Style basics in Word

Microsoft Office Word 2007 makes it easy to benefit from styles without having to know much about them. However, you may want to know how styles work behind the scenes, or you may want to know what's new with styles in Office Word 2007.

This article explains how styles work to save you time and make your document look good, and it discusses the relationship between styles and two new features in Word 2007: Quick Styles and themes.

In this article

Styles save time and make your document look good

One of the great things about using a word processor is that you can create documents that look professionally typeset.

* Headings are in a font that contrasts with body text.

* Paragraphs are separated with just enough white space.

* Elements such as bulleted lists are indented.

* Emphasized text is in a contrasting color.

The document may even include special elements such as a table of contents.
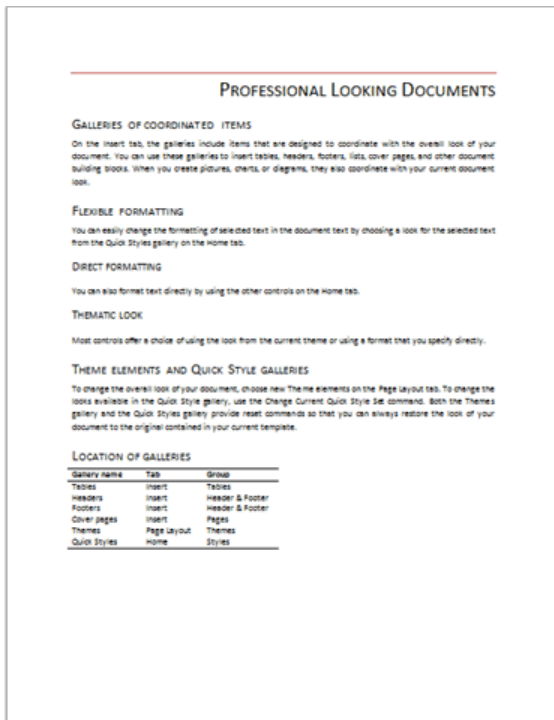
Using direct formatting

Word provides several ways for you to achieve each of these effects in your document. For example, to format headings, you can select the text, apply bold formatting, and then apply a slightly larger font size than the size that you use for the body text.

Applying formatting in this manner is known as `direct formatting`. The process of applying direct formatting can be tedious. It's easy to make mistakes, and you might not get a good looking document. In the example in the previous paragraph, you must repeat the direct formatting process for each heading, and you must be careful to select the same font size every time.

If you want subheadings, you must decide how to differentiate the subheadings from the headings (smaller size? italicize?) and repeat the direct formatting process for each subheading. If you don't have expertise in design or typography, it may take some time before you create a look that you like.

Furthermore, documents that are formatted by direct formatting are difficult to update. If you want to change the look of the document, you must select each element and apply the new formatting choices.

Using styles

By contrast, when you use styles to format your document, you can quickly and easily apply a set of formatting choices consistently throughout your document.

A style is a set of formatting characteristics, such as font name, size, color, paragraph alignment and spacing. Some

styles even include borders and shading.

For example, instead of taking three separate steps to format your heading as 16-point, bold, Cambria, you can achieve the same result in one step by applying the built-in Heading 1 style. You do not need to remember the characteristics of the Heading 1 style. For each heading in your document, you just click in the heading (you don't even need to select all the text), and then click Heading 1 in the gallery of styles.
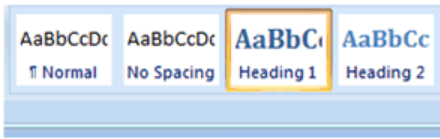
Galleries of coordinated items

On the Insert tab, the galleries include items tha
your document. You can use these galleries to ir
other document building blocks. When you crea
with your current document look.

If you decide that you want subheadings, you can use the built-in Heading 2 style, which was designed to look good with the Heading 1 style.

1 The Quick Styles that you see in the gallery of styles are designed to work together. For example, the Heading 2 Quick Style is designed to look subordinate to the Heading 1 Quick Style.

2 The body text of your document is automatically formatted with the Normal Quick Style.

3 Quick Styles can be applied to paragraphs, but you can also apply them to individual words and characters. For example, you can emphasize a phrase by applying the Emphasis Quick Style.

4 When you format text as part of a list, each item in the list is automatically formatted with the List Paragraph Quick Style.

If you later decide that you want headings to have a different look, you can change the Heading 1 and Heading 2 styles, and Word automatically updates all instances of them in the document. You can also apply a different Quick Style set or a different theme to change the look of the headings without making changes to the styles.

Built-in styles turn on timesaving features

The built-in styles (Heading 1, Heading 2, etc.) provide other benefits, too. If you use the built-in heading styles, Word can generate a table of contents automatically. Word also uses the built-in heading styles to make the Document Map, which is a convenient feature for moving through long documents.

TIP   Try it. If you have a document that uses the built-in heading styles, open it, and on the View tab, in the Show/Hide group, select the Document Map check box. Click a heading in the document map to jump to the corresponding part of the document.

An assortment of style types

Word provides several style types:

- Character and paragraph styles determine the look of most of the text in a document. Some styles work as both character and paragraph types, and these styles are known as linked styles.

- List styles determine the look of lists, including characteristics such as bullet style or number scheme, indentation, and any label text.

- Table styles determine the look of tables, including characteristics such as the text formatting of the header row, gridlines, and accent colors for rows and columns.

You are likely to work with different types of styles in different circumstances, so this article addresses character, paragraph, and linked styles in one section, and it covers table and list styles in separate sections.

Character, paragraph, and linked styles

Character, paragraph, and linked styles appear in the Styles group on the Home tab. You can quickly apply a style from the gallery of styles. To see more information about each style, click the Styles Dialog Box Launcher.

The Styles task pane opens.
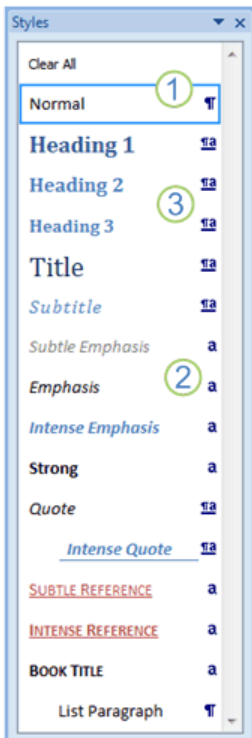
1 Paragraph styles are marked with a paragraph symbol: ¶. You can see the paragraph symbol in the Quick Style gallery as well as in the Styles task pane. Click anywhere in a paragraph to apply the style to the entire paragraph.

2 Character styles are marked with a character symbol: a. Click anywhere in a word to apply the style to the entire word. Or you can select more than one word to apply the style to more than one word.

3 Linked styles are marked with both a paragraph symbol and a character symbol: ¶a. Click anywhere in a paragraph to apply the style to the entire paragraph. Or you can select one or more words to apply the style to the words that you selected.
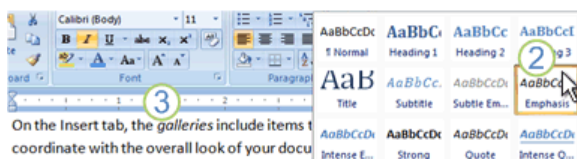
Character styles

Character styles contain formatting characteristics that can be applied to text, such as font name, size, color, bold, italic, underline, borders, and shading.

Character styles do not include formatting that affects paragraph characteristics, such as line spacing, text alignment, indentation, and tab stops.

Word includes several built-in character styles, such as Emphasis, Subtle Emphasis, and Intense Emphasis. Each of these built-in styles combines formatting, such as bold, italic, and accent color, to provide a coordinated set of typographic designs. For example, applying the Emphasis character style formats text as bold, italic, in an accent color.

To apply a character style, you select the text that you want to format, and then you click the character style that you want.

1 Click in the word you want to format.

2 Mouse over the Quick Styles to see a preview of the formatting in your document. When you point to a character style, only the word where you clicked is formatted. When you point to a paragraph style or a linked style, the entire paragraph is formatted. Click the character style that you want to use.

3 The word that you selected is formatted with the characteristics of the style that you chose.
Back to the list of style types

Paragraph styles

A paragraph style includes everything that a character style contains, but it also controls all aspects of a paragraph's appearance, such as text alignment, tab stops, line spacing, and borders.

For example, you can have a character style called Alert that formats text as bold and red. Additionally, you can have a paragraph style called Headline that formats text as bold and red. But the Headline paragraph style also centers the text horizontally and adds 24 points of space above the text.

In this scenario, if you select a paragraph and then apply the Alert style, all the text in the paragraph is formatted as bold and red, but nothing else about the paragraph changes. However, if you select the paragraph and then apply the Headline style, the text become bold and red, extra space is inserted before the paragraph, and the paragraph is centered between the left and right margins.

Word includes two built-in paragraph styles: Normal and List Paragraph. By default, Word automatically applies the Normal paragraph style to all text in a blank, new document. Similarly, Word automatically applies the List Paragraph paragraph style to items in a list — for example, when you use the Bullets command to create a bulleted list.

To apply a paragraph style, you select the paragraphs that you want to format, and then you click the paragraph style you want.

NOTE   To select a single paragraph for applying a paragraph style, you can click anywhere in the paragraph. To select more than one paragraph, click anywhere in the first paragraph and drag to anywhere in the last paragraph that you want to select. You do not need to select the entire paragraph.

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Linked styles

A linked style behaves as either a character style or a paragraph style, depending on what you select. If you click in a paragraph or select a paragraph and then apply a linked style, the style is applied as a paragraph style. However, if you select a word or phrase in the paragraph and then apply a linked style, the style is applied as a character style, with no effect on the paragraph as a whole.

For example, if you select (or click in) a paragraph and then apply the Heading 1 style, the whole paragraph is formatted with the Heading 1 text and paragraph characteristics. However, if you select a word or a phrase and then apply Heading 1, the text that you selected is formatted with the text characteristics of the Heading 1 style, but none of the paragraph characteristics are applied.
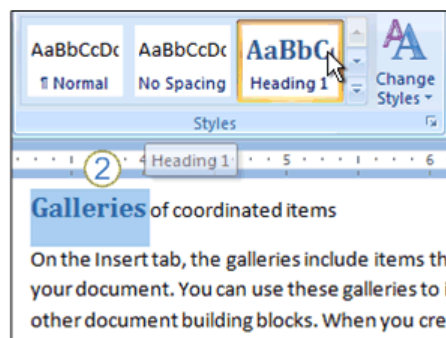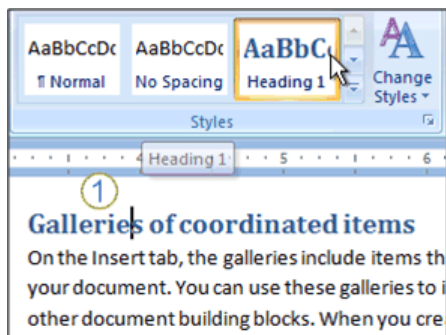
1 When you select or click in a paragraph and apply a linked style, the style is applied to the whole paragraph.

2 When you select a word or phrase and apply a linked style, the style is applied only to the selected text.
How is this useful? Consider the scenario above, in which an Alert character style and a Headline paragraph style each format text as bold and red. If the Headline style were a linked style instead of a paragraph style, you would not need a separate character style for formatting words and phrases. Wherever you wanted a headline in your document (bold, red, centered, with extra space above), you would select a paragraph and apply the linked style. Wherever you wanted an alert, you would select a word or phrase and apply the same linked style.

Word includes many built-in linked styles, notably the heading styles (Heading 1, Heading 2, and so on).

TIP   You might want the first few words of a paragraph to coordinate with the formatting of the headings in your document. This type of formatting, known as a run-in head or a side head, is easy to apply by using linked styles. Select the first few words of a paragraph, and then apply a heading style.

Thematic look Most controls offer a choice of using
format that you specify directly.

Theme elements and Quick Style galleries
To change the overall look of your document, choose ne
change the looks available in the Quick Style gallery, use
Both the Themes gallery and the Quick Styles gallery prov

1 Select the first few words of a paragraph and then click a heading style to create a run-in head.

2 Click in a paragraph and then click a heading style to create a heading.
Back to the list of style types

List styles

A list style applies characteristics for formatting a list. A list can include levels of hierarchy, like an outline, that can be indicated by indentation and numbering schemes. For example, level one in a multilevel list can be aligned against the margin and can begin with an Arabic numeral followed by a period. Level two can be indented slightly from the margin and can begin with a lowercase alphabetical character followed by a closing parenthesis. Here is an example of a multilevel list that is two levels deep:

1. This is the first item at level one.
  a) This is the first item at level two, within the first item at level one.
  b) This is the second item at level two, within the first item at level one.
2. This is the second item at level one.
  a) This is the first item at level two, within the second item at level one.
3. This is the third item at level one.
  a) This is the first item at level two, within the third item at level one.
  b) This is the second item at level two, within the third item at level one.
  c) This is the third item at level two, within the third item at level one.

A list style can define formatting for as many as nine levels of a list. The formatting scheme can include paragraph indentation for each level of the list, any label text (such as, "Item" or "Chapter"), and the numbering or bullet characters to use in the list.

Unlike the other types of styles (paragraph, character, linked, and table), predefined list styles are not available when you first create a document in Word.

NOTE   A document may contain list styles if you receive it from someone who created his or her own list styles. If your document contains list styles, they are listed under the List Styles heading in the gallery of multilevel lists. To see that gallery, click Multilevel List in the Paragraph group on the Home tab.
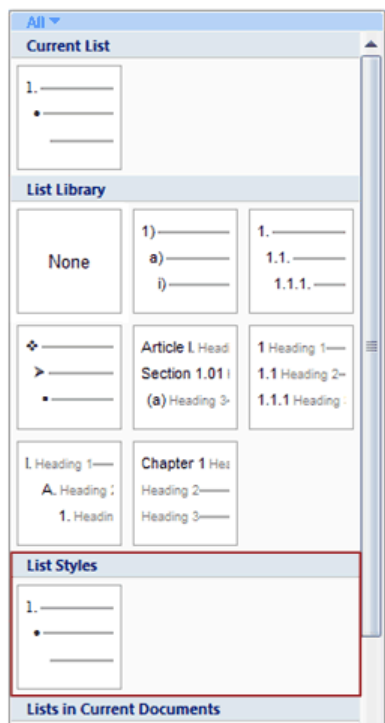

List Library: the starting point for list styles

Instead of predefined list styles, Word provides several multilevel list templates, which are displayed under the List Library heading in the gallery of multilevel lists. These preformatted designs can be applied to lists in your document, and they can also serve as a handy starting point for creating your own list styles.

Consider creating your own list style when you want to do the following:

- **Change list formatting consistently throughout your document**   After list styles are defined and applied, they can be changed. The changes affect all instances where the list style is used in the document.

- **Use complex list formatting that varies from one multilevel list design to another**   List styles provide great flexibility, and each one is named separately, which makes it easier to distinguish among them in the list of list styles.

- **Apply formatting to a multilevel list by using a keyboard shortcut**   You can assign keyboard shortcuts to list styles that you create, but not to the preformatted multilevel list templates.

TIP   If you use the built-in heading styles in your document (Heading 1, Heading 2, and so on), you can use multilevel list templates to apply a numbering scheme to your headings. For example, to number headings so that top-level headings (Heading 1 paragraphs) are numbered 1, 2, 3, second-level headings (Heading 2 paragraphs) are numbered 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, and so on, you click in the first Heading 1 paragraph, and then under List Library you click 1 Heading 1, 1.1 Heading 2, 1.1.1 Heading 3. Multilevel list templates that number headings are marked in the list gallery with Heading in gray text.
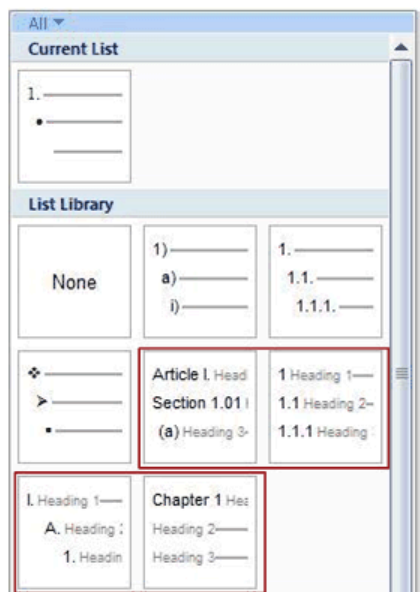
Create your own list style

The easiest way to create a list style is to start with one of the preformatted multilevel list templates.

1. Select the list that you want to format.

2. On the Home tab, in the Paragraph group, click the arrow next to Multilevel List.

3. Under List Library, click the design that most closely matches how you want your list style to look.

4. Click Multilevel List again, and then click Define New List Style.

5. Make any modifications you want to the preformatted design.

6. In the Name box, type a name for your list style.

7. If you want your list style to be available for all new documents that you create, click New documents based on this template.

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Table styles

A table style provides a consistent look to borders, shading, alignment and fonts in tables.

To apply a table style, you select the table that you want to format, and then you click a table style from the gallery of table styles on the Design tab, on the Table Tools contextual tab. Within a table cell, you can use styles and direct formatting to format the content of the cell. Formatting that you apply this way overrides the formatting that comes from the table style.

In other words, if you use a style or direct formatting to format the content of a table cell and then you switch to a different table style, the content that you formatted with the style or direct formatting is not updated to match the new table style.
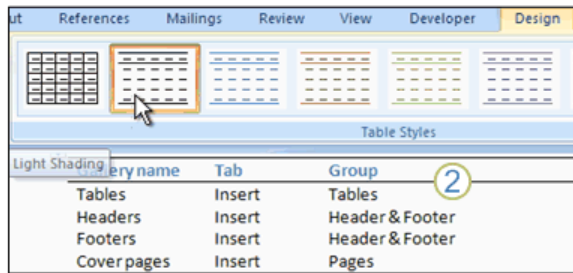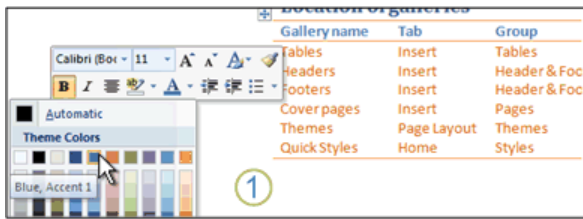
1 You can apply formatting to the content of a table, such as changing the header row to blue.

2 When you switch to a different table style, the header row remains blue.

 TIP   You can change the selection of table styles in the gallery by selecting or clearing check boxes in the Table Style Options section on the Design tab, before you open the gallery of table styles. For example, if your table has no header row, and you don't want rows to alternate shading, clear the Header Row and Banded Rows check boxes. When you open the gallery of table styles, you see previews that do not include formatting for header rows or banded rows.

Styles, Quick Style sets, and themes: putting the pieces together

When you use styles to format your document, the style definitions interact with Quick Style sets and theme settings to provide many combinations of cohesive, professional-looking designs.

After you apply styles, you can quickly change the look of the document to suit your needs by choosing the Quick Style set that you like. You can refine the look of the document even more by selecting a theme that you like. Within the Quick Style and theme parameters, you can also fine tune adjustments to the color and font schemes.

If you have not paid much attention to styles in previous versions of Word, you may appreciate the ease with which you can use the Quick Style sets and themes to quickly overhaul the look of your entire document.

However, if you are familiar with using styles in previous versions of Word, you may be surprised to see formatting in a particular paragraph change, depending on the Quick Style set, theme, color scheme, or font scheme.

If you are using the Word 2007 Quick Style set, Heading 1 is defined as 14-point bold Cambria. It may be disconcerting to switch to the Distinctive Quick Style set and see the text unexpectedly switch to 16-point normal Calibri (with small caps, no less), still defined as Heading 1. You may feel that you have little control over the formatting of your document.

Quick Style sets, themes, and color and font schemes still leave you in control, but they provide a great deal of flexibility, as well as some powerful tools for document design. The key is in understanding how they fit together.

Quick Style sets multiply the usefulness of styles

Previous versions of Word included a set of built-in styles that were designed to look good together. But it was only one set. If you wanted headings to be centered in some documents but aligned on the left margin in others, you either used separate templates or you created separate styles for each kind of formatting.

In Word 2007, you can use the same document template and the same styles for different kinds of documents. For a document with centered headings, you can use the Formal Quick Style set, and for a document with left-aligned headings, you can use a different Quick Style set, such as Word 2007. Switching Quick Style sets automatically updates the formatting of all the styles in the document.

You can see the effect of a Quick Style set by pointing to the various style sets before you click one. On the Home tab, in the Styles group, click Change Styles, point to Style Set, and then point to the various style set names.
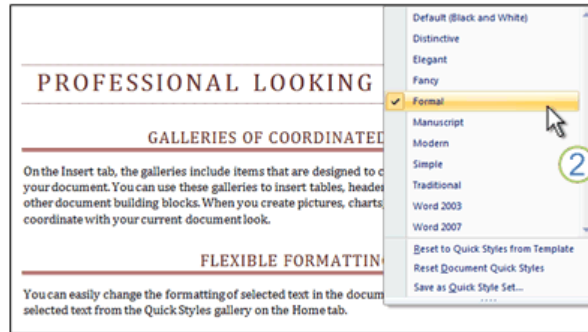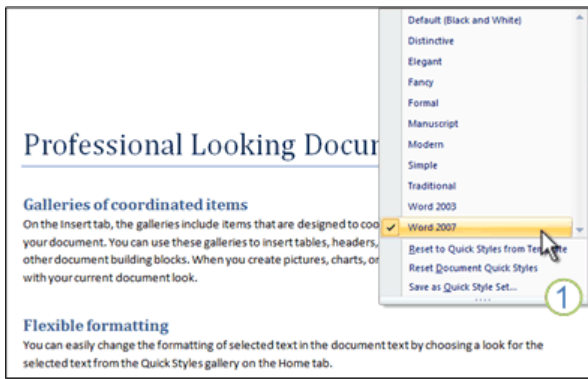
1 A document with the Word 2007 style set applied. Title, and Heading 1 styles are used to format the title and headings.

2 The same document, using the same Title and Heading 1 styles, looks very different when the Formal style set is applied.

Themes provide font and color schemes for Quick Style sets

When you apply a theme, you simultaneously apply a font scheme, a color scheme, and a set of graphic effects. The font scheme and color scheme from the theme are carried over into the Quick Style sets.

For example, if the Office theme (the default theme) is applied to your document, all of the Quick Style sets use Cambria for headings, Calibri for body text, and the Office color scheme. If you switch to the Metro theme, all of the Quick Style sets — and the text in your document — switch to Consolas for headings, Corbel for body text, and the Metro color scheme.


1 A document with the Office theme applied.

2 The same document with the Metro theme applied switches to a different font set and color scheme.

To apply a theme, click Themes in the Themes group on the Page Layout tab.
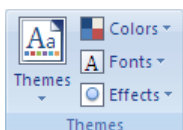
You are not required to apply a theme wholesale. You can apply the font scheme and color scheme that you want independently.

For example, if you like the color scheme and graphical effects of the Civic theme, but you don't want to use Georgia as the font for headings and body text, you can apply a different font scheme. On the Home tab, in the Styles group, point to Change Styles and then point to Fonts.
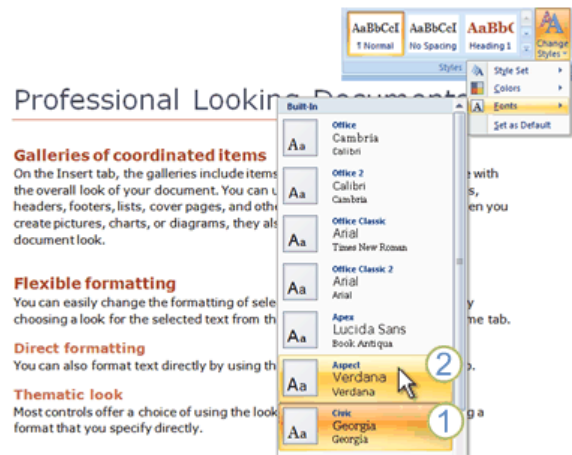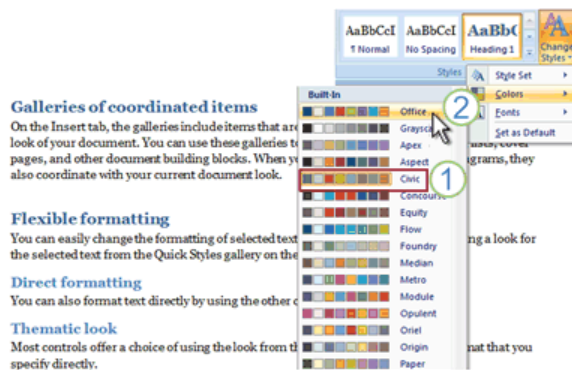

1 The Civic theme uses a red color scheme for headings and uses Georgia as the font for headings and body text.

2 The Civic theme is still in effect, but its font scheme is overridden by applying the font scheme from the Aspect theme. Verdana is now used for headings and body text.

Similarly, if you like the font scheme and the graphic effects of a theme, but you prefer to use different colors, you can apply a different color scheme. On the Home tab in the Styles group, point to Change Styles, and then point to Colors.

Similarly, if you like the font scheme and the graphic effects of a theme, but you prefer to use different colors, you can apply a different color scheme. On the Home tab in the Styles group, point to Change Styles, and then point to Colors.

1 The Civic theme uses a red color scheme for headings and uses Georgia as the font for headings and body text.

2 The Civic theme is still in effect, but its color scheme is overridden by applying the color scheme from the Office theme. Blue is now used for headings.

Applying custom font choices

Applying a theme or a font scheme defines font choices for headings and body text that are designed to go together. The font choices stay in effect regardless of which Quick Style set you choose, until you switch to a different theme or font scheme.

If you want to specify that text be displayed in a particular font regardless of the theme or font scheme, create a custom style. Or you can use direct formatting by selecting the text and applying the font that you want.

NOTE   If you don't want the font to update to reflect updates to the theme or font scheme, be sure to format the text with a font whose name is not followed by (Headings) or (Body). These are listed as Theme Fonts in the gallery of fonts.
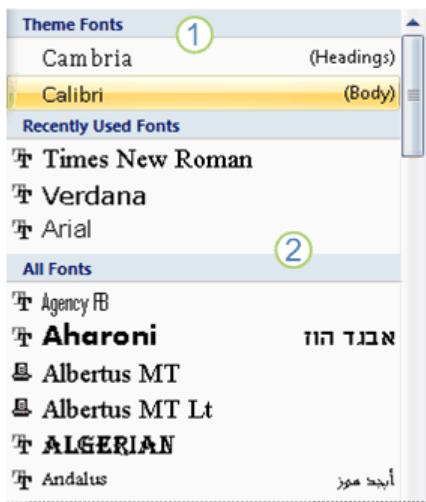
1 The fonts that you select among the Theme Fonts will be updated to a different font scheme if you apply a different theme or font scheme to the document.

2 Click a font among the Recently Used Fonts or All Fonts to quickly apply a font that is not subject to changing the theme or font scheme.

Applying custom color choices

You can apply a color scheme that is designed as a coordinated set of colors. When you define the color of text, you can choose one of the theme colors, or you can select from a range of standard and custom colors.

If you choose a theme color, the color might change if you switch to a different color scheme or theme. However, if you choose a standard or custom color, text is displayed in that color regardless of the color scheme or theme that you apply to the document.
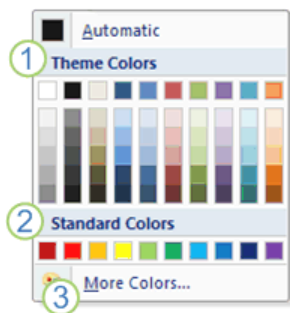
1 Colors that you select from the Theme Colors are updated to a different color scheme if you apply a different theme or color scheme to the document.

2 Colors that you select from the Standard Colors are not changed even if you apply a different theme or color scheme to the document.

3 Click More Colors to select from a wide array of color choices. These colors also are not changed even if you apply a different theme or color scheme to the document.

## Palettes of choices for applying layers of formatting

Let's put all these formatting choices together. Think of themes as palettes that provide font and color schemes, and Quick Style sets are like collections of brushes that you use to apply formatting to your document. The palettes are labeled things like Office, Apex, and Aspect. The brush collections are named things like Word 2007, Manuscript, and Traditional. Each brush collection is prestocked with brushes named Normal, Heading 1, Emphasis, and so on.

The effect of using any of the individual brushes depends on which collection (Quick Style set) it belongs to, as well as which palette (theme) is in use.
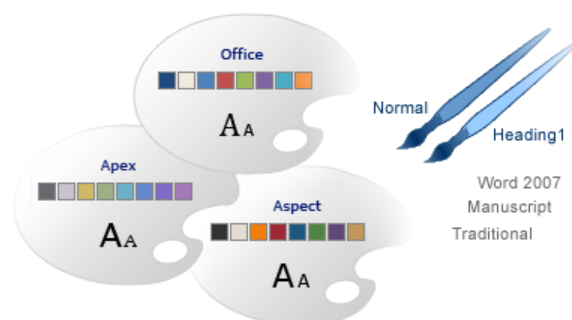

When you apply brush strokes (styles) to your document, Word applies the formatting in layers. Each layer overrides the previous layer, providing an increasing degree of fine-tuning and a decreasing degree of flexibility.

The bottom layer is the Normal paragraph style. Text formatted as Normal can automatically change its appearance when you switch themes or Quick Style sets. The top layer is direct formatting. If you select a word and apply the standard red color to it, the word remains red no matter what theme, Quick Style set, or style you apply to it.
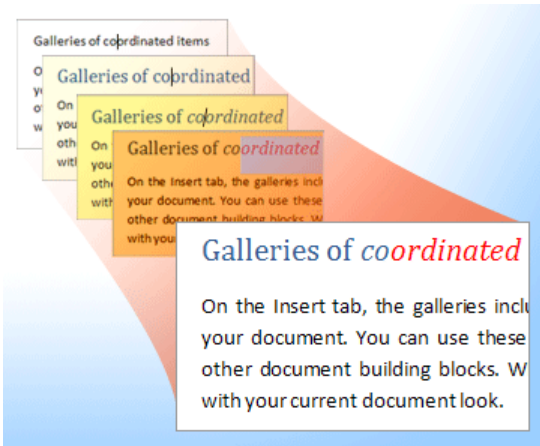
NOTE   You can see the layers of formatting by using the Style Inspector. On the Home tab, in the Styles group, click the Styles Dialog Box Launcher. At the bottom of the Styles task pane, click Style Inspector.
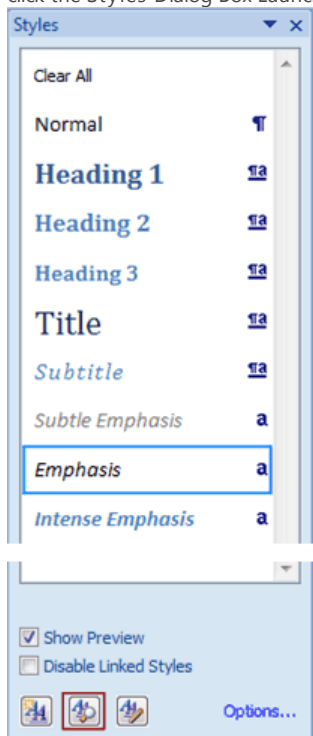
Boxes in the Style Inspector show you the style and direct formatting that are in effect for the text at the cursor's location. You can click Reset to Normal Paragraph Style, Clear Paragraph Formatting, Clear Character Style, or Clear Character Formatting buttons to remove formatting from the text, one layer at a time.
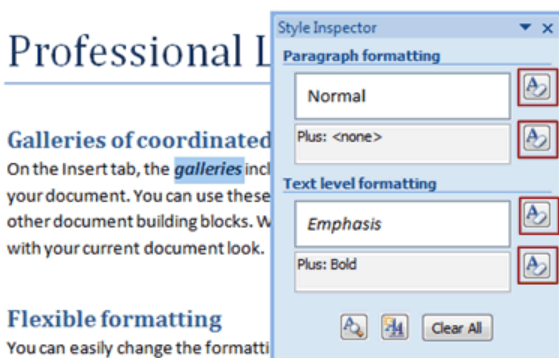
Emphasize or italicize?

For example, if you are using the Word 2007 Quick Style set, and you want to emphasize a word in a paragraph, you can select it and then do one of two things:

▸ Format it with the Emphasis Quick Style.

▸ Italicize it (for example, by pressing CTRL+I).

The choice you make depends on whether you want to emphasize the text or italicize it. Emphasized text contrasts with the surrounding text, but it doesn't necessarily need to be italicized. On the other hand, you may want to use italics if the text is a book title.

When you use the Word 2007 Quick Style set, the Emphasis style italicizes the text. However, if you switch to the Fancy Quick Style set, the body text is displayed in italics, and text formatted with the Emphasis style is displayed in a contrasting color with a shaded background. If you switch to the Elegant Quick Style set, text formatted with the Emphasis style is displayed as bold, small caps.

The Emphasis style is a design element within the Quick Style set, not an explicit format.

Customized styles

If you want formatting choices that are not available from the built-in styles, Quick Style sets, and themes, you can create custom styles to suit your needs.

The easiest way to create a custom style is to modify a built-in style and then save it as a new style.

For example, you might want to format a paragraph of quoted material with a half-inch indent from the left and right margins, single spaced. There is no built-in style to accommodate this, but you can create a custom style by doing the following:

1. Click in the paragraph you want to format.

2. On the Home tab, click the Paragraph Dialog Box Launcher.
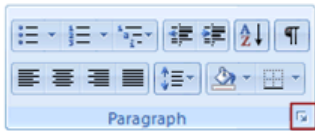
3. In the Indentation section, type **0.5"** in the Left and Right boxes.

4. In the Spacing section, in the Line spacing list, click Single.

5. Click OK.

6. Right-click in the paragraph, point to Styles, and then click Save Selection as a New Quick Style.

7. In the Name box, type a name for the style, such as Block quote.

8. If you want the style to be included in the gallery of styles on the Home tab, and if you want the style to be a linked style, click OK.

9. If you don't want the style to be included in the gallery, or if you want the style to be either a paragraph or a character style, click Modify and do one or both of the following:

    *   At the bottom of the dialog box, clear the Add to Quick Style list box.

    *   In the Style type list, click Paragraph or Character.

If you switch to a different Quick Style set, you may need to adjust the settings of your custom style. In the example here, if you create the Block quote style while the Word 2007 Quick Style set is applied, and then you switch to the Traditional Quick Style set, you can change the Block quote style to remove the first-line indentation that the Traditional Quick Style set introduces. To change a style, do the following:

1. On the Home tab in the Styles group, right-click Block quote, and then click Modify.

2. Click Format, and then click Paragraph.

3. In the Indentation section, in the Special list, click (none).

The more characteristics that you specify for the style, the less the style is affected by switching Quick Style sets or themes.