

Microsoft Word Template for Theses & Dissertations: A Guide

How to use the full Word template



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How to Download and Open Template File

The new Word template is saved as a **.dotx** file, which means you can download it to your computer as a template. Typically, your custom templates, such as this ETD template, will automatically save in a folder for “**Custom Office Templates.**” You can create many documents based on this template. These instructions will show you how to download the template correctly and create documents from it – without altering the template itself.

Downloading and Saving the Template

1. Download the template from the Graduate School’s [Thesis & Dissertation page](#).
2. Save the file to your **Custom Office Templates** folder, which is on all Windows computers. If you are using **macOS**, the template is saved in **/Users/username/Library/Group Containers/UBF8T346G9.Office/User Content/Templates** (unless you select a different location).

Creating a Document from the Template

1. Go to the template folder and **double click on the file**. This step is very important because it will create a brand new document from the template.
2. When the file opens in Word, go to **Save As**.
3. Save the document as a **.docx** file in a folder of your choice. Click **Save**.
4. Now you’re ready to write!
5. *Note:* follow these steps to create a second, third, etc. document from the template if you need to.

Section Breaks and Page Breaks

Page Breaks

Often, people confuse page breaks with section breaks. Page breaks only start a new page. This function is useful if you need to move a table title onto the next page or have a widow/orphan situation with your text. **Do NOT use “page breaks” to start a new chapter or major section.**

Section Breaks

Section breaks are what you must use to start a new chapter or major section. If you need to start a new chapter, appendix, etc., then follow these steps:

1. Put your cursor at the end of the preceding section.
2. Go to the **Layout** tab, then click on **Breaks**. This should bring you to a drop menu.
3. Under “**Section Breaks,**” click on **Next page**.
4. Now you have a new section and can begin a new chapter.

5. *Note:* Use “Heading 1” as it is set up in the template to type the heading for your new major section. Heading 1 in the new template is already set to add the 2-inch top margin so you don’t have to.

Heading Styles: Descriptions

There are many heading styles that are pre-set in the new template: Title, Heading 1, Heading 2, Table of Contents (Heading), Table Titles, and Figure Captions. Read through the descriptions below to learn how to use them properly. These heading styles enable your document to:

1. Have the 2-inch top margin on the first page automatically – without a section break;
2. Insert a self-populating table of contents, list of tables, and list of figures; and
3. Have bookmarks for navigation and accessibility.

“Title”

This heading is only for the title of your thesis or dissertation. The title on the title page is already set to this style. Using this heading style for your ETD title will also ensure accessibility by giving your document a title that can be read by screen readers.

“Heading 1”

Use Heading 1 for **all major sections**. The [formatting guide](#) has a complete list of major headings on pages 19 and 24. This heading is currently set to small-caps so that, regardless of how you type the text, the heading will appear in the document in small-caps automatically. It also has an invisible paragraph that provides the page with a 2-inch top margin. For the 2-inch top margin to appear properly, however, you need to use a **section break** to start each new chapter. The template currently has section breaks for each chapter already, but you will need to add another section break if you need additional chapters.

The table of contents is automatically set to show all iterations of Heading 1 and Heading 2 (see below) in the document as entries. To update the table of contents’ entries, all you have to do is alter your major headings, then update your table of contents. See the [“How to Edit the Table of Contents”](#) section of this guide for more information.

“Heading 2”

Heading 2 is for first-level subheadings in your chapters. The Graduate School only allows students to display the first level of subheadings in the table of contents (you are allowed to have more levels in the body of the document; they just cannot be entries in the table of contents). Use this style if you want to include the first level of subheadings as entries in the table of contents.

“Table of Contents (Heading)”

There is a special heading just for the table of contents so that the heading conforms to the established major heading style, has the invisible paragraph above the heading for the 2-inch top margin, and does *not* appear in the table of contents. Remember: the table of contents cannot be an entry in the table of contents. If you change the style for the major headings, be sure to change this heading style also to match the established major heading style.

“Table Titles”

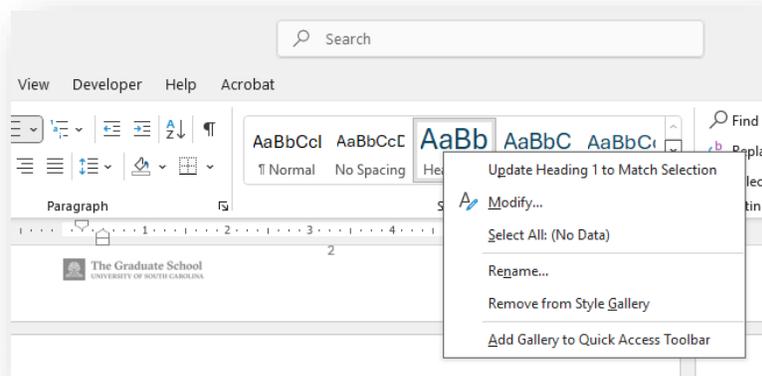
This style is only for table titles. When you use it for your table titles, you will be able to have a self-populating list of tables. Note that the list of tables can only work if you use the Table Titles heading style for your table titles.

“Figure Captions”

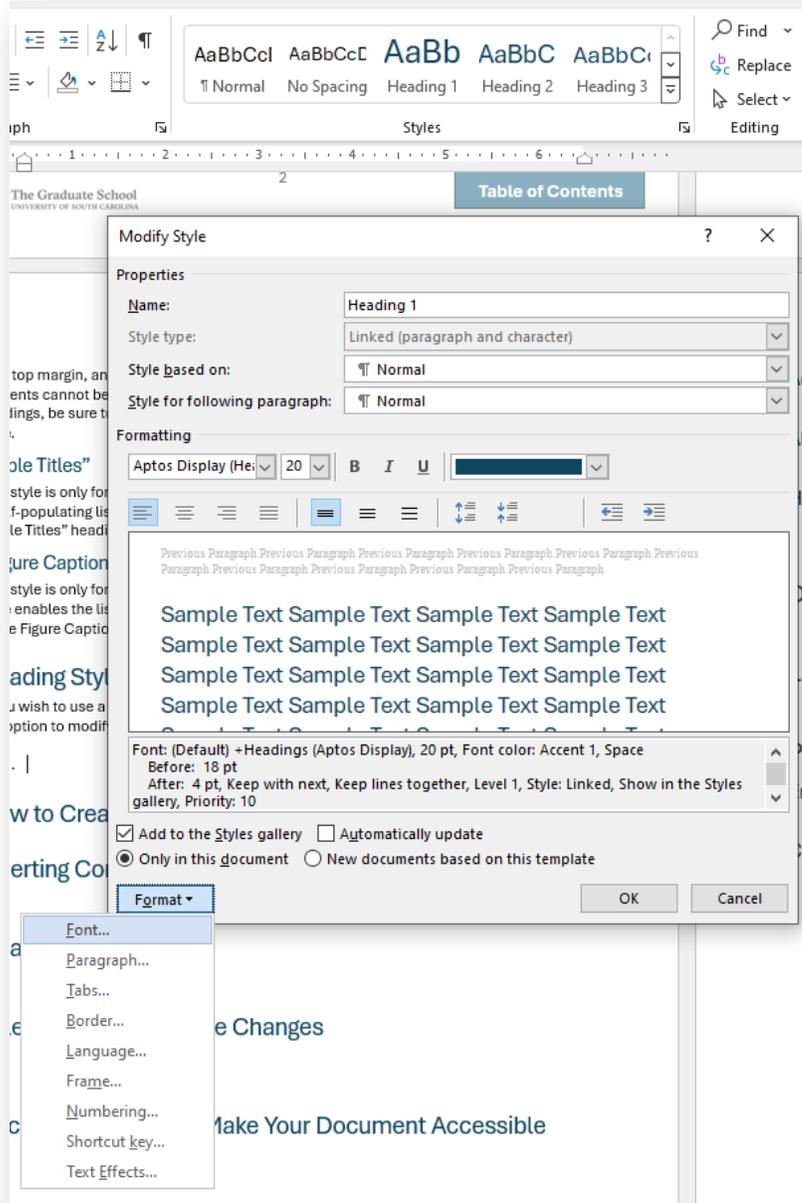
This style is only for figure captions. Just as with the Table Titles style, the Figure Captions style enables the list of figures to be self-populating. Type each figure number and caption in the Figure Captions style.

Heading Styles: How to Edit Them

If you wish to use a different style for your headings than the pre-set ones, then you have the option to modify the styles. To do so, follow these steps:



1. Go to the **Styles** menu and right-click on the heading style you wish to change. For instance, if you want to change your major heading style, right-click on “Heading 1.”
2. Click on **Modify**.
3. From there, you will see another menu. In the bottom left-hand corner is another menu called **Format**. Click on that and choose from the drop-menu options. You can click on **Font** to make changes to the font, such as color, size, and placement. You can click **Paragraph** to make changes to the spacing.



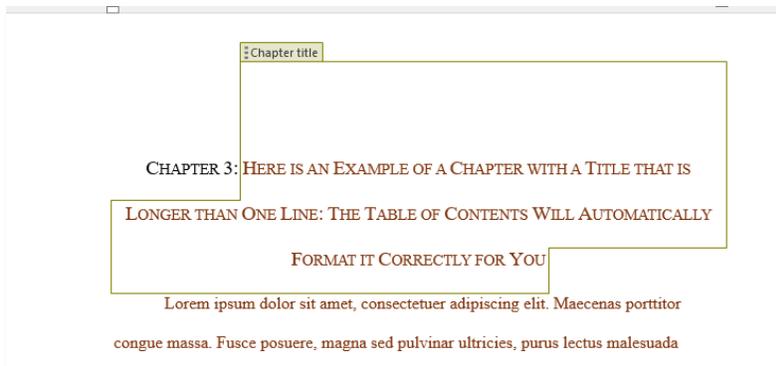
4. *Note: Remember that all headings and subheadings must be double spaced. All major headings must be centered.*
5. After you make these changes, click **Ok**. This will save your changes.
6. Word will now automatically update all headings at the level (e.g., “Heading 1” or “Table Titles”) with the new style you created.
7. Follow these steps to change any of the heading styles.

How to Edit the Table of Contents

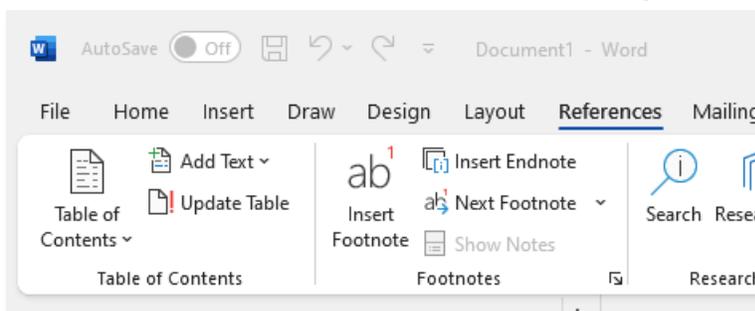
In this new template, the table of contents is already set up for you. You do not have to format any part of it, including spacing and margins. If you make any changes to the existing headings, such as altering a chapter title or deleting an appendix, then you will need to update the table of contents. Likewise, if you add any more major sections, such as a new chapter, then you will need to put the major section titles in **Heading 1**. This will ensure that your sections will appear in the table of contents and be formatted properly. *Remember: to change entries in the table of contents, you must alter the headings in the document; do not try to type in the table of contents itself.*

Update the Table of Contents

1. First, make any necessary changes to the headings, content, etc. Be sure to use **Heading 1** for major headings and **Heading 2** for first-level subheadings. You can type the title you wish to have for the chapter, appendix, etc. in the appropriate space. There are boxes throughout the document that instruct you on how to change the content.



2. After making these changes, put the cursor anywhere in the current table of contents.
3. Go to the **References** tab and click on **Update table**.



4. A menu will pop up with two choices: Update the page numbers only OR update the entire table. If you have added new major sections and/or changed any major section titles, click **Update entire table**. If you made simple revisions and only need to update the page numbers click **Update page numbers only**.
5. The table of contents will update automatically!

Inserting Content: Tips

- Do not copy/paste your entire thesis or dissertation into the template all at once. Instead, add the content section by section.
- The “filler text” is in a dark orange color, and it can be deleted *after* you add your own content. You can also change the font color later.
- Use section breaks to create new chapters, appendices, etc. **DO NOT USE “PAGE BREAKS.”**

Changing Font Color

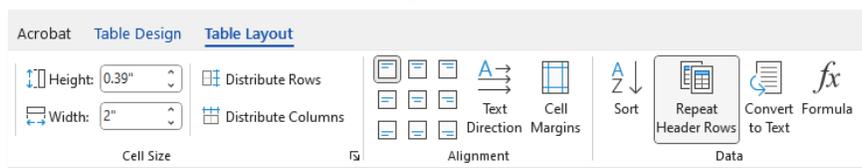
If you still have any orange font after adding your content, you can select all text (Windows: ctrl + a; macOS: cmd + a). Then, go to **Font**, and select black as the font color. This will change all font to black.

Accessibility: How to Make Your Document Accessible

Accessible Tables

The most important feature of having an accessible table is repeating the header row:

1. Go to the **Insert** tab, then click on **Table**, then **Insert Table**.
2. After you add the table, a table menu tab will appear. Click on **Table Layout**, then click on the box reading **Repeat Header Rows**.



Alt Text for Figures

Image descriptions can be added as alternative text in Word. Alt text is read by screen readers in a Word file and should remain intact when you convert the .docx file to HTML or PDF.

1. Right-click on the figure and select **View Alt Text**. An alt text panel will appear.
2. Enter the appropriate alt text in the text box. It should be a 1-2 sentence description of the figure/image.
3. Do *not* use generated descriptions!

How to do an Accessibility Check

You can check your document’s accessibility by going to the **Review** tab, then selecting **Check Accessibility** in the **Check Accessibility** menu. The checker will tell you what to fix in order to make your document accessible for all readers. For more information on digital accessibility, please visit the [Digital Accessibility at USC’s Toolbox](#).

Deleting Pages

1. Click or tap anywhere on the page you want to delete.
2. Press **ctrl + g** in Windows; press **Option + Cmd +g** for MacOS.
3. In the **Enter the page number** box, type **\page**.
4. Press **Enter (or Return)** on your keyboard, and then select **Close**.
5. Verify that a page of content is selected, then press **Delete** on your keyboard.

Landscape Pages

If you need to add a landscape page to your document, you will use **Section Breaks** (*not* page breaks) to isolate the pages you want to convert into landscape orientation.

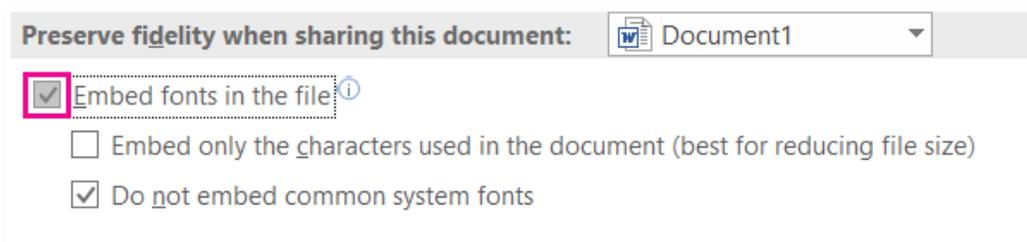
1. Go to the end of the preceding page where you want to insert the landscape page(s).
2. Go to **Layout**, then **Section Break – Next Page**.
3. You will now see a new, blank page. From there, again click **Layout > Section Break – Next Page**.
4. Put your cursor on the middle, blank page. Go to **Layout**, then **Orientation>Landscape**. The page should now be in landscape.
5. Leave the page number on the long, right side of the page. Do not move it or change the placement. The template contains a properly formatted landscape page.

Preparing Your Document for Submission

Embed Fonts

Embedding fonts can help with preserving your font when you convert the document to a PDF. When you embed fonts into the document, the online conversion will use these fonts to avoid font substitution.

1. Click on the **File** tab, and then click **Options**.
2. In the left column, select the **Save** tab.
3. At the bottom, under **Preserve fidelity when sharing this document**, select the **Embed fonts in the file** check box.



4. You will see two check boxes: Embed only the characters used in the document and Do not embed common system fonts.

5. Select **Embed only the characters used in the document** option to reduce the file size but limit editing of the file using the same font. This checkbox is common for both PowerPoint and Word.
6. Or, select **Do not embed common systems font**, which may increase the file size but is best for allowing others to edit the document and keep the same font.
7. Click **Ok**.

Convert to PDF

You are required to submit your thesis or dissertation as a PDF file. To save it:

1. Click on **File**, then either **Save As** or **Save As Adobe PDF**.
2. From there, you will select what folder you would like the document saved in. Be sure the file type is set as a PDF.
3. Click **Save**. The document will automatically convert.
4. Now, you're ready to submit your thesis or dissertation for the format check!

Additional Templates

The Graduate School [provides individual templates](#) in Microsoft Word that you can use to put your document together. Like the full template discussed in this guide, these individual templates have the same pre-set formatting options ready for your use.