# Formatting characters

The Home tab contains the controls you'll use most often, so it's selected by default whenever you open or create a document.

It's organized into five areas: Clipboard, Font, Paragraph, Styles and Editing controls. We'll start by looking at the Font controls.

Choosing the font with the Mini Toolbar

The terms "font" and "typeface" come from traditional typography, and describe the visual design of letters and other symbols. Most people will be familiar with popular typefaces such as Arial or Times New Roman. Strictly speaking, a font is an instance of a typeface at a certain size and variant such as normal, light, bold or italic. These days the term "font" is often used in place of typeface, so in Word we might select a font of "Arial Black", then choose a size of 12 and perhaps apply an effect such as italic.
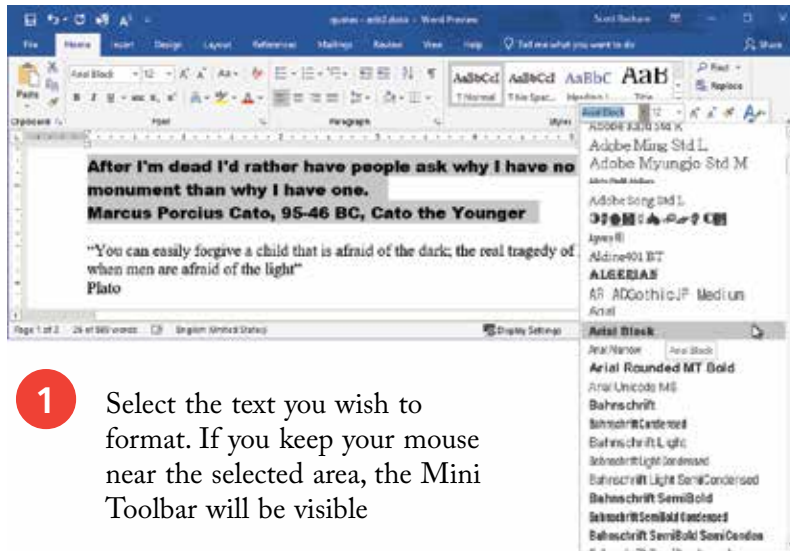
1 Select the text you wish to format. If you keep your mouse near the selected area, the Mini Toolbar will be visible

2 Select from the font menu in the Mini Toolbar. The list is previewed using the fonts themselves. Recently-used fonts are listed near the top

Hot tip

Font size is usually measured in points, where 72 points is equal to one inch when printed. Most printed body text is either 10, 11 or 12 points in size.

Don't forget

If the Mini Toolbar fails to appear when you hover over some text with your mouse, try right-clicking. A pop-up context menu will appear with the Mini Toolbar immediately above.
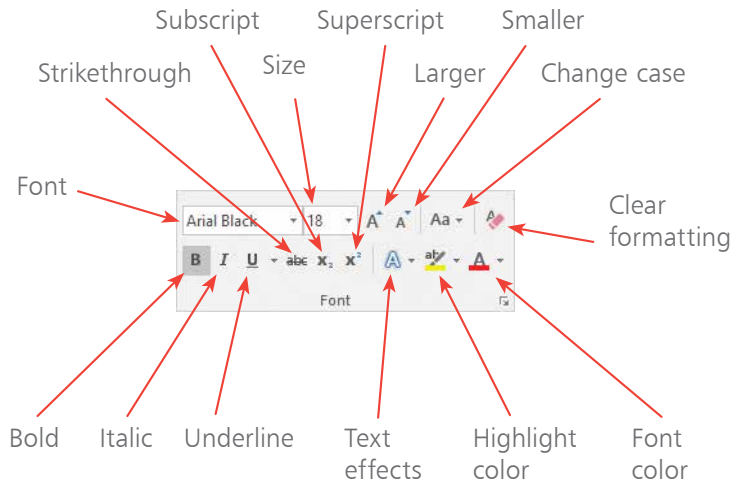
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Formatting with the Home tab

The Font section of the Home tab gives you access to more ways of controlling the appearance of characters.

1 Select some text. Change font, size, and other attributes by selecting from the Font section in the Home tab

2 The Font area shows the current settings of selected text, wherever possible

3 In this example all the selected text is 18 point in size, and bold, so that's shown in the Font area. However, since the text uses more than one font, the area that usually displays the font name is blank. Selecting just the word "Phaedrus", or even part of that word, would cause the Font area to show "Arial Black"

The Font dialog

You can call up the Font dialog box to get full character-level control over the appearance of your selected text.

1 Select some text. Click on the dialog icon in the lower-right corner of the Font area, or press Ctrl + D

Open Font dialog

2 You now have access to additional effects, such as double strikethrough, and a variety of underline styles. The Preview box near the bottom gives you an indication of how the text would appear if you clicked OK

Hot tip
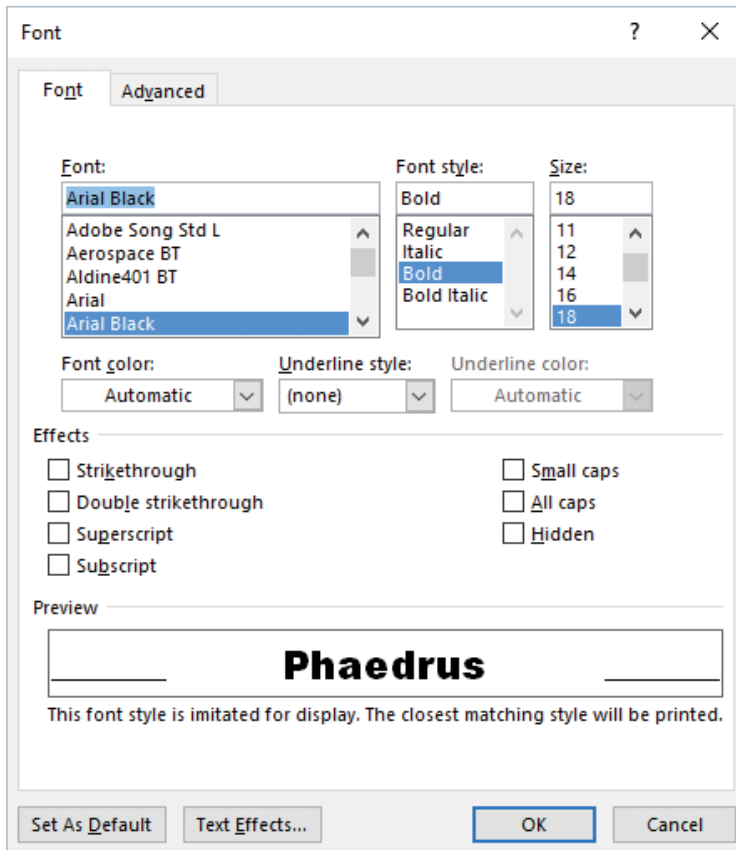
Clicking the Text Effects button will take you to a dialog where you can apply a wide range of visual effects to your text. These include fills, outlines, shadow, reflections and 3D formats. You can apply some (but not all) of these directly from icons in the Home tab of the Ribbon.

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3 Click on the Advanced tab to control the precise positioning and scaling of the selected characters

Kerning

Kerning is a process used to adjust the space between certain combinations of characters. For example, when the letters "T" and "o" occur next to each other, normal spacing appears too wide. If you activate kerning then they will be brought closer together to create the illusion of normal spacing. Since kerning creates more work for your computer when drawing text on the screen it may increase the time it takes to display. For this reason, you might want to activate it only for larger font sizes (where spacing is more noticeable).
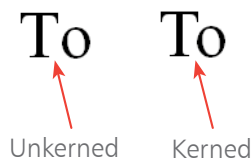
Ligatures

The Advanced dialog also has the ability to access a range of OpenType features. OpenType allows font designers to make use of features such as special small caps, ligatures, number forms and spacing. Ligatures are combinations of characters designed as a single entity. In this example you can see that applying ligatures affects the two consecutive "f" characters, which are displayed as a specially designed single character.

Beware

Scaling allows you to stretch or compress text horizontally. While this can sometimes work well for large titles, it's not recommended for use on main text as the results are often unreadable. If you need narrower or wider text then try using a different font that is already the desired shape.

Don't forget

You might not notice any changes in the appearance of your text when you activate ligatures, as this setting will only make a difference if you are using a font that has been specially created with ligature information.
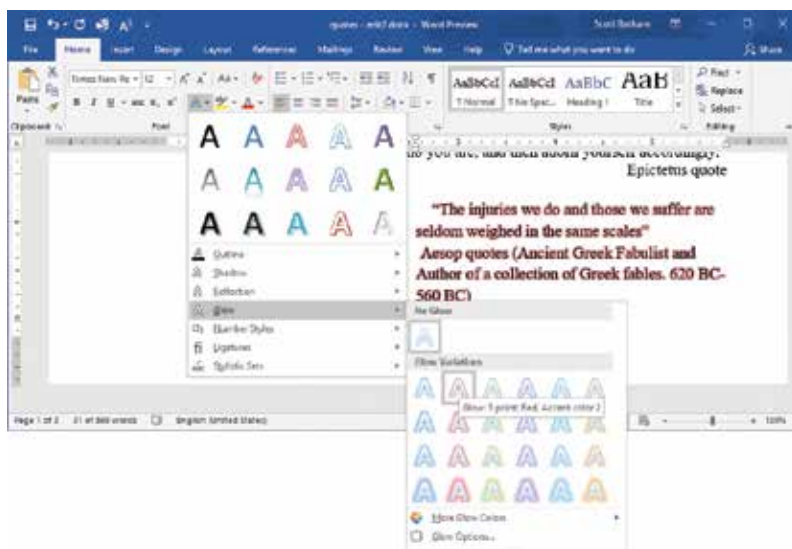
Phaedrus

Unkerned   Kerned

suffer

Normal text

suffer

Ligature applied to the pair of f characters
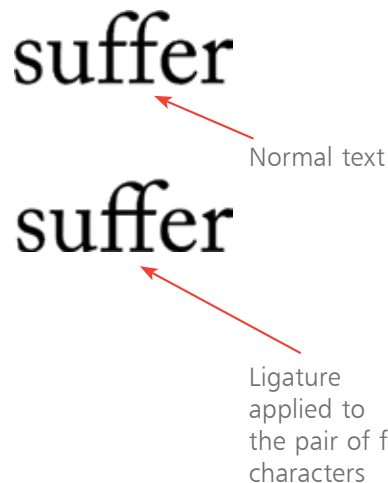
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Text effects

Word gives you access to a wide range of text effects, and by using the Font area of the Home tab you'll get an instant preview.

1 Select some text. Click on the "Text Effects and Typography" button within the Font tools to see a menu of popular effects. As you hover over an item your text will temporarily preview the effect. Either move to a different effect or, if you are happy with your selection, click once on the effect to apply it permanently

The Text Highlight Color and the Font Color buttons also give you an instant preview of how the text will look as you hover over each color in their pop-up menus.

2 You can use the sub-menus to access more options within the individual effects of outline, shadow, reflection, and glow. Note that you can apply several effects at once, although just one from each category. For example, an outer shadow, a green glow and a medium reflection can all be applied to a single piece of text, as in the following example