

Word Tips for Editors

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So many questions, so much advice, and so little time. That was the theme of this fast-paced session at the 48th annual meeting of the Council of Science Editors. Although Microsoft Word was designed primarily to aid writers, it can be customized into a powerful science editing tool. Listed below are just a few of the tips the presenters offered to science editors.

Make Your Editing Tasks Easier

Expand the number of “recently used files” listed on the File menu from four files to nine. Click on Tools, then Options, then the General tab. Look for the box labeled “Recently used file list”, then use the arrows to increase or decrease the number of recently used files that will appear in your File pull-down menu.

Spot an author’s use of Word Fields (such as the EndNote reference manager). Click on Tools, then Options, then the View tab. Look for the box labeled “Field shading”. Click “Always” or “When selected” to add shading to field results in your document,

which makes the fields easy to identify. Field shading displays on the screen, but it does not print.

Customize cut-and-paste options, thereby avoiding Word-inserted extra spaces before and after inserted text. Click on Tools, then Options, then the Edit tab. Look for the Settings tab next to “Smart cut and paste”. Choose various options to automatically adjust paragraph, sentence, and word spacing; apply style formatting; and update lists.

Customize spell-check options and turn off automatic grammar checking. Click on Tools, then Options, then the Spelling & Grammar tab. Choose various options to check spelling and grammar as you type.

Create a Custom Dictionary

Suppose such terms as *telencephalon*, *dynein*, and *haploinsufficiency* appear repeatedly in your manuscript. Each word is spelled correctly, but Word doesn’t recognize them. To create a custom dictionary for technical words that appear repeatedly in your documents, click on Tools, then Options, then the Spelling & Grammar tab. Choose the tab labeled “Custom Dictionaries”, then click on the “Add” tab, and then name a custom dictionary. You can create at least a dozen custom dictionaries and use them simultaneously by adding words to them. To add words to a custom dictionary, first choose the custom dictionary you wish to use, then during the spell-check process, right-click to choose the “add to dictionary” option.

For more accurate medical spell-checking, consider purchasing Dorland’s

or Stedman’s medical dictionary, available from www.dorlands.com or www.stedmans.com.

Control Automatic Typing Changes

Microsoft Word thinks it is smarter than you. Suppose, for example, you create an itemized list—for example, (a), (b), (c)—but Word automatically changes (c) to ©. Or you wish to type 1st, 2nd, and 3rd, and Word automatically corrects the ordinals to superscripts (1st, 2nd, and 3rd). To prevent those and similar corrections from occurring, click on Tools, then AutoCorrect Options, then AutoCorrect. Uncheck the box marked “Replace text as you type” or scroll through the auto-replace options and delete individual options. Look at the other submenus, and either check or uncheck the boxes next to the automatic corrections that you wish to turn on or off.

Suppose you regularly type the phrase “Address all reprint requests to . . .”. To make your work easier, you could type the nonsensical letters “aarp” and have the entire phrase automatically inserted in your document. To create such a shortcut, click on Tools, then AutoCorrect Options, then AutoCorrect. Type the letters aarp in the “Replace” box, and the phrase “Address all reprint requests to”. The next time you type “aarp”, the entire phrase will appear on your screen.

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