ways to start the Word program, depending on which version of Windows you are using and how your software has been set up.

First, you need to find the Start button. This isn't the button that you use to switch on your computer or the one on your keyboard. It's on the screen, in the bottom left corner. In older versions of Windows, the button is coloured green and says 'Start' on it, but in Windows Vista and Windows 7, the button is round and has a Windows icon on it.

Place your mouse pointer over the Start button and click it (by pressing the left mouse button). This will open a 'menu' of programs. Look to see if Word is among them, and if it is then simply position your mouse pointer over that item in the list and then click it (press the left mouse button).

If you can't see Word on the menu, you need to position your cursor on All Programs at the bottom of the menu, and then click it. A menu of all the programs on your computer will open. Find the folder for Microsoft Office (you might need to use the scrollbar if you are using Windows 7 or Vista). When you click the folder, it will open so you can see the Word entry. Click on that, and Word will start loading. It sounds complicated, but it only takes about four seconds once you know how to do it.



If you're nifty with a keyboard and are using Windows Vista or Windows 7, there's a quicker way. Find the Start key on your keyboard (see Figure 0.1 in Introduction); it is usually on the bottom row and has the same picture of the Windows 'flag' as the onscreen Start button. Press the Start key, type 'Word' and then press Enter, and you should see Word fire up.

These are just a couple of many ways you can start Word. You might have a Word icon on your desktop that you can double-click, for example, or you might have Word pinned to your taskbar in Windows 7. Feel free to experiment to find the quickest way to start Word on your PC. The above approach will work for everyone, but it won't necessarily be the quickest way to do it.

## Saving your work

Word automatically opens a new blank document when you start the program. So when Word opens, you'll be faced with a sight that will either inspire you with its endless possibilities or strike fear into your heart: a blank page.

Before you let rip with your creativity, though, I recommend that you save your work. If you have used any other programs, you might have saved files before. Whenever you create a new file or make changes to an existing file, you need to save it on your computer's hard disk. It is important to save whatever file you're working on regularly, because anything in the computer's memory (including your current work) is wiped if there's a power cut or your PC freezes (which happens rarely with modern PCs). Anything that you have already saved on the hard disk will be safe, though.

Saving your file also means that you can come back to it again another day to re-read it, work on it or even modify it for another purpose.



Saving is not the same as backing up. When you save something, you store it in a file on your computer so it's still available even after you switch the machine off and on again. When you back up, you make a spare copy of that file, just in case the computer it's stored on breaks down.

Given that you haven't typed anything yet, it might seem an odd time for me to mention this now. After all, you're about to save an empty file. It can be a bit fiddly saving your work for the first time, though, so it's best to cover this first. If you save the file now, you can then easily keep the file updated as you're writing, without interrupting your flow. The easier it is to save your file as you write, the more likely you are to do it and the less likely you are to lose any finely crafted sentences – or worse still, finely crafted paragraphs or pages!

The menus used for saving files are slightly different in Office 2010 and Office 2007, but not so different that there's likely to be any confusion. In Office 2010, you should see a blue File tab in the top left corner of the screen, as shown in Figure 1.1.

When you click the File tab, you're taken to what Microsoft grandly calls the 'backstage area'. The idea is that this is where you go when you want to save, print

or otherwise manage your document. Anything that isn't to do with the content of your document and its appearance can be found backstage.

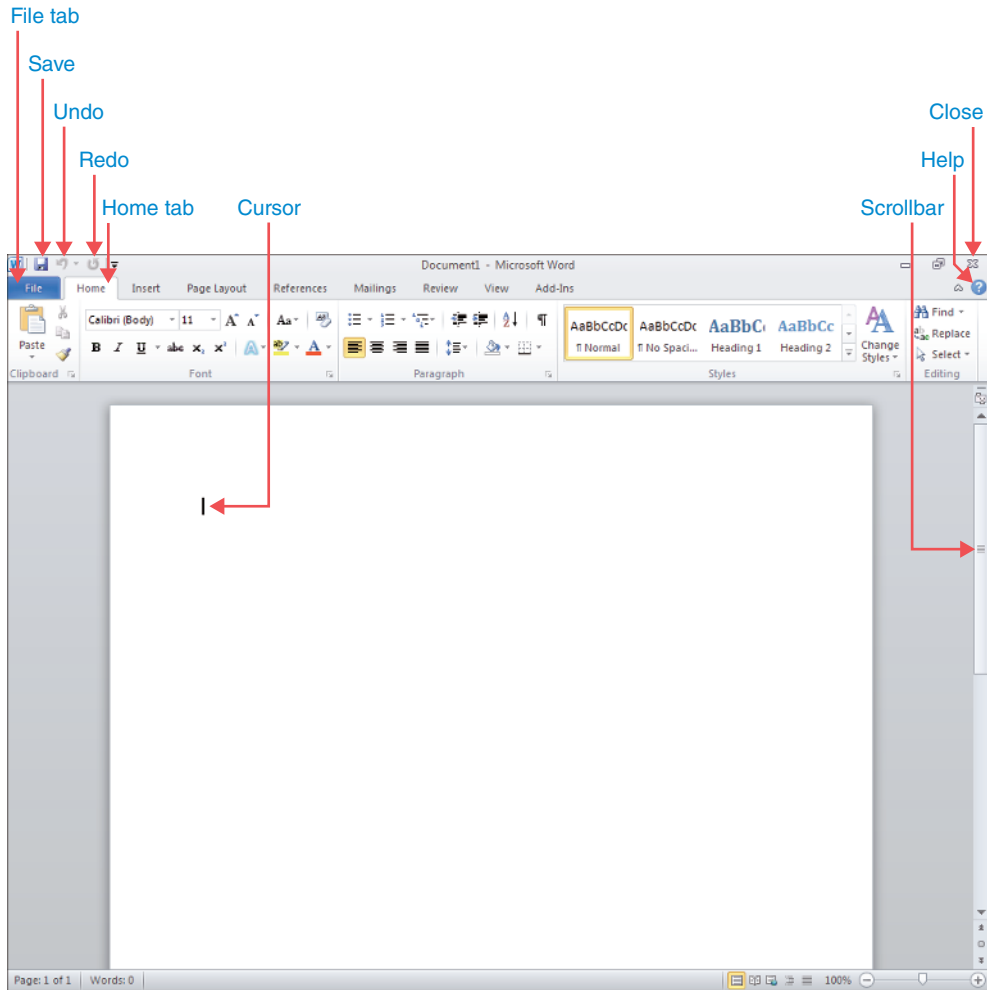


Figure 1.1

When you click the File tab to go backstage, you'll be shown some information about your document, including how many words and pages long it is (none, so far), and how long you've been editing it. On the left, you'll see Save as one of the options.

In Office 2007, there is a round Office button in the top left corner of the screen, as shown in Figure 1.2.

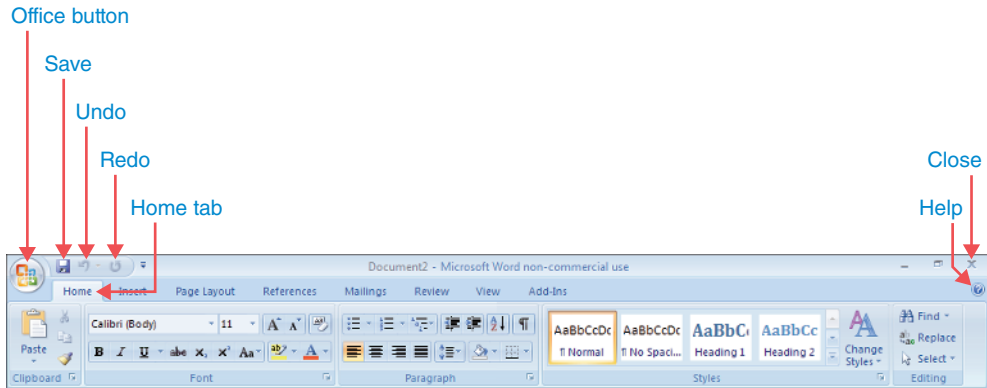


Figure 1.2

This is where all the file management and printing functions are kept, and Save is one of the options.

Whichever version of Word you are using, the process is the same after this. When you click the Save button, you see a file browser, like the one in Figure 1.3.

In Figure 1.3, I've clicked in the bottom right of the window and dragged it to make it bigger, so you can more clearly see what's going on in the screenshot. I recommend you save your work in your Documents folder. Click Documents in the left pane and find a suitable folder in which to store your work on the right. If you have lots of folders, you might need to use the scrollbar. If you can't find a suitable folder, you can create a new one. Put your mouse pointer in the right pane and right-click it (press the right mouse button). The right-click menu opens, shown in Figure 1.3, from which you can select New and then select Folder. The new folder will appear in the right-hand pane, and you can type in its name and press the Enter key.



The Enter key is sometimes called the Return key. It's on the right hand side of the main part of the keyboard and is often oversized so you can easily hit it (see Figure 0.1 in Introduction). It usually has an arrow on it that goes down a bit and then points to the left, echoing the motion of the carriage return on a typewriter. The Enter key is used in word processing to mark the end of a paragraph. It's also used more generally to tell the computer you've finished entering information or to confirm an action, as in this case.

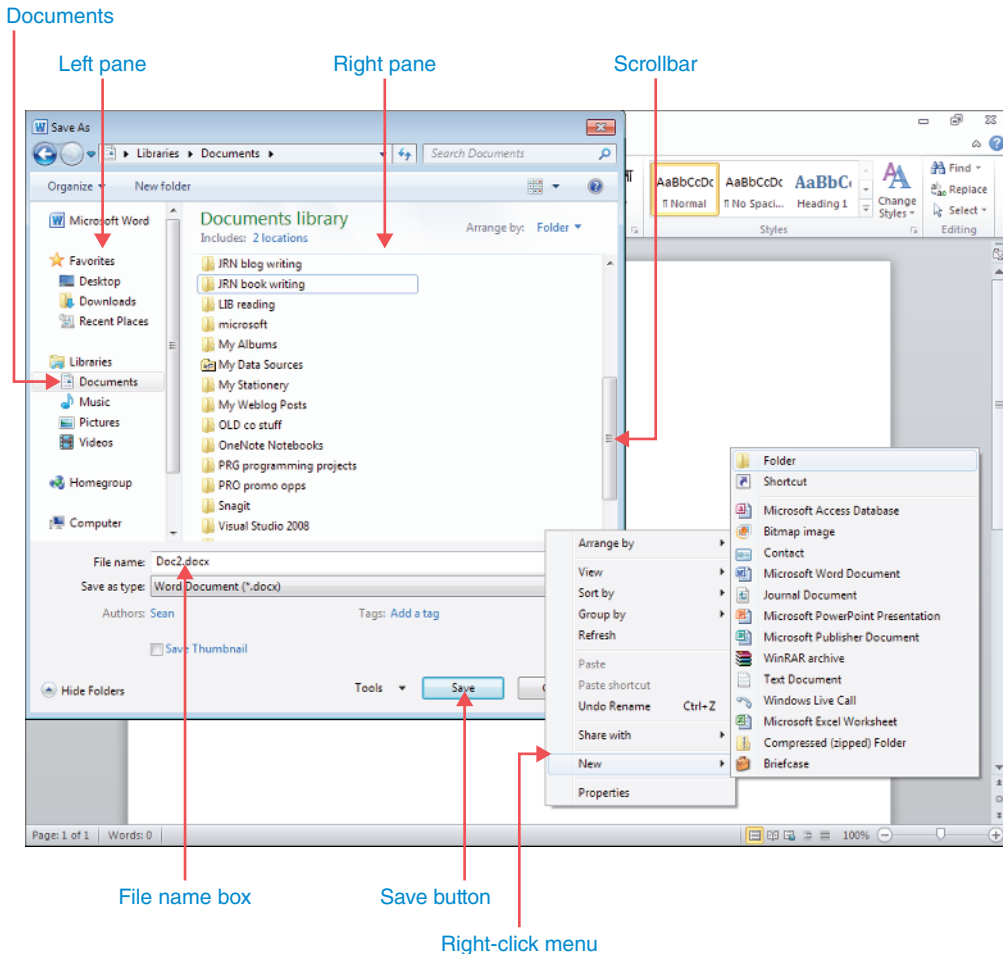


Figure 1.3

Once you've found your folder, you need to give your file a name. This is how Windows and all your programs will refer to this file in future. A good file name will help you to uniquely identify your letter without having to open it, so don't just pick a name like 'Letter' because you'll have lots of letters in future. Choose something more meaningful like 'James letter about Spain'. Don't worry about the .docx at the end of the file name. This is a technical marker that helps Windows work out what program created a particular file.

Click in the File Name box and you'll see the default name is selected. You can now type something new over the top of it.

When you're happy with your file name and where you're saving it, click the Save button.

Now you've saved your file, you can update what's in it rapidly. To save your document at any time, simply click on the disk icon in the top left corner (see Figures 1.1 and 1.2) and your work will be sent to the hard disk for safekeeping. You can also use a keyboard shortcut: find the Control key, which is marked CTRL. There are two of these, one at the bottom left and one at the bottom right of the main part of the keyboard (see Figure 0.1 in Introduction for an illustration). While holding down one of the Control keys, tap the S key, and the current version of your file will be saved. After a while, you might find you do this almost as a reflex action the moment you type something you want to keep.



This is the first of many actions you'll learn using the Control key, but in future, they'll be written as CTRL+S, or whatever key you need to tap while holding down the Control key.

It's important to remember to save your work regularly; information is only stored on the disk when you tell Word to do so.

Actually, that's not quite true. If you're unlucky enough to suffer a power cut, you might be lucky enough that Word can still rescue your work. Word automatically saves whatever you're working on regularly, and Office 2010 will even temporarily keep copies of files you haven't saved (you'll find these in your recent files in the backstage area). But I don't recommend counting on luck when there's a simple keyboard shortcut that can save you any wasted effort. Remember to CTRL+S, and life will be good.



If you want to save a different copy of your document, so you can have various versions of it or so you can retrace your steps later if you might want to go back to an earlier version, choose **Save As** from the backstage area or **Office** menu and give the document a new file name. A new file will be created with your chosen filename, leaving your last saved version with the old filename intact. When you do an ordinary save from then on, your changes will be saved in this new copy.

## Writing your letter

Now that you've got the housekeeping out of the way, it's time to start writing your letter. Click on the blank page, underneath the menu bar, and you will see a small vertical line blinking on and off in the top left corner of the page. This blinking line is your cursor (see Figure 1.1). It shows you where your words will appear when you type them. Type a few characters, and the cursor will move along with each one, so that new characters are added at the end of what you've written so far.

If you have ever used a typewriter, you might be waiting for a bell to ring to warn you to do a carriage return as you reach the end of the line. With a word processor, you can just keep typing. Word will automatically move you to the next line when you run out of space. It will also move any half-written words to the next line to avoid having to use hyphens. If you look up from the keyboard and see that the cursor has vanished with half your word, don't panic. Check the start of the next line first.

When you reach the end of a paragraph, press the **Enter** key on your keyboard. Word will start you on a new line, but will also put a bit of empty space between the paragraphs, so that it's easier for people to see where each paragraph begins and ends. If you're a word processing veteran, you might have to break an old habit here: in some programs you press **Enter** twice to put a blank line between the paragraphs, but you don't need to do that in Word.

It doesn't matter if you make a mistake – you'll learn how to fix it later. For now, just familiarise yourself with typing in text, so that you've got something to play with when you work on editing text later. You can safely ignore any green or red squiggly lines that appear under your text too. They highlight where Word thinks you've made a mistake, but you'll learn how to get rid of those later. (You'll also find out that Word isn't quite as clever as it thinks it is.)

To get used to the basics, I suggest you focus on the body of your letter for now. I'll show you how to add your address on the right later. If you're short on ideas for what to say, think about what you did at the weekend, what you're reading at the moment, what the family is up to and where you're going on holiday. You could cheat and just type a load of mumbo jumbo (I won't know about it!) but since I'm going to show you how to print your letter it would be nice if you had something to post at the end of this project.

If you struggle to read the text on screen, you can enlarge your view of the page. This won't affect the size of the text when it's printed out, it will just magnify it on the screen. To do this, click on the plus sign in the bottom right corner to zoom in (shown in Figure 1.4). You can click the minus to zoom out again.

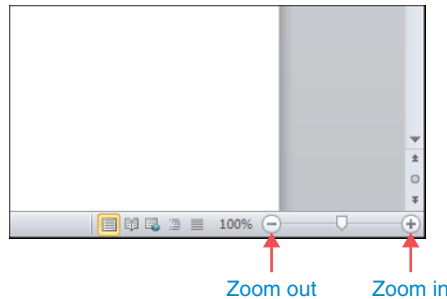


Figure 1.4



If you are struggling to do something and this book can't help, why not try searching Word's built in help function? You'll find a question mark in a circle in the top right corner: click this or tap the F1 key to get started.

## Making changes to what you've written

Oh no! I didn't mean to type that! What now?

There's an old joke about computers providing countless new opportunities... to make mistakes. But the best thing about computers is that they make them so easy to fix. If you've got the correcting fluid poised over the monitor, back away now!

If you need to go back and change something you wrote earlier, you first need to position your cursor in the place where you want to make changes. The simplest way to do this (particularly if you spot the error quickly) is to use the cursor keys to move through your document. The cursor keys have arrows on them pointing up, down, left and right and are usually grouped together somewhere on the right of the keyboard (see Figure 0.1 in Introduction).

When you press the left cursor key, the cursor will move back through your text, one character at a time. If you press the up cursor key, the cursor will go up a line. The right and down cursor keys will take you back in those directions. The cursor can't go outside of the text, so you can't position the cursor beyond the end of what you've typed. If you go up or down into a shorter line, the cursor will jump to where the text finishes on that line.

If you have a long document it can take almost as long to shuffle through the text as it did to type it, so there are a number of keys you can use to move around the document more quickly, as shown in Table 1.1. (Refer to Figure 0.1 for an indication of where you can find these keys.)

**Table 1.1 Keyboard shortcuts for navigating your Word document**

<b>Key(s)</b>	<b>Effect on cursor</b>
Home	Moves to the start of the current line
End	Moves to the end of the current line
Page Up	Moves up a page through the document (you'll need to have a document that's more than one page long to see this in action)
Page Down	Moves down a page through the document
CTRL+left	Moves one word to the left
CTRL+right	Moves one word to the right
CTRL+up	Moves to the start of the next paragraph up
CTRL+down	Moves to the start of the next paragraph down
CTRL+end	Moves to the end of the document
CTRL+home	Moves to the start of the document



Function keys such as Home are often shared with the numeric keypad. If you see numbers coming up on screen when you press them, tap the Num Lock key on your keyboard. That will switch the number keypad to the right mode for you to be able to use the functions in Table 1.1. If you want to revert to using the numbers on the keypad again, press Num Lock once more. Num Lock is at the top left corner of the numeric keypad.

You don't need to memorise all the shortcut key combinations. They are a bit complex and, to be honest, you can get by without them a lot of the time. For a short letter like this, you won't see much benefit from them. But as you find yourself working on more complex projects and longer documents, you'll find these shortcuts invaluable. They save so much time. As you use them, they start to become second nature too. I almost forgot about being able to move through words using the Control key, until I noticed I was doing it while writing this chapter! I recommend you play with these combinations in your letter now, just to familiarise yourself with them. Once you know what's possible, you can always look up a particular combination later when you need it.

There is another way to position the cursor, which some people find easier. That's to use the mouse. Place your mouse pointer where you'd like your cursor to go (such as in the middle of a paragraph) and then click it. Your cursor will jump there instantly. If you need to move between pages in your document (or even just scroll further down the page), put your mouse pointer over the scrollbar at the right of the page (see Figure 1.1), click your left mouse button and hold it down while you roll the mouse up and down the desk. You can also use the scroll wheel on your mouse to move up and down the page.

The mouse can save time if you want to move your cursor into the middle of a sentence a few paragraphs or even many pages back. But some people find it too fiddly for more minor changes. If you only want to edit the line above, or the paragraph above, it's usually quicker to use the keyboard than to switch to the mouse and move the cursor around.

Ultimately, it doesn't matter how you move your cursor. Most people use a combination of keyboard and mouse depending on what they are doing. You can strike the balance that works best for you, even if it means always using the mouse

or always using the keyboard. By experimenting with your letter to see how easy you find the different techniques, you can make an informed choice.

Once you've positioned your cursor where you want it, you can add new text at that point in the document. It doesn't matter whether you want to add a sentence or a paragraph, whatever you type will be inserted wherever your cursor is in the document. When you want to pick up at the end again, position your cursor at the end of your letter so you can carry on typing there.

## Deleting text

Some things are better left unsaid. As well as adding new text to your document, you will doubtless want to take things out from time to time. There are three different ways to delete text.

1. The Backspace key is found at the top right of the main part of your keyboard, and has a long, left-pointing arrow on it (see Figure 0.1). This is one of the larger keys on the keyboard, reflecting how often everybody needs to use it! When you press it, the character to the left of the cursor is exterminated and the cursor moves to the left. This is the key most people think of as the 'delete key' because it's used most often. But it should not be confused with...
2. ...the (real) Delete key. This is often found on the numeric keypad, and will say 'Delete' on it (or 'Del' if it's being less formal). Sometimes there are two delete keys (see Figure 0.1). When you press this key, the character to the *right* of the cursor is deleted and the cursor stays where it is. It looks as if the cursor is swallowing the text to its right. Remember to try tapping Num Lock if it's not working for you.
3. You can also select text (see later in this chapter) and continue typing over it. The text you select will then be replaced with whatever you type next.

## Moving text around

So far, we've made some fairly minor changes to our document, deleting some words or sentences and adding a few others. But what if you want to completely change the order of your content? If you're working on longer pieces, you might find that you need to experiment with the order of the sections until you find the way they flow best. Word processing makes it easy to move things around.



Don't forget to keep saving your work. You'll be free to experiment if you know you've got a good copy stored safely. If you want to save a messed up version, use Save As to store a different version and keep your clean version safe. If you really mess it up and need to go back to an old saved version, skip to the end of the chapter for advice on closing Word; after you have closed Word without saving your messed up version, you can reopen your clean version and pick it up from there.

## Selecting text with the mouse

First of all, let's look at how you can move a whole paragraph. Imagine your letter is four paragraphs long, and you've decided that you'd like to move your second paragraph to the end.

The first step is to select the piece of text you'd like to move. This is a bit awkward, so it might take a couple of goes to get the hang of it. First, move your mouse pointer to the start of the paragraph. It doesn't matter if your cursor is in the margin, or whether it looks like an arrow or an 'I'. As long as you are aligned with the correct row of text, you'll be fine. Then you need to click your left mouse button and keep it held down. Move the mouse down the screen, and you'll see your text becomes highlighted in blue, as shown in Figure 1.5. Once you reach the end of the paragraph and everything you need is highlighted in blue, you can let go of the mouse button. When you let go, the text will stay selected.

Be careful not to type anything now, otherwise it will replace the text you've selected. If you do brush the keyboard, refer to the section on reversing mistakes later in this chapter.

## Selecting text with mouse clicks

If you find that moving the mouse around is, well, moving you to tears, there are shortcuts you can use to select text. As you know, when you move your mouse pointer over a word and press the left mouse button, your cursor moves to that place in the word. But if you click multiple times or in different ways, you can get different results, as shown in Table 1.2.

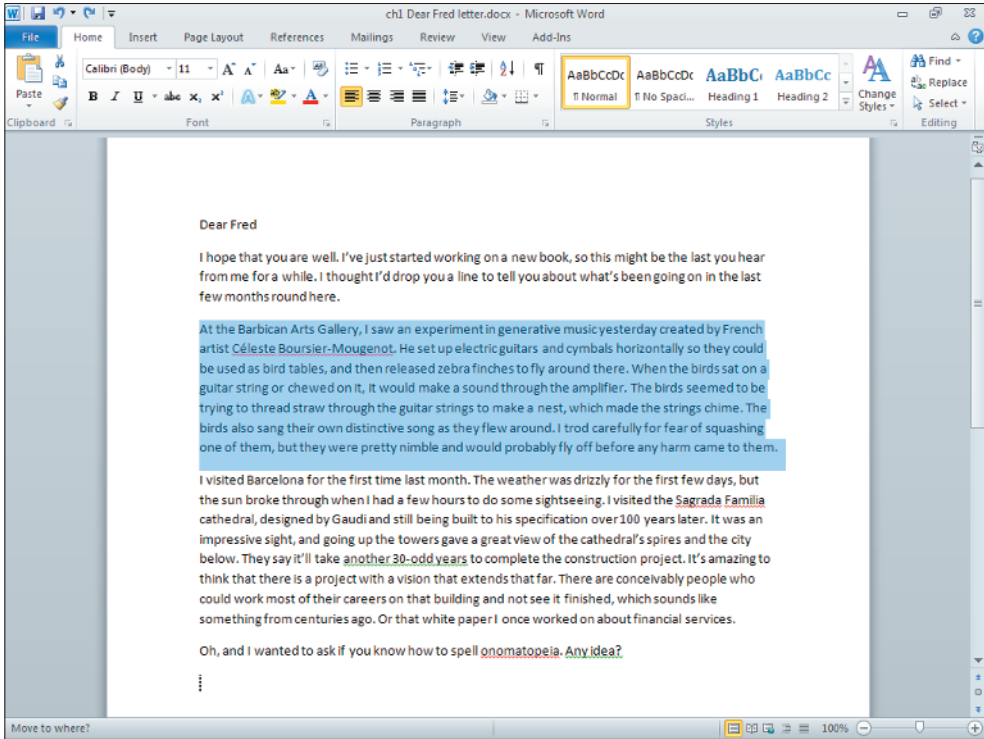


Figure 1.5

## Table 1.2 Mouse shortcuts for text selection

Shortcut	What is selected
Press the mouse button twice in quick succession	A word
Press the mouse button three times in quick succession	A paragraph
Hold down the Control key and press the mouse button once	A sentence
Hold down the Shift key and press the mouse button once	All text between the cursor and the mouse pointer
Click the mouse button in the margin	The line of text is selected

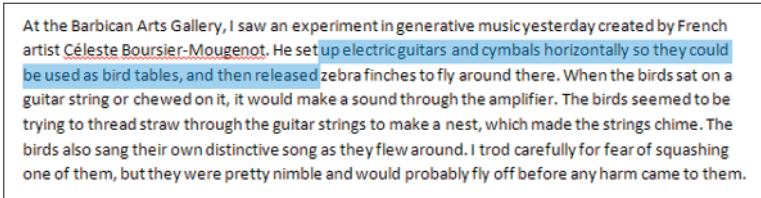
These shortcuts are great time savers, but don't let them stop you from experimenting with text selection. Sometimes you'll need to be more precise, and will need to select text the long way.

## Selecting text using the keyboard

If you find it hard to use the mouse, you can use the keyboard to select text. You use the same controls you used to move the cursor around (see Table 1.1), but hold down the Shift key at the same time. If you want to select the character to the left of the cursor, hold down the Shift key and press the left cursor key. If you want to select the word to the left of the cursor, hold down Shift and Control and press left, and that word will be selected and highlighted in blue. If you want to select the line you're at the end of, hold down Shift and tap the Home key.

Sometimes this technique seems to select odd chunks of text. If you're in the middle of a line and you press Shift and up, it will select all the text to the left of the cursor on the current line, and all the text to the right of the cursor on the line above, and will then move the cursor to the line above. Figure 1.6 shows what happens if I position my cursor before the word 'zebra' and then use Shift and up to select text.

The way to understand what you can select with each combination of keys, is to experiment with using the left and right arrows to move through your document. What happens when your cursor reaches the end of a line of text? It goes to the start of the next line. What happens when you reach the left hand side of a line of text? The cursor goes to the right hand side of the line above.



At the Barbican Arts Gallery, I saw an experiment in generative music yesterday created by French artist Céleste Boursier-Mougenot. He set up electric guitars and cymbals horizontally so they could be used as bird tables, and then released zebra finches to fly around there. When the birds sat on a guitar string or chewed on it, it would make a sound through the amplifier. The birds seemed to be trying to thread straw through the guitar strings to make a nest, which made the strings chime. The birds also sang their own distinctive song as they flew around. I trod carefully for fear of squashing one of them, but they were pretty nimble and would probably fly off before any harm came to them.

Figure 1.6

Text selection using the keyboard does the same thing. Although you tap the up key and see it move instantly, imagine the cursor is going back along the line you're on, selecting characters as it goes. When it reaches the left-hand side, it

goes to the right edge of the line above, and keeps moving left, selecting characters as it goes, until it comes to the spot above where it started.

As with moving the cursor around, you should experiment to see whether you prefer the mouse or the keyboard. Many people find the keyboard quicker, but it won't make much difference if you use the mouse instead.

## Moving your selected text

Now you've got your text selected, move your mouse pointer into the blue highlighted area, click your left mouse button and hold it down. Now when you move your mouse, you'll see a dotted cursor move through your text one word at a time (see Figure 1.5, at the end of the letter). In the bottom left, Word is asking 'Move to where?'

You can put your dotted cursor anywhere you like at the start or end of a paragraph, or in the middle of one.

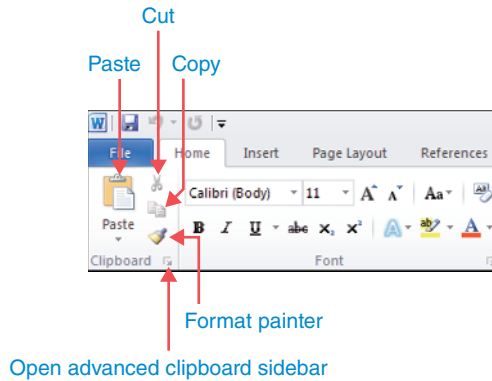
When you release your mouse button, your selected text and the cursor will be moved to where the dotted cursor is. The blue highlighting that showed the text was selected will also disappear.

You're not limited to selecting paragraphs. You can select sentences, words or even letters and move them around using this technique. It's a good idea to practise selecting and moving text, because you also need to select text when you want to change its appearance, as you'll soon see.

## Using cut, copy and paste

Now that you know how to select a piece of text, you can start to do things to it. Across the top of the window, you'll see what Microsoft calls the 'ribbon'. This spreads out all the controls at your command, and can seem a bit daunting. When you don't understand what everything does, it's a bit like looking at the control panel of a space shuttle. Don't be overwhelmed, though. You can safely ignore a lot of the controls (for now, at least) and the ribbon does make it easier to find what you're looking for without getting tied in knots.

The first set of controls you should explore is the clipboard. You'll find this on the left-hand side, as shown in Figure 1.7.



**Figure 1.7**



If you can't see the clipboard on the left of the ribbon, click the Home tab next to the File tab (in Office 2010) or near to the Office button (in Office 2007). You should find that the clipboard controls are now shown on the left.

The clipboard is used for temporarily storing something. Have you ever read a phone number and then concentrated on remembering it until you can write it down? The clipboard works a bit like that. You can put text on your clipboard, and the computer will 'remember' it for you until you've found somewhere else to put it. This is done using a process called 'cut and paste', and it's another way you can move text around. It's particularly useful if you want to move text a long way, and is often used to move text between different documents or even different applications.

To cut and paste text, you do the following:

1. Select the text you want to cut, using either the mouse or keyboard.
2. Click the scissors icon on the ribbon by putting your mouse icon over it and pressing the left mouse button. The text will be cut out of your document.

3. Move your cursor to where you would like your text to go.
4. Click the Paste icon on the ribbon. The text on the clipboard will be added back in to your document where your cursor is.

You can paste the same text as many times as you want. You can also leave the original text in place by first clicking the copy icon, the one that shows two pages instead of the scissors icon (see Figure 1.7). That will put a copy of the text onto the clipboard without removing it from your document.

When you paste, Word will usually insert the last thing you put on the clipboard. For simplicity's sake, it's a good idea to work with only one thing on the clipboard at a time, and not to leave things there for too long.

When you cut a piece of text, be very careful to paste it as soon as possible, don't forget it's on the clipboard and don't cut anything else before you paste; if you do that, you'll lose the first piece of text you cut. (You wouldn't be the first!)

If you are doing something more complex, you can keep a lot of different text snippets on the clipboard. If you click in the bottom right of the clipboard area to expand the clipboard, you'll open an advanced clipboard sidebar on the left that can hold multiple clippings at once (see Figure 1.8). When you copy or cut a piece of text, your cuttings are added to this clipboard. You can click one of those snippets to paste it into the document wherever the cursor is. (To close the advanced clipboard, click the X in the top right corner of the clipboard sidebar.)



There are keyboard shortcuts you can use to save time when cutting and pasting. CTRL+X will cut (the X looks like scissors), using CTRL+C will copy, and using CTRL+V will paste. Those three keys are all together on the keyboard.

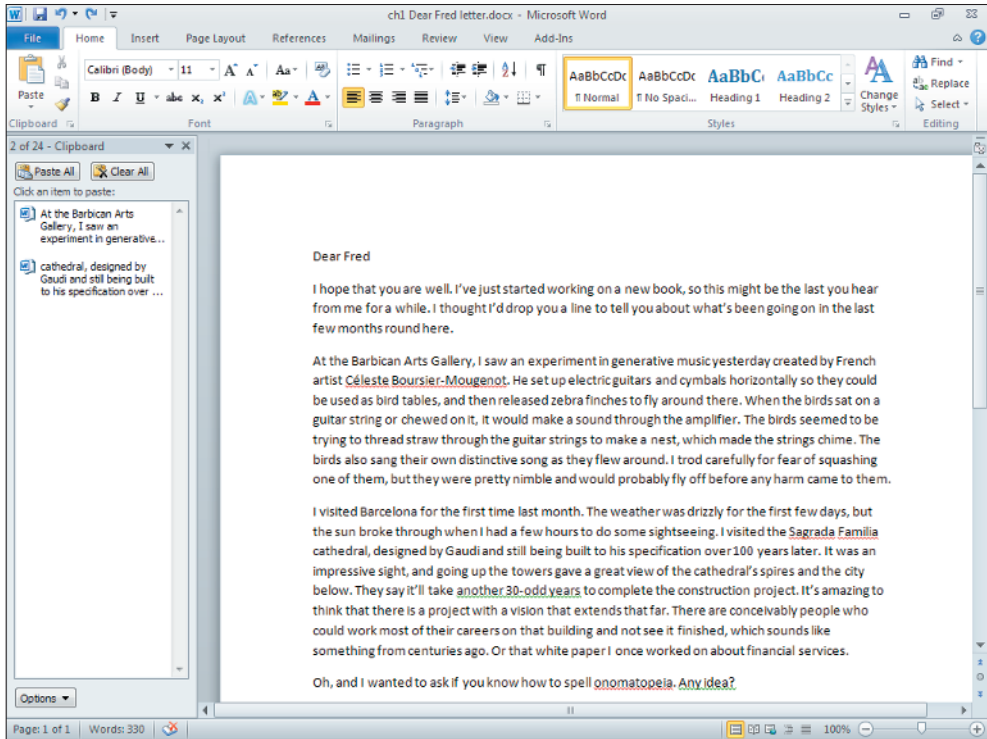


Figure 1.8

## Changing the appearance of your letter

It would be a boring world if all our documents looked the same, so Word gives you a lot of control over how individual words or parts of your document are formatted. Now that you've learned to select text, you should find it easy to format its appearance.

Look at the Font area on the ribbon, shown in Figure 1.9. I've created a document here to show some of the different text effects that are possible.

To apply the different styles, you just select your text (as you did before you moved it earlier) and then click the relevant button on the ribbon. If you want to make an important word bold, for example, select that word and then click the 'B' icon on the ribbon. If italic is more your style, select your text and then click the 'I' icon.

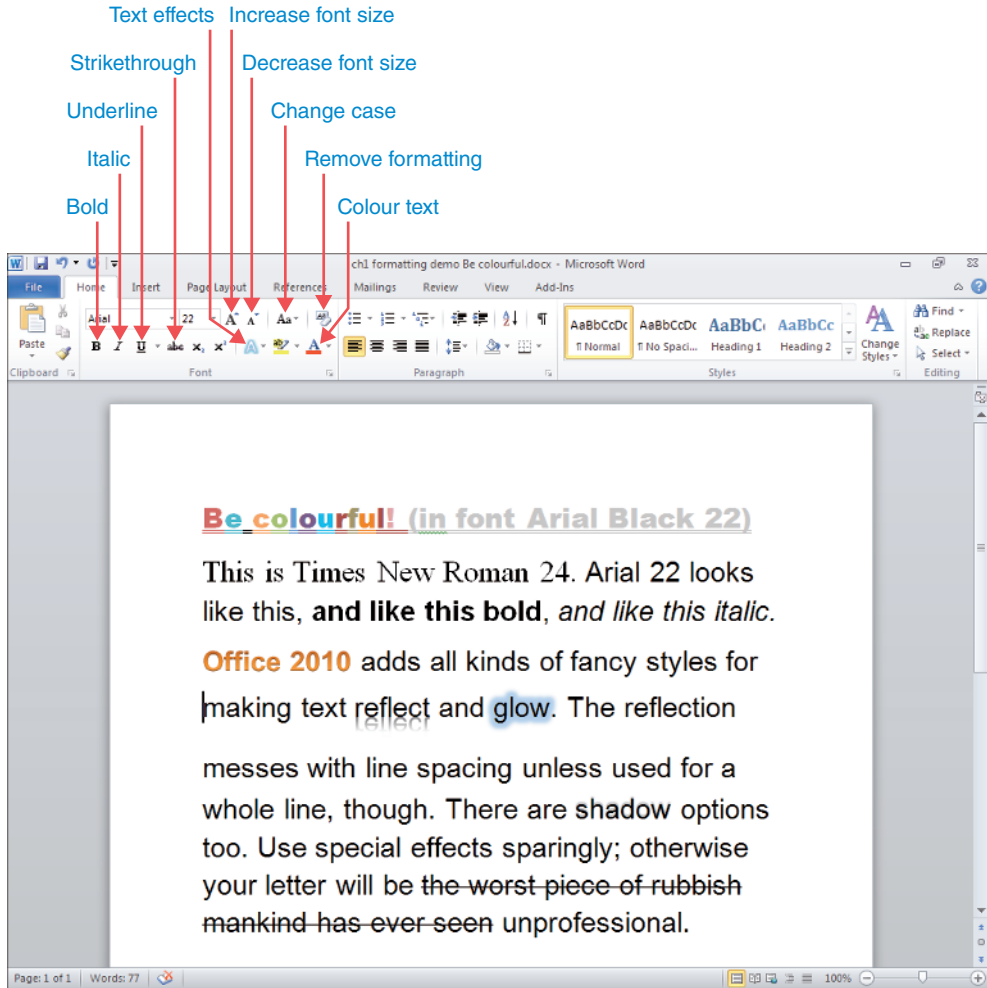


Figure 1.9

Some of the formatting options are used rarely. Unless you're writing a dissertation about Einstein ( $E=mc^2$ ?), you probably won't need the superscript formatting, for example. The strikethrough format is more or less redundant because you can just delete any mistakes rather than crossing them out, so it's usually used to jokingly pretend you wrote something else first then changed your mind. So if you can't see a use for a particular formatting option or don't really understand what it's for, it doesn't matter.



You can also use the formatting tools like switches to turn on bold, italic or other styles before you type your text. Just click the same button to switch them off again.

You'll notice that some of the formatting options have a little triangle pointing downwards beside them. When you click one of these, you'll see more options open up. When you click the one next to the 'Aa' icon, for example, you can choose to change to upper case, lower case, sentence case or all words initial-capitalised. The underlining options enable you to choose different types of underlining, such as double, dotted or wiggly lines. You can also change the colour of the text or its background by opening the options beside the appropriate icons. Use the highlighter tool to change the text background.

In Office 2010, Microsoft has introduced a new option for you to create fancy text effects. This enables you to add reflections, glow effects and shadows to your words, and includes a number of shiny and hollow looking text styles. Like decorated cakes, effects like these are best consumed in small chunks on special occasions. They're too rich for everyday use.



Leave your mouse pointer over a button on the ribbon for a couple of seconds and a box will temporarily pop up to tell you what it does.

Although the Fonts section of the ribbon includes lots of formatting options, strictly speaking a font is just the design of lettering you are using. In Figure 1.9, I have used a couple of different fonts. If you compare the Times New Roman text with the Arial text, you will probably notice lots of subtle differences. For example, the Times font has tiny strokes (called serifs) at the ends of letters like the h and the s; the Arial font doesn't. (Text without serifs is described as sans serif.) A font comprises a complete set of symbols in the same style, including upper and lower case letters, numbers and punctuation.

You can change the font by clicking the triangle to the right of the font name and then choosing one from the list. You see a sneak preview of it before you apply it

too, so you can avoid picking anything that won't look right. You can change the font size by typing a new value into the font size box, or by selecting the size from the options. You'll find your PC has lots of different fonts installed, but not all of them are easy to read.



When you select text, you will see the ghost of a tiny control panel materialise above the selected text. If you put your mouse over it, the controls will appear properly and provide quick access to the most frequently used formatting controls. The control panel disappears if you ignore it.

## Copying text formatting

I decided to personalise my letter in Figure 1.5 by using a font that looks like handwriting for the greeting and my name at the end. The Script MT Bold font has far neater handwriting than I do, so I used it to write 'Dear Fred' at the start.

When I got to the end of my letter, I could have gone through the same formatting steps as I did for the greeting, picking a new font, size and colour. But it's boring to do the same things over again. Luckily, it's possible to copy the formatting from one piece of text and apply it to another piece.

In the clipboard section of the ribbon (refer to Figure 1.7), there is a tool called the format painter, which looks like a paintbrush. To use it, you:

1. Select the text you want to copy formatting from.
2. Click the format painter button.
3. Select the text you want to apply the formatting to.
4. Watch your text transform to the new format.

There is also a keyboard shortcut: you can use CTRL+Shift+C to copy formatting from selected text, and CTRL+Shift+V to apply it to selected text.

## Keeping your text readable

Before too long, it will be obvious that you can create some truly eye-achingly ugly documents with Word. It's easy to end up with something that looks like a teenager's scrapbook, with 50 different colours, wiggly lines everywhere, odd capitalisation, rainbow colourings around letters and fonts so ornate that it would take the nation's best cryptographers a good week to work out who fancies who.

The secret of good-looking documents is not so much what you put in, as what you leave out. It's good practice to limit the number of different text styles you use. The number you can get away with will depend on the length and structure of your document, but you should think carefully before having more than three different styles on the same page. Use italics or bold for occasional emphasis, but if you use them for more than a few words at a stretch, the text becomes tiring to read. Large tracts in capital letters are hard to read, too (which is why lawyers love them for small print).

There is an art to picking a good font. Don't be afraid to use boring fonts like Calibri (the default font), Times New Roman (the default font before Office 2007) or Arial (a clean font for reading on-screen). These are much easier to read than fonts that mimic handwriting or have special effects. Try to match the font to its size, too: Arial Black is good for headlines but can be hard to read in the body of your text. Times New Roman can look a bit weedy as a headline but works great in your body text.

Fonts are measured in point sizes. A good size for normal copy is 11-12 pt, and headlines can be 20-36 pt. If your correspondent has poor eyesight, there's no reason why you shouldn't use a larger font, though. The font size options go up to 72 point, which is pretty massive. You can type in values greater than that if you want, but by that point you're making giant labels rather than writing letters.



If you want to format your whole document at once, use CTRL+A. That will select all the text in the document. Then you can apply the same formatting to everything.



Most designers are agreed that there's nothing funny about the Comic Sans font. It was originally designed to be used in comic strip speech bubbles, but it can now be seen on all kinds of products and publications. There's even a website that campaigns to stop its inappropriate use (at [www.bancomicsans.com](http://www.bancomicsans.com)). If you want your documents to have an air of professionalism, avoid Comic Sans.

## Clearing formatting and undoing mistakes

If you make a mess of the formatting, you can always use the Eraser icon in the top right of the Font section, which will remove the formatting but leave your text intact.

There is also an Undo function, which you will learn to love. After you have done something you're not happy with – or Word has automatically done something for you – you can use the Undo function to reverse that action. The Undo button looks like an anticlockwise arrow and is at the top left of the screen, as shown on Figure 1.1 (Office 2010) and Figure 1.2 (Office 2007). There is also a keyboard shortcut, which is CTRL+Z. Word will remember a sequence of actions, so you can repeatedly undo to go back a number of steps. If you go a step too far, there is a Redo function, a clockwise arrow beside the Undo button, which will redo something you've undone – or undo the undo, if you like! This doesn't just work for formatting; if you manage to delete all your text off screen (surprisingly easy to do), Undo simply conjures it up again. Phew! That's a relief. You can start breathing again now.



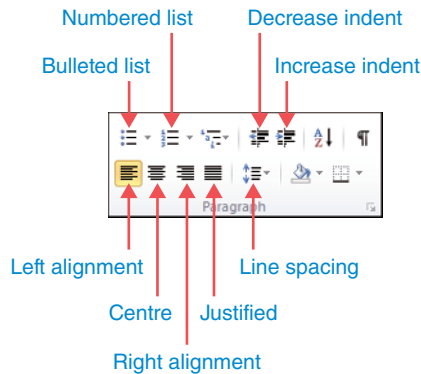
Now you know that you can fix anything that goes wrong, feel free to experiment. Explore all the different ways you can jazz up your document, if only to get it out of your system.

## Adding your address to your letter

Now you've mastered the formatting controls, it should be a doddle to add your address in the top-right corner of your letter. Move your cursor to the top of your

letter and start to type your address above your greeting. If you press Enter when you get to the end of each line, Word will think you've finished a paragraph and will add a gap between each line of your address. That makes the address look too spaced out. (Why not give it a go and see?) The solution is to use what is called a 'soft return'. This is a special way of telling Word you've finished a line, so it doesn't think you've finished the whole paragraph. To create a soft return, hold down the Shift key when you press Enter.

Don't start using the space bar to shunt the address to the right of the page. There's a much more elegant solution. On the ribbon, you'll find a collection of controls you can use to change the way a paragraph appears on the page. Figure 1.10 shows these, together with an explanation of what each of them does.



**Figure 1.10**

To move your address to the right of the page, you just select it (remember you can just click it three times) and then click the right alignment button on the ribbon. You can select more than one paragraph at a time and apply paragraph formatting options to all of them, so you could right-align your address and the date in one go.

You might want to spend some time playing with the other formatting options, just to see what they do. The options are:

- **Bulleted list:** this moves the paragraph in from the left and puts a bullet in the space created at the start of the paragraph to draw attention to it. It's best applied to a group of paragraphs together, like this bulleted list of paragraph formatting options.

- Numbered list: this moves the paragraph in from the left and puts a number in the space created at the start of the paragraph. Paragraphs are numbered in order, and this is best used for paragraphs where the order or the number of paragraphs is part of what you want to say.
- Left alignment: this formats text so it has a straight margin on the left, and ragged text on the right. This is what people use most of the time and I've used it in my document in Figure 1.9.
- Right alignment: this formats text so that it has a straight margin on the right and is ragged on the left. This would normally be used for an address in the top right of a letter.
- Justified text: this formats text so that it has a straight margin on both the left and the right and the text is spaced out in between. It's used for most of the text in this book.
- Centre: this formats text so it runs down the middle of the page, with ragged margins on both the left and the right. This can be used to centre a title on the page. It's hard to read if applied to large blocks of text.
- Line spacing: this changes the spacing between lines in a paragraph and can be used to add or remove the space before a paragraph.
- Increase or decrease indent: to draw attention to a paragraph you can indent it, which moves the paragraph in from the left.

We'll come back to some of these controls in later projects.

## Checking your spelling

Before you send your letter, you can run it through Word's spellchecker. It can't always tell if you've put words in the wrong order, or used the wrong word (such as 'that' instead of 'than') but it can pick up any words that aren't in the dictionary. It has a go at fixing grammar too, although that tends to be more hit and miss. Word is a bit like the pupil who shouts out all the answers in class despite only getting about half of them right.

You probably have some red and green squiggly lines underneath words in your letter. A red line means the word isn't in Word's dictionary; a green line means Word thinks the grammar might be broken.



You might have noticed that Word sometimes automatically corrects your spelling as you type. Type 'wrod' and see what happens! If it does this and you don't want it to, press CTRL+Z to undo immediately afterwards.

To check your spelling, you need to use a different ribbon. The ribbon is organised a bit like a filing cabinet. Imagine that all the controls for reviewing your text are on one tabbed divider, all the controls for page layout are on another, and both are filed in the cabinet. Whenever you click a particular tab, you lift out that set of controls and move it to the front. So far, you've used the File tab (in Office 2010) and everything else you've needed has been on the Home ribbon. Now click the Review tab on the ribbon, and you'll see the controls you need for spell-checking come to the front.



Try clicking the different tabs to see what's behind them, but don't worry if you don't understand the new controls you see. We'll come to the important ones later. If you get lost, click the Home tab.

George Bernard Shaw is credited with saying that the US and UK are two nations divided by a common language, and this is never truer than when you're trying to spellcheck something. If you spellcheck a UK document with the US dictionary, you'll get all kinds of false alarms and might miss some genuine errors too. The first thing you need to do, then, is to set the dictionary language. In Office 2010 (shown in Figure 1.11), find the Language part of the Review ribbon, click the Language button and select Set Proofing Language. In Office 2007, find the Proofing part of the Review ribbon and click Set Language. Your current language is highlighted at the top of the list, together with other languages you've already used so you can find them quickly. You can scroll to find the language you need and double-click it to set it.

To check the spelling of the whole document, click the Spelling & Grammar button on the Review ribbon (shown in Figure 1.11).

Spelling & Grammar button

Check grammar

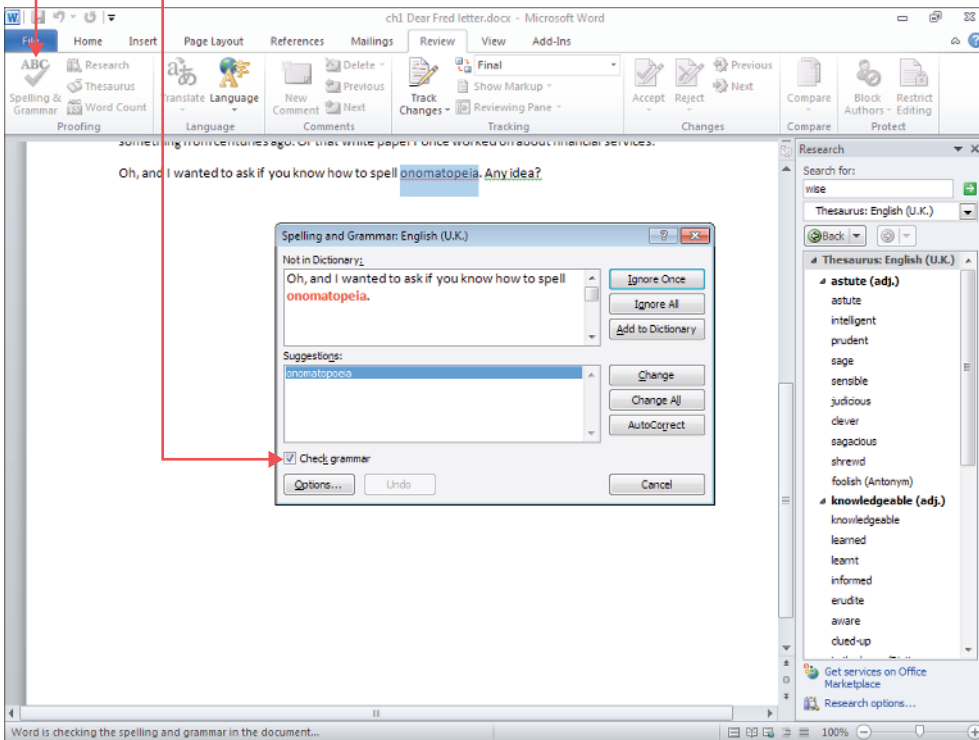


Figure 1.11

A new window will open. In the top box, it will show you an excerpt from your text, with a questionable section shown in red (for spelling alerts) or green (for grammar queries). In the second box, it will show you Word's suggestions for how to fix the error. Your options for spelling are:

- **Ignore Once:** click this button if you're satisfied you're right and Word is wrong but you want it to tell you if it spots something similar later on. Use this if you could easily slip and make an error that looks like this, even though it's correct this time. If you were writing a story about Shep the dog rounding up sheep, you'd probably Ignore Once when it flagged up the dog's name, so you could check you haven't mis-spelled 'sheep' anywhere.

- Ignore All: click this button if you're right and that's final. Use this for names of people or companies, so you don't get alerted to every mention.
- Add to Dictionary: if you click this, Word will add your questionable word to its dictionary, so it will always know it's correct on all documents you create. This is a good idea for names of people in your family. Try to avoid adding something that you might accidentally type when you meant to write something else.
- Change: when you click this, the coloured text in the top box will be replaced with the highlighted suggestion in the bottom box. If there are multiple suggestions, click the correct one first.
- Change All: this will change all instances of the text in this document.
- Autocorrect: if you make this particular mistake often, click this button and Word will automatically fix it for you as you type. Make sure that it is an unambiguous typing error. Don't use Autocorrect to always change 'nappy' to 'happy', because you might want to type 'nappy' in future.

For grammar errors, your options are:

- Ignore Once: this works the same way as the spelling check, as above.
- Ignore Rule: this will stop Word alerting you to similar problems in future. Word's sense of grammar is a bit Victorian and not consistent with an informal letter style, so I often tell it to ignore a rule when it flags up sentence fragments that make sense in today's English.
- Next Sentence: this jumps the grammar check ahead to the next sentence.
- Change: this works the same as the spelling check, as above.
- Explain: in this fun feature, Word will tell you why it thinks the grammar is wrong. The rules are pretty sound, but sometimes Word can't identify when a rule is being broken. The most important thing is that it looks and sounds okay to you.
- Check grammar tickbox (also shown on Figure 1.11): If you uncheck this box, Word will concentrate on the spelling and ignore the grammar. Play with the grammar checker to see if you find it useful, but don't be afraid to turn it off if your writing style generates too many false alarms.

If Word has found a mistake but doesn't know how to fix it, you can also click the text in the document and edit it there. Afterwards, click the Resume button in the spell check window to pick up where you left off.



As you are writing your letter, you can also right-click on any words or phrases with squiggles underneath them. A new menu will open, from which you can choose a suggestion (at the top), or choose to ignore once or throughout.

Now Word has set me straight on the spelling of onomatopoeia, I won't have to ask Fred after all.

If you find all that red and green underlining distracting (it's a bit like being back at school), then you can switch it off. In Office 2010, click the File tab and then click Options on the left. In Office 2007, click the Office button and then click Word Options in the bottom right. Once you've found the Options, click Proofing on the left to see the Proofing options shown in Figure 1.12. To get rid of the squiggles, untick the boxes beside Check spelling as you type and Mark grammar errors as you type.

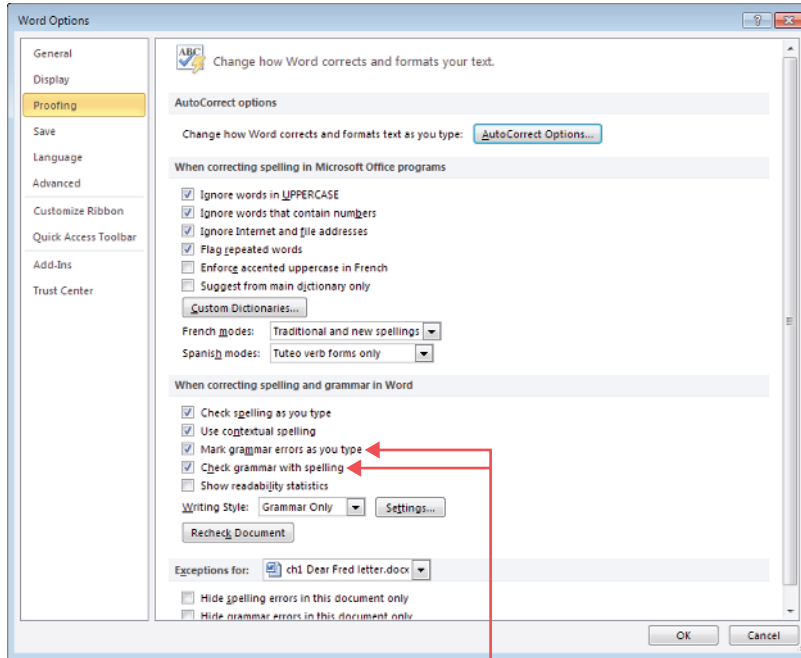
To stop Word autocorrecting what you type, go into the Proofing options, and then click the button for AutoCorrect Options. Untick the box beside 'Replace text as you type'.



You can also add your own replacements to the AutoCorrect dictionary in the Proofing options. This is a handy way to create short ways to type long words. For example, I could set it so that whenever I type 'msox' it replaces it with 'Microsoft Office'. Take care that the short form you use isn't a real word.

If you're ever lost for words, there is also a thesaurus on the Review tab (why is there only one word for thesaurus?). Click its button on the ribbon and a Research panel opens on the right where you can enter your word and search, as shown in Figure 1.11. This Research sidebar also enables you to search the Encarta

dictionary and to translate your letter into a number of languages. (The translation is provided in your web browser, so you'll need to select it, copy it and paste it back into Word.) Computer translations are a bit ropey but this can still be a useful tool if your correspondent doesn't have a full command of English. I'd send them the English version too, though. To use the dictionary or translation service, select it in the pulldown menu at the top of the Research sidebar.



Turn on/off squiggles

Figure 1.12

## Printing your letter

Once you're happy with your letter, it's time to print it out. The way this works is slightly different in Office 2010 and Office 2007.

In Office 2010, you click the File tab and then click Print. On the right is a preview of your document, to allow you to see what it will look like on the printed page. On the left, all your options are laid out, as shown in Figure 1.13.

Usually, the default printer options will be fine, but you can choose different printers (if you're living in multi-printer luxury), and can choose which pages of your letter you want to print if you don't want the whole thing. If that's the case, you specify a page range using a dash to separate pages (eg 5-7) or you can list the pages you want and separate them with commas (eg 1,3,5,7). If you want multiple copies of your letter, you can specify that too. When you're ready, click the Print button in the top-left corner, shown on Figure 1.13.

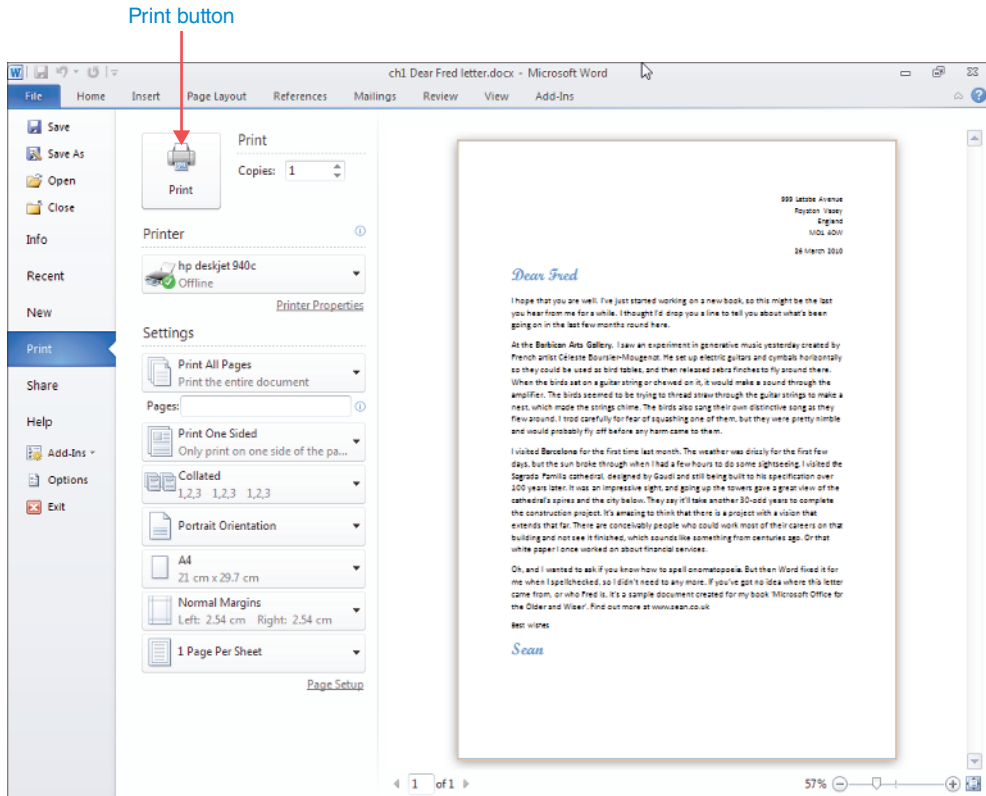


Figure 1.13

In Office 2007, things look a bit different. Click the round Office button in the top-left corner of the screen (see Figure 1.2) and then click Print on the menu. Your print options are similar to Office 2010 but look like Figure 1.14. If you want to preview your document first, click the Office button, then place the mouse over Print, and click Print Preview on the right when it appears.

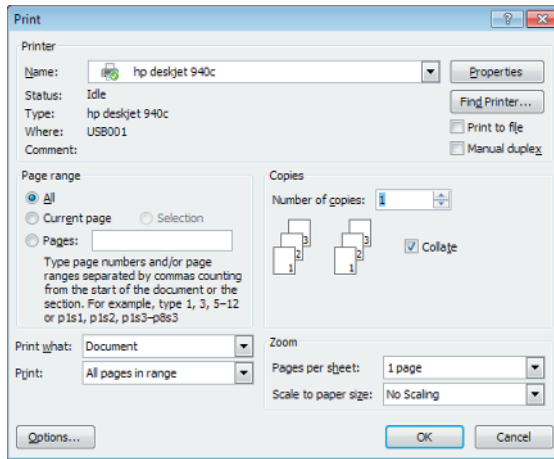


Figure 1.14

When you're happy, click OK, and your letter will print. Now, only one question remains: is there time to catch the post?

## Finishing your Word session

When you've finished with Word for the day, click the Close icon in the top right of its window (shown on Figures 1.1 and 1.2). If you haven't saved your work before quitting, Word will try to save you from yourself by reminding you. Think carefully before deciding whether to save the file. You may not want to save it because you haven't made any significant changes to it, or because by saving it you would be overwriting a good version of the file with one you'd rather discard.

To close your file without closing Word, click the File tab (Office 2010) or Office button (Office 2007) and then click Close.

If you want to edit your file again later, you can double-click on the filename or icon in Windows and the computer will start Word and open that file for editing. You can also open Word as you did at the start of this project, and then click the File tab or Office button, choose Open, and then find the right file.

When the file first opens, you might see it in a special preview mode that enables you to quickly read through it. To get out of that, click the Close button at the top right of the screen.

Word makes it easy to find recent documents. In Office 2010, there is a Recent option when you go backstage. In Office 2007, recent documents are listed when you click the Office button. In either case, click the name of a recent file and it will load so you can work on it.

## What else can you do?

Congratulations on finishing your first project with Word! Here are some of the other ways you can use your new skills:

- Write formal correspondence. In this chapter we've covered informal letters, but you can also use Word to manage your letters to the bank or doctor, for example. You can print two copies of the same letter, one for the bank/doctor and one for your records. You can edit the letter to create modified versions. You can use the same letter, with a new date and some alterations to the details, for regular prescription requests. The possibilities are endless.
- Create and print your CV, and make sure there are no typos in it!
- Write a diary. You can use Word to record your daily life for future generations or just for your own interest. If you're worried about people prying, see Chapter 5 for advice on encrypting your file.
- Write concrete poetry, where the layout and fonts help to convey the meaning. Or keep it simple and write straight poetry or song lyrics.
- Write a book. Although we've only created a short letter here, Word can handle long and complex documents. You can even get your book published by uploading a Word document to sites like [www.lulu.com](http://www.lulu.com).
- Print out some words in light grey text, so that younger family members can practise writing by tracing the words.
- Print your French homework double-spaced, so that you can write the translation in the gaps. (Use the paragraph formatting options to change the spacing between lines in a paragraph.)
- Type out your recipes to stick on the kitchen wall. You could even laminate them at your local printshop, to make them splash-proof.
- Create a checklist of everything you usually take on holiday. Every time you have to pack, you can print it out and cross things off as they go into the case.

## Summary

- There are lots of different ways to start Word, but you can always find it by going through the Start menu.
- You should save your work before you start, and keep saving regularly.
- Your cursor shows you where any new characters or edits will appear.
- You can reposition your cursor using the keyboard or mouse, so that you can go back and change what you've written, or delete something.
- You can select text using the keyboard or mouse. Once selected, you can delete it, move it or format it.
- The ribbon lays out the controls in Word. You click the tabs on the top to bring different sets of controls to the front.
- Cut and paste enables you to copy or move text around your document, between documents or even between different programs.
- To change the formatting or alignment of your text, select it and then click the appropriate formatting option on the Home ribbon.
- To reverse the last thing you did, use the Undo button.
- Word's built in spelling and grammar checker can help weed out errors, but it's not perfect. You can override it any time you want.
- You can print your entire letter or choose specific pages.
- Close Word using the X in the top-right corner.
- You can open your files to work on them again by double-clicking them in Windows, or using the File tab or Office button to find recent files and Open others.





## Brain Training

Your first project has taken you from typing your first word to producing a complete letter. How much did you remember? Try this quiz to find out. There might be more than one right answer.

- 1. To prevent your work being lost because of a power cut, you should:**
  - (a) Save your file when you start
  - (b) Use CTRL+S or the disk icon to keep it updated
  - (c) Close your eyes and wish really hard
  - (d) Pay your electricity bill
- 2. To correct a spelling error a few words back, you can:**
  - (a) Use the mouse to reposition your cursor and then fix it
  - (b) See whether Word has fixed it automatically
  - (c) Use the cursor keys to move the cursor and then fix it
  - (d) Pick it up at the end using the spelling checker
- 3. If you press the Del key, Word will:**
  - (a) Delete the character to the left of the cursor
  - (b) Delete the character to the right of the cursor
  - (c) Delete whatever text is selected
  - (d) Start a new letter to your friend Derek
- 4. If you click three times:**
  - (a) Word will select the word
  - (b) Word will select the sentence
  - (c) Word will select the paragraph
  - (d) You'll be transported back to your bed in a Kansas farmhouse
- 5. To make your letter easy to read, it's a good idea to:**
  - (a) Write it all in capitals
  - (b) Use fonts that look like handwriting
  - (c) Use a point size of 6-8
  - (d) Pick a couple of easy-to-read fonts and use them consistently

### Answers

**Q1** – a, b and d    **Q2** – a, b, c and d    **Q3** – b and c    **Q4** – c    **Q5** – d