

Track changes in Word--don't let them track you



Print

Crabby Office Lady

Revision marks in Word have wreaked a special sort of havoc for some of you; even if you think you've hidden them, they keep showing up and embarrassing you, like mole hairs and creepy uncles. Let's see if we can't pluck them, wax them, and send them packing, once and for all.

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Life is full of embarrassing moments. Some merely cause temporary blushing while others can make you cringe for years to come. Of course, some of these episodes are preventable if you just take some appropriate action. For example:

- That hiring manager you sent your souped up résumé to opened it up in Word and saw all your creative editing right there, in the form of insertions, deletions, and comments. Your secret was out, and you now remain unemployed and living in your parents' basement. Party on Wayne. Party on Garth.
- Before sending off your annual review form, where you let off some steam by inserting epithets and insults about your goody-goody coworkers and vindictive manager, you hide the revision marks (or so you think). Later that day, you're escorted out of the building.
- You send off your contract bid with the proprietary notes (i.e. profit margins) not-so-hidden.

Solution: Before you send those documents off, get rid of the revision marks — otherwise, they're on by default when someone opens them up in Word.

But hold it one minute! You know you got rid of all those revision marks before you sent the file out, so what happened? Let's take this a step at a time.

Revision marks: When they seem like the undead

First, let me say right off the bat that there are better ways to boost the appeal of your résumé without flat-out lying. That said, I'm not the ethics police, and résumé building is another column for another day. So, let's move on to the issue at hand: revision marks that just won't die.

Once you've marked up your file with revisions and comments, there are a few different ways you can hide them. However, like emotional scars, hiding revision marks doesn't mean they're gone. And while we're at it, turning off the Track Changes feature also accomplishes nothing — it just lets you make changes to your document without displaying all those strikethroughs, underlined words, and balloons. It's like pushing your fingers into your ears and shouting "LALALALALALA I can't *hear* you!!!!" (Maybe so — but whatever you're avoiding is still there). Denial is very unproductive.

There's only one way to completely get rid of all the changes, and that's to accept or reject all the changes you've made. Let's do that together now, once and for all. You'll feel much better once we're done.

Word 2007

Because this revision marks issue has flummoxed people for several versions now, we did something about it for Word 2007: Introducing the Document Inspector. I like to think of this feature as the cold and efficient Passport Inspector, one of the first humans you encounter when entering a foreign land:

- **Document Inspector:** Makes sure that you have no tracked changes.
Passport Inspector: Checks to see that you haven't been traveling the globe using multiple passports.

- **Document Inspector:** Points out all comments.
Passport Inspector: Will find out if you're entering the country to start up a subversive newspaper.
- **Document Inspector:** Will find out if you have any hidden text.
Passport Inspector: Will find out if you have a hidden agenda.

The Passport Inspector already knows what he has to do; here are some instructions for you to get the Document Instructor going.

Prepare your document and let's get crackin':

1. Click the Microsoft Office Button , point to **Prepare**, and then click **Inspect Document**.
2. In the Document Inspector dialog box, click **Inspect**.
3. Review the inspection results. If the Document Inspector finds comments and tracked changes, you are prompted to click **Remove All** next to **Comments, Revisions, Versions, and Annotations**.
4. Click **Reinspect** or **Close**.

Of course, there are other things to consider here: How did those comments get there, and how do you find those extremely hard to find needles-in-a-haystack changes that you are sure you already checked for?

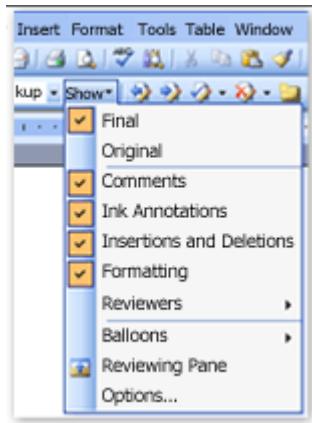
For all that info read [Get rid of tracked changes, once and for all.](#)

Word 2003

Of course, in Word 2003 and Word 2002, we didn't have the Document Inspector. (He was still in training at the Academy).

First, make sure all of your tracked changes are displayed.

1. On the **View** menu, point to **Toolbars**, and then click **Reviewing**.
2. On the **Reviewing** toolbar, click **Show**, and then make sure that a check mark appears next to each item (Reviewers and Balloons too):



Now, you can either accept or reject your changes one at a time, or all at once.

- **To accept or reject changes one at a time:**
 1. On the **Reviewing** toolbar, click **Next** to advance from one revision or comment to the next.
 2. Click **Accept Change** or **Reject Change/Delete Comment** for each revision or comment.
 3. Repeat steps 1 and 2 above until all the revisions in the document have been accepted or rejected, and all the comments have been deleted.
 4. Check again.
 5. And again.
- **To accept or reject all changes at one time:**

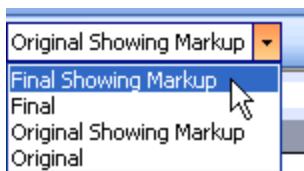
- Click the arrow next to **Accept Change**, and then click **Accept All Changes in Document**.

Or, click the arrow next to **Reject Change**, and then click **Reject All Changes in Document**.

Dealing with various versions of Word

Now, to motivate you to take these steps (in order to avoid embarrassing yourself and tarnishing your reputation) there are a few things you should be aware of:

- No matter which version of Word you're using, if you send your marked up file to someone who opens it in Word 2007 or 2003, the "See those sneaky little writers' revisions" view (otherwise known as **Final Showing Markup** view) is on by default.
- If your recipient is using a previous version of Word, the revision marks may not show up by default, but they're still there and can be easily found using this box on the **Review** toolbar:



In fact, some people (editors in particular) set up Word so that the default is to display the revision marks upon opening a document that contains them. (Those editors — they can't help it; they're hard-wired to behave like that.)

- If YOU are using Word 2007 or 2003 and you close your document and then open it again, you'll see that all the revisions are still there, plain as day. It's like having your very own safety net, saving yourself from at least one embarrassing moment today ...

"What's the use of a good quotation if you can't change it?" — Dr. Who

About the author

[Annik Stahl](#), the Crabby Office Lady columnist, takes all of your complaints, compliments, and knee-jerk reactions to heart. Therefore, she graciously asks that you let her know whether this column was useful to you — or not — by entering your feedback using the **Did this article help you?** feedback tool below. And remember: If you don't vote, you can't complain.

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