Setting and Using Tabs

Tabs are a way to position your text/numbers in the exact location you need and with very few keystrokes.

Instead of pressing the <spacebar> to position your information (and then hoping for the best), you need to use the <tab> key.

This handout will guide you through the process of setting tabs two ways.

**Important Note:** When you have text that will be affected by tab settings, make sure you select the text before setting or moving tabs.

You have two ways to set tabs – from the Tabs windows and on the Ruler Bar.

**Setting Tabs in the Tabs Window**
Select the Home tab and then click on the Paragraph command group launcher.

From there, you will click on the [Tabs] button at the bottom of the screen.

Next, you’ll see the Tabs screen. This is where you can clear existing tabs, change the type of tab, its alignment, and also add a tab leader.

To set tabs, type the location in the Tab stop position box.

Type multiple locations at one time by separating them with a comma.

Click on [OK] to save your tab settings.
Ruler Bar
If you don’t see the Ruler Bar (as shown below), click on the View tab and then select Ruler.

The Ruler Bar is shown below.

Setting Tabs on the Ruler Bar
To set tabs directly on the Ruler Bar, you will need to be comfortable double and single clicking.

Method 1
1. Single click on a location on the Ruler Bar where you would like a tab set. In the screen capture below, you can see a left tab set at 1.5 and 3.

Method 2
1. Double click on the Ruler Bar.
2. You should see the Tab window where you can clear, set, and change tabs.
Moving Tabs
Drag tabs along the Ruler Bar with the mouse to move them to a new location. Remember to select the text to be changed before changing the tab settings.

Removing Tabs
To remove tabs from the Ruler Bar, simply drag them off. Or, you can go to the Tabs window, select the tab from the Tab stop positions window and select [Clear]. Or, clear them all by clicking on the [Clear All] button.
Combining the Dot Leader and a Right Alignment Tab

Have you ever wondered if there is an easy way to put the “dots” in the example lines below? (Continually pressing the period key does not count!) Further, how do you keep the names aligned?

Example

Master of Ceremonies .................................................................................................. Johnna Jones
Presentation of Certificates ......................................................................................... Stephanie Stillwell
Swearing In of New Officers ......................................................................................... Melanie Malcolm

You would set a RIGHT tab in the location of (or close to) the right margin. You’d also select a dot leader. Then, when you were ready to type the names in the example above, you would press the <tab> key. That would take your cursor to the right tab position (e.g., 6.5) and then put the dot leaders (periods) before the name. As you typed the name, the text would go to the LEFT and not to the right.

Look at the screen capture below to see how the tab settings would appear for this example.

The red circle indicate the setting changes you would need to make for this type of tab.
**Bonus Information**

**Removing Extra Hard Returns**
If you’ve had to edit an older document, you might have been “tasked” with removing extra hard returns. By using ^p to represent each hard return in the Find and Replace screen fields, you can turn an onerous task into just a few clicks.

Simply select Replace from the Editing command group.

![Find and Replace dialog box](image)

Then, type ^p for the number of consecutive hard returns you need to eliminate. This will vary, so you may need to “show” the hard return symbols with the Show/Hide command on the Home tab. That symbol is indicated by the graphic to the right. (Hide/Show command shortcut: Press <ctrl><shift> * simultaneously.)

Count the hard returns to assess the ones you need to either remove or substitute for just one hard return.

For example, if you have two hard returns where you need one, you would type ^p^p in the “Find what:” field as shown in the example below. Then, you would type ^p in the “Replace with:” field in order to only have a single hard return. Continue by clicking on [Replace] or [Replace All] to remove the unwanted hard returns.

**Removing Spaces and Replace with a Tab**
If you need to replace the cumbersome result of the dreaded “tap, tap, tap, tap, tap” of the spacebar with tab commands, you can use ^t to represent the tab command. Using tabs instead of spaces makes it easier to adjust columns and make additional formatting changes.

The process would be similar to the one above for extra hard return removal.
Refer to the following screen capture for an understanding of how to substitute the tab command for spaces.

Remember: The number of spaces to replace with a tab is what has been entered with the spacebar. With characters and formatting marks showing (Hide/Show command), spaces will be represented as a raised period. You will see extra spaces in places such as between columns of information if tabs were not used.

Once you click on Replace from the Editing command group on Word’s Ribbon, you will see the Find and Replace screen.

Tap the spacebar as many times as needed to represent the spaces that should be replaced.

Tip: Select (highlight) and Copy the spaces you need to replace to make sure you enter the exact number of spaces. Then, Paste the selected spaces in the “Find what:” field.

Enter ^t to represent the tab command. Continue by clicking on [Replace] or [Replace All] to replace the unwanted extra spaces with a tab.

If necessary, you may need to “tweak” some columns to remove extra spaces – more than what you indicated in the “Find what:” column. This will be unique to each document. It’s also possible you might need to make a few “passes” through the document to get all extra spaces replaced by tab commands.

To see what other special characters can be used in Find and Replace tasks, click on the [Special] button on the Find and Replace screen.
More characters can be represented with the caret symbol (^) and a letter, number, or string of characters. Refer to Microsoft’s support article titled “Special characters you can use with Find and Replace in Word” (https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/kb/214204) to discover those.