

Web content vs. Word Processing Files

Instructors choosing to post their course materials to Web-pages or to their WebCT courses, frequently develop materials in MS Word, or some other word processing application. Despite Microsoft's efforts at integrating the MS Office suite of applications with their browser (Internet Explorer), the reality is that Word is a desktop application designed for desktop publishing and not for Webpage development.

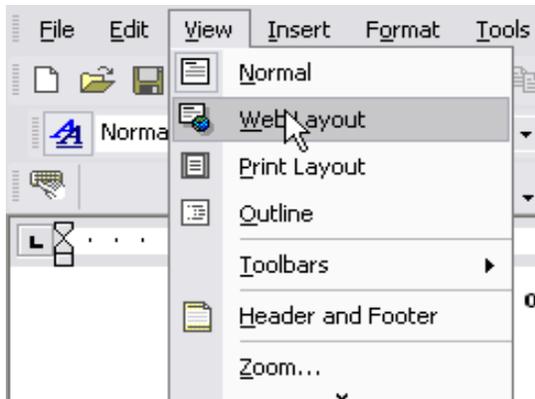
Documents developed in desktop publishing software are intended, for the most part, to be printed rather than viewed on the computer screen. The difference being, printed material can be held and thumbed through where readers are able to quickly scan through print. Screens are not as convenient for reading large amounts of text and need to be navigated – usually through some form of bookmark or hypertext links.

When designing material for the screen, authors need to consider how much material will the reader have to manage and how they will navigate the text. As a rule, the Webpage should not be longer than twice the width. Occasionally it is necessary to use a lengthy document - in these cases, a table of contents should be added with navigation at the top of the page.

Posting documents in their native word-processing file format, can cause a number of unexpected results when opened with a Web browser. More recent versions of Internet Explorer will open MS Word and certain other formatted files directly in the browser window. This may at first seem like an acceptable solution, but can in fact cause more problems than it solves when opened in other browsers or with computers that are not MS compatible (Netscape/Mozilla, Opera, etc.). The best solution for displaying documents in a browser is to convert them to HTML or some other format intended to be displayed in a browser.

Preview your document

MS Word provides authors with the option to “save as Web page”, or “save as” HTML. Oftentimes the result is something we can live with; some of the time it leaves much to be desired. There are a few “tricks” we can use to minimize the unexpected.



Preview the document using the “View – Web Layout” feature in the menu bar.

You will see that one major difference is HTML doesn't use margins like Word documents. If you have typed your document using hard line-breaks, you will also see the text no longer lines up evenly.

Spacing, tabs, and bulleted lists often change in layout.

Tabs and spaces to tables

Oftentimes faculty have instructional materials already developed in a Word Processing document format. Rather than create the documents again in Web-development software (such as FrontPage), it may be expedient to simply convert the document to the desired HTML format. One of the challenges in converting documents is the formatting. Tabs and spaces are often used to align text and paragraphs in a Word document, but do not translate well to the HTML document. For this reason, it is advisable to convert tabs to tables before saving as a Web page.

Highlight the text to be converted, select Table – Convert – Text to Table, in the action menu.

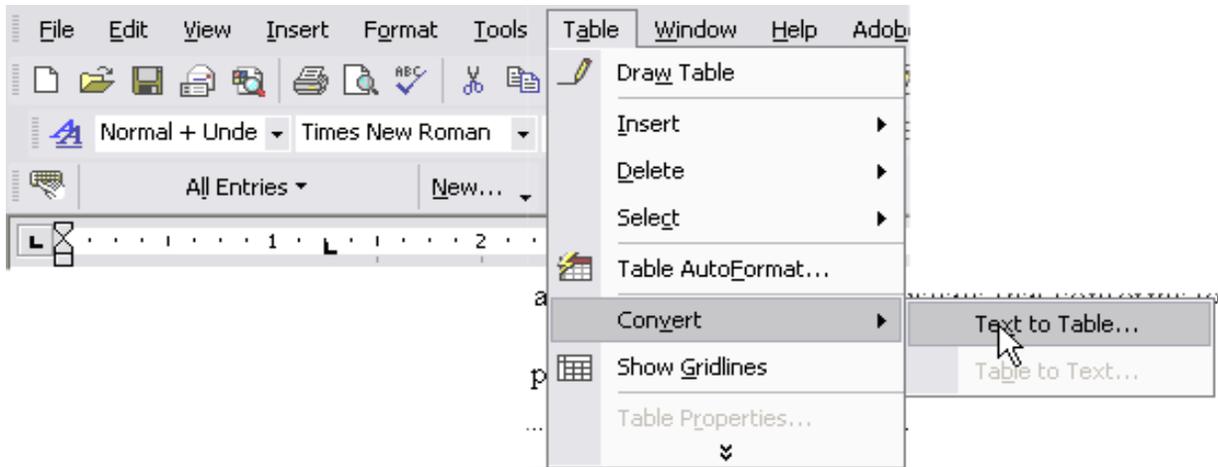


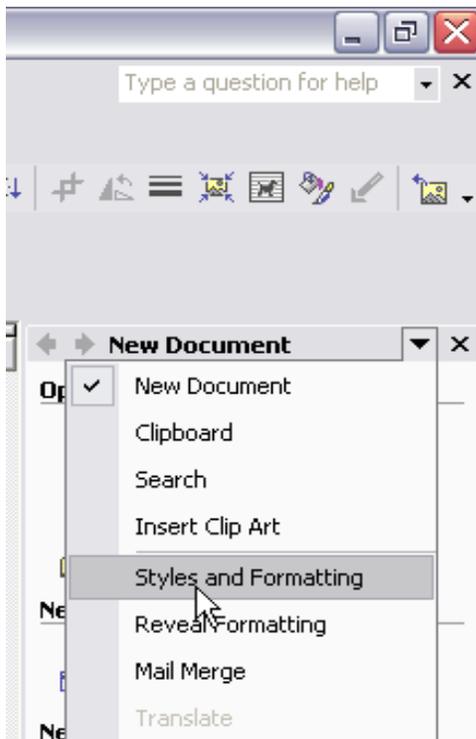
Table options should offer to convert content based on the number of tabs present in the highlighted text. It may be necessary to re-arrange text within the table before saving the document.



You may choose to hide the gridlines in your table by clicking on "Hide gridlines" under the table menu.

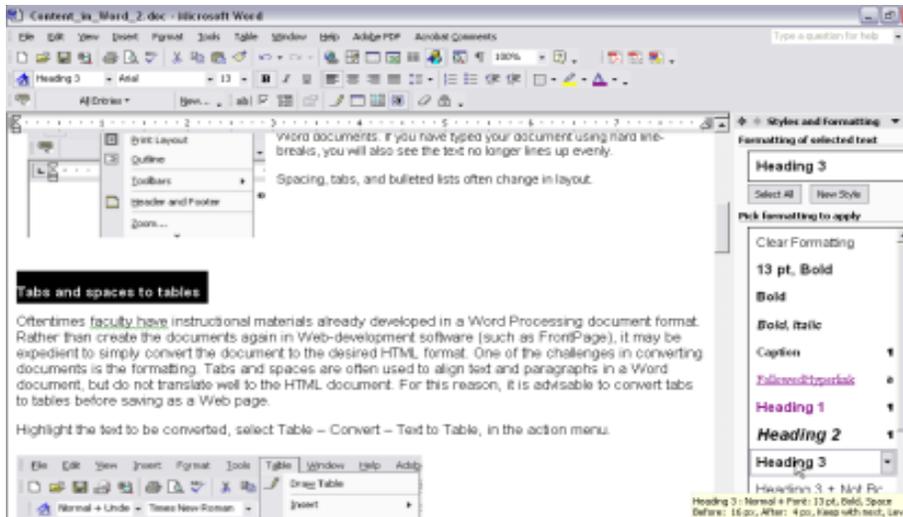
Using formatting for headings

Microsoft Word can be a very useful program for developing content. Many instructors are familiar with using Word and with minimal preparation, can modify existing content for use on the Web.



MS Word has the capability of creating a table of contents automatically. The TOC can be used as a navigation tool, especially when documents tend to be several pages long. In order to make use of the TOC feature, all headings need to be formatted properly. The pane to the left of the screen can be changed from the “New Document” view to the “Styles and Formatting” view by dropping down the menu indicated by the arrow to the left of “New Document”.

By highlighting the text and then clicking on the formatting for the heading: heading 1, heading 2, heading 3, etc.

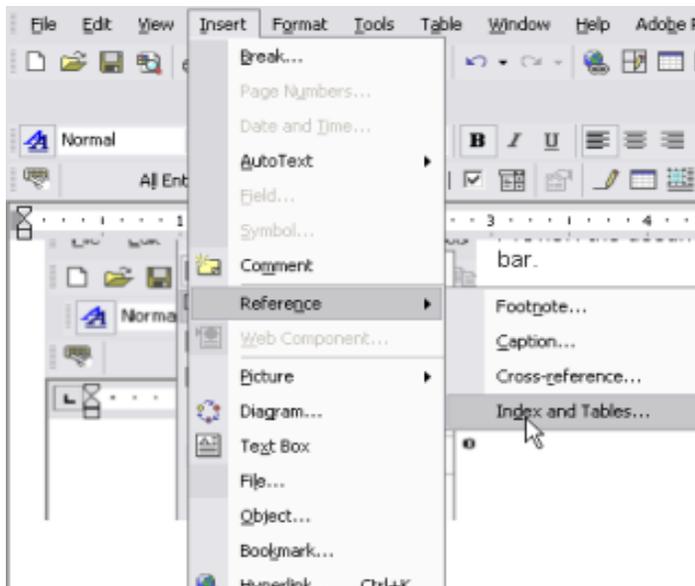


Add new heading styles to the list by typing text, highlighting it and then using the lower menu “Show: Available formatting” Select “All Styles” and choose the style (e.g. Heading 4) you prefer.

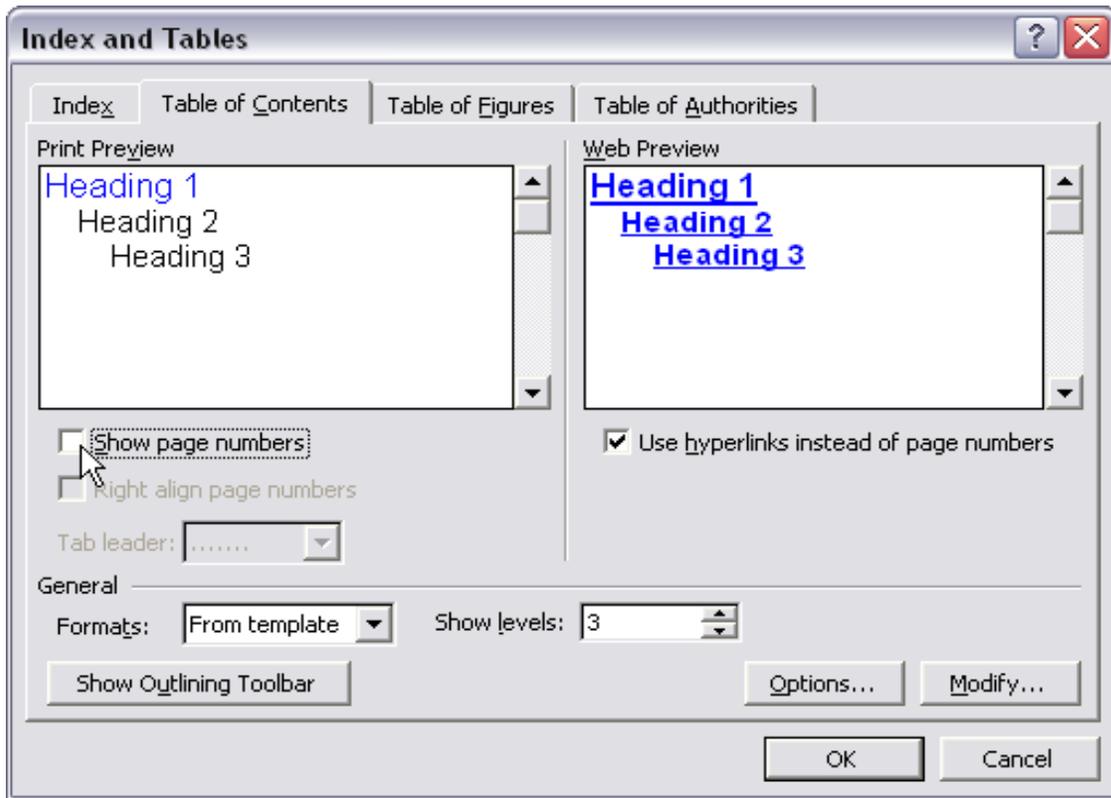
By right-clicking on the style name in the heading you can modify the style in order to edit the font, weight, italics, size, etc.

Creating Navigation

Insert – Reference – Index and Tables – Table of Contents



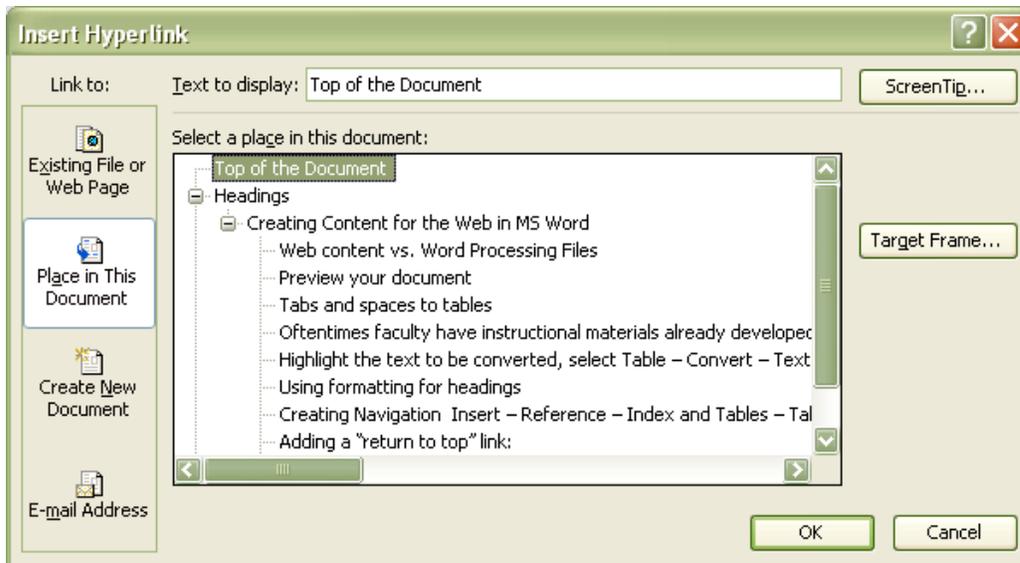
(turn off page numbers, by un-checking “Show page numbers”).



Adding a “return to top” link:

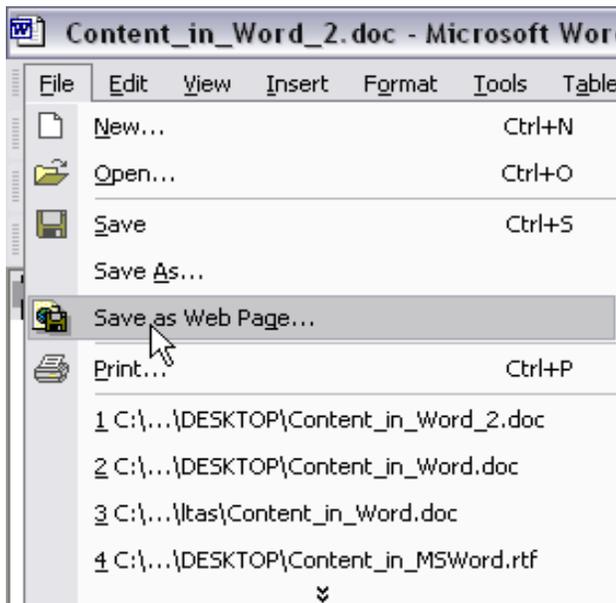
The navigation added to the beginning of the document is great for finding contents, but a return to top link can make navigation even easier.

- Type “top” in the desired location
- Highlight the text
- Select “hyperlink” from the “Insert” menu
- Select “Link to: Place in this document”.
- Highlight “Top of the Document”
- Click “OK”

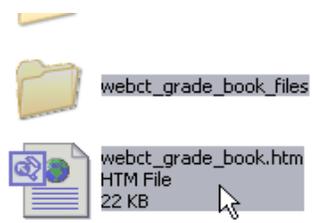


Saving documents for the Web

From the file menu, select **save as Web page**.



There will be an html file created and a folder with a similar name to that of the file. The folder contains any images linked to the Webpage.



Both must be published to the Web within the same Website folder.