

KB CommEntary

KB COMM • SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

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Greetings!

Spring Training

What a winter! We got 3 feet (yes, feet) of snow in two storms less than a week apart in February. We are one with our shovels. However, warmer weather is in the forecast: the robins have returned, the bulbs are poking through, and the bats are cracking in Florida. It's all good.

Even though you may be itching to go outside and dig in the dirt, you may want to first clean up a few items inside—starting with your documents! This issue of *KB CommEntary* includes suggestions for making your documents look consistently professional.

What's Up at KB COMM?

At KB Comm, we provide mission-critical communication and learning services to clients in a variety of industries. Thanks to our established and new clients for keeping us fully engaged. Recent and ongoing projects include:

- Writing and editing numerous information products for a healthcare diagnostics manufacturer, including a product messaging guide, a communications style guide, an employee newsletter, customer letters, and sales and marketing brochures and data sheets
- Writing job descriptions for posting on the Careers web page of a high-tech manufacturer
- Writing, formatting, and performing quality control reviews of large, complex chemical residue studies intended for regulatory submission to EPA on behalf of a research organization and a chemical manufacturer
- Writing supplements and formatting modules of electronic submissions to FDA for a pharmaceutical manufacturing company

KB Comm is a certified Women's Business Enterprise. We are officially qualified to participate in corporations' woman- and minority-owned vendor programs.

Please keep us in mind for your communication or training projects.

Tips and Tales

Making Your Documents Look Good, Pt. 1

One thing we've learned over the years is that a document's appearance often has as much impact on the audience as its contents. That's why it's important to create professional-looking documents.

Microsoft Word gives you plenty of tools with which to control a bewildering array of document formatting parameters. But when you're trying to get your formatting act together, we recommend that you keep it simple and start with the basic formatting elements. By "the basics," we mean:

- Fonts
- Line spacing
- Page size, orientation, and margins
- Paragraph indentation
- Header, footer, and page number
- Placement of graphics and table

If you can maintain consistency in the formatting of these basic elements within and among documents, you will have solved probably 80% of your document formatting issues. The key word here is "consistency"—you need to ensure that you format the various elements of your documents the same way every time.

We will discuss these common formatting elements and offer suggestions for how to make them consistent in the next few issues of *KB CommEntary*.

Fonts

Inconsistent use of fonts is the formatting problem we see most frequently. In layman's terms, a font is a combination of typeface, size, weight, and other variations. To get started, you must select one or more typefaces to use for body text, headings, headers and footers, figure and table captions, and any other text elements you have in your documents. To keep it simple, you can select just one face to use for all the elements (say Times New Roman or Arial) and vary the treatment of the face (size, weight, etc.) to distinguish among them. Another popular approach is to choose a serif face like Times New Roman for body text and a sans serif face like Arial for headings and captions.

We recommend choosing conservative faces for business use. If you think Times and Arial are done to death, consider alternatives such as Garamond for a serif face and Century Gothic for sans serif. To ensure compatibility within your company and among business partners and eliminate the need to buy and install additional fonts, we suggest limiting your typeface options to those that come standard with Microsoft Windows. Graphic designers, we feel your pain, but business documents other than sales and marketing collateral can get by just fine with typefaces selected from the standard set of Windows fonts.

Another important thing to keep in mind—when choosing typefaces, do not use more than one serif or sans serif face in your document design. For instance, do not use both Times New Roman and Garamond, or Arial and Century Gothic.

For body text, appropriate font size is 10-12 points. Sans serif faces look larger on the page than serif faces, so 10 pt. sans serif appears to be about the same size as 11 or 12 pt. serif. For headings, sizes typically range from 10-16 points. You can adjust heading sizes to help the reader visually distinguish between different levels of headings. Experiment with heading weights (bold, extra bold, or black) as well. But once you decide on what to use for each text element, be consistent.

For business documents other than sales and marketing collateral, we recommend using solid black for all text elements.

Line Spacing

Line spacing is the amount of space between lines of text within a paragraph. The Word default is Single-spaced, and that's what we recommend using.

That's all the space we have for now. Stay tuned for the next exciting episode, in which we discuss page size, orientation, and margins and paragraph indentation and justification!

Ideas?

To help us make *KB CommEntary* more useful to you, feel free to suggest topics you would like to see addressed. Send your idea to kathy@kbcommlc.com and we will consider featuring it in an upcoming edition of the newsletter.

And please remember, *when it has to be right*, KB COMM is here to help.

Sincerely,

Kathy

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KB COMM

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