

# Using Standard Software to Support Reading

## Making a Document more 'Dyslexia Friendly'

A lot can be done to make a standard document (e.g. a worksheet, or an electronic copy of a book) more accessible for a learner with reading and writing difficulties. These examples are based on Microsoft Word 2010, but similar adjustments can be made using most word processors.

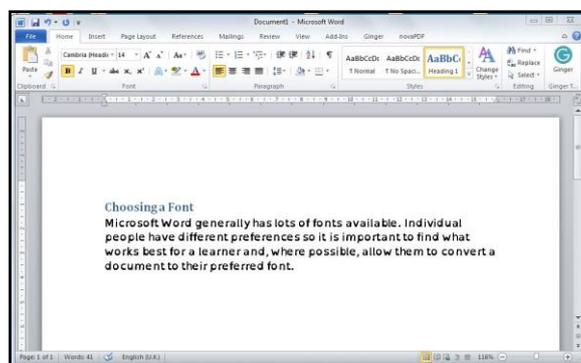
### Make Use of Styles

You should get into the habit of using Styles when creating or working on a document, assigning different styles to the basic text in your document and to different levels of headings. This makes it easier for individual learners to personalise a document to meet their preferences with regard to font, spacing, justification, etc.. For example, rather than having to select all of the Body text, but not the Headings in a document to change the font, they just have to modify the style. The use of Styles for section headings makes it easier to create a navigable contents page for a document.



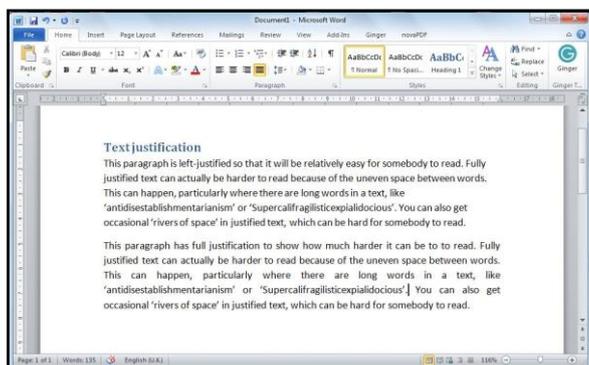
### Choosing a Font

Try to avoid Serif fonts (the ones with little 'ticks' on the letters, like Times) as they can be difficult to read. *Comic Sans* attracts strong feelings - some love it, others hate it! Some teachers prefer fonts with a 'round a', as this mirrors handwriting, but it can be confused with a letter 'o'. *Century Gothic* is a font that uses the 'round a'. *Open Dyslexic* is a font designed specifically for people with dyslexia, though typographers dislike the inconsistency of spacing between letters.



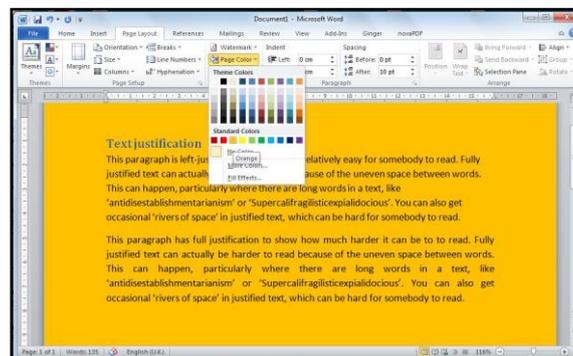
### Text Justification

Fully justified text (i.e. with a straight edge on both sides) looks 'nice' but is actually hard to read due to the uneven space between words, which can result in 'rivers' of white space flowing through the document. Left-justified text (also known as 'ragged right') is easier to read. In Word, the justification options are visible when the Home tab is selected.



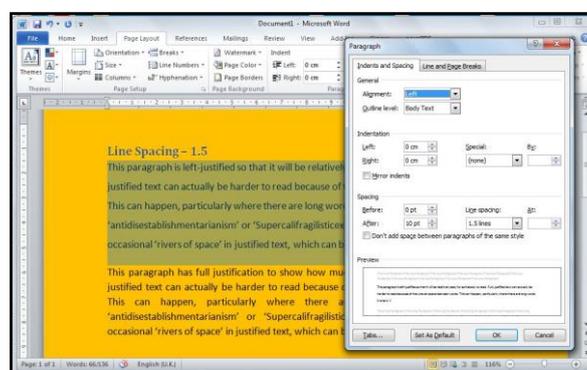
## Background Colour

The ability to change the background colour of a document can make a significant difference to readability for people with visual stress (and for many other people, too!). In Word 2010, this is done by clicking on the **Page Layout** tab, then **Page Color**. You then get a choice of colour to use. Note that if you change colour and then print a document, the coloured background will not be printed.



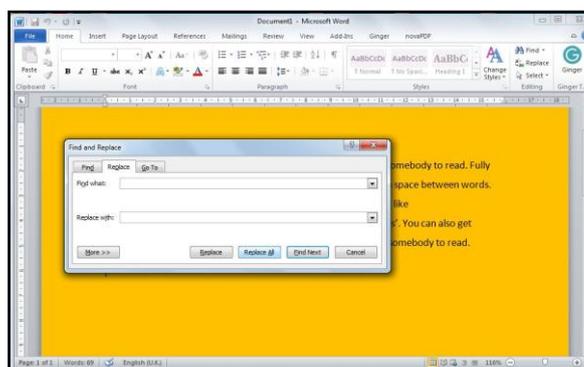
## Line Spacing

It is much easier to follow a line of text across the page if there is significant space between lines. Line spacing should be increased to at least 1.5 for learners with reading difficulties - many will prefer 2, or more. To set Line Spacing in Word, open the **Paragraph Dialog Box** by clicking on the small square to the right of 'Paragraph' when either the Home or Page Layout Tab is selected. Make Line Spacing '1.5 lines' or 'Double'.



## Word Spacing

Recent research by Prof Johannes Zeigler et al suggests that increasing the space between individual words makes text easier to read. Word does not have an automatic facility for increasing space, but you can use the Replace facility to do this. Click on the Home tab and you will see the replace option at the right hand side of the Word window. Beside **Find what**, type a single space and beside **Replace with**, type two (or three) spaces.



The end product of these adjustments should be a document, tailored to the needs of the individual learner that is much easier to read. There are other steps that may help, including increasing space for the margins and changing text colour.

