

## ***Samples from "Writers' Daily Dose," an internal technical writing newsletter from environmental-engineering Management (e<sup>2</sup>M)***

### **Keep It Clean**

Many of the documents we produce are the product of extensive copying and pasting from other documents. Although that's a great way to save time in retyping, it's also a great way to corrupt the styles of your brand new document. When that happens, things don't always look the same from one paragraph to the next. Because so many people aren't fully acquainted with the use of styles in Word, that means the next step for the document originator is to select the 'offending' text and manually apply fonts, bold, italics, tab stops, margin settings, etc. When the document comes through Jacksonville for editorial work, things start falling apart as we make changes. Many times, we end up undoing all that manual formatting in order to apply the styles correctly.

Avoiding this problem takes two steps: use a clean style template in the first place, and avoid bringing in styles from other documents in the second place. A generic style template is attached to this message (if it's no longer attached when you receive this, e-mail me directly at [givie@e2m.net](mailto:givie@e2m.net) and I will send it to you again.) Store it in the same directory as your Normal.dot template. That way you'll be able to see it when you select New from Word's File menu.

This template already has settings for margins, different odd and even header/footer, different first page header/footer, and new sections starting on an odd page. Do not use a section break for anything except starting a new chapter. Do not insert page breaks if your file doesn't have the final graphics; when the graphics go in, the page breaks will change, so there's no point in inserting something that an editor will have to remove later. The available styles in this template should cover 99% of your needs. If you run into a situation where they don't, contact me and I'll work it out with you.

Note that there is no 'body text' style. All body text uses Word's built-in Normal style.

There are three heading styles. These are Word's built-in heading styles, which means they are tied to Word's outliner. The outliner can be a very powerful organization tool; by collapsing the view to just the headings, you can move entire sections without cutting and pasting. If you don't know how to do this, read the manual before trying it or call me for advice.

Note that there are not separate styles for bulleted lists and numbered lists; use the same list styles for both. **DO NOT USE AUTO-BULLETING OR AUTO-NUMBERING.** Auto-numbering in particular becomes a nightmare because Word frequently decides to make every auto-numbered item part of one big list. Instead of items 1 - 3 in one place, followed by another set of items 1 - 3 in another, you end up with items 1 - 3, a bunch of text, and then items 4 - 6. Type numbers manually, followed by a period, followed by a

tab. For bulleted lists, hold down the ALT key while typing 0149 on the keypad (ALT 0149) to generate the first-level bullet character (•). To generate the second-level bullet character, use ALT 0150 (–) (this is also called an en-dash). You should avoid going any further down than this, but if it is absolutely necessary to have a third level, the plus sign (+) is the accepted bullet character at this level. At any level, follow the bullet with a tab.

The 'blank page' style is designed specifically for the phrase "This page intentionally left blank." The style forces a page break, centers the text, and adds space above the text.

After you start your new document with this template, you definitely don't want to bring in the styles from other documents. There are several ways to avoid copying unwanted styles. You can open the document you want to copy and save a copy of it as text only. Close the file and then re-open the text file in Word. You'll see that all formatting is gone, and everything is in Courier. Select the desired text, copy it, and then paste it into your new document. To apply styles to this pasted text, put the cursor in the paragraph you want to style and then select the desired style from Word's style menu.

You can also copy directly from the old document without changing it to text-only format. If you do this, **DO NOT** use the Paste command in the new document. Use the Paste Special command, and choose Unformatted Text in the resulting dialogue box. The copied text is then pasted into the document in Normal style. From there, you can apply the necessary styles.

If absolutely none of this makes sense, talk to someone in your area who has more experience with Word, or call me.

If you have specific questions about styles in the template that weren't mentioned here, feel free to e-mail or call.

If you need a template that is customized for a specific type of document or for a specific customer, just call. We can do that.

## **Find & Replace**

This issue has some more Word tips that I hope most of you will find useful.

Word's Find & Replace feature is much more powerful than some people realize. In addition to handling text, it can find and replace special characters and styles, or some combination of the three.

To see the additional options, select Replace... from Word's Edit menu (or press Control-h). Look for the More button in the lower left corner of the Find and Replace box when it pops up. Click that button to see the various search options. (If the button says Less, then you can already see the search options.)

Click the Format button to see these options: Font, Paragraph, Tabs, Language, Frame, Style, Highlight. Before you select one of these options, put the cursor in the Find or Replace field, as appropriate. If you select one of these options for the Find field without entering any text, Word will look for any text that has the attributes that you specified in the various dialogue boxes. If you select one of these options for the Replace field without entering any text, Word will apply the attributes that you specified in the various dialogue boxes.

Here's an example: You want to replace the style Level 2 Head with Heading 2. With the cursor in the Find field, click the Format button and select Style from the list. In the Find Style dialogue box, select the style Level 2 Head and then click OK. Look at the Find field in the Find and Replace dialogue box. Under the field, you'll see Style: Level 2 Head. Now put the cursor in the Replace field. Click the Format button and select Style from the list. In the Find Style dialogue box, select the style Heading 2 and then click OK.

Look at the Replace field in the Find and Replace dialogue box. Under the field, you'll see Style: Heading 2. As long as you didn't type any text in either field, Word is now ready to replace Level 2 Head style with Heading 2 style in any paragraph it finds. Click the Replace All button to do just that. If you want to decide on a case-by-case basis, click the Find Next button to find the paragraphs with Level 2 Head applied and then decide whether to change each one.

The process is similar for each Format option. If you put text in the Find and Replace fields, you'll limit the change to only that specific text, and, in the case of our example, only if it's in Level 2 Head style.

Next to the Format button, you can see the Special button. When you click the Special button, you'll see a list of 21 options. In addition to paragraph marks, tab characters, and fields, you can choose 'wildcards' like any character, any digit, or any letter, as well as footnote marks, em- and en-dashes, nonbreaking hyphens and spaces, graphics, and more.

When you select one of these items, the special character appears in the field where you had placed the cursor. You can search and replace with special characters on their own, or in combination with specific text and/or format attributes.

The best way to figure how this will help you is to open a document and try out different combos. Good luck!

## **Once vs. After, plus extras**

Today's topic is by request: the difference between 'once' and 'after.'

In common speech, we frequently hear things like this: "Once you're done with that, you can start on this new project." It's generally understood that the speaker means you can begin the new project after you finish what you're doing. However, not everyone will pick that up because 'once' has another, more common, definition: a single occurrence, as in "I rode that roller coaster once, and that was enough!"

To avoid possible confusion among your readers, use 'after' when you're setting a sequence: "\*After\* you're done with that, you can start on this new project." Use 'once' only when you mean a single occurrence: "Pull the start lever \*once\*."

By using 'after' for sequence, you'll avoid a confusing instruction like this: "Pull the start lever \*once\*. \*Once\* you've done that, release the choke."

[An employee] sent a list of questions. I thought everyone might want to see the answers...

**Difference between 'e.g.' and 'i.e.'...** Many people overuse 'i.e.' and 'e.g.' in their writing, and then don't use them correctly, to boot. More than 80% of the time, the writer is trying to give an example, which means he/she needs 'e.g.' A better choice, however, is to take a second look at the phrase and figure out a clearer way to say it without the Latin. In a case where examples are required, the phrase 'such as' works fine. (FYI, 'i.e.' translates loosely as "in other words" or "that is to say." I can't think of any reason to use this in a technical document because you should be saying exactly what you mean in the first place.)

**Difference between 'affect' and 'effect'...** In a psychological context, 'affect' and 'effect' are VERY different things. 'Affect' (pronounced AFF-ekt) is a person's outward display of emotion/feeling. Psychiatrists and psychologist want their therapy to have a positive effect on the patient's affect. For most of the writing at e<sup>2</sup>M, that context isn't going to come up.

To \*affect\* (pronounced uh-FEKT) something means to \*have an effect\* (pronounced ef-FEKT or ee-FEKT) on it. Here are two ways of saying the same thing: "Allowing dam construction at this point in the river will affect the town five miles downstream." "Allowing dam construction at this point in the river will have an effect on the town five miles downstream." Both mean that the construction will somehow influence the town; the basic difference is that the first sentence is in active voice, and the second is in passive voice.

In some contexts, "effect" could be considered a synonym for "result": "What is the effect of closing the senior center?" "What is the result of closing the senior center?"

In some cases, "effect" is used as a verb, too: "We need to effect a change in current policy." I don't recommend that anyone at e<sup>2</sup>M use the word that way, because it's less direct. In the same example: "We need to change current policy."

**Difference between em-dash, en-dash, and hyphen...** Em-dashes, en-dashes, and hyphens all have specific uses that are well-covered in the Chicago Manual of Style; please refer to that excellent reference, starting with paragraphs 5.105–5.121. If that doesn't cover it, see the index under "dash, em" and "dash, en" for specific uses. Some word-processing or spreadsheet programs don't support them directly with a specified key or key combination, but on a PC you always type an em-dash by holding down the Alt key while typing 0151 (0150 for en-dash) on the keypad. When you let go of the Alt key, the em-dash will appear. If it doesn't, you're using an older program that doesn't support an extended character set.

**How to type 'e<sup>2</sup>M'...** The correct way is so that it reads "e-squared-em" (lowercase e, superscript 2, capital M). How you do it depends primarily on the application you're working with at the time. Some don't support superscripting. If your app won't superscript, then it won't. MS Word does, however, so all business correspondence should show the 2 superscripted. You can also try using the extended character set. With the cursor where you want the "squared" symbol to go, hold down the ALT key and type 0178 on the keypad (not the numbers at the top of the keyboard). When you let go of the ALT key, you should see the "squared" symbol. If you don't, the application or font doesn't support the extended character set.

## Requirements vs. Suggestions

Many of the documents that we produce are—or contain—requirements. It's important to consistently use the right terms to reinforce what is a requirement and what is a suggestion. Here's the short list:

**Shall:** Use this term when the sentence states a legal or contractual requirement.

Example: "The contractor shall provide to the client weekly reports on the contract status."

**Must:** Use this term when the sentence states a requirement, but there is no legal or contractual connotation. This usage commonly appears in procedures. Example: "You must include DD Form XYZ with all hazardous material shipments."

**Should:** Use this term when the sentence makes a suggestion. Example: "According to best management practices, you should ensure that the containment area is surrounded by a security fence." Be very careful when using the word "should." It's generally understood by the reader that this is NOT a requirement, and they don't have to follow the instruction if they don't want to. If what you're stating is in fact a requirement, don't use "should."

**May:** This term's usefulness in procedures is generally limited to indicating a possible state, something that might or might not happen; in this usage, "may" is a synonym of "might." Example: "Depending on total hours of operation, the filter may need to be

changed more often than twice each month." *Don't* use this term when discussing safety procedures. *Bad* example: "You may want to use spark-proof tools when working in an explosive environment."

"May" can also be used to indicate permission. Example: "After receiving command approval, individual units may..." However, to avoid any possible confusion between possibility and permission, it's better to use "can" in this situation. If necessary, rewrite the sentence to indicate that permission has been granted so that someone can do something.

The general rule of thumb is this: If it has to happen, no exceptions, then it's a requirement. Use "shall" or "must" depending on whether there is a legal or contractual connotation to the sentence. If it's a good idea, but it isn't absolutely necessary, it isn't a requirement. Use "should" in this case.

Keep in mind that the audience and what they need to know determines the thrust of your writing. If the audience is primarily people who will be performing a job and/or people who need to know the position's requirements, this sentence would be appropriate: "The State Environmental Manager must review all applications for..." But if the intended audience doesn't perform this job, and you're just letting them know who does what, this sentence would be appropriate: "The State Environmental Manager reviews all applications for..."

## **Which vs. That**

Today's topic is in response to a reader's question.

Most of the time, folks use "which" when they really need "that." It's pretty obvious when you're trying to locate a specific item— "Which one is it?" "That one on the table." When you're using one of these words to tie a clause to the end of the sentence, it isn't necessarily that easy. Let me give some examples:

"I came back from Publix with everything but milk, which is the one thing I really needed." In this case, "which" introduces a dependent clause. The sentence would be complete, and make sense, without the clause.

"This is the piece that you need to finish your puzzle." In this case, "that" ties on an adjective phrase that identifies the specific piece we're talking about.

Here's one that isn't so obvious:

"Ensure that the cotter pin, which keeps the tie rod in place, doesn't show any signs of corrosion."

—but—

"Ensure that the cotter pin that keeps the tie rod in place doesn't show any signs of corrosion."

The difference in the two is subtle. In the first example, the dependent clause tells you what the cotter pin is for. That information is in the nice-to-know category, but it isn't essential to what the writer was trying to tell you. You can easily assume from this sentence that there are no other cotter pins involved in the process.

In the second example, the adjective phrase is a modifier that tells you which cotter pin out of several is the one of interest. Not the one that keeps the wheel on the axle (we're talking about a toy car here), but the one that keeps the tie rod in place.