

Instructions on how to present your book

Formatting

You may have read that there are automatic conversion programs that take your Word document and convert it straight into Kindle format. Yes this is true but the books that are produced don't have the same professional look to them as we give to ours. Formatting takes time and you can help us save time - time that can be spent on:

- Uploading your book
- Promoting your book
- Managing your book
- Earning you money!

All you need to do is to follow a few simple rules:

Style commands

Please don't use style commands (if you don't know what they are, don't worry).

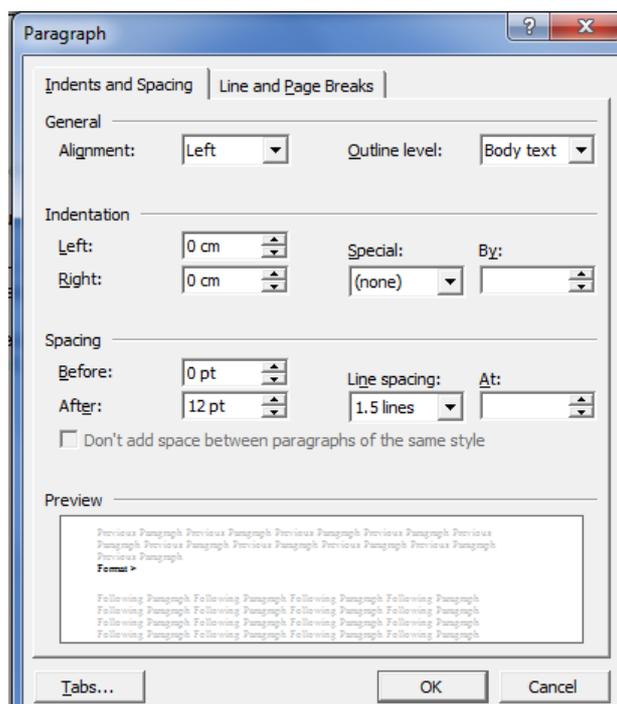
Line spacing

This doesn't matter as long as you don't chop and change. Whatever makes it easiest for you to read is OK with us.

Paragraph breaks

Do not, repeat, do not, use double hits of the return key to create paragraph breaks. Instead, set it up to do it for you with a single hit as shown in the picture:

Format > Paragraph > Spacing > After and set to 12pt. The screenshot shows what it should look like (1.5 line spacing selected). This document has been formatted in that style. Once you've



done this, to create a new paragraph, just press enter once.

Paragraph indents

Sometimes called hanging paragraphs. Please don't use them as they are not in keeping with the house style. NB screenshot above.

End-of-sentence spacing

We use a single space. Just like these sentences. They only have one space between them. This sentence has two spaces on either side. See the difference? We'd like a single space, please.

Fonts

Take your pick – Times, Courier, Arial, Verdana. Not others, because they won't convert to Kindle. Most writers use Times and, unless you've a good reason for doing otherwise, this is the easy solution.

Font size

10 pt to 12 pt. It's not really important.

Justification

Left or full is OK. Don't centre, please.

Chapter title

Just plain left aligned text. When we come to format the book, we'll make it more visually appealing. Unfortunately the mobi format that we're obliged to use does not lend itself to much in the way of creativity.

Pictures

If your book has pictures, please supply them as jpgs that are not wider than 400 pixels and which are to 300 dpi resolution if possible. If this is Double-Dutch, don't worry. Just send them in and we'll sort it but please help us if you can.

Margins

Irrelevant but don't chop and change.

Page size

Irrelevant but don't chop and change.

Page orientation

Always portrait, please. Don't ever use landscape without discussing it with us first.

Page numbering

We'd prefer it if you didn't use it. Page numbers can't appear in the finished book because Kindles operate with infinitely scalable fonts therefore the number of pages can be varied by the reader.

New chapters

Please always start a new chapter on a fresh page (use CTRL+Return).

About the author, copyright, etc

Don't worry, we'll come back to you for this information before we publish it. Just get the book off to us.

Document format

Word documents are preferred but you can also use Open Office or Google docs to create a .doc formatted file. Do not embed any macros or other high-level commands as they will only jam up the works and delay your book's launch.

Font colours

Very pretty but don't go there.

Bold and italics

It would make our life easier if you didn't use these. If you really must, please could you type <bold> and <endbold> tags (or something similar) around the sections? When books are converted from Word to Kindle, bold and italics are dropped. They then have to be added in manually afterwards. See the problem?

The house writing style

Elisions

In dialogue, generally always use elisions such as "I've got this ...", "We'd better ...", "It'll be fine ..." and "Can't stand this ...". The only time you might choose to avoid elisions is if one of the people speaking is trying to make some point about slipshod speech or to indicate their (perceived) class or educational superiority.

Whether you use elisions outside of dialogue is a matter of personal taste but you must be consistent. Think of the narrator's character. If you had a professional actor turning your book into an audiobook (it may happen one day), how would you instruct them?

You've got your answer.

Slang and dialect

People use slang in their speech so you should do the same. Thus "Ain't", "Wotcher" and "Innit?" are OK in moderation. Too much renders a book unreadable, though. A standard convention with heavy accents or excessive slang is to indicate this over the first couple of dialogue interchanges and then gradually drop it. Make the odd reference back to it by all means but don't subject your readers to hundreds of pages of difficult to read slang/dialect.

Swearing

If it's appropriate, you can use whatever words you feel necessary but overuse of profanities just dulls the senses and makes for a boring book that we will be quick to reject. The stronger the language, the more you cut down the market for your book.

Sex

If it's appropriate, put it in. But please note that if it is gratuitous, non-consensual (unless the story is demonstrating how unacceptable that is – i.e. police trying to catch a serial rapist, a child molester getting their come-uppance etc) or involving minors or animals (subject to that last qualification), then it's a no-no. Always feel free to check with us first.

Chapter length

Most people read in relatively short bursts (on the train, in bed, in an odd hour etc) so they will appreciate the obvious stopping points that chapter breaks represent. There's no perfect answer for 'How long should a chapter be?' but (typically) between 2,000 and 5,000 words is about right.

Chapter structure

It's not always possible to leave a chapter on a cliff-hanger however you should always strive to make people want to start the next one. Most people who give up with a book, do so at the end of a chapter. They'll end up returning your book, Amazon will refund their money, and you won't get paid.

Try to imagine you're reading the book to someone and you've stopped for a break. Will they be asking you "What happens next"? If not ...

Genre

Your best chance of selling lots of books is by appealing to a particular group of people. Trying to appeal to everyone is as likely to succeed as not bothering to appeal to anyone therefore you need to know your market and write accordingly. Forgetting any copyright issues for a moment, can you imagine writing:

- A Star Trek story and having a stab at Klingon?
- A Superman story without knowing about Krypton?
- A Tintin story with no mention of Snowy?
- A Spiderman story and leaving out Lizard?

The hate-mail will flood in and your book would bomb big-time. Research is everything and you must know your subject matter thoroughly.

Spelling and grammar

The modern idea is that 'near enough' is 'good enough'. That's not the case and certainly not with us. In our eyes, poor spelling and grammar is tantamount to saying 'I can't be bothered'. Please understand this simple statement:

Leaving it to the spellchecker is like saying "I've got a hammer, what do I need other tools for?"

By all means use one but don't think it's the answer. The best way is to get friends to look over your work and to correct each error that they spot. You should also read it out loud following the punctuation as you have it, not as you'd like it to be.

Speech

All speech should be inside double inverted commas, not single ones. When speech extends across several paragraphs, the convention is as follows:

"I did this and It was

"After that I did this ... It went ...

"Finally I did this and that was that."

Notice how the double inverted commas only close on the last paragraph.

US or UK English?

Since more Kindle books are bought by Americans than by Brits, it makes sense to use US English. We won't reject UK English but do urge you to take this last comment into account. You don't need to translate 'trousers' into 'pants', 'car' into 'automobile', 'bottom' into 'fanny' but you might consider it. Be consistent, though!

The Wow Factor

Remember that the first few pages will be part of Amazon's 'Look Inside' feature. These opening pages will sell your book so they need to be enticing, appealing, captivating, exciting and every other adjective you can think of that will make someone want to part with their hard-earned cash. The opening is as important as the ending.

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