Working with Columns and Tables

The use of columns and tables in a document allow for better control of how text is displayed on a page. While both columns and tables can be used to format text into distributed areas of a page, each have functions for which they are especially useful.

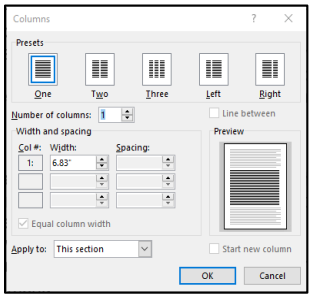
Word allows for the creation of two types of columns – the *snaking columns* of text you see in newspapers, magazines and newsletters, and *parallel columns* of text you see in lists and tables. Parallel columns can be accomplished through the use of the column function, tab stop placement, or the table function. All in all, the table function is best used when parallel columns is the desired result.

Snaking Columns – The Column Function

Snaking columns are most useful when creating newsletters or when flowing text from one column to the next is the desired result. Columns can be created with equal or unequal widths. Vertical lines can easily be created between columns. By using section breaks within the document, different numbers of columns or styles of columns can be created.

The quickest way of creating columns in a document is to use the Columns button on the Layout Menu Ribbon. The Columns dropdown box allows you to choose the number of columns to be created. Using the Columns button will create equal width columns. If you want to change the width of a column or want to create columns with unequal widths, use the More Columns arrow dropdown at the bottom of the Columns button.

Although you can easily format your document with columns by clicking the Columns button, you can use more options when you use the Columns dialog box. In addition to specifying the column width, the option to have a line between columns is selected in this box, as well as selecting whether the columns apply to the whole document or to a specific section.



Typing, editing and formatting text within a column uses the same rules as all other text.

> **Tip:** To move from one column to the top of the next column using the keyboard, press Ctrl+Shift+Enter.

> **Tip:** To change the number of columns in a given section, select the text in the columns you want to reformat, click on the Columns button and select the number of columns desired.

Parallel Columns – The Table Function

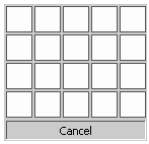
A table is simply a grid of columns and rows. The intersection of a column and a row is a cell. Each cell is independent and can be sized or formatted. Text, numbers, graphics, or formulas can all be inserted into cells. A table enables you to present in columns and align paragraphs or graphics.

A table can be inserted anywhere in a document. A table can span more than one page, and you can frame a table, resize it and position it on the page. You can attach a caption to a table and designate headings for the table so that if the table splits between pages, Word automatically repeats the heading at the top of the table.

Tables can be created by choosing the Table Button on the Insert Menu Ribbon.

To insert a table, move the insertion point to where you want the table to start then click the Table Button on the Insert Menu Ribbon.

When you click the button, a grid of rows and columns that looks like a miniature table appears. You can move the pointer within the grid to select the size of the table that you want to insert. Click the grid cell when you want to insert the table.



Once the table is created, you can click inside any of the cells to activate the Table Design and Table Layout Menu Ribbons.

Table Design

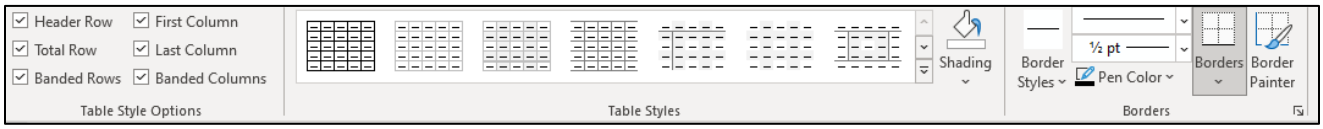
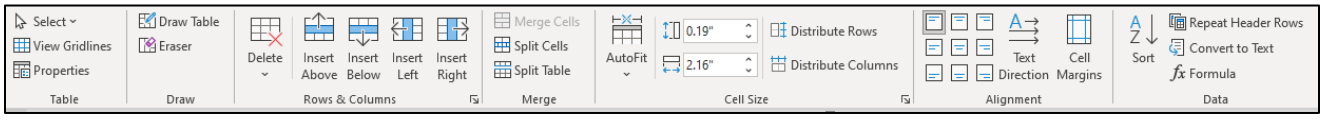


Table Layout



These ribbons provide a fast way to edit an existing table. Select from a variety of line styles, line weights, border colors, and shading. You can also merge and split cells, align text within a cell or cells, distribute rows and columns evenly, change the text rotation cells, and sort in ascending or descending order.

Changing the Column Width

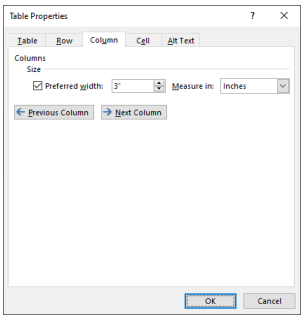
When Word first creates a table, the columns are sized equally to fill the area between the right and left margins.

To change the width of a column with the mouse, position the pointer on the column's right border. The pointer changes to a vertical double bar when you position it properly. Drag this column marker to the desired column width and release the mouse button.

If you have selected either the entire column or nothing in the column, the entire column adjusts to the new width. If you select cells within the column, only the selected cells adjust to the new width.

You can also use the table markers on the ruler to change column widths. Dragging the table markers has the same result as dragging the column borders.

To change the column width using the Table Properties Dialog Box

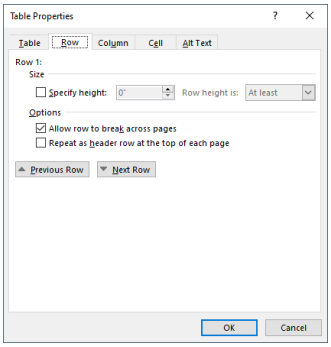


1. Select the columns or cells whose width you want to change.
2. Right click the selection you just made and choose Table Properties from the shortcut menu
3. Select the Column Tab and type a number in the Preferred Width box.
4. If you want to adjust other columns, click the Previous or Next Column button.

Changing Row Height and Position

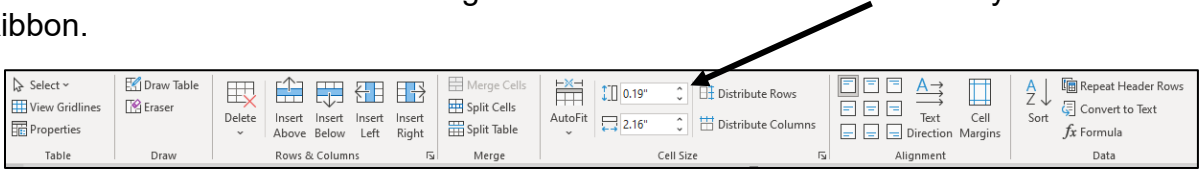
When a table is first created, each row has the same height. However, the text and the amount of paragraph spacing that you add changes a row's height. The Table Properties Dialog Box enables you to specify the row's height.

To change a row's height:



1. Select the rows whose height you want to adjust.
2. Right click the selection you just made and choose Table Properties from the shortcut menu
3. Select the Row Tab and type a number in the Specified Hight box.
4. Uncheck the Allow Row to Break Across Pages option to keep the selected row from splitting at a page break
5. Click the Previous or Next Row button to format other rows

NOTE: Column width and row height can also be set from the Table Layout Menu Ribbon.

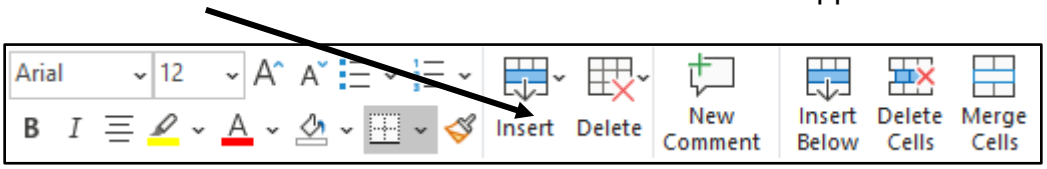


Adding or Deleting Cells, Rows, or Columns

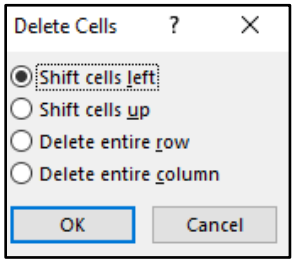
Word enables you to change a table's structure by adding and deleting cells, rows, and columns.

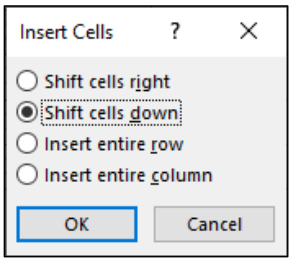
To add or delete individual cells from an existing table:

1. Select the cells you want to delete, or position the cursor where you want to add cells
2. Choose the Insert or Delete button from the Table toolbar that appears.



3. Choose the appropriate option button that corresponds to shifting the existing cells to the position that you want. You also have the option of inserting or deleting the entire column or row.





Tip: To delete cell contents without deleting the actual cell, select the cell contents that you want to delete and press Delete or Backspace.

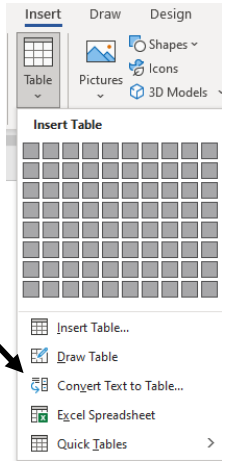
Tip: If you want to add a row at the end of a table, move the insertion point to the last position in the last cell and press Tab.

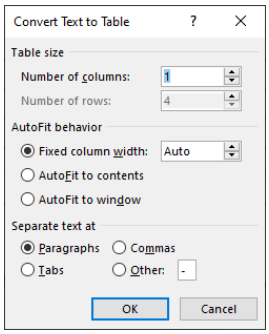
Converting Text to Tables

If the information that you want to include in a table already appears in your document as text, you can convert the text to a table.

To convert text to a table:

1. Select the lines of text or paragraphs you want to covert to a table.
2. Choose the "Convert Text to Table" option on the Insert Table Menu Ribbon.





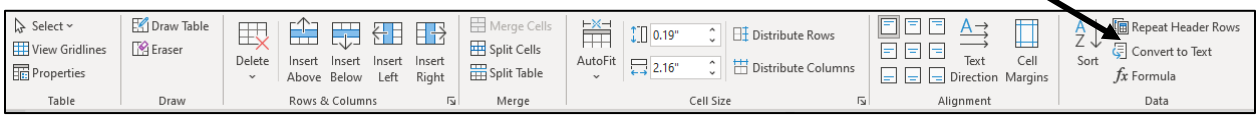
3. Type or select the number of columns, and the number of rows you want.
4. Select the column width, if you don't want to use the automatic settings.
5. Select the most appropriate text separator which corresponds to the text you are converting.

Converting a Table to Text

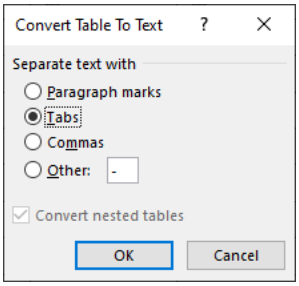
You can convert a table's cells to text separated by commas, tabs, or another single character, or you can convert each cell's contents into one or more paragraphs.

To convert a table to text:

1. Select the rows of the table you want to convert to text or select the entire table.
2. Choose the Convert to Text option on the Table Layout Menu Ribbon.



3. Select a "Separate text with" option from the dialog box.

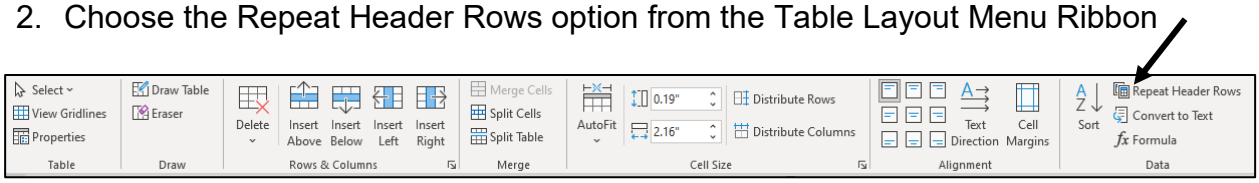


Creating Table Headings

Table headings are repeated on subsequent pages if the table spans more than one page. Any table heading designated must include the first row of the table.

To create table headings:

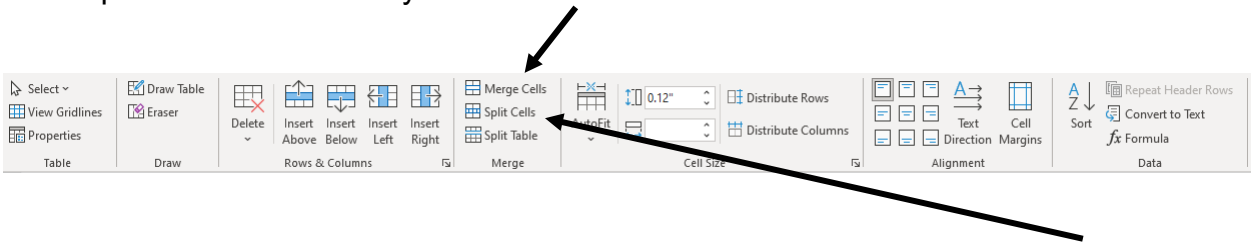
1. Select the first row and any following rows you want to use as table headings
2. Choose the Repeat Header Rows option from the Table Layout Menu Ribbon



Merging and Splitting Cells

Sometimes you want text or a figure to span the width of multiple cells. Word enables you to merge multiple cells in a row into a single cell. Merging cells converts their contents into paragraphs within a single cell.

To merge multiple cells, first select the cells you want to merge, then choose the Merge Cells option on the Table Layout Menu Ribbon.



To split merged cells, first select the cell you want to split, then choose the Split Cells option on the Table Layout Menu Ribbon.

Text that consists of a single paragraph is inserted into a single cell. If the text consists of multiple paragraphs, each paragraph is inserted into its own cell.