



Paragraph Formatting

in MS Word 2021

Alignment, Indentation, Spacing, Borders and Shading

≡ Paragraph Alignment



Align Left Ctrl+L

Text flush with LEFT margin. Ragged right. Most common for English body text.



Centre Ctrl+E

Centred between both margins. Titles, headings, invitations.



Align Right Ctrl+R

Text flush with RIGHT margin. Used for dates and return addresses.



Justify Ctrl+J

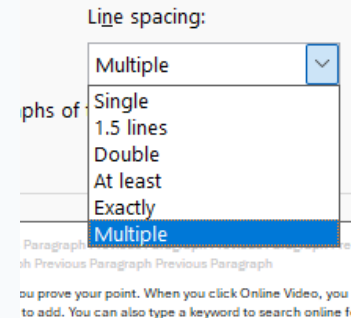
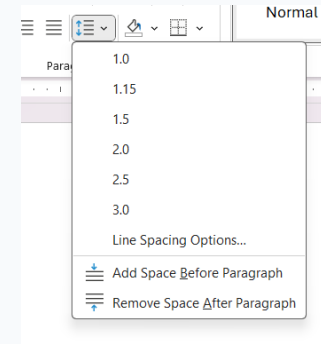
Spread to fill BOTH margins. Used in newspapers, textbooks, and reports.

↕ Line Spacing and Paragraph Spacing

Spacing Option	Value	Common Use
Single	1.0	Very tight — captions, footnotes, addresses
1.15 (Word 2021 default)	1.15	Comfortable for most body text
1.5 Lines	1.5	School assignment and exam standard
Double	2.0	Proofreading and teacher marking
Exactly	e.g. 18pt	Fixed line height — useful for forms
Multiple	Custom	Any multiplier e.g. 1.2 or 1.8

Access: Home → Line & Paragraph Spacing | Ctrl+1 (Single) Ctrl+5 (1.5) Ctrl+2 (Double)

Paragraph Spacing: Layout Tab → Spacing Before/After (default After = 8pt)



→ Indentation and Tab Stops

Types of Indentation

First Line

Only the FIRST line of the paragraph moves in

Hanging

First line at margin; all other lines indented

Left Indent

The entire paragraph moves in from the left margin

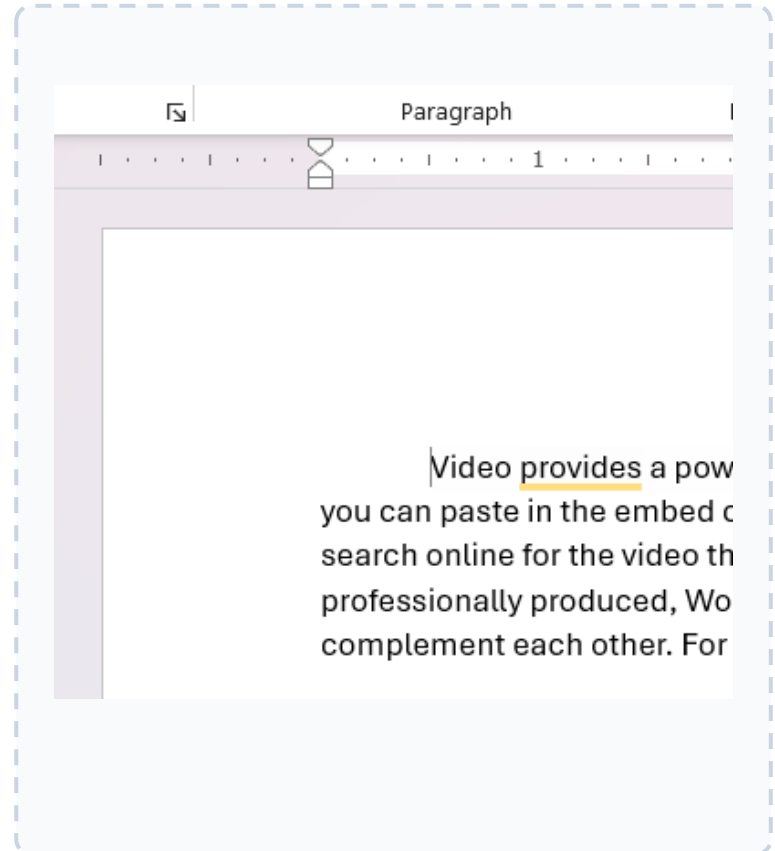
Right Indent

The entire paragraph moves in from the right margin

Access: Layout Tab → Indent OR drag the markers on the Ruler OR Paragraph dialog

Tab Stop Types

- Left ◁ — Text starts at the stop and flows to the right
- Right ▷ — Text ends at the stop and flows to the left
- Centre ◆ — Text is centred on the tab stop
- Decimal ▴ — Decimal point aligns on the stop





Paragraph Borders and Shading



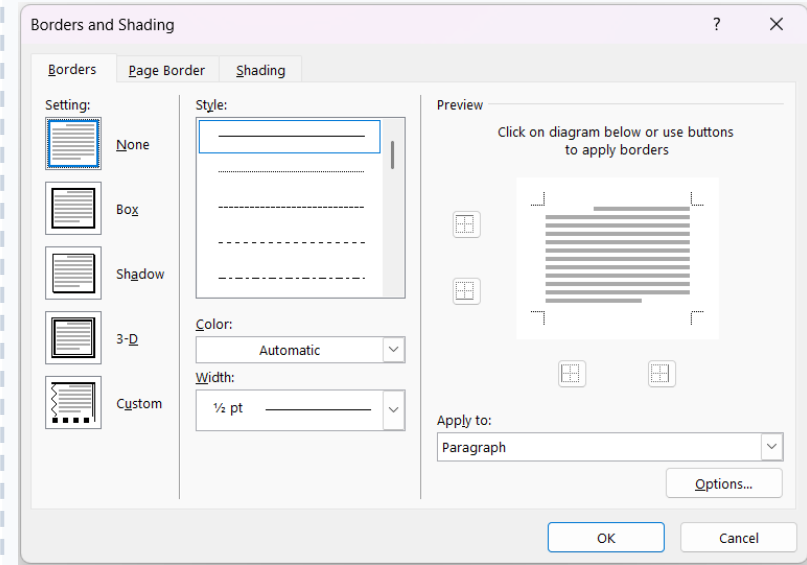
Adding Paragraph Borders

- Select the paragraph(s)
- Home Tab → Paragraph group → Borders dropdown arrow
- Choose: Bottom, Top, Box, All, Outside or Inside
- For custom: click 'Borders and Shading...' at the bottom
- Set line Style, Colour and Width → Apply to: Paragraph



Adding Paragraph Shading

- Home Tab → Paragraph → Shading dropdown → choose colour
- OR: Borders and Shading dialog → Shading tab → Fill colour





The Paragraph Dialog Box

Access: click the small ↗ arrow in the Paragraph group (Home or Layout Tab)

Indents and Spacing tab

Set alignment, indent values, spacing before/after and line spacing

Line and Page Breaks tab

Widow/orphan control, keep with next, keep lines together

Preview pane

Shows exactly how paragraph will look before clicking OK

Default button

Sets current values as the default for all new documents

The screenshot shows the 'Paragraph' dialog box with the 'Indents and Spacing' tab selected. The 'General' section includes 'Alignment' set to 'Left', 'Outline level' set to 'Body Text', and a 'Collapsed by default' checkbox. The 'Indentation' section shows 'Left' and 'Right' indents both at '0"', 'Special' set to '(none)', and a 'By' value of '0"'. The 'Mirror indents' checkbox is unchecked. The 'Spacing' section shows 'Before' spacing at '0 pt', 'After' spacing at '8 pt', 'Line spacing' set to 'Multiple', and 'At' set to '1.08'. The 'Don't add space between paragraphs of the same style' checkbox is unchecked. The 'Preview' section shows a preview of the paragraph formatting. At the bottom, there are buttons for 'Tabs...', 'Set As Default', 'OK', and 'Cancel'.



Key Takeaways — Paragraph Formatting



Justify Ctrl+J

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Line Spacing

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Indentation

Quick Recap

- Alignment: Left (Ctrl+L) · Centre (Ctrl+E) · Right (Ctrl+R) · Justify (Ctrl+J)
- Line spacing: 1.0/1.15/1.5/2.0 — shortcuts Ctrl+1 / Ctrl+5 / Ctrl+2
- Indent types: First Line, Hanging, Left, Right — set via Ruler or Layout Tab
- Borders: Home → Borders dropdown | Shading: Home → Shading dropdown
- Paragraph dialog (↗ in group): all settings in one place