

## PleasantValleyPress.net Manuscript Submission Requirements

Since PleasantValleyPress.net is a small and fairly new business, we can keep costs low and decrease the time and work required by establishing standards for manuscripts that are submitted for review, editing, interior design, and/or publishing.

Authors whose manuscripts are not in compliance with these guidelines will incur costs beyond the quoted price. The additional costs will depend on the amount of time required to produce a compliant manuscript. These guidelines are based almost entirely on our printer's submission requirements, the Chicago Manual of Style manuscript preparation chapter, and other resources.

We recommend that you ignore many of the requirements in your first drafts, as worrying about them during the creative process is unnecessary. Just write. However, when you start editing, you will save an enormous amount of time (and possibly money) by checking for and correcting hidden formatting as you go. If you prefer, you can wait and do it after your final edit, but it can take a great deal of extra time. Balance the 'time cost' between doing it as you go and doing an entire read-through just make sure your manuscript compliant with the requirements in this document.

### **FILE NAME**

Please include your first initial and last name, along with an abbreviated title. For example, for this document, I might use: *SCarney-SubmissionGuide.docx*

### **NOT A WORD PROCESSING 'EXPERT?'**

A few of the requirements are quite simple and will not require any particular expertise on your part: almost everyone can understand that manuscripts should have a one-inch margin all around and should be on plain white paper.

However, many others will require that you get to know your word processing software better. If you are working in MS Word, there are many resources available to you, including free hands-on tutorials available on the Microsoft Office Web site. If you prefer, there are any number of books that will provide the help and information you need to bring your skills up to speed. I have used the *Dummies* and *... for Idiots* books for a lot of software and other learning in the past and particularly like them because they are intended specifically for people who are trying to learn something new and unfamiliar: they assume we don't understand the 'tech speak' that is found in software and other manuals. The explanations are easy to understand and any exercises are easy to follow.

Another source that many forget about is the Help files in most programs. Some of them are a bit more technical, but the MS Word Help files are easily understood by anyone with the patience to read and understand them.

I will, as time permits, add some simple tutorials on this site for the functions I believe are most important. Send me an email if you'd like to be notified when new cheat sheets are available (at no cost, of course).

### **PRODUCING A CLEAN MANUSCRIPT**

No matter how you intend to publish your book, a clean manuscript is important for a variety of reasons. If you will be sending it to agents or traditional publishers, first impressions are extremely important. If a manuscript is messy, poorly set up, and doesn't meet their—or industry—guidelines, they might reject it without reading the first page. They get hundreds of submissions and your poorly produced manuscript marks you as a beginner who is unaware of 'the rules of the road.'

If you plan to self-publish using a print-on-demand (POD, pronounced P-O-D, not *pod*) publisher, you might be required to submit your properly formatted manuscript or, in many cases, an Adobe Acrobat PDF file that is ready to be sent directly to the printer. They might be able and willing to handle this for you, but it could add a great deal to the cost of getting your book published, perhaps even a few hundred dollars.

If you decide to do it all on your own and send a poorly formatted manuscripts to a printer, it will look like it was produced by an amateur, and potential buyers might assume that the content is as amateurish as

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the formatting. In addition, the cost of printing could be higher because the hidden formatting can add pages to your book. Printing charges may include a per book PLUS a per page charge.

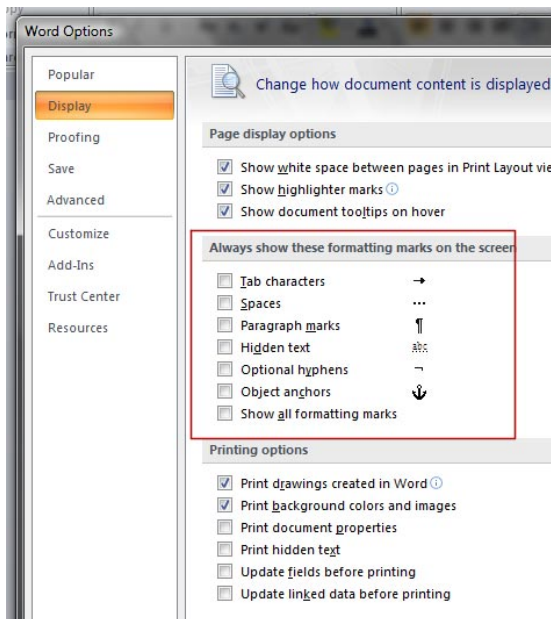
So it is well worth your time, effort, and the cost of a decent book or two to learn what you need to do to succeed—or at least produce a manuscript that looks professional. Your readers will decide whether what you've written is worth the price, and they'll tell their friends!

### HIDDEN FORMATTING

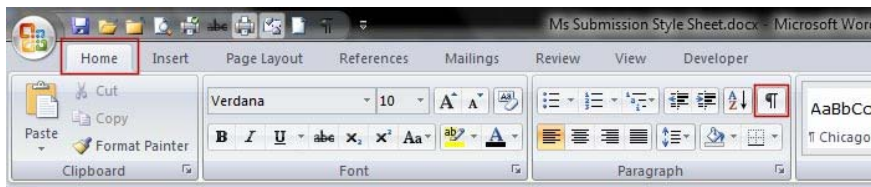
In Microsoft Word and most other word processing programs, you can view the hidden formatting elements by finding and turning on the **Show All** function (MS Word; other programs might call it something else). Activating this function allows you to see the spacing, tabs, and other items that aren't otherwise visible. To see what hidden formatting looks like when the function is on, click on the **Show All** button (**Home** tab in Word 2007, in the *Paragraph* section; see illustration below).



To see what the formatting marks look like if you haven't used this function before, begin by clicking on the **Office** button in the top left corner of the screen. Click on the **Word Options** button on the bottom right, then click on **Display** to see this screen.



It is not necessary to click all the items you want to display. There's an easier way to turn the display on and off as you work. Opening this screen simply lets you see what the format marks look like.

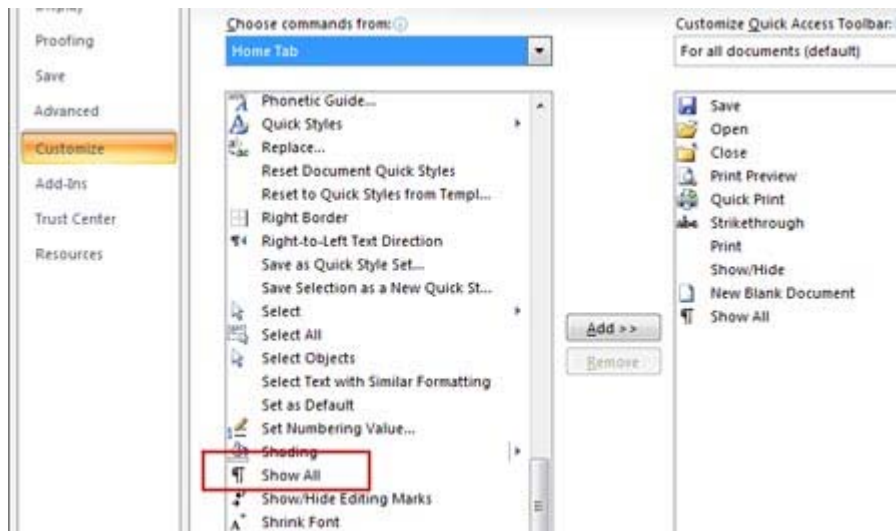


Make sure you're on the **Home** tab, then click on the paragraph mark to 'show all.' Click again to hide it.

To avoid having to constantly return to the **Home** tab, you can add the **Show All** button to the Quick Access toolbar: Click on the **Office** button and **Word Options**, as you did before, and select **Customize** on the left. In the dropdown list (under *Choose commands from*), select **Home Tab**. Scroll down to

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**Show All**, click on it, then click on the **Add >>** button to add it to the toolbar at the top of the screen next to the Office button.



When you begin editing, turn on **Show All** and make a habit of cleaning up the formatting as you edit. It will be a bit of a pain at first, but you'll soon get used to it and it is worthwhile. Now we're ready to get to work.

### The Hard & Fast Formatting Rules:

- Only **one space between words**. No exceptions.
- Only **one space between sentences**. No exceptions.
- **NEVER** use the space key to indent paragraphs. The easiest way to create a consistent indent is to add the amount you want in the *Paragraph* setting in the Normal style, and select "This document only" so it doesn't interfere with non-manuscript writing. (*Check back for a tutorial on creating and using style sheets in MS Word to ensure that your formatting is consistent and greatly reduce the amount of work necessary to accomplish that*).
- **DO NOT** use the **Enter** key at the end of lines of text in the same paragraph. The software will automatically wrap the text. Only press **Enter** to start a new paragraph.
- **DO NOT** use a soft return (**Shift + Enter**) at the end of sentences or paragraphs. It will cause weird and ugly breaks in the middle of sentences.
- **DO NOT** use the **Tab** key to indent the first line of paragraphs. Use the Help files in your program to learn to set an automatic (and consistent) first line indent, if you don't already know how to do it.
- **Delete extra spaces** between the end of the paragraph (the last punctuation mark) and the paragraph symbol.

When you see violations of the above rules, simply delete them. If you are unwilling or unable to produce a clean manuscript, extra charges could be as high as \$1.00 US per page for PleasantValleyPress.net to do it for you. If you choose to leave it 'as is,' your printed book will look sloppy and amateurish—self-published in the worst sense of the word. PleasantValleyPress.net will request that you sign a waiver and not hold the company liable for any extra expenses incurred for reformatting and reprinting if you decide to leave in all the extraneous hidden formatting.

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### General Manuscript Format—PleasantValleyPress.net

- All manuscripts submitted for review, editing, and/or interior formatting must be on plain white paper (real or virtual) in Portrait orientation, with page numbers in the footer of each page and the chapter title on the first page of each new chapter.
- Set up an automatic first-line indent of 0.4”
- Set the line spacing to 1.5 or double spaced. Notify us if you need instructions. Only hit **Enter** twice when you want a break between two sections in the same chapter—for example, when there is a new subject, a time lapse between the previous and next section within the same chapter, etc.
- (Optional) We prefer that you not use single quotes where an apostrophe is required. They are two entirely different punctuation marks. It can be a bit of a pain, but will look much more professional. Here's how I make it as easy as possible. (I try to do it while I'm writing, but it's easy to overlook it, so I double check when I'm editing.)
  - To insert an apostrophe, click on the **Insert** tab, then on the **Symbol** button in the *Symbols* section on the right side of the tool bar. Set the font to whatever you're currently using, then scroll through the symbols until you find a symbol that looks like this: ' It's very different from a single quotation, which looks like this: ’
  - Click the **Insert** button to insert the symbol where the cursor is located.

Tedious, huh? Here's how I solve that problem.

- Once I've inserted the first one and made sure it's in the correct font, I simply highlight it and copy it by pressing **Ctrl+C**.
- To paste it, I only have to click where I want it and press **Ctrl+V** to insert it

NOTE: I have occasionally been known to cut or copy and paste a paragraph or chapter between apostrophes. When I go to paste an apostrophe, I might get pages of copied text instead. Instead of panicking, simply press **Ctrl+Z** to undo it.

The MS Word clipboard can hold a number of cut or copied items. If you have the Clipboard open, just click on the one you want to insert. On the **Home** tab in Word 2000, the first group on the left side of the Taskbar should be the Clipboard (with the Paste, Cut, Copy, and Format Painter options). At the bottom of the group, you'll see the word “Clipboard” with a tiny down arrow to the right. Click on the arrow to open the Clipboard on the left side of the screen. If you use the clipboard a lot, click on the Options button at the bottom and select the options that suit you (you can change them whenever you want to).

**USE YOUR SPELLCHECKER** and—when required—a dictionary. I use the dictionary when I have used a word I can't adequately define in my head. Rather than hauling out the dictionary for every word when you're in doubt, you can simply right click on the word (in MS Word) and select *Synonyms* from the context menu. One typical and frequent error: knowing when to use 'lay' and when to use 'lie.'

### CONSISTENCY

We strongly recommend that you start a list of character names, place names, etc., that appear in your manuscript and refer to your list as needed to ensure that you have spelled names and locations the same way every time they are used. For example, if you have a character named Marcy, make sure you don't call her Marcy half the time and Marcie the rest of the time!

Rather than reading through the entire manuscript again to look for possible mistakes of this kind, just enter a possible variation in the **Find** function (**Ctrl+F**), enter the correct spelling in **Replace**, then click on the **More...** button. Select **Match case** (only if you typed it in with the correct capitalization in the *Find what:* field) and **Find whole words only**. If you're not sure what variations you may have used, you might want to add **Sounds like (English)**.

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### PUNCTUATION

- End every sentence with a punctuation mark. Usually this will be a period, although it can be a question mark, ellipsis, etc.
- Use “double quotes” when you are actually quoting something. Use ‘single quotes’ when you want to call attention to a word or phrase, or to an unusual word or one you’re using in some way other than its commonly understood use.
- Punctuation such as commas, question marks, or periods almost always go inside quotation marks, double or single.

### MS WORD 2007 HELP

To read about using Word templates and styles for formatting your manuscript, click on the tiny blue button in the upper right corner of the window (it has a white question mark inside it). When the contents page appears, type (without the quotation marks) “Style Basics in Word,” then click the search button to read a moderately long, but easy to understand, illustrated article about using styles to simplify and speed up formatting your work.

If you prefer hands-on tutorials, there are lots of free ones on the Microsoft Web site (<http://office.microsoft.com>). On the Web site:

1. Click on the **Help and How-to** tab at the top.
2. On the left navigation bar under 2007 Release Learning Resources, click on **2007 Training Course Catalog**.
3. Select **Word 2007**.
4. Under **2. Start with an outline or let Word do the work with templates and Quick Styles**, select *Format your document with styles*. Then just follow the instructions.

Also consider doing the *Save time with templates tutorial*. That way, once you get your manuscript format just the way you want it, you can save it as a template and use it over and over again.

All the Office training courses are free (unless you're looking to be a certified Office expert!), they are fun, and the thirty minutes to an hour of your time will save you tons of time and hassles in the future. If you are preparing the interior of a book to a printer's specifications, you'll eventually need to know how to properly use section breaks, set up page numbers, and format headers and footers so that the page numbering continue throughout the manuscript, but the headers for each section are different (sections are something else you'll eventually need to know about if you plan on self-publishing your book. Many print-on-demand publishers will format your book for you, but you can sometimes save some money by doing it yourself.)

FEEL FREE to contact us at [PleasantValleyPress.net](http://PleasantValleyPress.net) if you have questions.

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