



Word: Things you should never do #1

One reason I like to see people take our Level 1 courses – even if they have been using the program for some time – is because it's our chance to correct people's bad habits. In that vein, from time to time, I will publish a "Things you should never do" tip.

- **Never use the [SPACE] key to create an indent or tab gap.**

It might look good in your initial document, but if you ever have to edit the document (or someone else gets stuck editing your document) those spaces can be pushed along into the body of your document – creating an unwanted gap. Or, if the font gets changed – the text that used to line up no longer will.

Here are columns aligned using spaces:

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Joe	Bob	Mia	Roberto	Heidi

Here are the same columns – after the font *face* was changed:

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Joe	Bob	Mia	Roberto	Heidi

Now you'd have to adjust the spacing to re-align your columns.

What you should have done: create *custom* tab stops. Don't just hit the [TAB] and use the default ½" tab stops between columns...they too can be affected by a change in the document font. Here's why:

Here are columns aligned using the default tab stops that are built in to Word:

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Joe	Bob	Mia	Roberto	Heidi

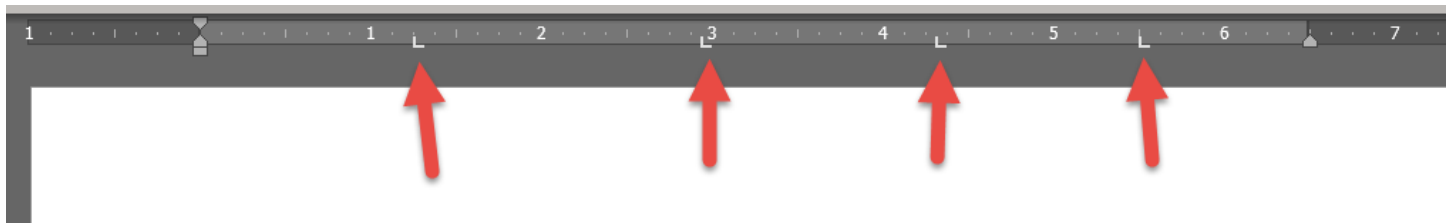
Here are the same columns – after the font *size* was changed:

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Joe	Bob	Mia	Roberto	Heidi

What you should have done: create custom tab stops.

How?

With the cursor at the start of the (blank) line where you want your tabbed columns to start – click your mouse on the bottom portion of the ruler (across the top of your document) where you want each (custom) tab stop to be located. Once you click (add) a tab stop onto the ruler...any default tab stops *to the left of that point* will automatically disappear. (Note: in Word 2010 you can see the default ½" tab stops all along the ruler – in the newer versions, you can't see them...but they're there (until you add your custom ones).



Now you use the [TAB] key to advance to each new stop. Changes to your font will not affect the columns.

VERY IMPORTANT NOTE: if you decide to re-align your tab columns after you have typed your list...you **MUST** highlight all (lines of) text affected by the tabs before dragging the tab "L" stops along the ruler.

This is as in-depth as we can really get in a "tip". If you need a better understanding of custom tab stops; using LEFT vs RIGHT vs CENTRE vs DECIMAL tabs, et – sign up for our Word Level 1 (CORE) course. Even seasoned users are surprised at how much they learn in this level.