Working with sections in Word

Have you ever wanted to create a Microsoft Word document with some pages numbered in Roman numerals and the rest in Arabic, or include a landscape page to accommodate a large table or diagram, or just have a title page with no numbering? This note shows you how.

Understanding section breaks

To create pages with different formatting, the solution is to use sections. You insert section breaks to divide the document, then format the sections as you want. This sounds simple, but sections can cause a great many problems. Before using them, it helps to take a moment to understand how they work.

Word stores information about the section formatting in the section break. This includes:

- The headers and footers – text, page numbering etc.
- The page setup – margins, orientation etc.
- The column settings – number and width

It is important to remember that a section break stores information about the section that precedes it, not the section that follows it, and this is where confusion lies. If you delete a section break, the text that preceded the deleted break will take on the properties stored in the section break that followed it. This can lead to very strange results; for example, an entire document can become landscape, or headers and footers can change or disappear altogether.

Note also that the final paragraph mark of a document contains an ‘invisible’ section break. This stores the formatting for the entire preceding section as well as for the paragraph.

If you are working with sections it is a good idea to be able to see them so that you do not inadvertently delete them. To see your formatting, open your document and click on the button on the toolbar. (You can also use the Ctrl Shift * key combination.) Section breaks appear as a double dotted line and indicate the type of break:

The status bar at the bottom of the screen tells you which section you are working in:

Inserting a section break

To insert a section break:

☞ Click where you want the section to start.
Click **Insert** on the menu bar and choose **Break**.

There are several types of section break:

- **Next page** – the new section starts on the next page.
- **Continuous** – the new section starts on the same page.
- **Even page** or **Odd page** – the new section starts on the next even-numbered or odd-numbered page. This may mean you have a blank even-numbered or odd-numbered page, depending on where the insertion point falls.

**Note:** A **continuous** section break is used where you want different formatting on the same page, such as a section of text that has altered margin settings or columns. In the example below section breaks have been used to create a heading that spans two columns, followed by a section of full-page text.

Select the section break type and click **OK**.

Once you have inserted your section breaks, you can set up the formatting for each section.

If you change the page orientation, i.e. from portrait to landscape or vice versa, midway through a document using **File** – **Page Setup**, Word will insert a **next page** section break automatically. In the **Page Setup** dialog box, select **This point forward** from the **Apply to** drop-down list if this is your first section break. If you already have section breaks, you will also have the option to select **This section**.

### Setting up different page numbering systems

You can use section breaks to set up different page numbering systems for different parts of a document. For example, you may have a document that has a front part containing a title page, preface and table of contents, and a main part containing the text of the document itself. You can have Roman numbering for the front part and Arabic numbering in the main document.

Follow these steps to create your numbering:

**Step 1  Separate the main document from the front part**

First, split up the main and front parts of the document.

- If you have a manual page break between the front and main parts, remove it; you will be replacing it with a section break.

- Click at the beginning of the page that is to be page 1 of the main document.
Select **Insert – Break – Odd Page**. This will force the first page in this section onto an odd page regardless of how many pages are in the section before. (You can use **Next Page** if it does not matter which page the main document start on.)

You should now see **Sec 2** in the status bar at the bottom.

**Step 2  Set up page numbering in the main document**
The next stage is to set up your numbering in the main part of the document.

- Select **View – Header and Footer**. The **Header and Footer** toolbar displays.
- If you want the page number in the footer, click the **Switch between Header and Footer** icon.
- Click the **Format Page Number** icon.
- Choose your **Number format**; Arabic (‘1,2,3 …’) should be selected by default.
- In the **Page numbering** section, click in **Start at**. The number defaults to ‘1’.
- Click **OK**.
- Move to where you want the number to appear and click the **Insert Page Number** icon. (You can select **View – Ruler** to see where the centre- and right-aligned tabs are.)
- Don’t close the **Header and Footer** toolbar yet.

**Step 3  Set up page numbering in the front part**
Now you will set up the Roman numbering for the first part of your document.

- Click the **Show Previous** icon on the toolbar. This moves to the header or footer for the previous section, in this case, the front part of the document. You will see that Word has inserted an Arabic page number here as well.
- Click the **Format Page Number** icon.
- Change the **Number format** to ‘i, ii, iii …’ and click **OK**.
- Click **Close** to return to your document.

**Step 4  Remove page number from title page**
The finishing touch is to remove the page number from the title page.

- Move to your first page and select **View – Header and Footer** again.

  A quick way to open the **Header and Footer** toolbar is to double-click on any visible text in the header or footer.

- Switch to the footer if that is where your page number is.
- Click the **Page Setup** icon and move to the **Layout** tab.
- In the **Headers and footers** section, check the box for **Different first page** and click **OK**.

If you look at your footer you will see that section 1 now has a First Page Footer as...
well as a normal one (click **Show Next** to see the normal footer). Leave the First Page Footer empty so that no page numbering appears.

- **Click Close** to return to your document.

As well as having a different front page, you can use **Page Setup** to create different odd and even pages. This will create an even and odd page section break for each section. Place the page number on the left side of the even page footer and the right side of the odd page footer.

**Note:** It is a good idea *not* to use the **Page Numbers** option on the **Insert** menu to add page numbering. It may appear to have the same effect as the **Insert Page Number** icon on the Header and Footer toolbar, but in fact the page number is placed inside a graphic frame. This makes it much harder to work with.

### Adding header and footer text

You can add text to your header and footer in the same way as you add page numbering. For example, you might want the title of the document to appear at the top or bottom of every page.

Access the **Header and Footer** toolbar as described above and type your text. Whatever you enter will appear in every header or footer throughout your document.

You can change what appears in the header or footer for a specific part of your document only. You will have to insert section breaks to separate the parts, unlink the sections, then edit the header or footer for each section.

To do this:

- **Insert section breaks** before and after the part of your document where you want different header or footer text.

- **Make sure you are in the section following** the part to be different and select **View – Header and Footer**. The **Header and Footer** toolbar displays.

- **If the change is to the footer**, click the **Switch between Header and Footer** icon. **Note the ‘Same as Previous’ text at the top right of the header or footer**. Click the **Link to Previous** icon to break the link between the current and previous sections. The ‘Same as Previous’ text no longer displays.

- **Click the Show Previous icon** to move to the section where the text is to change and click the **Link to Previous** icon to break the link to the section before.

- **Make your changes to the header or footer.**

- **Close the **Header and Footer** toolbar. Your changes will appear in one section only.**

### Entering variable text - doing it the easy way!

A common feature in a long document is the ‘running head’, where each chapter or section heading appears in the header or footer. You could insert section breaks, unlink the sections and edit the header or footer for each section as described above, but a much simpler way is to use Word’s **fields** facility.

The **StyleRef** field searches a page for the first instance of text that is formatted with a specific style. So, for example, if you have chapter headings that use the Heading 1 style, you can make the text of your headings display in the header or footer.
To insert the StyleRef field:

- Click in the first page where you want the running head to appear and select View – Header and Footer. The Header and Footer toolbar displays.
- If you want to place the text in the footer, click the Switch between Header and Footer icon.
- Click where the text is to appear and select Insert – Field. The Field dialog box displays.
- In the Field names panel, click on StyleRef. Field properties and Field options boxes display.

- In Field properties, click on the style name, for example, ‘Heading 1’. Leave the Field options blank.
- Make sure that the Preserve formatting during updates box is checked and click OK. The text of Heading 1 appears in the header or footer. The field will update automatically if you make changes to your heading text.
- Close the Header and Footer toolbar.

You don’t need to create section breaks between chapters to use this technique – page breaks work just as well. Note that you will have to insert section breaks and unlink the sections if you don’t want the heading text to appear on specific pages.

Troubleshooting

I copied text from another document and now the headers and footers have changed

If you have copied text from one document into another and your headers and footers have changed or have disappeared, it is because you have copied a section break along with the text. The section break brings all its formatting with it. To avoid this, click so that you can see the section breaks. If you are copying a lot of text, delete the section breaks from the document you are copying from. Alternatively, copy the text in batches, making sure you do not copy the section break as well.

I can’t see my section breaks even though Show/Hide is on

If you are in Print Layout view, section breaks aren’t always easy to see – they may be hidden at the end of a paragraph, as in the example below, and appear as a few dots at the end of the line.

If you are having problems seeing the section breaks, change to Normal view by selecting View – Normal. Your breaks will display across the full page. Note that you will not be able to see your headers and footers while you are in Normal view.
**How do I create different odd and even page headers and footers if there is only one page in the section?**

To create headers and footers for both odd and even pages, insert a page break and set up your formatting. You can then delete the extra page break. Your formatting will be retained. This applies to sections with a different first page as well.

**I’ve put in new page margins, but some pages have not changed**

When you apply formatting to sections, in most cases you will have an **Apply to** option that allows you to select where to apply the changes – the current section, this point forward or to the whole document. If you have more than one section in your document, the **File – Page Setup** option will by default apply changes to the current section only. Click on **Apply to** and change to **Whole document** if that is what you want.