FAST FORMATTING FIXES

How to fix the formatting in your Microsoft Word document *fast* (and maybe save your sanity!)

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VIDEO DEMONSTRATIONS

WHAT KIND OF FORMAT FIXER ARE YOU?

In my years of helping people with Microsoft Word problems, I've noticed that people tend to have one of two reactions to formatting issues:

> (1)   "Why is this happening?"

> (2)   "Fix it NOW!"

In other words, some people want to understand why their Microsoft Word formatting is so jacked up and figure out a way to prevent future problems.

Other people just want it fixed ASAP. They're either pressed for time or have ZERO patience with long-winded technical explanations.

I totally get it. That's why I've divided this guide into two different sections: one for the "tell me why" crowd, and one for the "fix it now" crowd. The "Tell Me Why" section will feature some great diagnostic techniques plus some tips for preventing future formatting disasters (particularly the cut-and-paste variety). The "Fix It Now" section will feature a short series of quick fixes that require nothing more than a shortcut key (a combination of the CONTROL, ALT and/or SHIFT keys plus a number, letter or F-key) or a quick mouse click.

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How to Use This Guide

See that Table of Contents on the second page? It's got clickable links that will take you directly to each tip in this guide.

And because text and screen shots can't always explain computer stuff adequately, some of the tips have video demos, too. Just click on the Play button when you see it in selected tips:

(In some PDF software, clicking on the Play button doesn't take you to the video, so I've included a shortlink in each screenshot's caption you can copy & paste into your browser address bar.)

How to Select Text Like a Pro

Most Word users know how to drag a mouse cursor over a block of text to select it. But if you're going to fix formatting problems, you need more than one text selection trick up your sleeve. How many of these techniques do you already know?

Select a whole word – Double-click on it.

Select a whole paragraph – Triple-click on anywhere inside the paragraph.

OR, hover your mouse in the left-hand margin until the pointer turns to the right, then double-click your left mouse button.

Select an entire line – Hover your mouse cursor in the left-hand margin until the pointer turns to the right. Click once to select the line, or hold down your left mouse button and drag your mouse cursor down to select multiple lines.

Select a large block of text – Use your keyboard instead. Click your cursor in front of the first word you want to select, hold down your Shift key, then use either the Page Down or Down Arrow key (depending on how far down you need to select) until you get to the end of the text block.

Prefer to use your mouse? Left-click your mouse cursor at the beginning of your intended selection, scroll down to where you want your selection to end, then hold down your Shift key and left-click your mouse just after the end of your selection. *Voila!* That entire block is selected.

Select the entire document – CTRL-A (hold down the Control key and press the letter "A")

Select an isolated column of text – Say, for example, you wanted to copy the text of these paragraphs *without* the paragraph numbering:

(1) On the Insert tab, the galleries include items that are designed to coordinate with the overall look of your document. You can use these galleries to insert tables, headers, footers, lists, cover pages, and other document building blocks. When you create pictures, charts, or diagrams, they also coordinate with your current document look.

(2) You can also format text directly by using the other controls on the Home tab. Most controls offer a choice of using the look from the current theme or using a format that you specify directly. To change the overall look of your document, choose new Theme elements on the Page Layout tab. To change the looks available in the Quick Style gallery, use the Change Current Quick Style Set command.
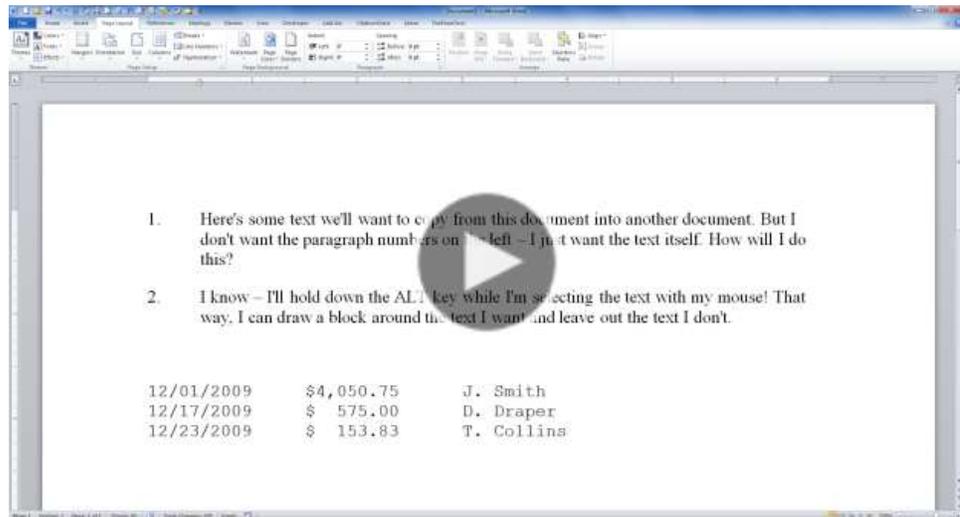
Hold down your Alt key and, while holding down your left mouse button, drag your mouse cursor

down and over from the upper right-hand corner of the text until the entire column is selected:

Press CTRL-C to copy and then use CTRL-V to paste that text (sans paragraph numbers) into your document.

Here's a quick video demonstrating the technique:

Video 1: Selecting an Isolated Column of Text (http://goo.gl/YwIL8)

If you find that whole ALT-mouse trick physically awkward, here's an alternative: place your cursor at the beginning of the desired selection and press CTRL-SHIFT-F8 to start the selection, then use your cursor or mouse to select. When you have finished selecting, press the ESC key to turn the selection mode off.

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TELL ME WHY!

You're my kind of person. Why is that? Because you're not just annoyed when your document suddenly goes all wonky, you're curious about the reasons behind it. And you want to make sure it never happens again.

So I'll show you three diagnostic tools and how to use them, and I'll recommend some default settings to prevent future cut-and-paste formatting disasters.

THREE DIAGNOSTIC TOOLS

If you want to figure out why your document formatting has gotten out of whack, you need to learn how to use three diagnostic tools that Microsoft Word provides you: the Show/Hide button, the Status Bar, and Reveal Formatting.

SHOW/HIDE

The Show/Hide button is designed to reveal much of the hidden text that makes formatting possible in Microsoft Word. The button is located on the Home tab in the Paragraph section and looks like a paragraph symbol (¶). Toggling[1] it on enables you to see such hidden text as:

Hard returns at the end of lines (¶)

Spaces between letters or words (•)

Tabs (→)

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[1] To "toggle" a computer feature is to switch it from one state to another, *e.g.*, on or off. In the case of a button like Show/Hide, one click will turn it on and the next click will turn it off.

A paragraph without Show/Hide looks like this:

> This is a paragraph. It starts with a tab to indent the first line by a half-inch. The sentences are all separated by two spaces, and a hard return appears at the end of the paragraph.

A paragraph with Show/Hide turned on will display like this:

> → This·is·a·paragraph.·-It·starts·with·a·tab·to·indent·the·first·line·by·a·half-inch.·-The· sentences·are·all·separated·by·two·spaces,·and·a·hard·return·appears·at·the·end·of·the· paragraph.¶

Show/Hide will also display some interesting characters that are often the result of pasting text from WordPerfect documents:

> → Plaintiff·objects·to·this·request·as·overly·broad,·vague·and·ambiguous,·and· unduly°burdensome.¶

If, for example, you were trying to figure out why the line above didn't break after the word "unduly", you could turn on Show/Hide and see the answer above; namely, that there is a nonbreaking space (shown above as a hollow circle rather than a solid dot like the other spaces) between the words "unduly" and "burdensome".

If you're working with more advanced Microsoft Word features like Tables of Authorities, the Show/Hide button will show you the hidden markup that can help you diagnose problems with, for example, citations showing up in the wrong section.

Gupta·v.·Florida·Bd.·Of·Regents,·212·F.3d·571,·583·(11ᵗʰ·Cir.·2000)·cert.·denied·531·U.S.·1076·(2001).{TA·\l·"*Gupta·v.·Florida·Bd.·Of·Regents,·212·F.3d·571,·583·(11ᵗʰ·Cir.·2000)·cert.·denied·531·U.S.·1076·(2001).*"·\s·"Gupta,·212·F.3d·571·(11th·Cir.·2000)."·\c·1·}·

In the example above, Show/Hide which show you that the citation will show up in section 1 of the Table of Authorities. How? There's a "1" after the "\c" in the hidden text.

To ensure that you're seeing all of the items that Show/Hide can display, click on the File tab (or the Office Button if you're using Word 2007) and click Options. Check the box next to "show all formatting marks":
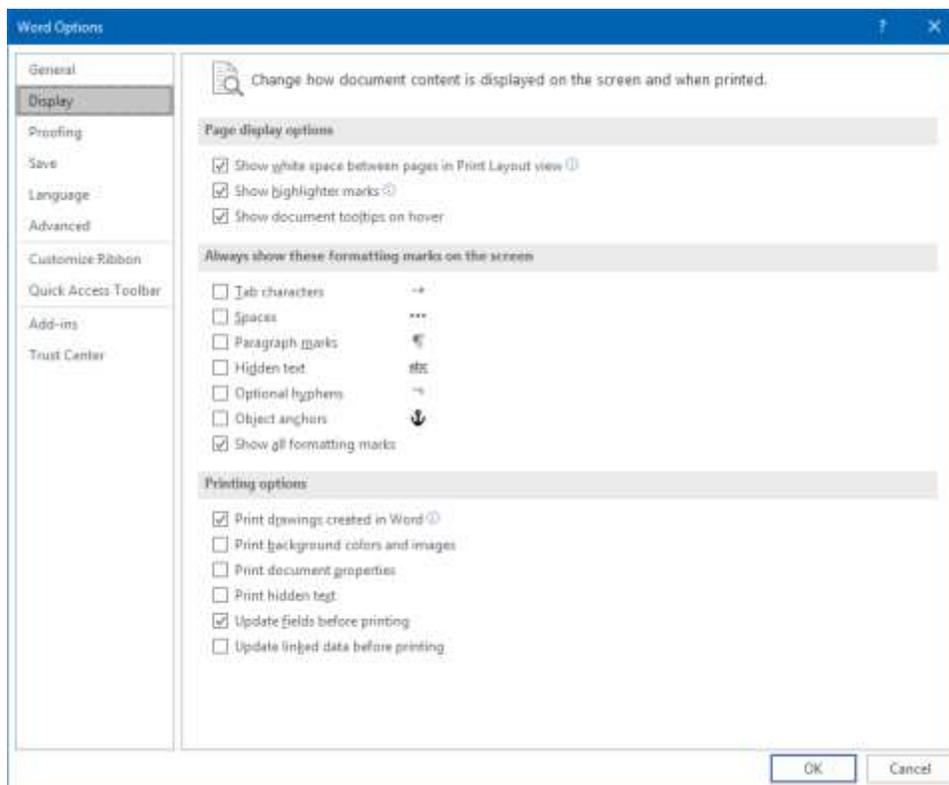
Status Bar

See that long gray bar at the bottom of your screen just above the Windows taskbar? That's Microsoft Word's Status Bar. By default, it doesn't show very much, but I always recommend that people enable as much of it is possible.

To do that, right-click anywhere in the grey bar to bring up the Customize Status Bar menu:

Customize Status Bar	
✓ Formatted Page Number	1
✓ Section	1
✓ Page Number	Page 1 of 1
✓ Vertical Page Position	1"
✓ Line Number	1
✓ Column	1
✓ Word Count	0 words
✓ Spelling and Grammar Check	Checking
✓ Language	
✓ Signatures	Off
✓ Information Management Policy	Off
✓ Permissions	Off
✓ Track Changes	Off
✓ Caps Lock	Off
✓ Overtype	Insert
✓ Selection Mode	
✓ Macro Recording	Not Recording
✓ Upload Status	
✓ This document has been updated. To refresh the document, click Save.	No
✓ View Shortcuts	
✓ Zoom Slider	
✓ Zoom	184%

You may think all those checkmarks above may make the Status Bar look too busy, but it really doesn't. I consider all that information to be vital in diagnosing document problems. For example, if I'm having problems with headers and footers, I always look at the

Section numbers as I scroll through the document. A document with a lot of Sections was probably imported from WordPerfect. Before I do any work with headers and footers, I know that I need to delete all those excess Section breaks.

I also want to be able to tell at a glance whether Track Changes is turned on or off. Having this in the Status Bar also enables me to turn Track Changes on with a single click, as opposed to having to go to the Review tab to turn it on.

REVEAL FORMATTING

WordPerfect users had Reveal Codes; Microsoft Word users have Reveal Formatting. While the two features don't look anything alike, they perform much the same function. And unlike Reveal Codes, Word's Reveal Formatting gives you one-click access to the correct dialog box when you need to fix your text formatting.

To turn on Reveal Formatting, press SHIFT-F1. A pane will appear on the right-hand side of your document, showing you the current formatting settings of the text where your cursor is positioned. If you want to change any of those settings, Word makes it easy. The blue underlined text is
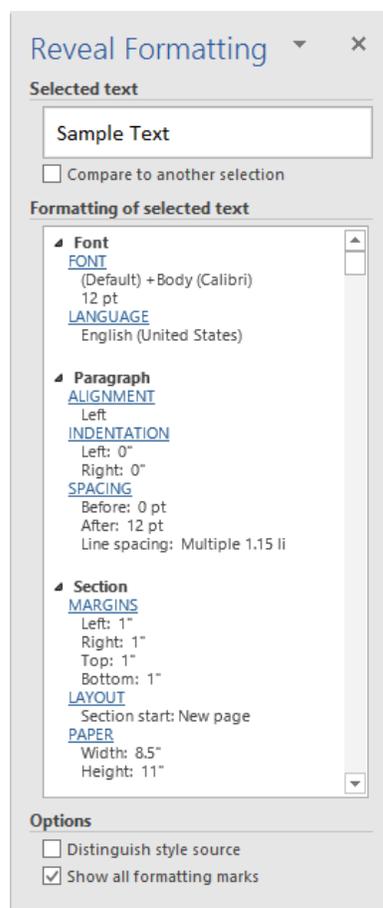
hyperlinked, meaning you can click it and go directly to that feature's dialog box.

And here's one feature that would be sure to make Reveal Codes green with envy: the ability to compare the formatting of one section of text with another. Just click your mouse cursor into the first section of text, check the box in the Reveal Formatting pane marked "compare to another selection", then click your cursor into the second section of text. Word will then show you the formatting differences.

DIAGNOSING FORMATTING MISHAPS

Now that you have some diagnostic tools at hand, here are some situations in which they'll come in handy:

THE MYSTERIOUS HORIZONTAL LINE

One day, you're typing along, minding your own business, and you happen to type three dashes in a row and hit the Enter key. And this happens:
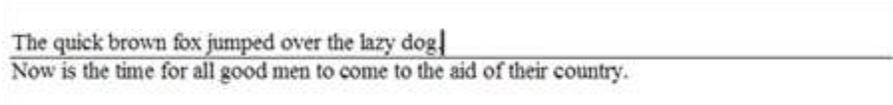
> The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dog.
> Now is the time for all good men to come to the aid of their country.

You'll attempt to delete it, but it'll defeat you. That's because this isn't so much a line as it is a border. A paragraph border, to be exact.

You'll know it's a paragraph border because Word's Reveal Formatting will show it to you. The solution is simple. Click on the blue hyperlinked text "Borders", which will take you directly to the Borders and Shading dialog box. Click "None" on the left-hand side to remove the paragraph border, then click OK to exit dialog box. When you return to your text, voilà, no more horizontal line!

THE CASE OF THE STRICKEN TEXT

Perhaps one day you're editing a document and you select some text and hit the Delete key. But your text doesn't delete. Instead, it turns a different color with strikethrough:

If you've got your Status Bar configured the way I showed you earlier, you'll not only be able to diagnose this problem in a flash, you'll correct it just as quickly, because you'll look down there and see this:

… and know that Track Changes is turned on. You can just click on that same section of the Status Bar, turn Track Changes off and continue editing.

THE WEIRD PAGE BREAK DILEMMA

Ever had a document with a weirdly large amount of white space at the bottom of one page? And no matter how much you hit the Delete key, you couldn't get that next paragraph to "pull up" onto that page?

Here's where Show/Hide comes in really handy!

Most the time, what's happening is that some sort of block protection has been applied to that paragraph that insists on jumping to the next page. The only way to verify that, though, is to use Show/Hide to reveal the hidden markup:

In fermentum, lorem non cursus porttitor, diam urna accumsan lacus, sed interdum wisi nibh nec nisl. Ut tincidunt volutpat urna. Mauris eleifend nulla eget mauris. Sed cursus quam id felis. Curabitur posuere quam vel nibh. Cras dapibus dapibus nisl. Vestibulum quis dolor a felis congue vehicula. ¶

Maecenas pede purus, tristique ac, tempus eget, egestas quis, mauris. Curabitur non eros. Nullam hendrerit bibendum justo. Fusce iaculis, est quis lacinia pretium, pede metus molestie lacus, at gravida wisi ante at libero. Quisque ornare placerat risus. Ut molestie magna at mi. Integer aliquet mauris et nibh. ¶

Ut mattis ligula posuere velit. Nunc sagittis. Curabitur varius fringilla nisl. Duis pretium mi euismod erat. Maecenas id augue. Nam vulputate. Duis a quam non neque lobortis malesuada. ¶

Those little squares at the beginning of each paragraph tell me that one of Word's block protection features (either "keep with next" or "keep lines together") has been applied to these paragraphs. That's going to force

them onto a single page, regardless of how much blank space that leaves on the prior page.

The fastest solution is to press CTRL-A to select all the text of the document, click the little launcher arrow in the bottom right-hand corner of the Paragraph section of the Home tab, and go to the Line and Page breaks tab of the Paragraph dialog box. There, I can uncheck the boxes next to "keep with next" and "keep lines together". Once I click OK and return to the document, the pagination should be normal.

Here's a video that demonstrates the whole process:
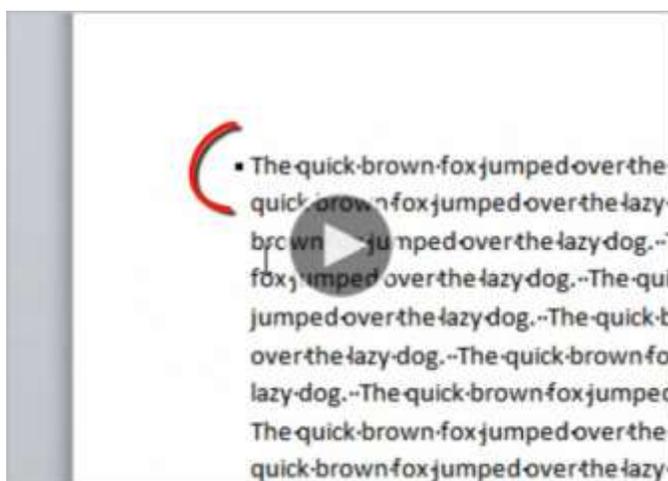
Video 2: Diagnosing "Block Protect" Issues (http://goo.gl/7reR2t)

PREVENTING CUT AND PASTE DISASTERS

I'm sure you've heard the saying "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." If you do a lot of cutting and pasting of text, you can prevent most cut-and-paste formatting disasters by changing some Word default settings.

Go to the File tab (or, if you're in Word 2007, click the Office Button) and click on Options.
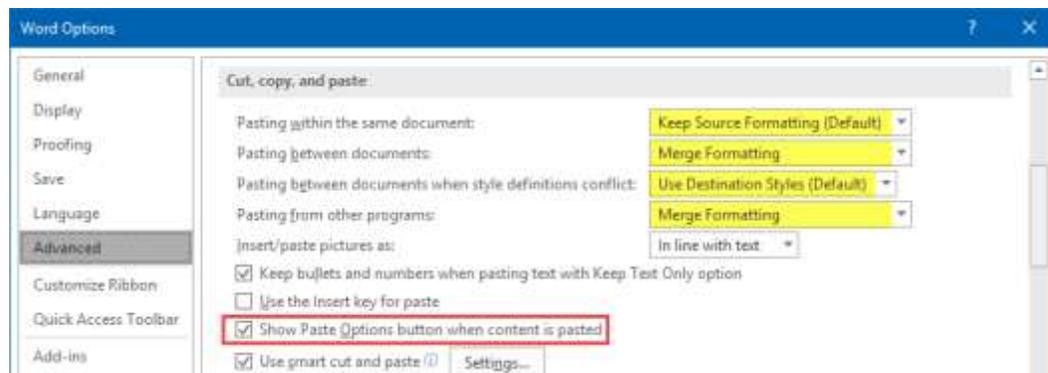
The options I've highlighted in yellow above are the ones I recommend. When pasting between two Word documents or from WordPerfect, the Merge Formatting option serves as a "middle way" between pasting the text with all its formatting and pasting plain text. When pulling in text from other programs, however, you may find that Merge Formatting creates too many problems. In that case, change that option to Keep Text Only so you can have full formatting control.

The Show Paste Options button (a small button that hovers on the edge of recently-pasted text) annoys a lot of users. If you're one of them, uncheck that box I've rimmed in red above.

FIX IT NOW!

Okay, fix-it-nowers! Let's cut to the chase with some quick emergency fixes.

"PAINTING" FORMATTING FROM ONE TEXT TO ANOTHER

Cutting and pasting text from one document to another is probably the most common source of formatting disasters. Often, when you've pulled text from one document and dropped it into your current document, that text will bring over some undesirable formatting:

> (1)   On the Insert tab, the galleries include items that are designed to coordinate with the overall look of your document. You can use these galleries to insert tables, headers, footers, lists, cover pages, and other document building blocks. When you create pictures, charts, or diagrams, they also coordinate with your current document look.
>
> (2)   You can also format text directly by using the other controls on the Home tab. Most controls offer a choice of using the look from the current theme or using a format that you specify directly. To change the overall look of your document, choose new Theme elements on the Page Layout tab. To change the looks available in the Quick Style gallery, use the Change Current Quick Style Set command.

If, for example, you pasted in paragraph (2) from another document, and you want the formatting of it to match paragraph (1), including font and paragraph settings, do this:

(1) Triple-click the first paragraph. (When I say "triple click", I literally mean pointing your mouse cursor somewhere on the first paragraph and clicking the left mouse button three times rapidly.) This will select the entire paragraph.

(2) Go to the Home tab and click the Format Painter button on the left side. The Format

Painter button has a paintbrush icon. When you click it, the entire button will turn orange, which means Format Painter is turned on.

(3)   Select the entire second paragraph with your mouse. The easiest way to do this[2] is to hover your mouse cursor in the left margin next to the first line of the paragraph so that the mouse cursor is pointing to the right:
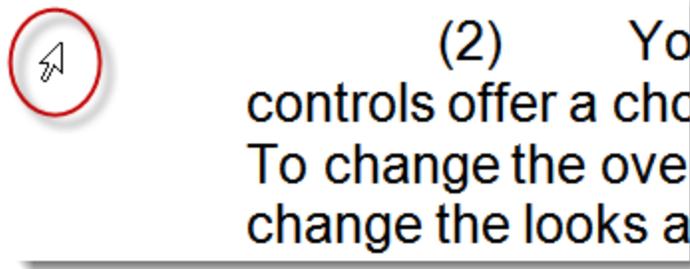

Press down on the left mouse button and drag all the way down to the end of the paragraph so the entire paragraph is selected.[3]

(4)   When you let go of the mouse button, the second paragraph will look just like the first paragraph.

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[2] Wondering why I didn't tell you to triple-click again? In the middle of a Format Painter operation, the first click of your mouse will turn off Format Painter. Instead, you'll have to select text in a way to allows you to hold down the mouse button until you've selected the entire paragraph.
[3] If you only want to copy paragraph formatting but leave the font in the "target" paragraph intact, you can just single-click anywhere in the "target" paragraph—no need to select the entire text.

Here's an 18-second video that'll show you how easy this is:
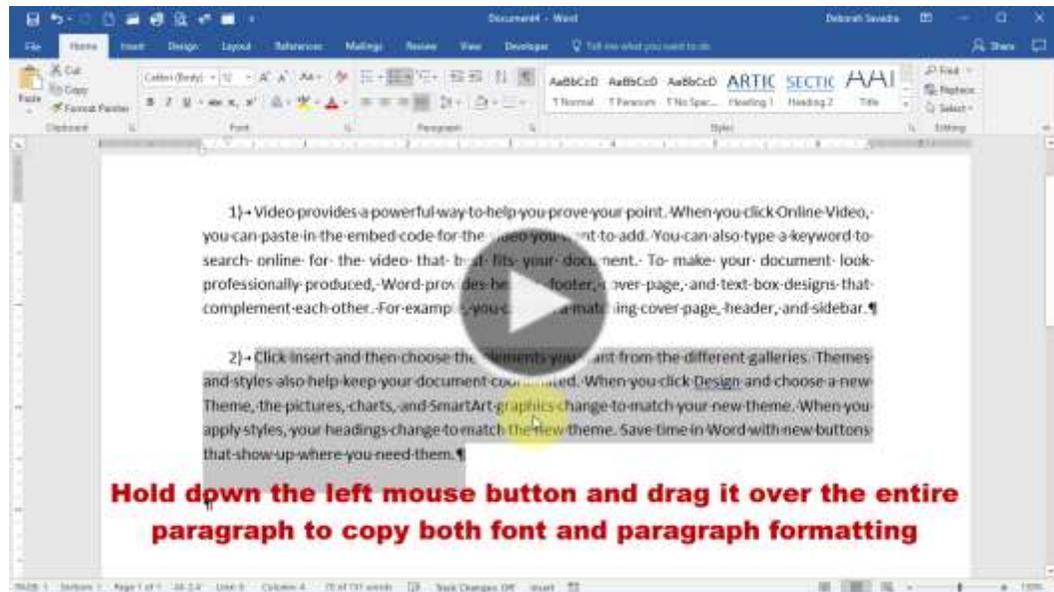
Video 3: Using Format Painter to Copy Paragraph or Font & Paragraph Formatting (https://goo.gl/aMEUkp)

(Note: the video above demonstrates both methods of copying formatting; you don't have to do it twice!)

To break it down even further, here's how to use Format Painter in any situation:

(1)   Select the text that has the formatting you like.

(2)   Click Format Painter.

(3)   Select the text that needs its formatting changed.

Could it get any easier?

Bonus Tip: Rapid Repeat Reformatting

If you want to fix several pieces of text without having to repeat this entire sequence, you can make Format Painter "persistent" so it will paint the desired formatting onto multiple pieces of text in a document. In step 2 above, instead of single-clicking on the Format Painter, double-click on it. Then every piece of text you click on or select from that point will have the new formatting. When you're finished reformatting, turn Format Painter off by single-clicking on it again. You'll know it's off when the icon is no longer orange.

Not Just for Paragraphs

Format Painter isn't just for paragraphs. You can select individual words, sentences, etc., pick up their formatting and "paint" it onto however much text you wish. I've demonstrated Format Painter with paragraphs above because it's the most common problem I see with cut-and-pasted text.

"CLEAN SLATE" FORMATTING

Sometimes, frankly, it's just a whole lot easier to start from scratch. Here are three shortcut keys you'll want to write down on a Post-It™ note to stick on the bottom of your monitor:

CTRL+SPACE removes all character-level formatting—funky fonts, underlining, boldface, italics, etc. Just select the text you want to fix, hold down your Control key and press the Space Bar.

CTRL+Q removes all paragraph-level formatting—weird indents, line spacing, extra spacing before and after the paragraphs, etc. Again, select the text, hold down your Control key and press the letter "Q".

CTRL+SHIFT+N returns the selected text to Normal formatting (however Normal is defined in your particular document's Styles). You'll need a bit more manual dexterity here: select your text, then hold down the Control and Shift keys together and press the letter "N".

Once you've eliminated the problem formatting, you're free to reformat it, either manually or by using the Format Painter trick illustrated in the previous section.

GET MORE WORD FORMATTING AND OTHER TIPS

Thanks for downloading my Fast Formatting Fixes report! Be sure to check your email inbox every week for the next several weeks for more of my popular Microsoft Office tips and tricks.

If you like to pass these tips along to a colleague, you're free to do so, as long as you pass along the document in its entirety.

If you'd like to get more tips and tricks from Legal Office Guru, here's where I hang out on social media:

http://www.linkedin.com/in/deborahsavadra

https://plus.google.com/+DeborahSavadra

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Deborah @ Legal Office Guru