Creating an accessible thesis document in MS Word

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1 Introduction

This guide focuses on improving the accessibility of your thesis using the built-in formatting and document-structuring tools available in Microsoft Word. Applying these tools helps create a document that is easier to navigate, understand, and use for all readers, including those who rely on assistive technologies such as screen readers, text-to-speech software, voice control, and screen magnification.

Creating accessible digital resources promotes equitable access and reduces barriers for users with disabilities. It also supports compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), which requires **all digital content made available online to meet accessibility standards**, including theses deposited in the Atrium Institutional Repository.

The instructions in this guide were developed using Microsoft 365 Word on a Windows operating system. Menu locations, features, and available options may vary depending on your version of Word and operating system. By using Word's built-in formatting features as described in this guide, you can improve the accessibility and usability of your thesis for a broader audience.

1.1 Thesis formatting requirements

This guide is intended to help improve the accessibility of your thesis and should not be used as a definitive guide to thesis formatting. While formatting conventions may vary by discipline, all theses must comply with the requirements of the Office of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies (OGPS). Please refer to OGPS' Preparation of your Thesis guide for specific formatting requirements. OGPS also provides downloadable accessible monograph- and manuscript-based thesis templates under the **Template** section of the Preparation of your Thesis guide.

2 Accessible formatting

2.1 Creating chapters and sections using Styles

When creating chapters and sections, use Heading styles to organize your document and create a clear structure. Applying Heading styles also allows Word to automatically generate a Table of Contents.

Heading styles are available on the **Home** tab in the **Styles** group.



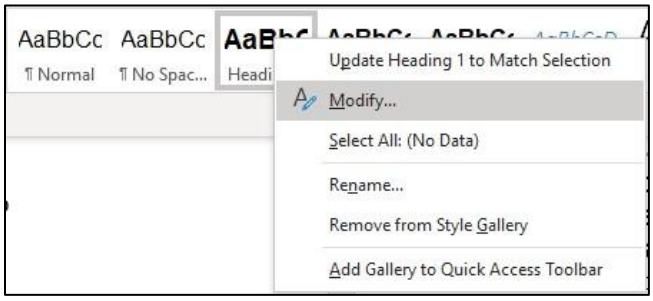
Keep in mind:

- Heading styles must be used in the correct order and nested properly.
- Built-in styles can be modified (for example, font size or spacing).
- You can create custom styles if needed.

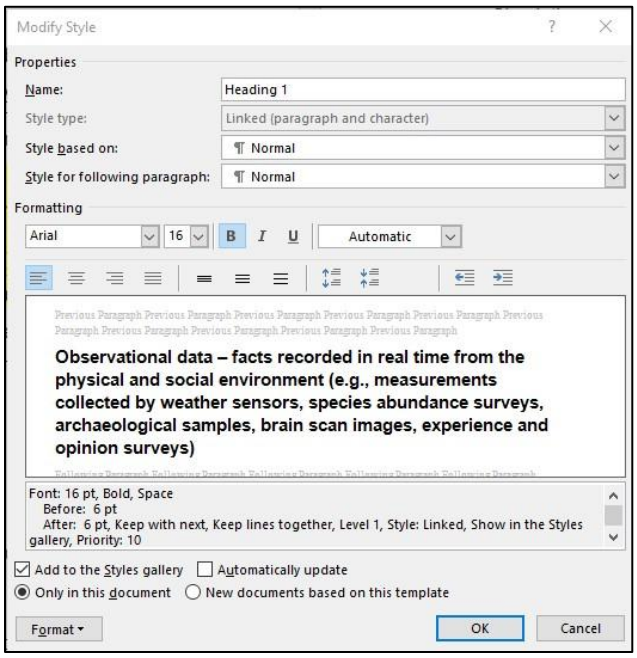
2.1.1 Modify a style

To modify a pre-defined style:

1. Select Home in the menu bar, right click on a style name in the Styles group section of the toolbar, and select **Modify** from the drop-down menu.



2. Adjust the options in the **Modify Style** window as required.



3. To set paragraph and line spacing, select the **Format** button at the bottom of the **Modify Style** window and choose **Paragraph**.

2.1.2 Create a new style

You can create your own styles.

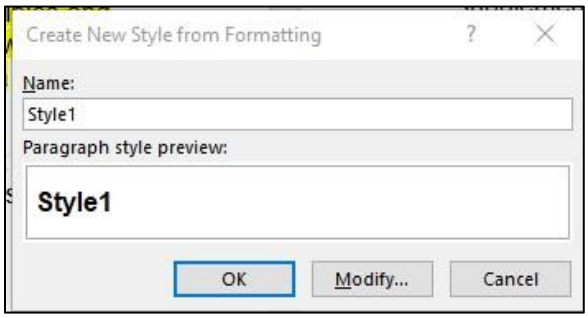
1. Expand the Styles options by selecting the drop-down arrow on the bottom right of the tool bar.



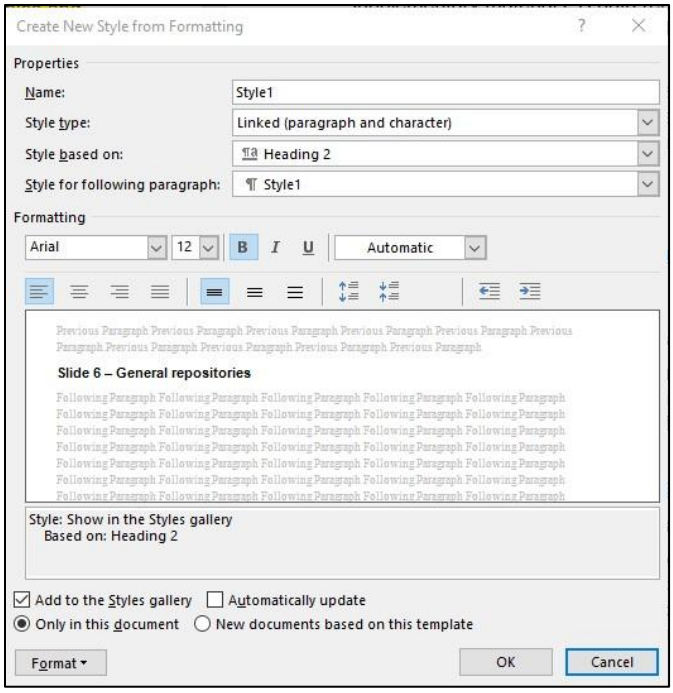
2. Select **Create a Style** from the list.



3. In the **Create New Style from Formatting** window, add a name for the style.



4. Select **Modify**.
5. In the **Create New Style from Formatting** window adjust the settings as required.
6. Note, when you create a new style, it will automatically be assigned the same properties as the style you were previously working in. Use the **Style Type** and **Style Based On** options in the Modify window to adjust the style properties.
7. To set paragraph and line spacing, select the **Format** button at the bottom of the **Create New Style from Formatting** window and choose **Paragraph**.



2.1.3 Nesting heading styles

When using headings:

- Use headings in order: Heading 1 → Heading 2 → Heading 3 → Heading 4.
- A heading of the same level starts a new section. A lower-level heading starts a subsection within the section above it.
- Do not skip heading levels. For example, Heading 2 should not be followed directly by Heading 4.

Example of correctly nested headings:

Heading 1

Heading 2

Heading 3

Heading 4

Heading 2

Heading 3

Heading 2

Heading 1

This structure helps readers and assistive technologies understand the organization of your document.

1 « Title of First Chapter – uses Heading 2 »

« The format of this template supports a monograph-based thesis. A monograph-based thesis should include an introduction, a comprehensive review of literature, methodology, research findings, a comprehensive scholarly discussion of the research findings, and conclusions. The formatting requirements for a monograph-based thesis must align with the general formatting requirements as outlined in the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies Preparation of your Thesis guide.

Please refer to the 'Formatting documents in Microsoft Office Word' guide for more detailed instructions related to using built in tools in MS Word to format and make your thesis document more accessible.

Use Styles to delineate sections within the chapter. You can use a numbering system if you wish. Below is an example of using Styles to create sections and sub-sections. Add or remove sections and sub-sections as required. Adjust the heading titles as required.»

1.1 « Title of section – uses Heading 3 »

« Use the Normal Style for text. »

1.1.1 « Title of section – uses Heading 4 »

« Use the Normal Style for text. »

1.2 « Title of section – uses Heading 3 »

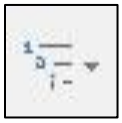
« Use the Normal Style for text. »

2.2 Automatically number chapters and sections

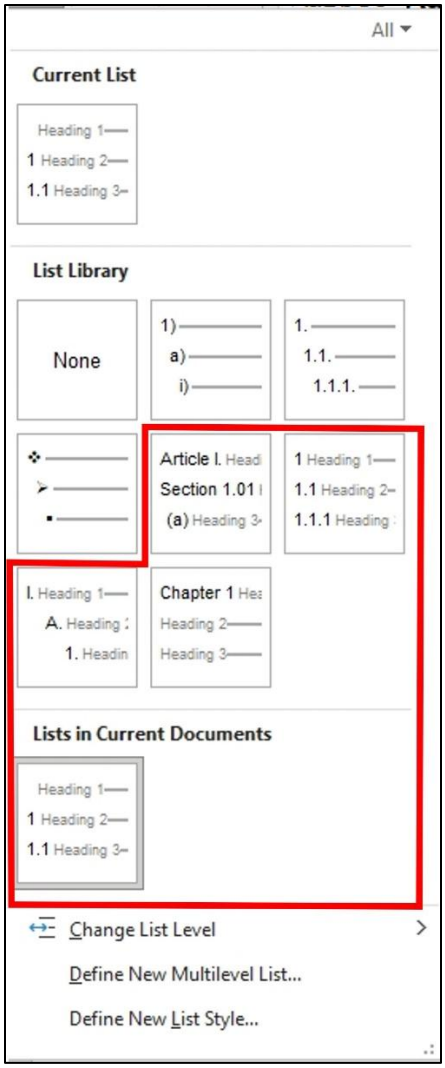
Note that if you are using a thesis template, the templates are set to auto-generate chapter numbers.

To automatically insert numbered chapters and sections:

1. Ensure the title of the thesis listed on the document title page is assigned the Heading 1 style.
2. Ensure your chapter titles are assigned the Heading 2 style.
3. Select Home in the menu bar and within the Paragraph section of the toolbar, select the **Multilevel List** icon.



4. Select a design from list library that uses heading styles.



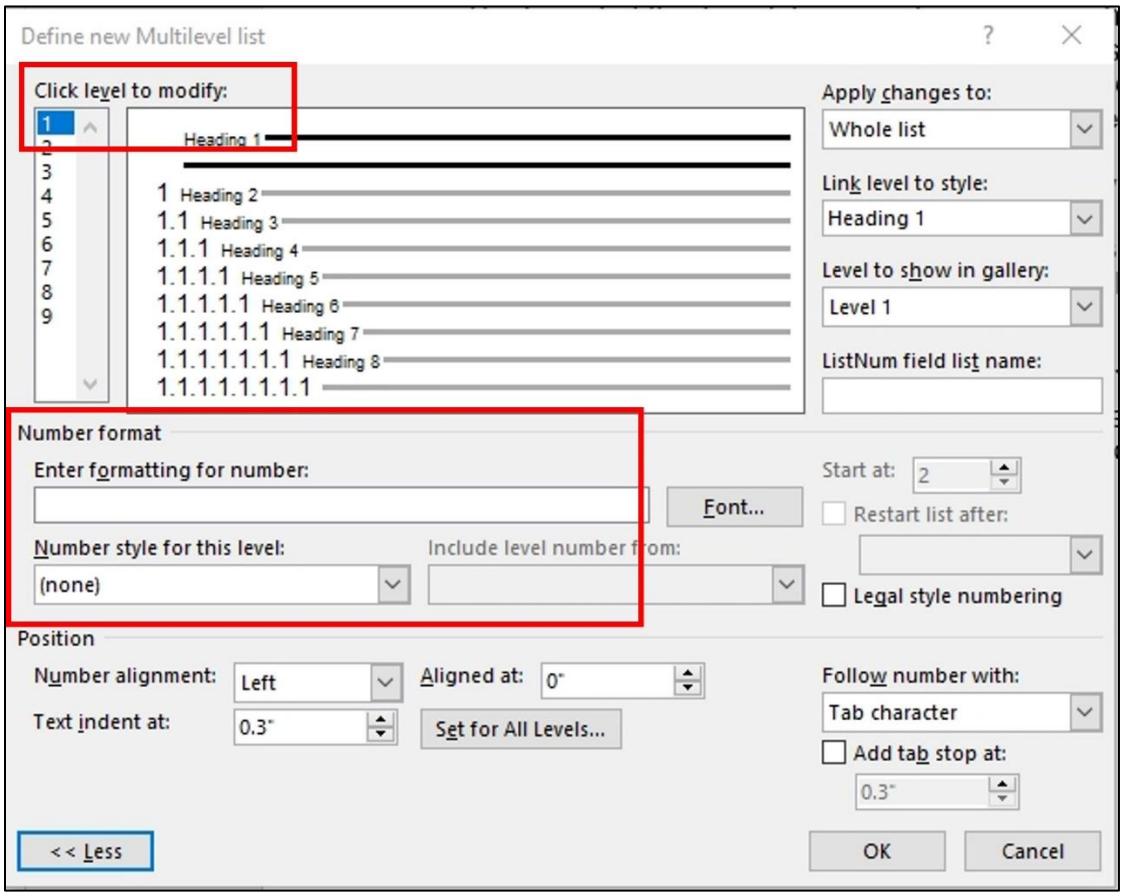
5. The heading styles should now be updated and include numbering.
6. All text assigned a heading style will be automatically numbered.

2.2.1 Adjust heading level numbering

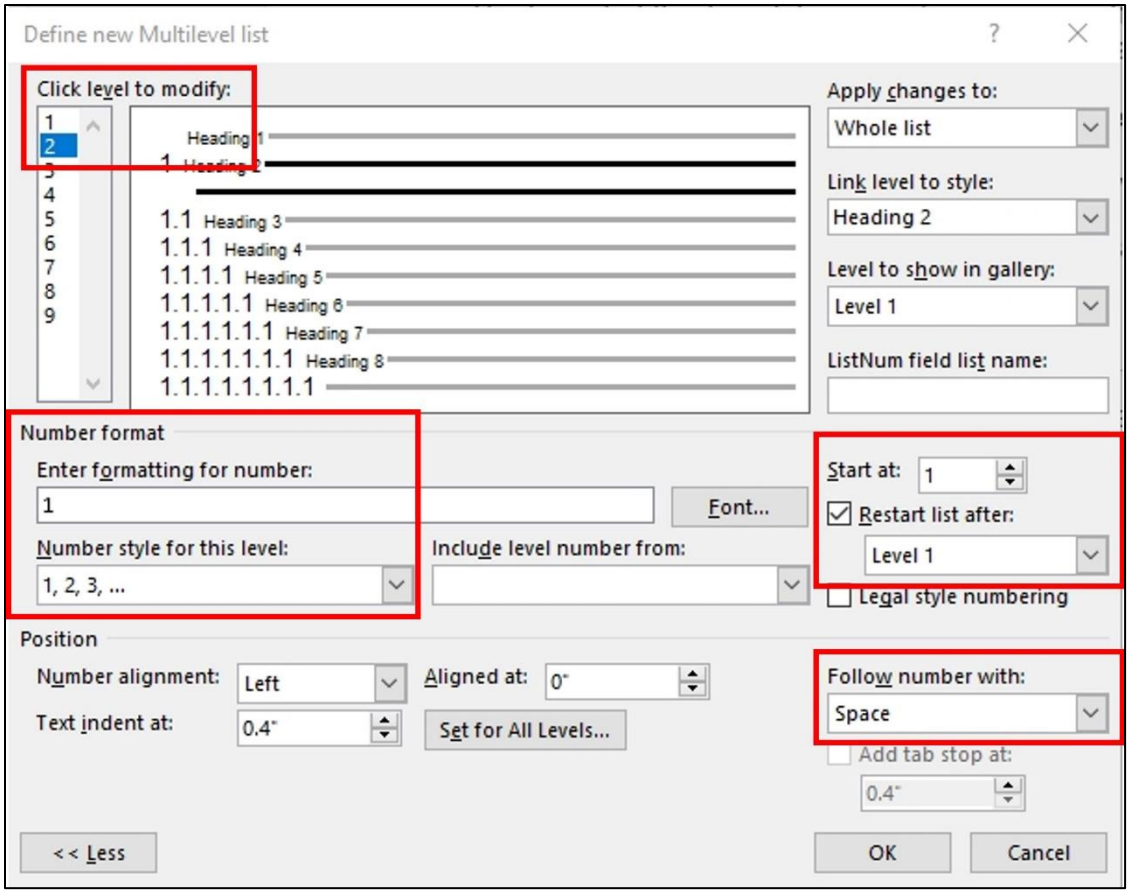
As Heading 1 in the thesis templates has been assigned to the thesis title on the title page, it should not be numbered. You can adjust the multi-level list properties so that only Headings 2 – 6 will be numbered.

1. Click on the number at the start of the first section title that is assigned a Heading level 1 (e.g., your thesis title on the title page to highlight all heading titles that are assigned Heading Level 1 in grey).
2. Right click and select **Adjust List Indents**.
3. In the Define New Multilevel List window, choose the **More>>** button.
4. To remove the numbering scheme from Heading Level 1:
    c. In the **Click level to modify** section, select **1**.
    d. In the Number Format section:

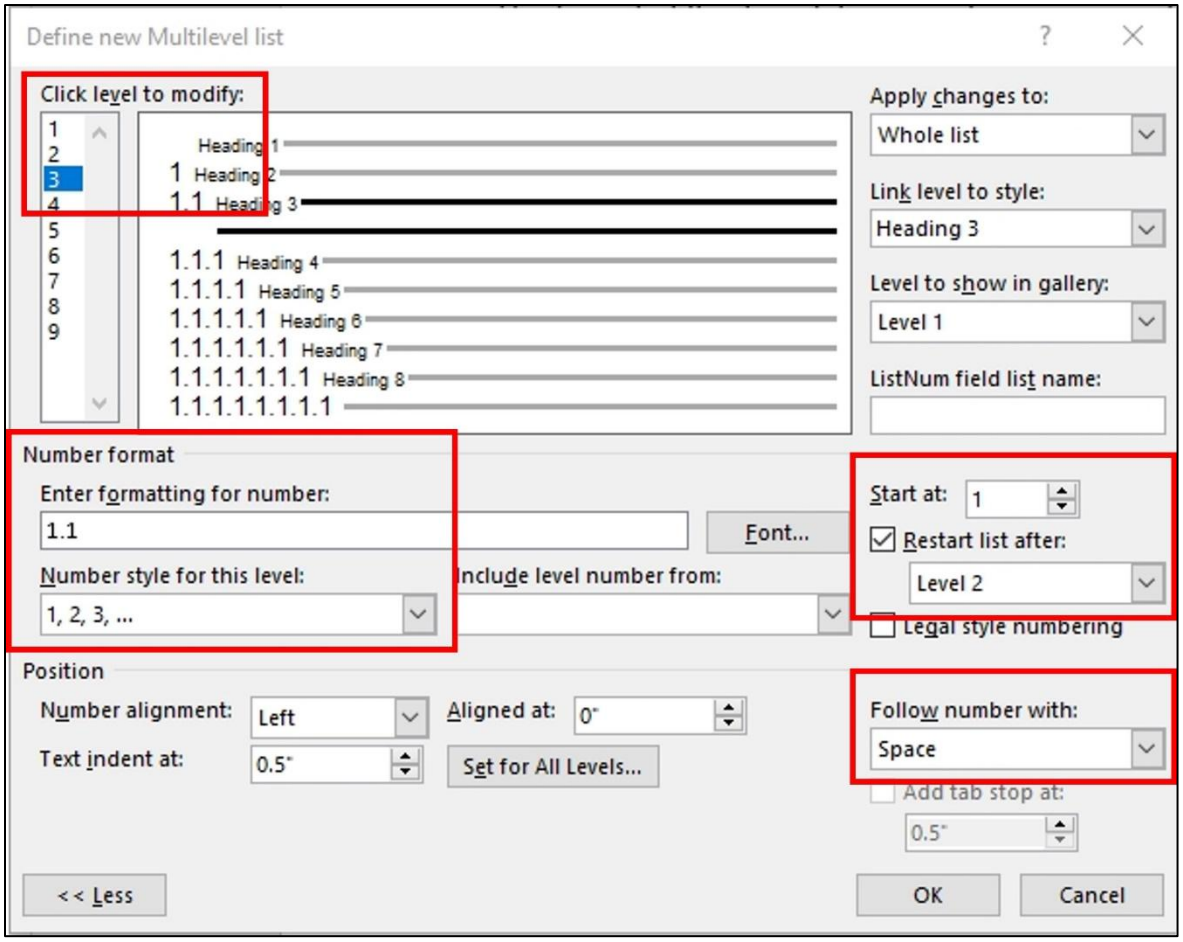
i. For the **Enter formatting for number** field, remove the pre-filled numbering so that the field is blank.
ii. Ensure **Number style for this leve**l is set to (none).



5. To reset the numbering scheme to start at Heading Level 2:
    a. In the **Click level to modify** section, select **2**.
    b. In the Number Format section:
        i. For the **Enter formatting for number** field, reset the numbering to '**1**'.
        ii. Ensure **Number style for this level** is set to '**1,2,3…**'.
        iii. **Uncheck** the box beside the **Restart the list** field.
    c. In the Position section:
        i. For the **Follow number** with field, select **Space** from the drop-down menu.



6. To reset the numbering scheme to start at Heading Level 3:
    a. In the **Click level to modify** section, choose **3**.
    b. In the Number Format section:
        i. For the **Enter formatting for number** field, reset the numbering to '**1.1**'.
        ii. Ensure **Number style for this level** is set to '**1,2,3…**'.
        iii. **Check** the box beside the **Restart the list** field and make sure **Level 2** is selected in the option list.
    c. In the Position section:
        i. For the **Follow number** with field, select **Space** from the drop-down menu.



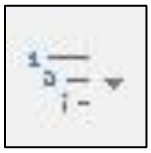
7. To reset the numbering scheme to start at Heading Level 4:
    a. In the **Click level to modify** section, choose **4**.
    b. In the Number Format section:
        i. For the **Enter formatting for number** field, reset the numbering to '**1.1.1**'.
        ii. Ensure **Number style** of this thesis is set to '**1,2,3…**'.
        iii. Check the box beside the **Restart the list** field and make sure **Level 3** is selected in the option list.
    c. In the Position section:
        i. For the **Follow number** with field, select **Space** from the drop-down menu.
8. Repeat Step 7 for Headings 5 and 6, adjusting the numbering and restart list field as required.
9. Once you have finished setting all the levels, select **OK**.

2.2.2 Remove automated numbering of chapters and sections

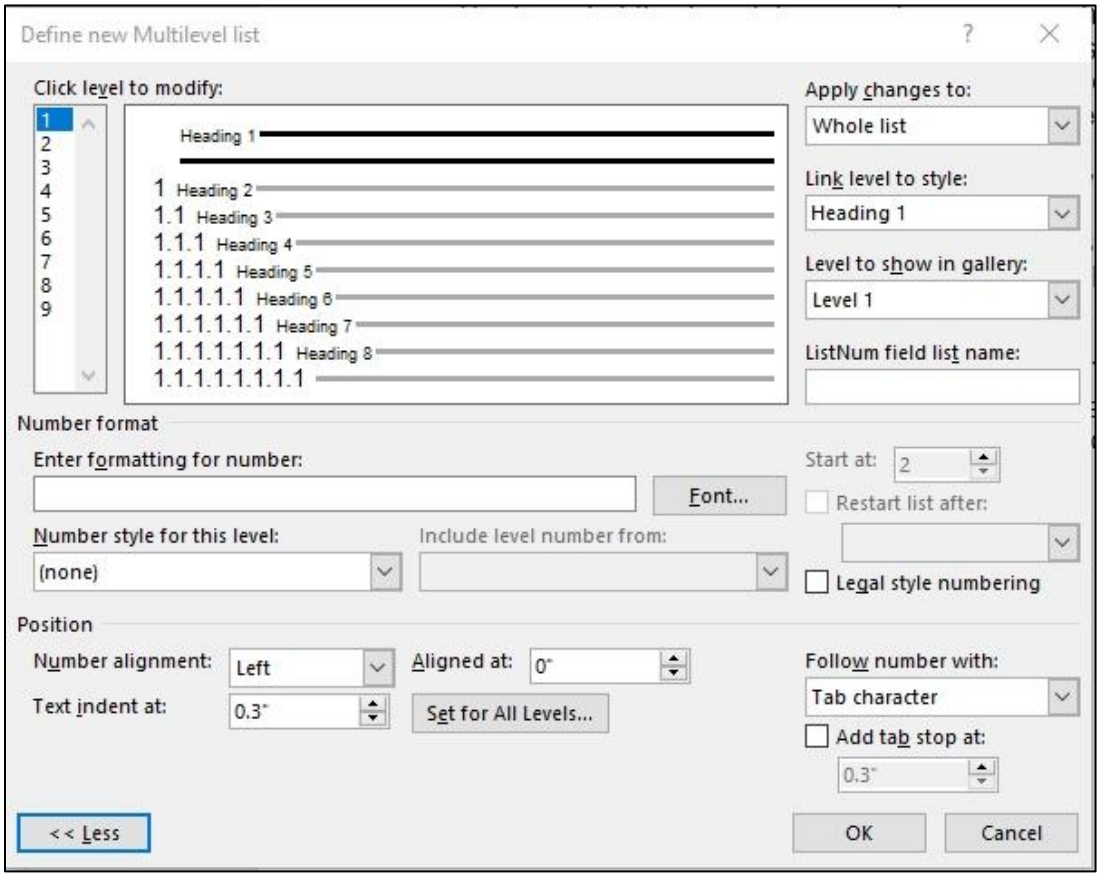
To remove automated numbering of chapters and sections:

1. Place your cursor in front of the first Heading 1 of the document.

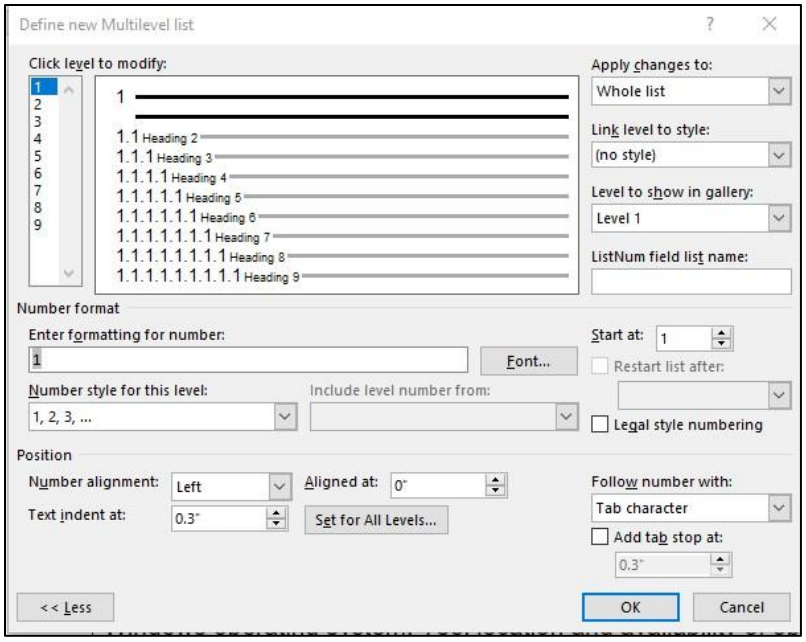
2. Under Home in the main menu bar and in the Paragraph section of the toolbar, select the **Multilevel List** icon.



3. Select **Define New Multilevel List** from the drop-down menu. In the Define new Multilevel list window, you may have to choose the **More >>** button at the bottom left of the window to expand the window to view all available settings.



4. In the Define New Multilevel List window, set **Link level to style** to **(no style)** for each numbering level.

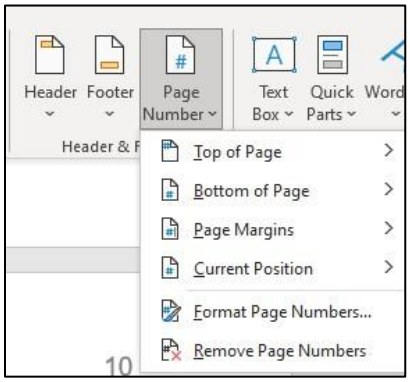


5. Select **OK.**

2.3 Adding page numbers

To automatically add page numbering into the header or footer of the document:

1. Select **Insert** in the main menu bar.
2. Within the Header & Footer section of the toolbar, select **Page Number**.
3. Using the drop-down menu options, you can choose to place the page numbers at either the Top of Page or Bottom of Page.



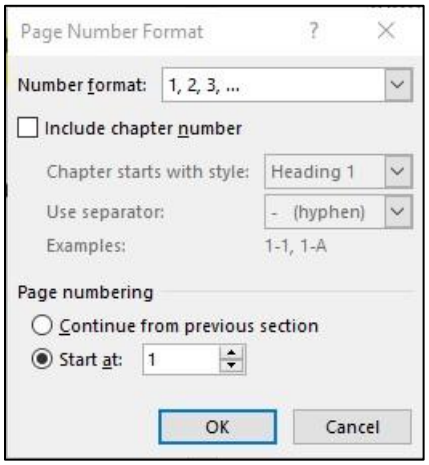
4. You can set the format of the page number under **Format Page Numbers**.
5. In the **Page Number Format** window, select a **Number Format** from the drop-down menu (e.g., numbers, Roman numerals, letters).
6. Select **OK**.

2.3.1 Change page numbering after a section break

To use different page numbering formats in your thesis, such as Roman numerals and Arabic numerals, each numbering format must be in its own section. Add a section break before changing the numbering format (see Section 2.4 Creating breaks in the document).

To change how page numbering is displayed within different sections of your document:

1. Insert a Section Break (see Section 2.4.2 Section breaks) at the start of the sub-set of pages you wish to change the numbering format for.
2. Double click in the area around a page number in the new section to open the Header & Footer tool bar.
3. Select **Page Number** and then **Format Page Number**.
4. Choose the **Number format**.
5. If you want the page numbering to continue from a previous section, select **Continue from previous section**.
6. If you want to start a new numbering, select **Start at:** and indicate the number you would like the numbering to start with.
7. Repeat steps 1 to 6 for each sub-section of pages that you need to adjust the numbering format for.



2.3.2 Suppressing a page number

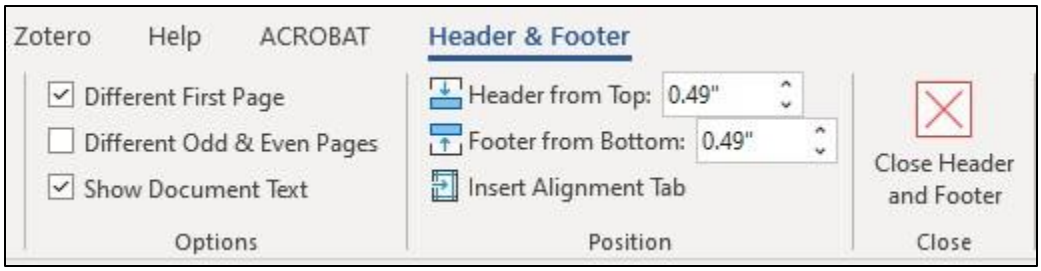
The method below suppresses the page number only on the first page of a section. To suppress page numbers on additional pages, place each page in its own section by inserting section breaks before and after the page (Section 2.4.2 Section Breaks).

To suppress a page number:

1. Open the header/footer for the page by double clicking in the area around the page number you want to suppress.



2. In the Header & Footer toolbar within the **Options** section, select the radio box for **Different First Page**.



3. Either select the **Close the Header and Footer** button in the menu bar or double-click anywhere outside the header/footer. The page number on the first page of the section is no longer displayed. Note that the page will still count as a page in the Table of Contents.



2.3.2.1 Suppressing page numbers for a multi-page Abstract

OGPS' formatting requirements call for page numbers to be suppressed on the Title Page and Abstract. The ETD templates already suppress the page number on the Title Page and on a one-page Abstract. If your Abstract is longer than one page, add a section break before each additional Abstract page and suppress the page number for those pages as well.

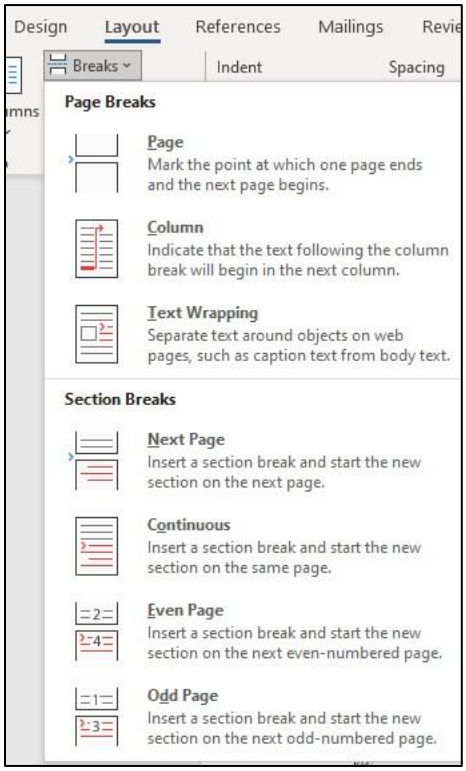
2.3.2.2 Creating breaks in the document

Breaks can be used to start a chapter or section on a new page or to create a 'section break' in the document.

2.3.3 Page Breaks

Use page breaks to start a new page rather than pressing Enter multiple times. If a subheading appears at the bottom of a page without at least two lines of text below it, move the subheading to the next page using a page break.

1. Place your cursor where you would like to insert a page break (e.g., at the beginning of a section title).
2. Select **Layout** in the main menu bar.
3. Select **Breaks** from the **Page Setup** section of the toolbar.
4. Select **Page** from the drop-down menu.



2.3.4 Section breaks

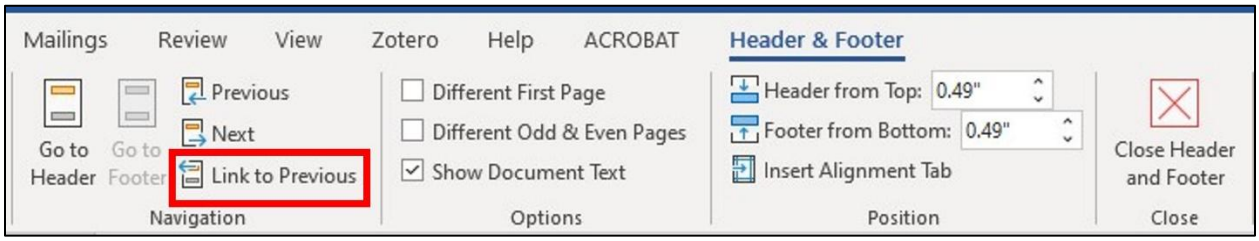
Section breaks let you change the layout or formatting of different parts of a document. For example, you can use section breaks to apply different page numbering styles or to suppress page numbers on specific pages.

1. Place your cursor where you would like to insert a break (e.g., at the beginning of a section title).
2. Select **Layout** from the main menu bar.
3. Select **Breaks** from the **Page Setup** section of the toolbar.
4. Select **Next Page** from the drop-down menu. Note that a Next Page break will insert the section break at the beginning of the next page of the document. If you want a section to start a new section on the same page as the previous section, then insert a Continuous section break.

2.3.5 Removing the link between sections

By default, headers and footers in a new section are linked to the previous section. To use different headers, footers, or page numbering between sections, you must first remove this link.

1. Open the header/footer for a page within a section by double clicking in the area within the upper or lower margin of the page.
2. Place your cursor within header (or footer).
3. In the Header & Footer menu, within the Navigation group, select **Link to previous**. This will remove the link between the current section and the previous section for the header (or footer).



4. Change the formatting of the header (or footer) as required. When complete, close the header/footer

2.3.6 Other types of breaks

There are other types of Page and Section breaks available. To add a break to your document:

1. Select **Layout** from the main menu bar.
2. Select **Breaks** in the **Page Setup** section of the toolbar.
3. Select from different types of **Page Breaks** or **Section Breaks** options.

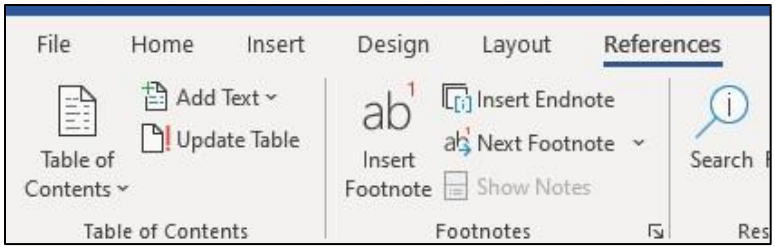
2.4 Automatically generate a Table of Contents

Only text formatted with a Heading style can be included in the Table of Contents. If content appears in the Table of Contents that should not be there, ensure it is formatted with the Normal style instead of a Heading style.

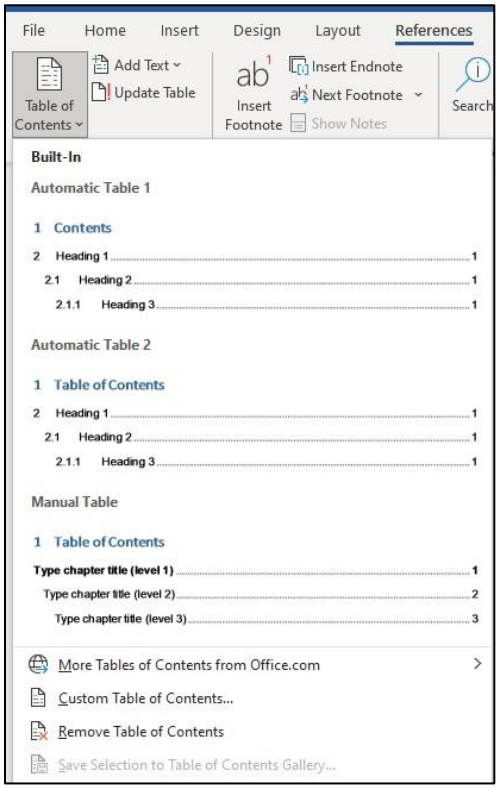
2.4.1 Create a Table of Contents

To automatically create a Table of Contents for the document:

1. Place your cursor on the page in your document where you wish to insert your Table of Contents.
2. Select **References** in the main menu bar.
3. In the Table of Contents section of the toolbar, select the **Table of Contents** icon.



4. Chose a style from the drop-down menu or create a custom design.



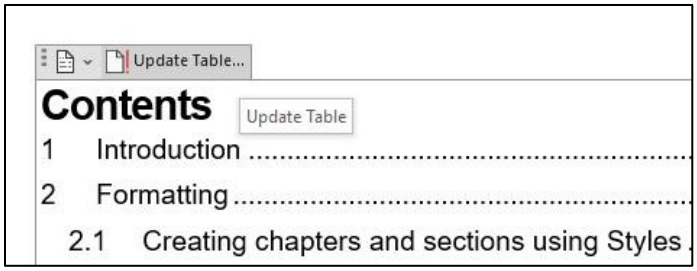
5. A Table of Contents will be added into the document.

2.4.2 Update a generated Table of Contents

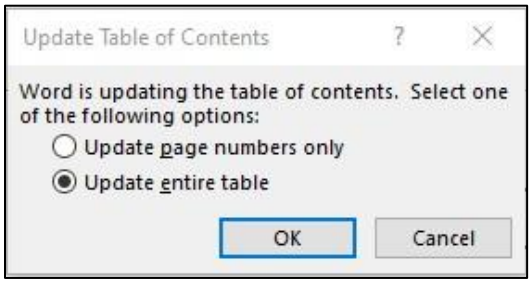
If you add new sections into your document, or the placement of section headings changes as you work on your document, the Table of Contents will need to be updated.

To update the Table of Contents:

1. Select the Table of Contents.
2. In the top left corner, choose **Update Table**.



3. Select either **Update page numbers only** or **Update entire table**. It is recommended that you select **Update entire table** as this will update both the section headings as well as the page numbers in the contents.



4. Select **OK**.

2.5 Changing the orientation of a page

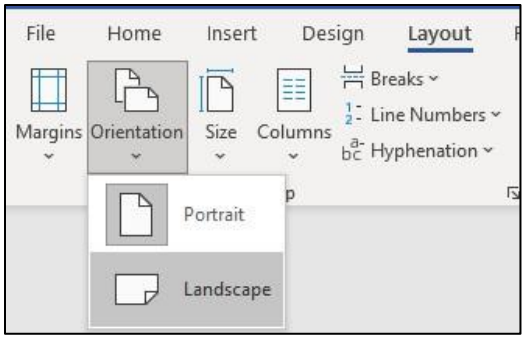
To change the orientation of a page, you first need to insert a section break both before and after the page.

To insert section breaks:

1. Place your cursor at the beginning of the section you want to break.
2. Select **Layout** in the main menu bar.
3. Select **Breaks** from the Page Setup section in the toolbar.
4. Select **Next Page**.
5. Repeat steps after placing cursor at the end of the section you wish to break.

To change the page orientation:

1. Place your cursor on the page you want to orient.
2. Select the **Layout** in the main menu bar.
3. In the Page Setup section of the toolbar, select **Orientation**.
4. Select **Landscape** from the drop-down menu.



Note: If section breaks were not used, all pages that are included in that section of the document will be re-oriented.

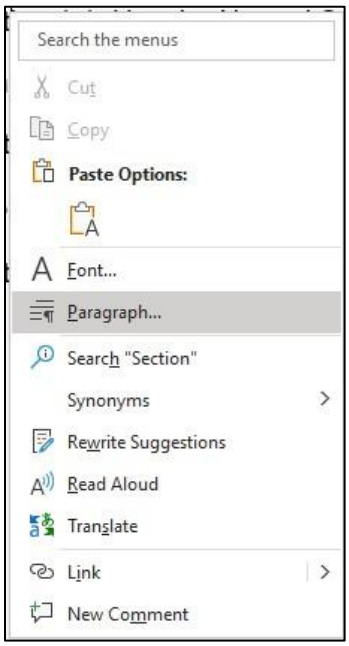
2.6 Adding spacing to the document

Instead of relying on tabs, spaces, and carriage returns (i.e., hitting the enter button) to add formatting into a document, use the **Paragraph** menu to apply formatting to selected text or to modify a Style's settings to apply formatting to all text assigned to that style.

2.6.1 Apply formatting/spacing to selected text

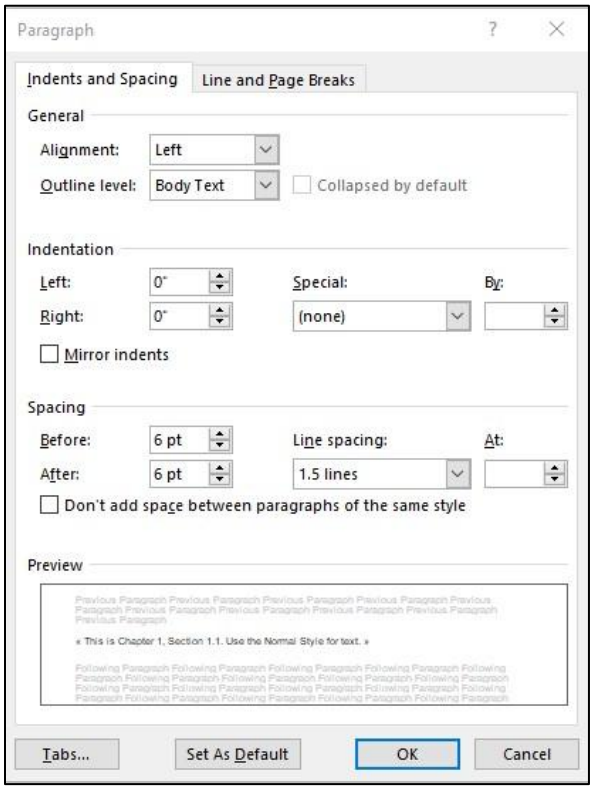
To adjust margins, indentation and spacing for text:

1. Highlight the text.
2. Right click and select **Paragraph** from the context (short-cut) drop-down menu.



- In the Paragraph window, use the options to set formatting and spacing
    - Under General

        - Set the alignment of the text (e.g., align left, centred, align right, justify).
        - Outline level
            - If the text highlighted has been assigned a heading style, the outline level will match the heading level (e.g., Level 1 to 9 matches Headings 1 to 9).
            - All other text will have an Outline Level of Body Text.
    - Under Indentation
        - Set the **left/right** indentation.
        - Use the **Special** option
            - To apply indentation to the **First line** only.
            - To create **Hanging** lines (where all lines after the first are indented by a set amount).
    - Under Spacing
        - Use **Before** and **After** to set the amount of space between individual paragraphs – 6pt works well.
        - Use **Line spacing** to set the number of spaces between lines within a paragraph – 1 to 1.5 lines works well.



2.6.2 Apply formatting/spacing to a Style

To adjust margins, indentation, and spacing for a style:

1. Right click on the style in the Styles menu.

2. Select **Modify** from the drop-down menu.
3. In the **Modify Style** window, choose the **Format** button at the bottom of the window and select **Paragraph**.
4. Apply settings as required.
5. Select **OK**.

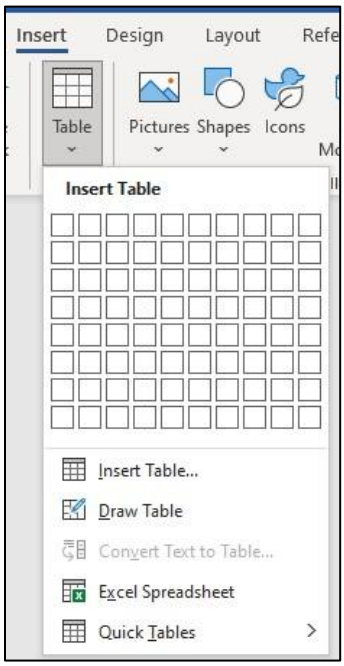
2.7 Creating and captioning tables

Create tables directly in Word rather than inserting images or screenshots of tables. This improves accessibility and ensures that screen readers can properly interpret the table's content.

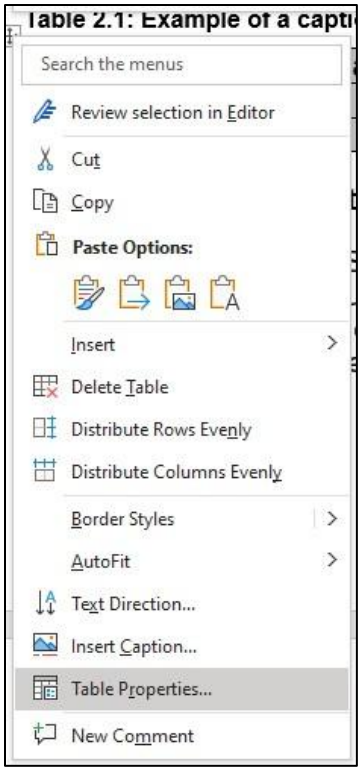
2.7.1 Creating a table

To insert a table:

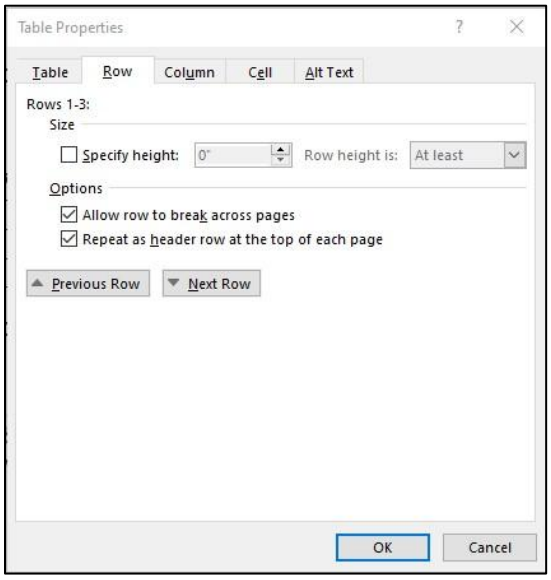
1. Under Insert in the main menu, select Table.
2. A drop-down menu will open allowing you to select the size and design of the table.



3. Once the table has been created, highlight the table, and right click.
4. Select **Table Properties** from the drop-down menu. Note that there are several options available in this drop-down menu for adjusting the design of the table (e.g., Text direction, Row/Column distribution, Border Styles, Captioning).



5. In the Table Properties window, select the **Row** tab. Under options, make sure both '**Allow rows to break across pages**' and '**Repeat as header row at the top of each page**' are selected.



6. Define your header row and first column, by clicking on the table and then select the **Table Design** tab in the main menu.
7. In the Table Style Options section:
    a) Select Header Row to set column headers.
    b) Select First Column to set the row headers.

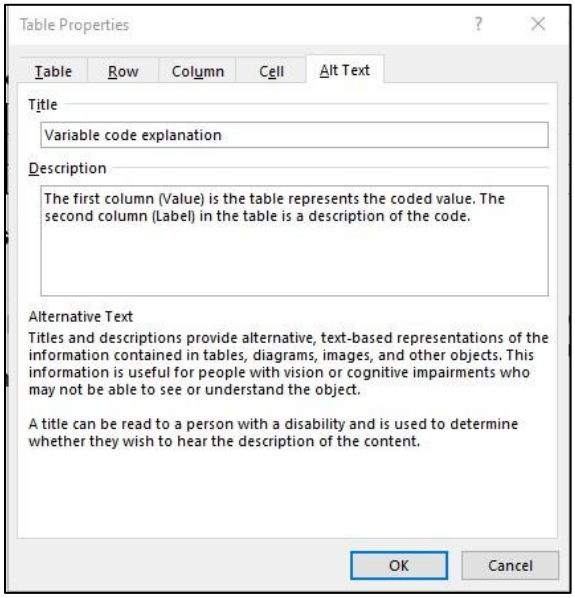


Note: As a best practice, avoid using merged, split, or blank cells in tables whenever possible. Instead of leaving cells blank, use a value such as N/A or Not applicable. These types of cells can make tables more difficult for screen readers and other assistive technologies to interpret and navigate.

2.7.2 Adding alternative text to a table

Adding alternative text to tables improves accessibility by helping screen reader users understand the table's purpose and content. Keep alt text brief and descriptive, and do not repeat information already provided in the table caption or the surrounding text. For guidance on writing effective alt text, see the WebAIM's Alternative Text guide.

1. In the Table Properties window, select the **Alt Text** tab. Add a name for the table in the **Title** text box and a brief explanation of the table in the **Description** text box.

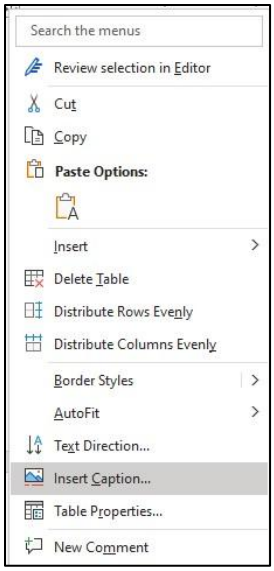


2. Select **OK**.

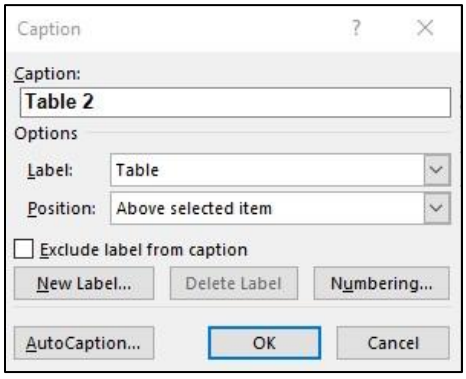
2.7.3 Captioning a table

To add table captions:

1. Select the table.
2. Right-click and select **Insert Caption** from the context (short-cut) menu.



3. In the Caption window, under **Caption**, enter a description of the table. The table numbers will automatically be numbered consecutively.
4. Set the **Label** to **Table**.
5. You can select the position of the caption, generally a table caption is '**Above selected item**'.

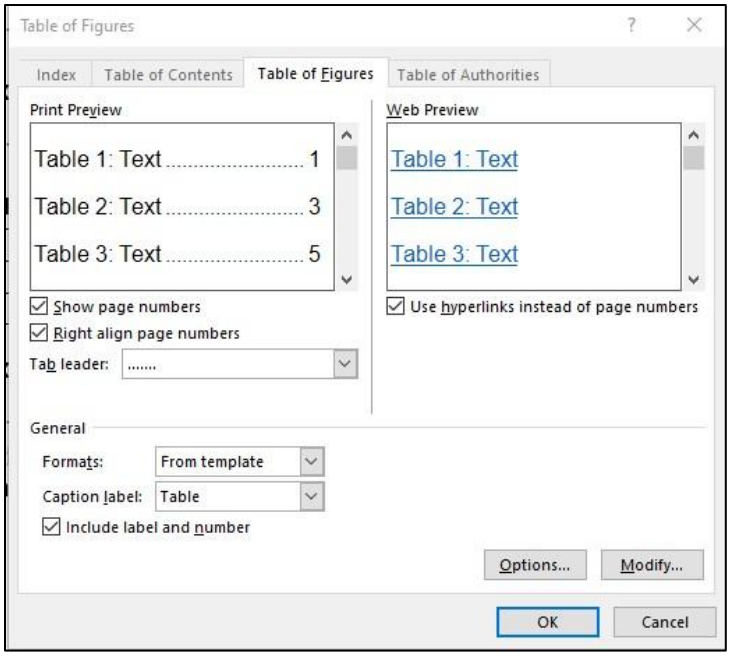


6. Select **OK**.

2.7.4 Create a listing of tables

A listing of tables can be created if you added captions to the tables.

1. Select **References** in the menu bar.
2. In the Captions section of the toolbar, select **Insert Tables of Figures**.
3. In the Table of Figures window, set the **Caption label** to **Table**.



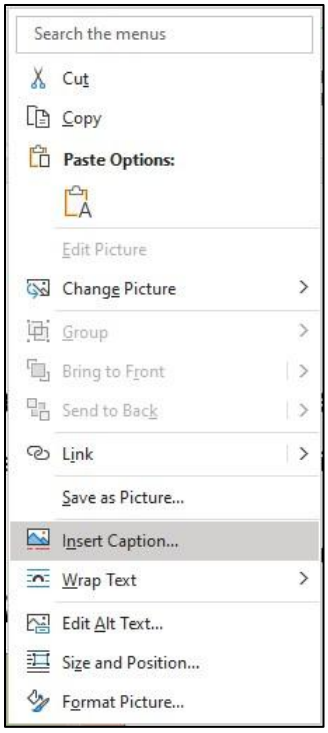
4. Select **OK**.

2.8 Creating captions and lists for figures

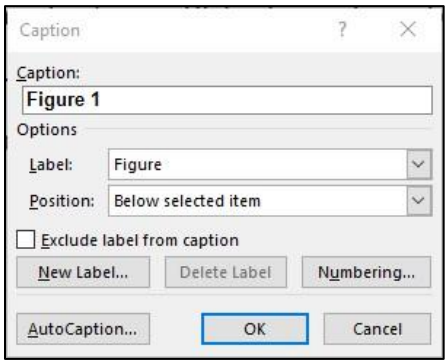
2.8.1 Creating captions for figures

To create figure captions.

1. Select the figure.
2. Right-click and select **Insert Caption** from the context (short-cut) menu.



3. In the Caption window, under **Caption**, enter a description of the figure. The figure numbers will automatically be numbered consecutively
4. Set the **Label** to **Figure**.
5. You can select the position of the caption, generally a figure caption is '**Below selected item**'.

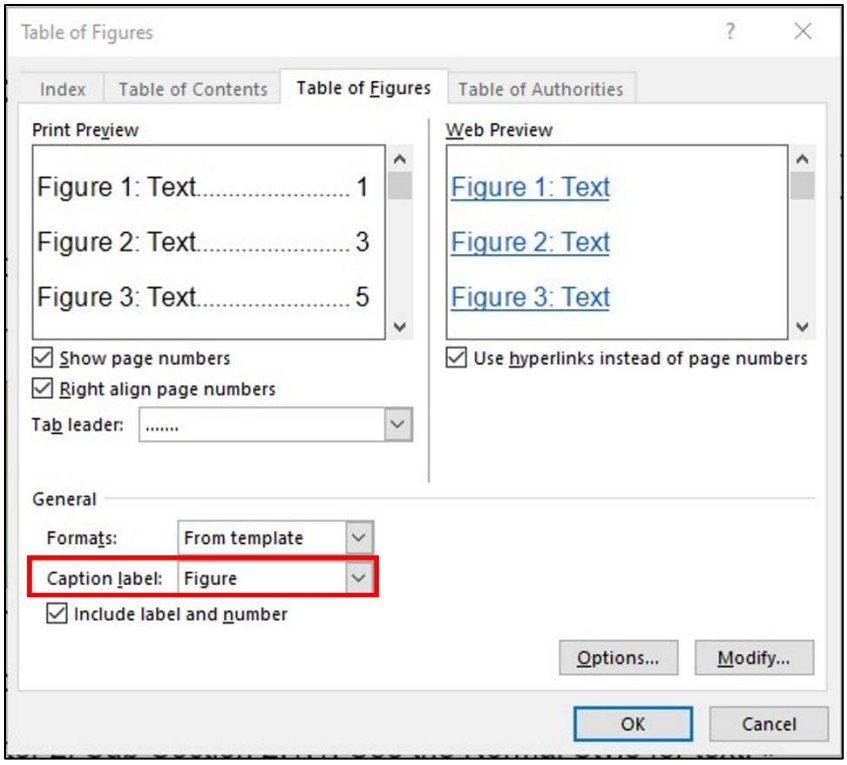


6. Select **OK**.

2.8.2 Create a listing of figures

A listing of tables can be created if you added captions to the tables.

1. Select **References** in the menu bar.
2. In the Captions section of the toolbar, select **Insert Tables of Figures**.
3. In the Table of Figures window, set the **Caption label** to **Figure**.



4. Select **OK**.

2.8.3 Adding alternative text to figures

To improve the accessibility of your thesis, add alternative text (alt text) to figures. Alt text helps screen reader users understand the purpose and content of an image. Keep alt text brief and descriptive, and do not repeat information already included in the figure caption or surrounding text.

When creating alt text:

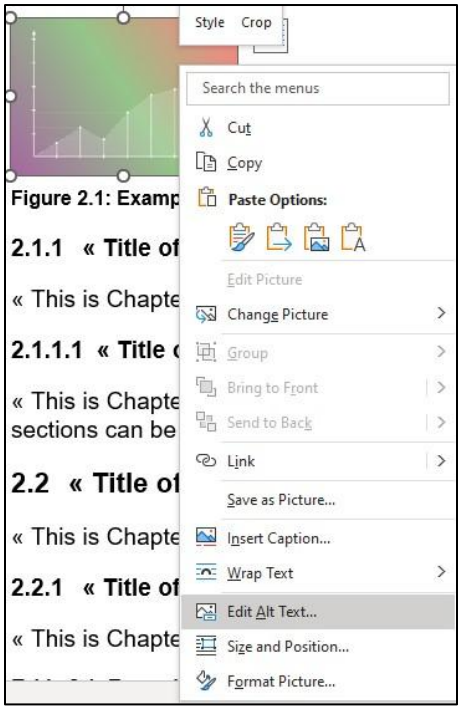
- Add alt text to images and figures that convey information or serve a purpose.
- Keep it brief and meaningful.
- Do not repeat information already provided in the caption or surrounding text.
- Do not include phrases such as "image of" or "graphic of."
- Include any meaningful text shown in the image.
- For decorative images, leave the alt text blank and select “Mark as decorative”. Decorative images include visual elements that do not add information, such as borders or purely decorative graphics.

For additional guidance on writing effective alt text, see the WebAIM’s Alternative Text guide.

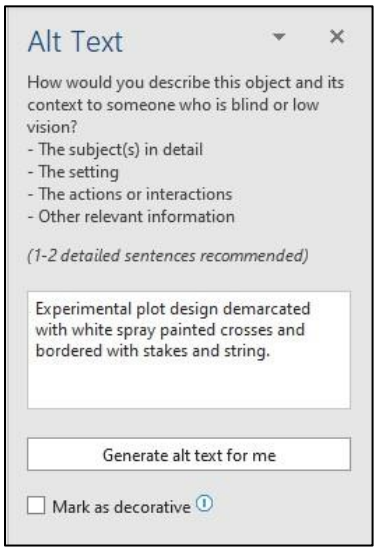
To add alternative text to a figure:

1. Select the figure.

2. Right click and select **Edit Alt Text** from the context (short-cut) menu.



3. In the **Alt Text** panel, enter a brief description of the figure.



2.8.4 Figures with overlaid graphics

If a figure contains added graphics such as arrows, boxes, or labels, screen readers may interpret these as separate objects and miss their intended meaning. To improve accessibility, use image-editing software to combine all elements into a single image before inserting it into your document.

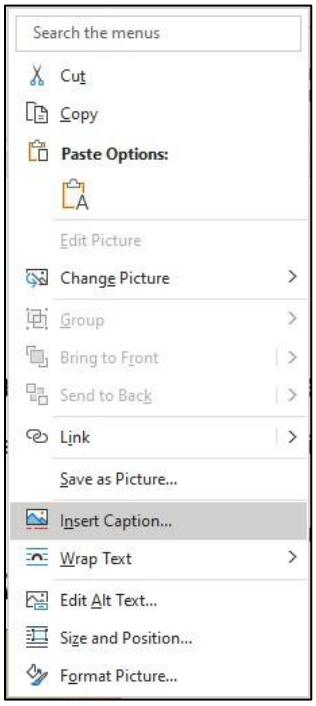
2.9 Creating captions and lists for other object types

Other objects may include plates or illustrations.

2.9.1 Creating captions for other objects

To create captions for other objects:

1. Select the object.
2. Right click and select **Insert Caption** from the context (short cut) menu.



3. In the Caption window, select the **New Label** button.
4. In the New Label window, enter the label title (e.g., Plate) and click **OK**.



5. In the main Caption window, the new label will now be an option in the Label menu.

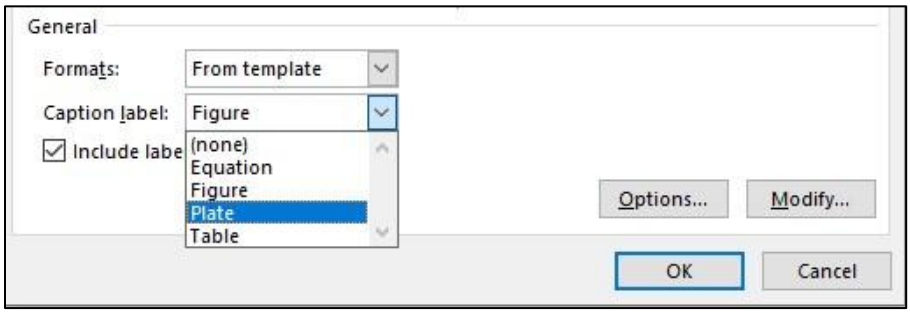


6. Under **Caption**, enter a description of the object. The object numbers will automatically be numbered consecutively.
7. Select the position of the label.
8. Select **OK**.

2.9.2 Create a listing of objects

A listing of tables can be created if you added captions to the tables.

1. Select **References** in the main menu.
2. In the Captions section of the toolbar, select **Insert Tables of Figures**.
3. In the Table of Figures window, set **Caption Label** to the object label (e.g., Plate).



4. Select **OK**.

2.10 Including chapter numbers in captions

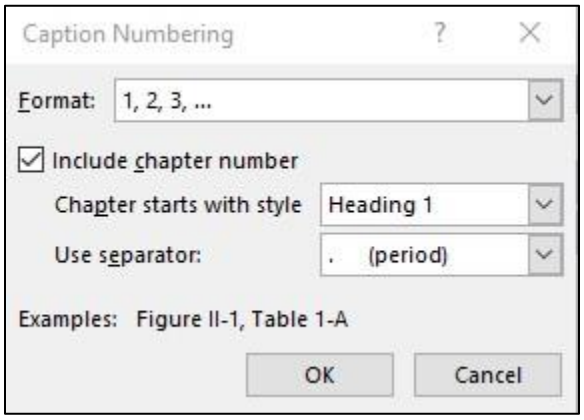
To include chapter numbers in your captions, one of your heading styles must be set to automatically generate chapter numbers. See Section 2.2 for instructions on how to auto-generate chapter numbers.

Note: In the ETD Template, Headings 1 is set to auto-generate chapter numbers.

To add chapter numbers to captions:

1. Select an object in your document (e.g., table, figure, etc.) and right click.
2. Select **Insert caption** from the context (short cut) menu.
3. In the Captions window, select **Numbering**.
4. Check off the radio box for **Include chapter number**.

5. Under **Chapters starts with style**, select the **Heading 1**.
6. Under **Use separator**, select a delimiter (e.g., hyphen, period, colon).

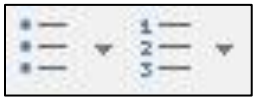


7. Select **OK**.

2.11 Creating formatted lists

To create a formatted list use:

1. The **List Paragraph** style, or the **Bullets** or **Numbering** tools accessed through the Paragraph section in the Home toolbar.



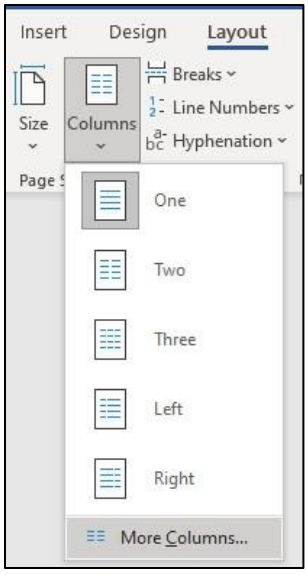
2. To create nested lists, use the **Increase Indent** or **Decrease Indent** tools.



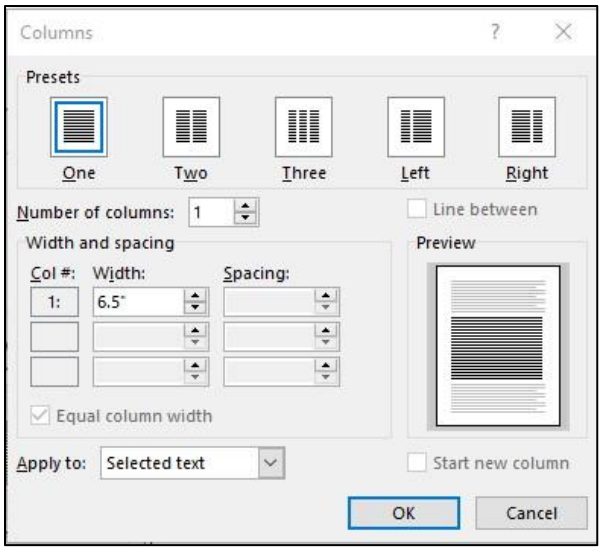
2.12 Creating columns out of lists

To break a list of text into multiple columns, use the Column tool.

1. Highlight the text you want to break into columns.
2. Select **Layout** in the main menu bar.
3. Select **Columns** in the Page Setup section of the toolbar.
4. Select the number of columns you wish to create or the **More Columns** option.



5. If you select the **More Columns** option you can set the number of columns, the width and the spacing of the columns.



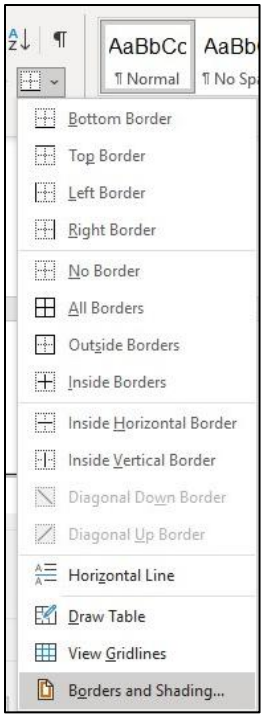
6. Select **OK**.

2.13 Adding borders around text

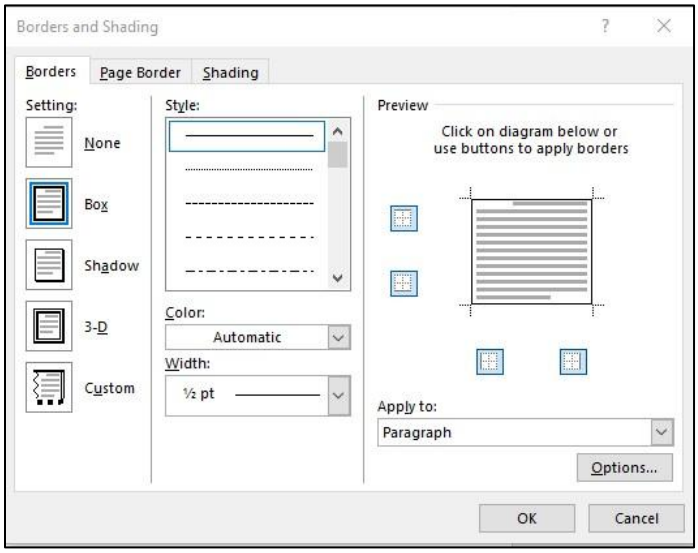
If you want to emphasize a portion of text, instead of using text boxes or inserting lines to show a break in the text, place a border around the text.

To add a border around a group of text:

1. Highlight the text.
2. Select Home in the main menu bar and in the Paragraph section of the toolbar, click on the down arrow beside the **Borders** icon.
3. Select **Borders and Shading** from the drop-down menu.



4. In the Boarders and Shading window, select the **Borders** tab.
5. Under **Setting**, select **Box**.
6. Set the style, colour, and width of the border.
7. Under **Apply to**, set as **Paragraph**.



8. Select **Ok**.

You will end up with text inside of a box.

2.14 Adding hyperlinks

Use descriptive hyperlinks so readers can easily understand where a link will take them.

- Use descriptive text: Avoid vague phrases such as "click here," "read more," or "link."
- Keep link text concise: Link key words or short phrases rather than entire sentences.
- Make links unique: Links with similar text should lead to the same destination.
- Keep links visually distinct: Use Word's default blue underlined hyperlink style, or ensure custom links remain underlined and have sufficient color contrast. Do not underline non-linked text.

Example of a good link insertion

In the following example, the link itself fully describes what the link is directing to without needing the surrounding text for context.

> "The University of Guelph's Accessibility Resources – Document Accessibility webpage provides a variety of guides for making accessible documents."

2.15 Font

When choosing a font:

- A sans serif font type is preferred (e.g., New Times Roman or Arial)
- Use a font size of 12 pt. for normal text
- Larger font sizes can be used in headings
- Non-standard typefaces, such as script, should not be used except for commonly accepted symbols

2.15.1 Bold

To bold text:

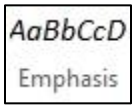
1. Highlight the text you want to bold and apply the **Strong** style to the selected text



2.15.2 Italics

To add italics:

1. Highlight the text you want to italicize and apply the **Emphasis** style to the selected text.



2. There is also a **Subtle Emphasis** and **Intense Emphasis** style.

2.16 Show hidden code

It is sometimes useful to see hidden codes that mark formatting such as paragraphs, tabs, page breaks and section breaks within the document.

1. Select Home in the main menu bar, select the **Show/Hide ¶** icon from the Paragraph section of the toolbar.



2. To hide the codes, click on the **Show/Hide ¶** icon again.

2.17 Clear formatting

To clear formatting from selected text:

1. Highlight a portion of text and click the **Clear All Formatting** icon located within the Font section of the Home toolbar.



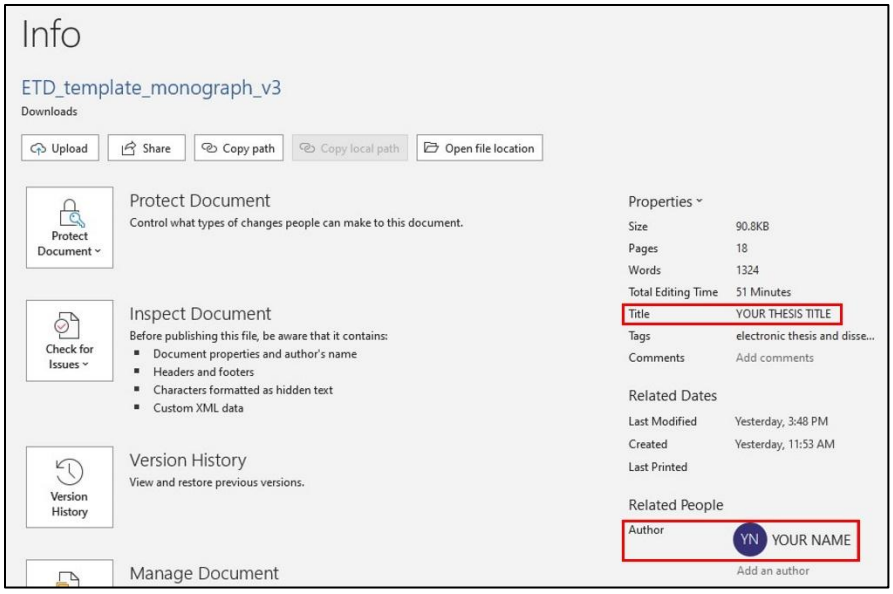
3 Updating document properties

Adding a title and author into your document's file properties will aid individuals using assistive technologies to quickly identify the file and understand the file contents.

Note: If you have used OGPS' ETD Template, be sure to update the document properties so that the file properties title and author fields reflect that of your thesis.

To update the file properties:

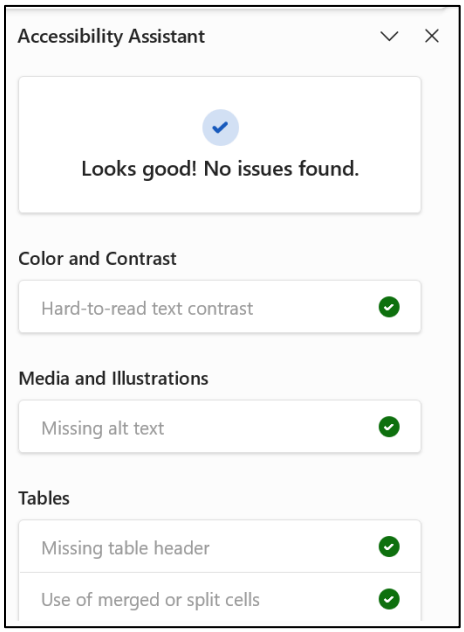
1. Select **File** in the main menu bar.
2. Select **Info** in the left-hand panel.
3. Under the **Properties** section on the right-hand side of the Info window:
    a. Update the **Title** field, removing 'UG ETD Template' and adding the title of your thesis.
    b. Update the **Author** field with your full name.



4 Accessibility checks

MS Office 365 products running on a Windows operating systems have built in accessibility checkers that can be used to review the accessibility of your document.

1. Select **Review** in the main menu bar.
2. In the Review menu bar, select **Check Accessibility** and then choose **Check Accessibility** the drop-down menu.
3. The **Accessibility Assistant** will open, and accessibility errors, warnings, and suggestions will be listed. You can select each item to learn more about the issue and potential methods for fixing it.



Note: Word's Accessibility Checker evaluates many common accessibility issues based on the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.2. However, it may not identify every accessibility issue in your document. Running the checker and addressing any issues it finds is a recommended best practice, but additional review may still be needed to ensure full accessibility compliance.

5 Saving your document as a PDF

When creating a PDF version of your thesis, save it as a tagged PDF to preserve the document structure and accessibility features created in Word.

5.1 Adobe Acrobat Pro

If you are using Adobe Acrobat Pro:

1. Select **File** from the main menu bar.
2. In the drop-down menu, choose **Create** and then select **PDF from File**.
3. In the **Open** window, navigate to, and select the desired document to convert.
4. Choose **Open** to begin the file conversion.

5.2 Adobe Acrobat add-in in MS Word

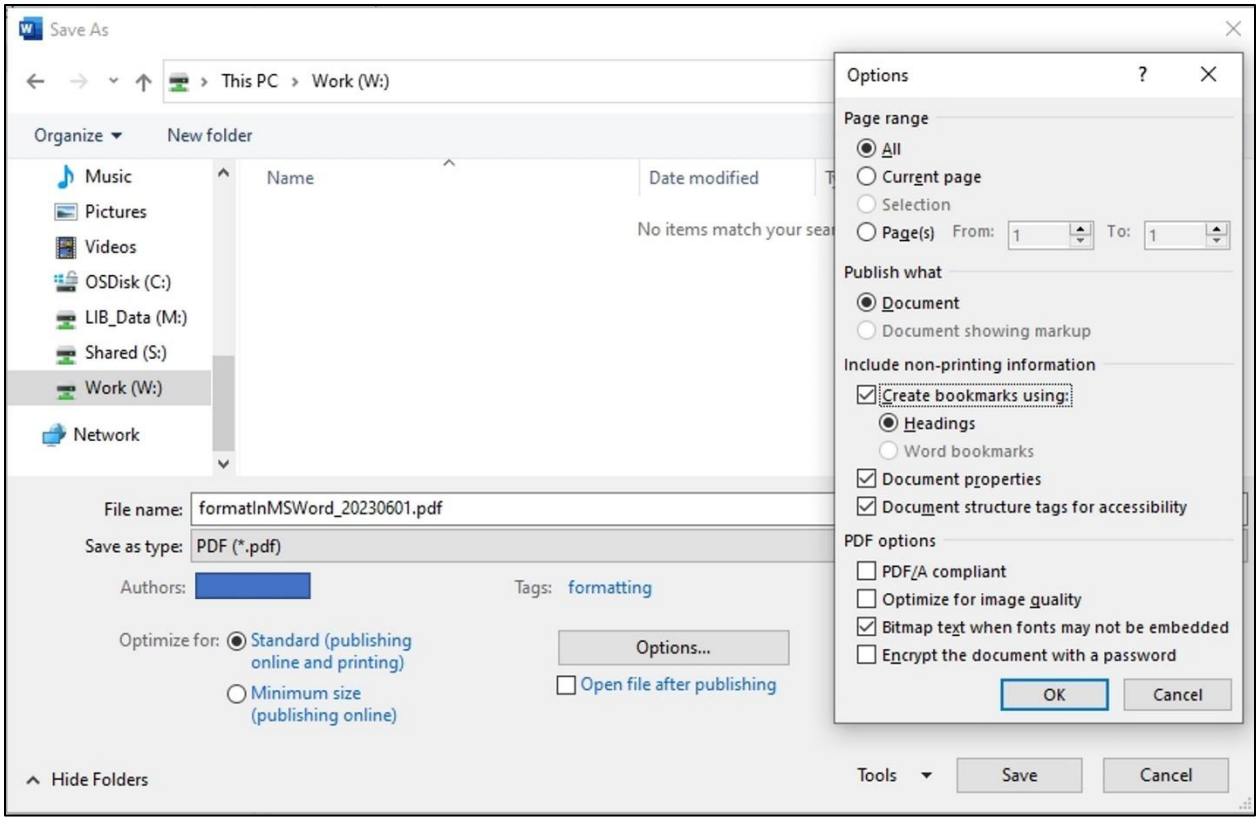
If your version of MS Word has an Adobe Acrobat add-in application:

1. In the main menu, choose the **Acrobat** tab.
2. Select **Create PDF**.
3. In the **Save Adobe PDF File as** window**,** choose **Options**.
4. In the Adobe PDFMaker window make sure that the radio button for '**Enable Accessibility and Reflow with tagged Adobe PDF**' is selected.

5.3 MS Word for Windows

If you are using MS Office Word on a Windows operating system, to create a tagged PDF:

1. Select **File** in the main menu bar.
2. Select **Save As** in the left-hand panel.
3. In the Save As window, choose where you want the file to be saved and enter a file name into the File Name text box.
4. Change the '**Save as type**' to **PDF**.
5. Select the **Options** button.
6. In the Options window,
    a. Under the 'Include non-printing information',
        i. Select the radio button for '**Create bookmarks using**' and '**Headings**'.
        ii. Select the radio button for '**Document structure tags for Accessibility'**.



7. Choose **OK** in the Options window.
8. Choose **Save** in the Save As window.

5.4 MS Word for Mac

If you are using MS Office 365 for Mac (or Word 2016 for Mac), to create a tagged PDF:

1. Select **File** in the main menu bar.
2. Select **Save As**.
3. Enter a file name into the '**Save As**' text box and choose where you want the file to be saved.
4. Change the '**File format**' to **PDF**.
5. Select '**Best for electronic distribution and accessibility (uses Microsoft online service)**'.
6. Select **Save**.

6 Additional resources

- Make your Word documents accessible to people with disabilities (Microsoft)
- Create Accessible Word Documents – Videos (Microsoft)
- Microsoft Word: Creating Accessible Documents (WebAIM)