
Getting Started
in the
English
Writing
Lab

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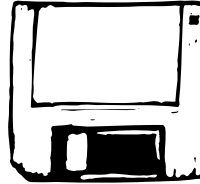
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introduction

Using a word-processing system such as the one in the Cuyamaca College English Writing Lab is a good way to improve your writing. *Revising* is the key to good writing, and Microsoft Word will allow you to revise as often as you need to in order to discover what you really want to say and then to say it as clearly and forcefully as possible. Then the lab will help you to *edit* your work, to eliminate distracting errors.

The Internet is an important *research* tool. You can use our computers as you research the Worldwide Web, but you can also use the Internet to access the catalogues of local college and university libraries in which you want to do conventional research.



Using this handbook

For the purposes of this handbook I have assumed that you are unfamiliar with the way computers work. Still, even students who are experienced computer users will find useful information here. Everyone should pay special attention to the section entitled *Formatting your writing*.

If you are new to computers, remember that there is no need to be afraid of them. They will not blow up in your face if you press the wrong key. Use your common sense, and even experiment when you are working in the lab. *The sooner you move from this handbook to the screen in front of you, the better off you will be. The sooner you stop worrying about word-processing and begin to focus on your writing, the better you will do in your English class.*

getting into the computer

Turning the computer on

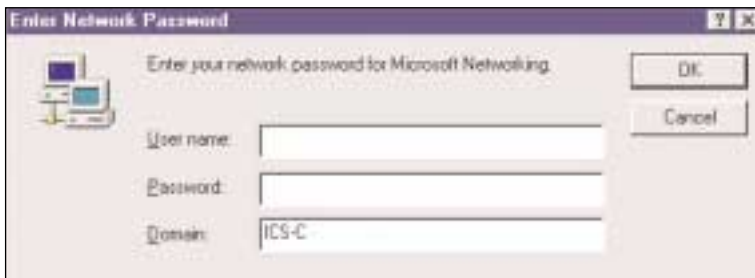
If your computer is not on yet, press the large, grey hemispherical button toward the right-hand side of the box underneath the monitor screen.

Logging onto the network

Your User Name After a minute or so, you will notice that a "dialogue box" (a box featuring a series of fields where you can make selections and enter information) appears on your

screen. There is a flashing bar (the “cursor”) in the first “field” (or box where you can type). The cursor indicates that when

you type, your typing will appear in this space. You will be asked to type your “User Name.” Every student enrolled at Cuyamaca College is automatically assigned a User Name. In most cases this will be the *first letter of your first name, then your last name, all in lower case,*



with *no spaces* in between. Thus, I would type my name, Timothy Pagaard, as “tpagaard.”

There are two exceptions:

(1) A User Name can contain only *eight characters*, so yours might need to be abbreviated by leaving off all of the characters after the eighth. Ted Beutelspacher’s name, thus, would be shortened to “tbeutels.”

(2) Since there are thousands of names in our system, many *common names* are duplicated. There are usually several students, for example, named J. (Julia... Juan... Jose...) Lopez. User Names must be unique, so if your last name is a common one, you will also be assigned a number, like this: “jlopez4.”

Be creative If you are having problems logging on, *be patient* and try various versions of your name. Sometimes both of the above exceptions will apply to your name, as might be the case with Catherine Williams, whose User Name would be “cwillia2.” Notice that the final “s” has been deleted from “Williams” in order to meet the eight-character limit. The “m” has also been deleted so that a “2” can distinguish Cathi from Carl Williams, “cwillia1,” and Cynthia Williams, “cwillia3.”

Your Password Once you have entered your User Name, type the “Tab” key in the upper left-hand corner of the keyboard. This will move the cursor to the second box, where you will be asked to enter your “Password.” Simply type *your birth date, month/day/year, using six characters*. For example, if your birthday is 8 March 1978, you will enter “030878.”

Leave the third box, “Domain Name,” alone.

When you have entered your User Name and Password, move the mouse so that the arrow on the screen touches the “OK” button. Then press the left-hand button on the mouse once (this is called “clicking”).

A useless step A box will appear with the message, “You have not logged on at this computer....” Click on either the “Yes” or the “No” button. *It makes no difference whatsoever which you choose.* You will have to wait a minute or so while you are logged onto the college network.

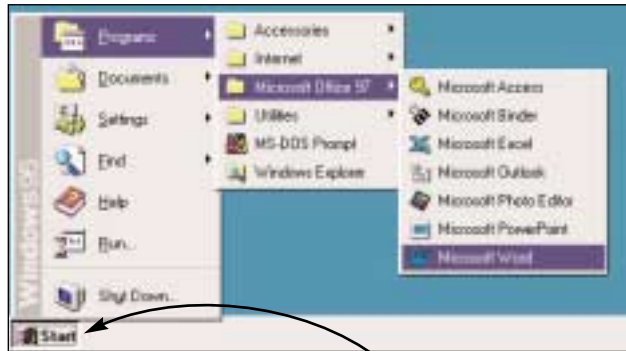
The desktop Once you have logged on, you will find yourself at what is called the “desktop.” Just like an actual desktop, this is *the starting point for all of the work you want to do.* From here you will select a tool—an “application” (or “program”).

microsoft word

The main application you will use in the English writing lab is Microsoft Word, a word-processing application.

Getting into Word In the extreme lower right-hand corner of your screen, you will find a button labeled “Start.” Move the mouse to (called “going to”) the “Start” button; click, and you will see a “menu” (a series of options) appear above it. Go to the word “Programs”; as the mouse touches it, another menu will appear which includes the “Microsoft Office 97” menu. Go to “Office 97,” and in the menu which appears, go to “Microsoft Word.” Click it. Word has been launched.

A dialogue box will appear with the message, “Please enter your full name and initials below....” Do this and then click “OK.” After a minute or so you will see the Word logo and then a blank page that has been opened for you. This is the page you will begin working on.



Begin by pressing the “Start” button. Then go to menus as shown, finally clicking on “Microsoft Word.”

saving and opening your work

Possibly the most important thing to remember as you work on any computer is that you need to “save”—or record (or “write”)—your work to a disk, very often, *at least every five minutes.* The computer has only a limited amount of working memory to process what you are doing. When you save, you move your work to a disk, freeing up the computer’s

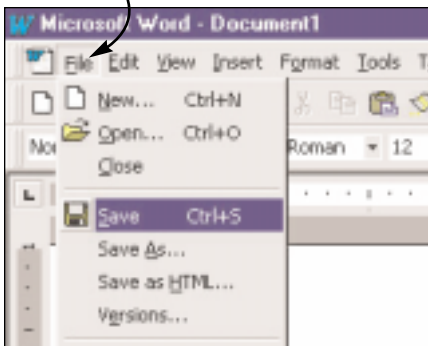
memory to continue processing your writing. If you do not remember to do this, your computer eventually will “crash”—or experience a system error, the main feature of which will be that you will lose your work. You will never get it back. You will be heartbroken. You will rail against the injustice of the universe. You still will not get your work back.

You may save either to a floppy disk (3.5-inch) that you bring to the lab or onto the Cuyamaca College network.

Saving

Saving a file for the first time Before you get to work on your writing, create a “file,” a place on a disk where your work will be recorded and which you can access in the future.

Click on the “File” menu. Then move the mouse to “Save,” and click.



To do this, under the “File” menu in the tool bar at the top of the Word window, go to “Save.” (That is, click on “File,” move the mouse down to “Save” in the menu that appears, and click.) A dialogue box will appear. (See illustration on page 5.) In the field at the bottom entitled “File Name” you can type the name you want to give your file. You can name it anything as long as your name distinguishes it from the other assignment files you will create in the future. I recommend you use a simple descriptive name such as “Engl 120/#1.”

You will also be able to choose where your file will be written. Click on the down arrow at the right end of the field entitled “Save In.”

(1) If you want to write your file to a floppy disk you can take home, first insert the disk into the slot on the front of the computer. (Insert it with the round metal disk facing down and the sliding metal plate facing toward the computer.) In the “Save In” field, select “3.5-inch floppy (A:).”

(2) If you want to save to the college hard drive, select “[your name] on ‘Coyote 1’ (H:).” Click the mouse button twice (called “double-clicking”) on the folder entitled “My Documents.” Then click “Save.”

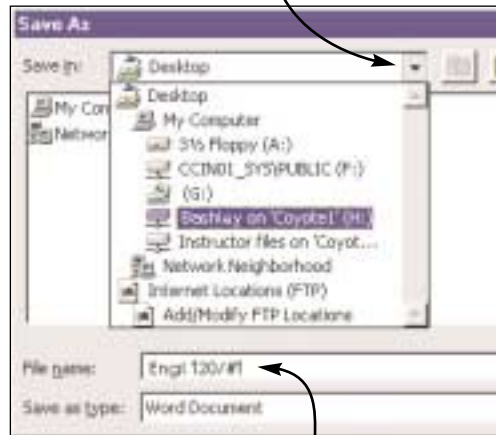
It is not a bad idea to do *both #1 and #2 above*, so that you have a back-up copy of your work. Just remember to update either copy after you have done work on the other. (See *Selecting text* and *Moving text around* below: “Select All” of the newer document; “Copy”; “Select All” of the older document; “Paste.”)

Saving while you are working While you are working on your writing, remember every five minutes or so to save. Under the “File” menu in the tool bar at the top of the Word

window go to “Save.” (As a shortcut, you can hold down the “Control” key at the lower left-hand corner of the keyboard and type an “S.”) No dialogue box will appear, but the computer will save your work to the file you are currently working on.

Save as In order to save time, instead of formatting every file you create (see *Formatting your writing* below), you can simply *open existing assignments, save them under new names, and recycle headings, headers, title, type style, etc.*

Begin by opening an existing formatted file, say, the file, “Engl 120/#1,” that you created for an earlier assignment. Under the “File” menu go to “Save As,” which will bring up the same dialogue box that appears when you go to “Save.” Leaving everything else alone, *change the name in the “File Name” field to anything except the present name, preferably something along the lines of “Engl 120/#2.”* Now change the due date and the title. Then delete all of your body text (see *Selecting text* and *Erasing* below), and begin typing your new assignment—already formatted.



Click on the down arrow. Then go to the H drive—with your name on it.

Name or rename your file here.

Opening

Opening an old assignment In order to continue working on a file you created in a previous lab session, once you are in Word, under the “File” menu in the tool bar at the top of the Word window, go to “Open.” A dialogue box very much like the “Save” box will appear. Select either the “3.5-inch floppy (A:)” to access your floppy or “Coyote 1’ (H:)” on the college network. Then find your file, either on your floppy disk or in the “My Documents” folder, and double click on it.

Opening Macintosh, non-Word Windows, or old Word documents Many of you are *Macintosh users* (I am one—and fiercely proud of it! This handbook was created on my Mac) and want to work on your English assignments at home or elsewhere on a Mac. Others of you have access to *DOS or Windows machines* but use *programs other than Word*—or perhaps an *older version of Word*. Can you work on your assignments both in the lab and at home or elsewhere? *Yes!* Ask your teacher or the lab aide to convert your non-Word 97 document for you using “*Connections Plus*.” Then, when you are finished working for the day, ask to convert your Word 97 document back to the original so you can work on it further outside the lab. (The conversion software, incidentally, is available both in our lab and in the Open Lab.)

using word-processing

While word-processing does a lot, you will be happy to know that, for the most part, it *works just like any typewriter* you may be familiar with. Simply start typing, and the words will appear in your Word document as if you had typed them conventionally on a piece of paper.

Think of word-processing as a *forgiving* typewriter.

Change your mind as often as you need to in order to express your meaning as best you can. Do not worry about making mistakes. You can fix them later. Word will even make suggestions as to how to correct spelling and grammatical errors.

Basic features

Word wrap One of the most immediately noticeable features of word-processing is that, unlike with a typewriter, you *do not have to type a carriage return at the end of each line*. Simply keep typing, and the computer will break your lines for you, automatically adjusting the line breaks when you add or remove text.

Moving around in your document Even the shortest English assignment will be too long to fit on your screen. You will need to learn how to move through your work so that you can revise and edit it.


Moving up and down in your document using the bar running along the right-hand side of the Word window is called “scrolling.” The bar is called the “scroll bar.”

(1) Notice the *arrows* at the top and bottom of the bar.

When you click on the top arrow, you will move toward the beginning of your text; clicking the bottom arrow will move you toward the end. Single clicks move you one line at a time, and by holding the mouse button down you will scroll continuously.

(2) If you want to scroll even more quickly, click on the *raised rectangle* in the scroll bar, and hold the mouse button down. Notice that a yellow box containing the number of the page you are currently on appears to the left of the rectangle. Holding the mouse button down and moving the mouse up or down (“dragging”) causes the raised rectangle to move up or down and the scrolling to be rapid.

(3) When you click in the *gray area above or below the raised rectangle*, scrolling will occur even more rapidly.

Notice that as you move the mouse over the text part of the Word window, the arrow becomes a shape like this: . This is called the “I-bar.” You can move around in your document by moving the I-bar and thus repositioning the cursor, the flashing

“insertion point.” Move the mouse to any place in your text: The I-bar will move there. Click and the cursor will appear there.

The *keyboard arrows* (between the standard and numerical keypads) can also be used to move around in your document. The right and left arrows move the cursor right or left one character at a time. The up and down arrows move it up or down one line at a time.

Inserting new material To insert new material into existing text, use any of the above methods to move the cursor to the place where you want to make the addition. Then begin typing. (See *Moving text around* below to see how to insert pre-existing text.

Selecting text The primary advantage word-processing has over typing is the ability it gives you to revise or edit your writing. To do this you will need to be able to “select” words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs you want to delete, move, or format. Selected text is “*highlighted*”; that is, it appears as white in a black band.

Place the cursor at the beginning of the text you want to select. Click and hold down the mouse button, highlighting as you *drag across the text*. Release the mouse button when all the text you want is highlighted.

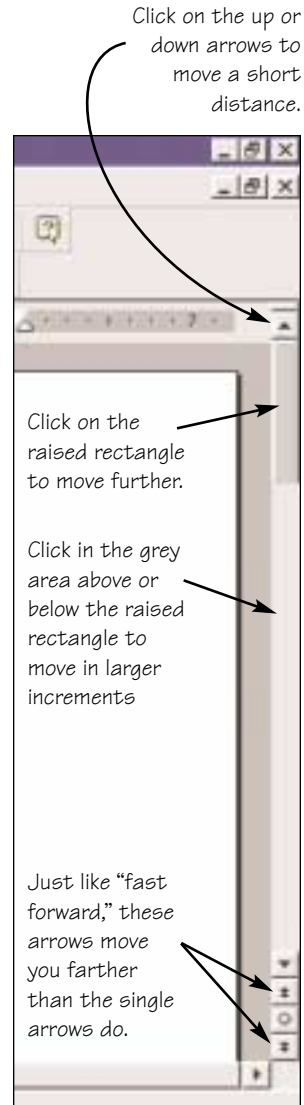
To select large amounts of text you can “*shift/click*”: Place the cursor at the beginning of the intended text. Then, holding down the shift key, move the I-bar to the end. Click, and the text between these two points will be highlighted.

To select a word, place the I-bar above it and double-click. To select an entire paragraph, “triple-click”.

Erasing The simplest way to erase (or “delete”) is to move the cursor immediately after the material you want to delete, and type the “*backspace*” key at the upper right-hand corner of the keyboard. This deletes text to the left of the cursor one character at a time. If you want to delete a larger amount of text, select it (as described above), and type the backspace key. Or once you have highlighted the text, simply begin typing; the new text will replace the old.

Revising

Moving text around You may move words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs from one place to another in your document. First *highlight* the text you want to move. Then, under the “*Edit*” menu in the tool bar at the top of the Word window, go to “*Cut*.” This will remove the selected text, but unlike deleting, Word stores it rather than merely erasing it.



Now move the cursor to the place to which you want to move the text. Again under “Edit” go to “Paste”; Word will insert the selected material there.

Sometimes you will want to copy material, not moving it but adding existing text in another place while also keeping it where it is. Follow the steps outlined above for moving, but instead of “Cut” in the “Edit” menu, go to “Copy.” The selected text remains unchanged, but Word will store it to be pasted into a new location.

Editing

Checking spelling To check your spelling, go to “Spelling and Grammar” under the “Tools” menu. Any suspicious word will appear in red in the top field of the dialog box. The bottom field will suggest words that Word thinks you may have been trying to spell, with the most likely choice shown at the top and highlighted.

If you agree that Word’s first suggestion is the word you intended, click either “Change” to replace the present instance of the misspelled word with the correction, or select “Change All” to correct *every* instance of the misspelling in your document. If you disagree with Word’s first suggestion, click on whichever of the others you prefer. If you disagree with all of them, *highlight the offending word*, the one shown in red in the top field, and *type the word you originally intended*. Then click either “Change” or “Change All.”

Sometimes the flagged word is not a misspelling at all but merely a word that is not in Word’s dictionary. This is often happens with *names* (mine, Pagaard, is always flagged) or with *foreign words* (see what Word does with “Reinheitsgebot”). If you are certain that this is the case with a word of yours, click “Ignore”—or “Ignore All,” which works just like “Change All” does.

Word’s spell-check will take you consecutively through all perceived misspellings in the document.

Electronic spell-checking is a wonderful thing, but *be aware of its limitations*: All it can do is flag words not contained in Word’s dictionary. So if the result of your misspelling is accidentally a real word, it will not be flagged. If, for example, you intend to type “there” but accidentally type “the” (which obviously is a word too), no misspelling will be registered. Thus, *never assume a spell-checked document is correct. Always check every assignment conventionally too.*

Checking grammar At the same time that you check spelling, Word allows you to check your grammar. Possible

offending words are shown in green in the top field of the “Spelling and Grammar” dialog box. The error is identified in the title of the field (e.g., “Subject-Verb Agreement”), and Word’s suggested correction is shown in the bottom field. As with spelling, you have the option to “Change” or “Ignore” Word’s suggestion.

Regrettably, while grammar-check can sometimes be useful, it has two near-fatal *disadvantages*: (1) You need to know rules already in order to decide whether or not they apply in any particular instance. And (2) often the rules appealed to are either very minor or only obliquely applicable in a given situation. Wading through an entire document of this stuff can be tedious and time-consuming—and usually is not worth the effort.

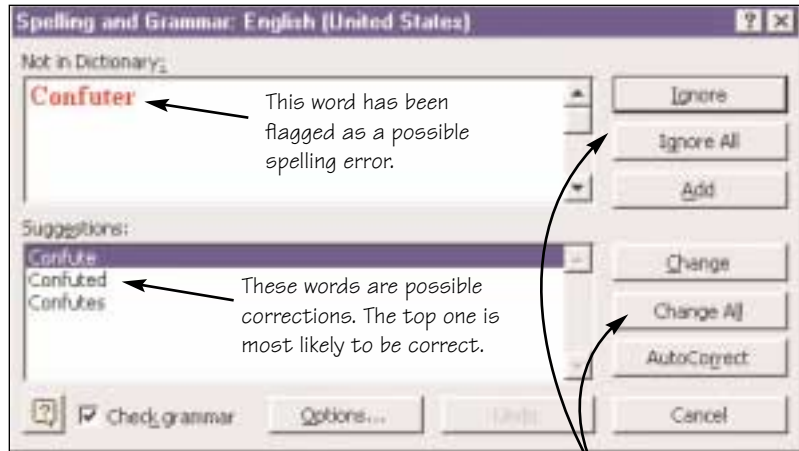
My advice is to get through your spell-checking more rapidly by clicking “Ignore” for grammar errors, the ones shown in green. Then edit your writing conventionally, applying what you know about grammar rules rather than relying on Word’s grammar-check.

Word count Word will tell you the number of words in your document. Go to “Word Count” under the “Tools” menu.

Formatting your writing

Obviously the content of your writing, what you have to say, is by far the most important aspect of any assignment. On the other hand, format, what your work looks like, is important too. Much time and effort can be saved when a college adopts a uniform format for assignments. At Cuyamaca College, as at most colleges, you will be expected to know and use “MLA” conventions for formatting your work. (The MLA, the Modern Language Association, is the largest and most influential of the English-teaching cartels.)

The heading Begin every assignment by typing the following in the upper left-hand corner: *your full name, your teacher’s name, the course name and section number, and the date of submission.*



Click on “Ignore” or “Ignore All” if you believe your original word is correct.

Click on “Change” or “Change All” to replace your word with the highlighted suggestion.

Brett Q. Ashley


K. McWilliams

English 120/0773

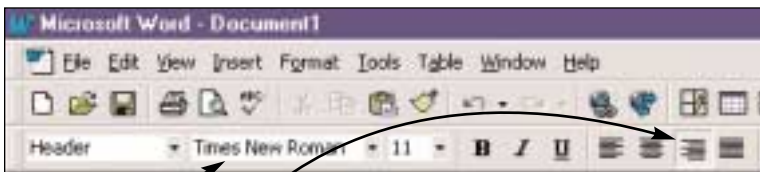
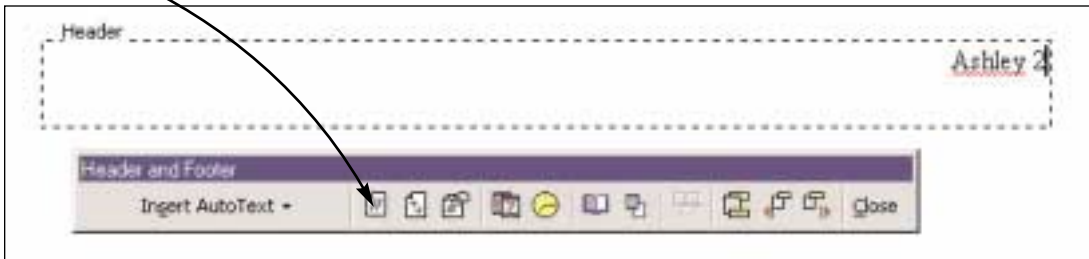
15 February 1998

The header Every page of your assignment, including page one and your “Works Cited” pages, must contain a header featuring *your last name and the page number*.

Ashley 2

In Word headers can be set to print automatically at the top of every page, the page number adjusting automatically for each new page. In the “View” menu at the top of the Word window, go to “Header and Footer.” In the “marqueed” box (a box delineated by a dotted line) which appears, type your *last name in upper and lower case*; follow it with *a space*, and click the “#” symbol in the special tool bar which appears underneath (“#” sets the automatic page numbering). In the tool bar at the top of the Word window, click the align-right button: . Then click “Close” on the bottom tool bar to go back to your writing. You will not see the header in your work, but fear not: It will appear when you print your assignment.

Set automatic page numbering here.



Set font and type size here.

Set alignment here.



Type style and size Always use a serif font (such as the one you are reading now: The characters have the little horizontal lines at the tops and

bottoms of strokes). “Times New Roman,” the “default” (or automatic) setting in Word, is a good choice. Always use “Roman” (plain) style, *never bold* (dark—like the word, “bold,” you just read). *Italic* type (slanted—like the word, “italic,” you just read) can be used to *emphasize* a word or phrase or to indicate *underlining* (as you do when you refer to the title of a book), but *never use italic for your basic font*. *The size of your type should always be **eleven** point.*

Under the “Edit” menu, go to “Select All.” Then determine your font and type size at the left end of the tool bar at the top of the Word window.

Spacing Your entire document, from your heading to the end, including block quotations and your “Works Cited” page in the case of research papers, should be *double spaced*. Go to “Select All,” and then, under the “Format” menu, go to “Paragraphs.” In the “Line Spacing” field, click the down arrow and go to “Double.”

The MLA mandates that you **never skip lines**—not between the heading and your title, not between your title and your text, not between paragraphs, not before or after block quotations, not between “Works Cited” entries... **NEVER**.

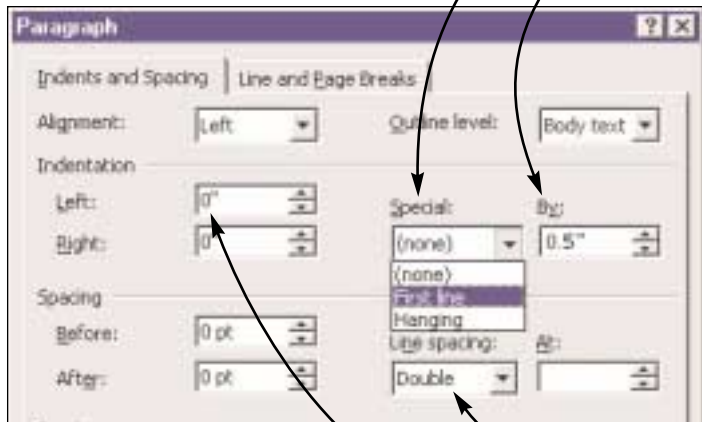
Alignment Everything in your document except the title will be aligned *flush left*. Go to “Select All”; then in the tool bar at the top of the Word window, click the align-left button: . The *title* should be *center-stacked*—aligned, that is, to the center of the page. Triple-click on your title, and click the align-center button: .

Paragraph indents As mentioned above, you do not have to type a carriage return at the end of every line. In fact you should not do so. The only time you should type a return is at the end of a paragraph. Word can automatically set an indent for you wherever it sees one of these returns.

Select all of your *body text* (all but the heading and title). Under the “Format” menu go to “Paragraph.” In the “Special” field, click the down arrow and go to “First Line.” In the “By” field “0.5” will appear automatically when you do so. One-half inch is the correct paragraph indent. Click “OK.”

Your *heading and title* should not be indented, so select them and go to “None” in the “Special” field. For your “Works Cited” list you will use a half-inch “*hanging indent*” (this means that *every line except the first* in each paragraph will be indented), so select the “Works Cited” text and go to “Hanging” in the “Special” field of the “Paragraph” dialogue box, again with “0.5” automatically entered. When you have made each of these these determinations, click “OK” to go back to your writing.

Margins The MLA convention is to use a *one-inch margin* on *all four sides* of your writing. This is the *default setting* in Word, so you will not have to make any adjustments. Occasionally,



Set paragraph indent here.

Half-inch indent is the default.

Set to double-space here.

Set to “1.0” for block quotations.

though, another student may have tweaked the settings on your computer. If you are having problems with margins, ask your teacher or the lab aide for help.

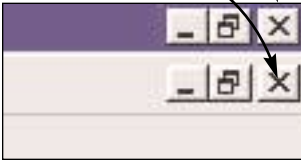
Closing

Getting out of a document If you are finished with a particular Word document and want to work on another, close the first by clicking the small square with the “x” in it in the upper right-hand corner of the document window—the lower-most of two such squares.

Getting out of Word If you are finished with your word-processing but want to do further work, say, on the Internet, close Word by clicking the small square with the “x” in it in the extreme upper right-hand corner of the screen—the upper-most of two such squares.

Click here to quit Word.

Click here to close a document.



printing your work

When you are ready to print your assignment, under the “File” menu at the top of the Word window, go to “Print.” You will not need to change any of the default settings in this dialogue box unless you want to print only certain pages rather than your entire document. Make this decision; then click “OK.”

using the internet

Computers all over the world have linked via the Internet and its most popular subset, the Worldwide Web. There is much to know about using these systems. Whole books have been written on the subject. You can learn more than you might expect, though, simply by looking around for yourself. For now, then, here is the easiest way to get in and get your feet wet.

Using Netscape

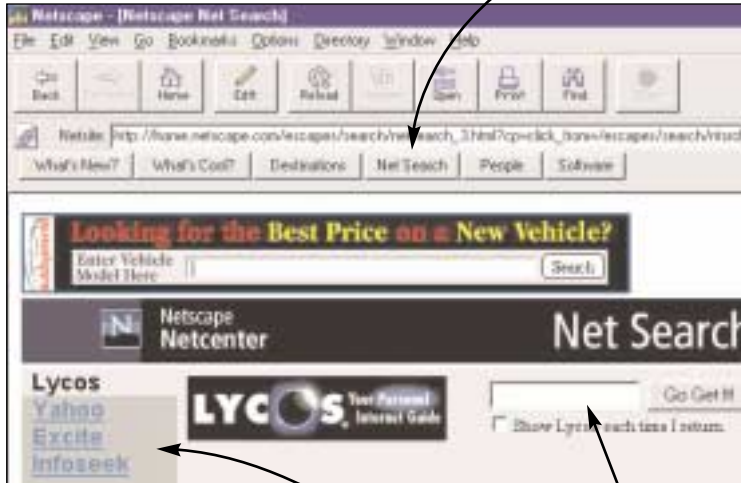
Netscape Navigator is a web browser, an application enabling you to explore the Web. To open it, from the “Start” button, go to “Programs,” then to “Internet,” and click on “Netscape Navigator.”

The default opening page on our network is the Cuyamaca College home page. Try clicking various buttons to get to the other pages of our site. You will notice that, whenever you click on colored, underscored type, you will be taken either to a

page within the site or to other locations on the Web. The single most useful feature of our college site is the *library page*: There you will be able to access the *on-line catalogues* not only of our library, but also of Grossmont College, San Diego State University, and others.

Once you have looked around our college site, click the “Net Search” button in the tool bar at the top of the Netscape window. This will lead you to a selection of “search engines,” special applications which serve as *indexes* to the Web: Lycos, Yahoo, Excite, Infoseek, and Web Crawler are all search engines. Each has its own search method and its own strengths and weaknesses. Choose an engine, type any subject into the search field, click “Search,” “Go get it,” or “Seek,” and begin your exploration of the Web.

Get to this page from the college home page by clicking here.



Type the subject you are looking for here.

Select a search engine here.

Logging off

When you are finished working, you must close your personal access to the Cuyamaca College network; that is, you must “log off.” Under “Start” in the lower left-hand corner of your screen, go to “Shut down.” A dialogue box will appear with four options. Click on the button in front of the fourth: “Close all programs and log on as a different user.” Then click “Yes.”

The computer will remain on—for the next student using the lab—but you will have exited the network. If you do not log off, another student could access your files and perhaps copy your work. Whether this happens or not, everything that is done on that computer after you leave will be done in your name. *Be sure to log off*

Have fun

Above all, have fun. A computer is nothing but a mechanical extension of your brain. It won’t work unless you enjoy it.