

Befriending the Big Hairy Beast - Tip #5

Formatting Your Manuscript

by Tammy Schubert

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Rumor has it that many of my fellow writers are struggling with the mystery of formatting a manuscript on their blasted computer. Before you get out a sledge hammer to teach your machine who is boss, read this article. You'll be a formatting whiz in no time, and you won't have to explain to your significant other just how your computer ended up in a gazillion pieces. Before you delve into Microsoft Word's settings, let's look at one reason this month's tip is important - determining word count.

When an editor's guidelines state how many words are required, many new writers rely on the word count option in our trusted word processing software. Wrong! That would be too easy.

Editors are more interested in the layout of the manuscript instead of the exact number of words. A standard format was developed to make it easier for them to determine the amount of resources it takes to publish your book.

The correct way to calculate word count is to take the number 250, that is the average number of words per page, and multiply it by the number of pages in your manuscript (250 words per page * 400 pages = 100,000 words). When a publisher's guidelines provide the expected word count, divide this number by 250 to determine the number of pages you need to write (100,000 words/250 words per page = 400 pages).

But how do you get 250 words per page? I'm glad you asked. Here's a method used by several of my writer friends:

1. Open your manuscript.
2. Click **CTRL + A** to select all of the text.
3. Modify the margins, font and paragraph settings as described below.

Margins

1. Click **File -> Page Setup**.

2. On the first tab of the Page Setup dialog box, set the Top, Bottom, Left and Right fields to **1.0** (one inch).
3. Click **OK**.

Font Settings

1. Click **Format -> Font**.
2. In the Font dialog box, select **Courier** or **Courier New** in the Font field.
3. Select **Regular** in the Font Style field.
4. Select **12** in the Size field.
5. Click **OK**.

Paragraph Settings

1. Click **Format -> Paragraph**.
2. In the Paragraph dialog box, on the tab titled "Indents and Spacing", select **Exactly** in the Line Spacing field.
3. To the right of the Line Spacing field, enter **25** in the At field.
4. Click the tab called **Line and Page Breaks**.
5. Make sure that the Window/Orphan Control field is **not checked**. (I recommend making sure all the fields on this tab are not checked.)
6. Click **OK**.

If you experience problems:

- Check your headers and footers for unnecessary line spaces.
- Try adjusting the Line Spacing field in the Paragraph dialog box. Sometimes the number may vary slightly.

This method was tested on Microsoft Word 2003 and Word XP (2002).

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