

Word has a mind of its own and so do you



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The Crabby Office Lady

I get a lot of inquiries about how to institute a restraining order on Word to stop it from guessing what you want to do with your documents. I created a video about it, and now let's delve a little deeper and get the cuffs out.

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In the video I recently did about Word, we looked at its sometimes irritating tendency to try to anticipate your needs. Today I want to show you, my readers, how to handle this situation, and, should you desire, disarm some of the features that you may neither need nor want.

- [View "Word's Mind" at 300K](#)
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NOTE If you're having trouble watching the videos, you can try our [troubleshooting tips](#). You can also view all of my videos from the [Crabby Office Lady video archive](#).

Word wants to help — honest!

I hear you snickering; don't think I don't. Apparently, some of you think that the creators of Word are trying to control your lives in a variety of ways by turning on features that you find at best not useful, and at worst repugnant. (I really do think that some of you are taking this issue a little too seriously.)

NOTE I decided that I was going to address this issue when my sister, Erika, called me, desperate to stop Word from automatically numbering and bulleting lists that weren't lists (or something like that). And so, sis, as the go-to gal for you and your fellow Office users at Acute and Rehab Therapies at Swedish Hospital in Denver ... here you go.

I'm going to make this really easy: Here is a partial list of features that are on by default (this means that they're on the first time you use Word) with suggestions for ways to turn them on or off, depending on how you like to work. Once again, the idea of customization comes to the forefront in a Crabby column: If I've said it once, I've said it a hundred times: If you don't like something, change it. And friends, this little tenet applies to Word, to other Office programs, to hairstyles, and to life in general. (I'm nothing if not someone encouraging her readers to work toward self-actualization and better hair. Hey, there's only room for so many Crabby ladies in the world.)

AutoFormat as you type

What it is: In the **AutoCorrect Options** (I'll get to how to find that in a moment), there is an **AutoFormat as you type** tab. How to get there:

- In Word 2007, click the Microsoft Office Button, and then click **Word Options**. Click **Proofing** on the left, and then click the **AutoCorrect Options** button on the right. Then click the **AutoFormat as you type** tab.
- In Word 2003, on the **Tools** menu, click **AutoCorrect Options**, and then click the **AutoFormat as you type** tab.

Within that tab, you'll see a whole list of actions that Word will do automatically as you work. A couple of examples are:

- **Automatic numbered lists** (the bane of my sister's existence): This happens when you have the number "1" (or another number) at the beginning of a sentence, whether or not you are truly starting a numbered list. If you have the **Automatic Numbered Lists** check box selected, Word thinks that you're about to start a numbered list and will press on, adding a 2, a 3, and so on, at the beginning of each additional sentence. There are three ways to stop this from happening:
 - Clear the check box, or
 - After the list starts enumerating, and ruining your entire day (a bit touchy, aren't we?), press CTRL+Z to undo it, or
 - In Word 2007, press the BACKSPACE key. (Yeah, we finally learned how to make it easier for you. Only took us ... a few versions...)
- **Straight quotes and smart quotes:** There are two kinds of quotes: A straight quote (' or ") and a smart — or curly or typographer's — quote (' or "). There is a check box that says **Replace as you type "Straight quotes" with "smart quotes"** and if it's selected, every quote you type will be, well, replaced. Once again, if that raises your hackles, clear that box!

So, as you can see, Erika, digging into that menu a bit will let you customize how you want (or don't want) auto formatting applied. If you're still having problems, give me a call. Better yet, read the assistance article [Troubleshoot automatic formatting](#) ...

NOTE This article refers to Word 2003 but works for Word 2007, too.

The drawing canvas

What it is: When you insert a drawing object in Word 2003, a drawing canvas is placed around it. (This was turned off for Word 2007.)

NOTE The drawing canvas is an area on which you can draw multiple shapes; it helps you arrange a drawing in your document since the shapes within it can be moved and resized as a unit.

To turn the drawing canvas off:

1. On the **Tools** menu, click **Options**, and then click the **General** tab.
2. Clear the **Automatically create drawing canvas when inserting AutoShapes** check box.

File locations

What they are: File locations are where Word stores things like document templates, documents, and other items you use and create in Word.

- **To find your specific Word file locations in Word 2007:**
 1. Click the Microsoft Office Button, and then click **Word Options**.
 2. Click **Trust Center**, click **Trust Center Settings**, and then click **Trusted Locations**.
- **To find your specific Word file locations in Word 2003:** On the **Tools** menu, click **Options**, and then click the **File Locations** tab.

It's possible that you don't care for the default locations of all the files or just some of them. Well, you can change that.

- Maybe you don't like where your documents are automatically saved (typically in the **My Documents** folder of your **C:** drive). Change it! Just click **Modify** and find your own path.

(And change the path for application templates and so on ...)

The moral of this story

Just because someone is giving away free cans of Tab doesn't mean you're required to develop a thirst for ...well ... whatever is in Tab (the ingredient list has never been revealed). I'm other words, you don't have to take what is offered. You can change the way Word applies things to your documents at any time, and if you decide that the creators of this handy little program really did have a few things going for them when they picked what was on by default, you can always change them back.

Go forth, my fellow humans, and customize.

Tip of the week

This week's tip comes from N.A. of Washington State. She writes:

"When you are typing in a Word doc (including in Outlook if you are using Word as your e-mail editor) and you want to know what a word means or want to look up a better word to use, type SHIFT+F7 and the Dictionary or Thesaurus will appear on the right side of the page. Sometimes when I do this and no suggestions come up, at the bottom of the window, it says **Other places to search**, so I click on **All Reference Books**. I am almost always able to find what I need there."

Thanks, Washington wordsmith. That IS a handy little tip. And readers, that "right side of the page" N.A. is referring to is the **Research** task pane.

"Paradise is exactly like where you are right now...only much, much better." — Laurie Anderson

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 **Was this information helpful?** tool below. And remember: If you don't vote, you can't complain.

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