Organization within a Document

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This is a guide for organizing a document using headers and the navigation pane. This downloaded version lets you work with the skills in real time, but you can also see it online.

# Understanding headers and the navigation pane

## Headings

A heading is a title or subtitle used to introduce and organize sections of text. Headings:

* make the text easier to understand by acting as a signpost for the author and reader to guide them through the narrative,
* allow screen readers to guide a user through a document in an organized and efficient manner, and
* can be used to create a table of contents with a few clicks of the mouse.

A first order topical heading like “Understanding headers and the navigation pane” above a level 1 heading. A second order heading like “Headings” above is a level 2 heading.

You can readily make headings with a few keystrokes within Google Docs or Microsoft Word. All you need to do is press Ctrl+Alt+(number) on a PC or Cmd+Option+(number) on a Mac to designate a heading level to that particular text.

## The navigation pane

The navigation pane is an interactive panel automatically generated by headings. If enabled, it appears on the left side of a Google Doc or Word document. It improves:

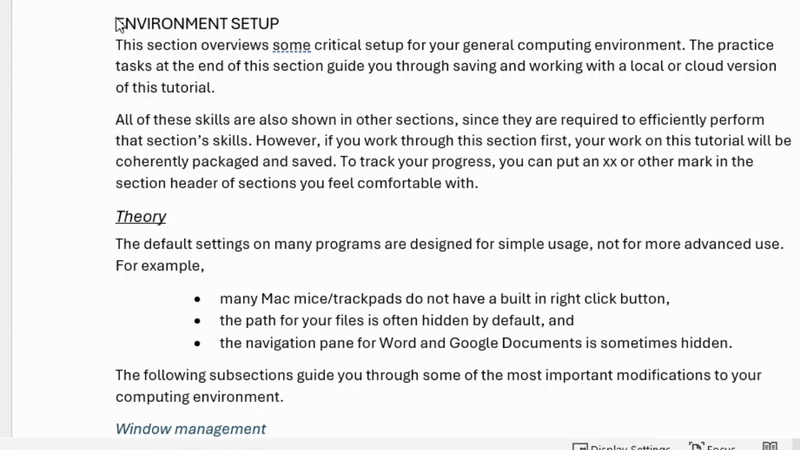
* idea organization,
* document navigation, and
* teamwork and delegation by telling collaborates to use the navigation pane to work on a specified section.

Read on for details on how to use headings and the navigation pane. Practice the skills described while reading the tutorial, in everyday computing work, and with the practice tasks at the end.

## Example use cases

These are some examples of how headers and the navigation pane can help.

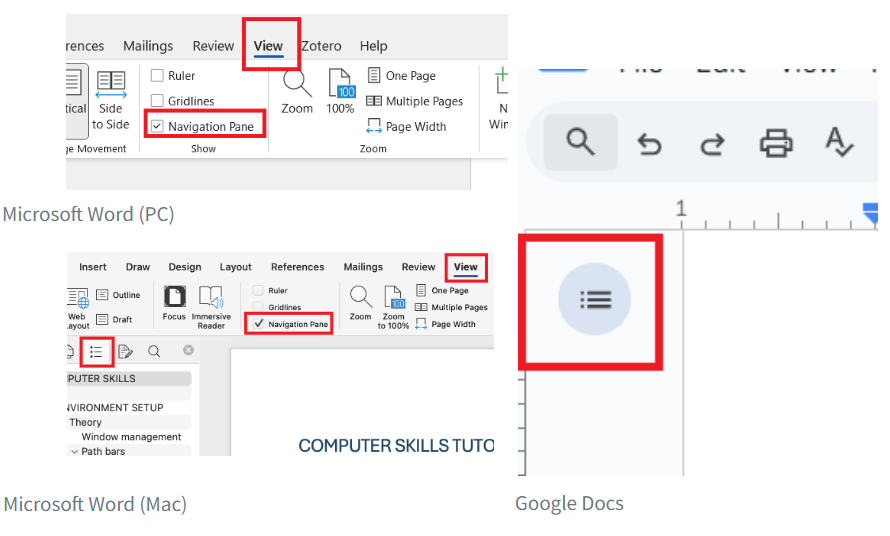
1. You can jump from your introduction to your conclusion with a click. This can help you ensure that your introduction and conclusion are argumentatively aligned.
2. You can tell a collaborator to look at section “XXX” and use the navigation pane to get there.
3. You can “zoom out” of a long document with headings by looking at the navigation pane. With this view, you can assess questions like “Is everything there that should be?” and “Does this order make sense?”
4. In Microsoft Word, you can collapse all sections of your document to focus on the one or two that you are currently working on.



# Skills

## Enable the navigation pane

The navigation pane displays all headings in your document in a easy-to-use and ordered way. To see the navigation pane in Microsoft Word, go to the View ribbon. In the “Show” section, click “Navigation Pane.” Google Docs opens the navigation pane by default. You may need to click the list icon at the top left of your screen.



## Use the mouse/trackpad to create headings

You can select a heading from the “Styles” section of the “Home” ribbon using a mouse/trackpad. This is straightforward but takes more time than using keyboard shortcuts.

## Use the keyboard to create headings

Headings are especially practical if you memorize the keystrokes to generate them.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Type** | **Microsoft Word**  **(PC)** | **Google Docs**  **(PC)** | **Microsoft Word**  **(Mac)** | **Google Docs**  **(Mac)** |
| Heading level 1 | Ctrl+alt+1 | Ctrl+alt+1 | Cmd+option+1 | Cmd+option+1 |
| Heading level 2 | Ctrl+alt+2 | Ctrl+alt+2 | Cmd+option+2 | Cmd+option+2 |
| Heading level 3 | Ctrl+alt+3 | Ctrl+alt+3 | Cmd+option+3 | Cmd+option+3 |
| Normal | Ctrl+shift+n | Ctrl+alt+0 | Cmd+shift+n | Cmd+option+0 |
| Heading dialogue box | Ctrl+shift+s |  | (see below) |  |

Note that Google Docs can create additional heading levels beyond level 3 using the same keyboard shortcut pattern. Microsoft Word stops keyboard shortcuts after heading level 3, although Ctrl+shift+s (PC) provides a handy alternative for lower-level headings. A more complex solution for a Mac can be found by Googling [“mac apply styles shortcut word.”](https://www.google.com/search?q=mac+apply+styles+shortcut+word)

Sometimes you might need to change multiple headers from UPPER CASE to Title Case or lower case. A handy trick in Microsoft Word is to change the case pattern of text using shift+f3 (PC) and Cmd+shift+a (Mac). Put your cursor in the middle of the word you want to change, then press the keyboard combination above.

## Change format of all headers

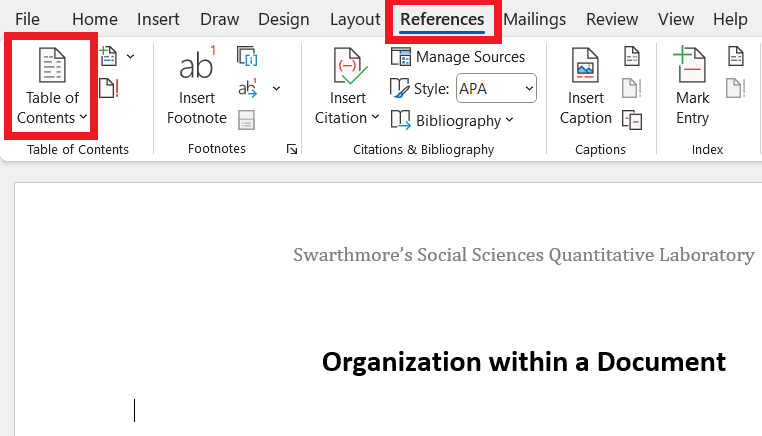
On either platform, you can adjust heading formats easily with the following steps.

1. Move to one of the existing headers a document. Change the format. For example, you can bold it. Keep your cursor blinking on that header.
2. Make all headers with that level match your new format
   1. Microsoft Word: Select the “Home” ribbon. In the “style” section, right click on the appropriate header. Click “Update Heading \_\_ to Match Selection.”
   2. Google Docs: Click into the heading section of the ribbon. Move your cursor to the appropriate heading. Click “Update Heading \_\_ to match.”
3. All headings of that level will now match the format of the heading your cursor started on.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Microsoft Word  Microsoft Word | Google Docs  Google Docs |

## Create a table of contents

A screenshot of a computer

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

# Practice

Copy and paste tasks 1-4 into Google Docs or Microsoft Word. [downloaded](https://github.com/swat-ssql/computer-skills-tutorials-docx/raw/refs/heads/main/Computer-Skills-Tutorials.docx) to your computer. Instead of copy-pasting the text in this section to a word processor, you can work within that downloaded document.

Tasks:

1. Make the “Tasks” line above into heading level 3 with just your keyboard.
2. Change the format of the “Tasks” line.
3. Apply that format to all level 3 headings in the document.
4. Undo your changes with just your keyboard.

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