How To Format Your eBook Using Open Office

Contents

Intro

Having a word processing program on your computer is a necessity these days, no matter your age or your occupation. Students as young as elementary school use computers to write reports; online business owners write articles and ebooks to help market their business; and older retirees often use the computer to write letters or lists.

So why isn't a basic word processing program included when you purchase a new computer if there's such a need for it? No doubt, it's because Microsoft is able to make more money by selling their Microsoft Office Suite as a package instead of providing Microsoft Word as part of the computer selling price.

If you don't have $150+ to purchase the Microsoft Office Suite, don't worry. The next best alternative for those business owners operating on a tight budget is to use Open Office, a free, open source package of programs that give Microsoft a run for their money. Included in this free package is a word processor, spreadsheet, presentation, database, and drawing programs. One of the best features of Open Office is that you can save your work as a Microsoft Word document and share it with those who only have Word. Likewise, if someone sends you a Word document, you can open it with Open Office.

This report focuses specifically on the word processing program but you can certainly experiment with these other programs and find a use for them in your business.


Getting Started.

Download the Free Software.

Start by downloading the Open Office programs at http://www.openoffice.org/product/writer.html .

Open the file and follow the installation wizard directions. The download and installation process takes about 15-20 minutes from start to finish, depending on the speed of your computer.

Tip: When the wizard asks if you want a desktop icon created, click Yes. This is the easiest way to launch Open Office without having to search for the program files.
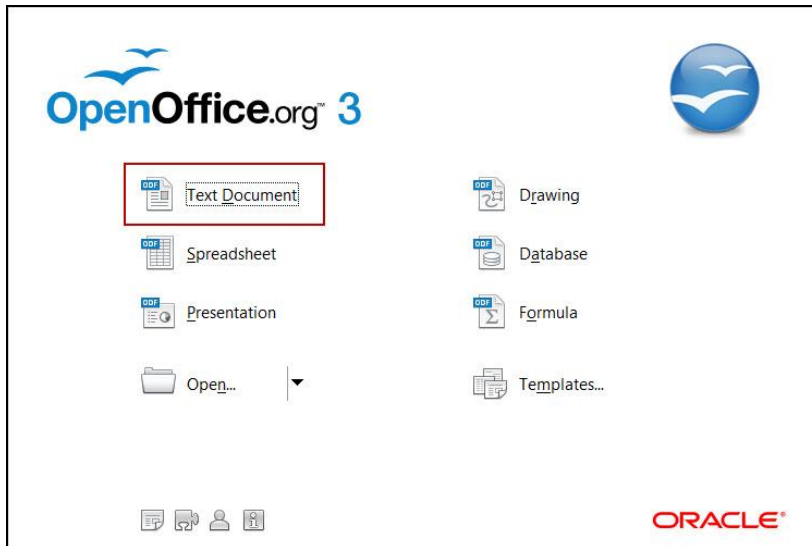
Open/Start a New Document.

When the files have installed, click on the Open Office desktop icon to reach the main menu. Click the icon that says Text Document.

A blank page opens up with default margin and tab settings.
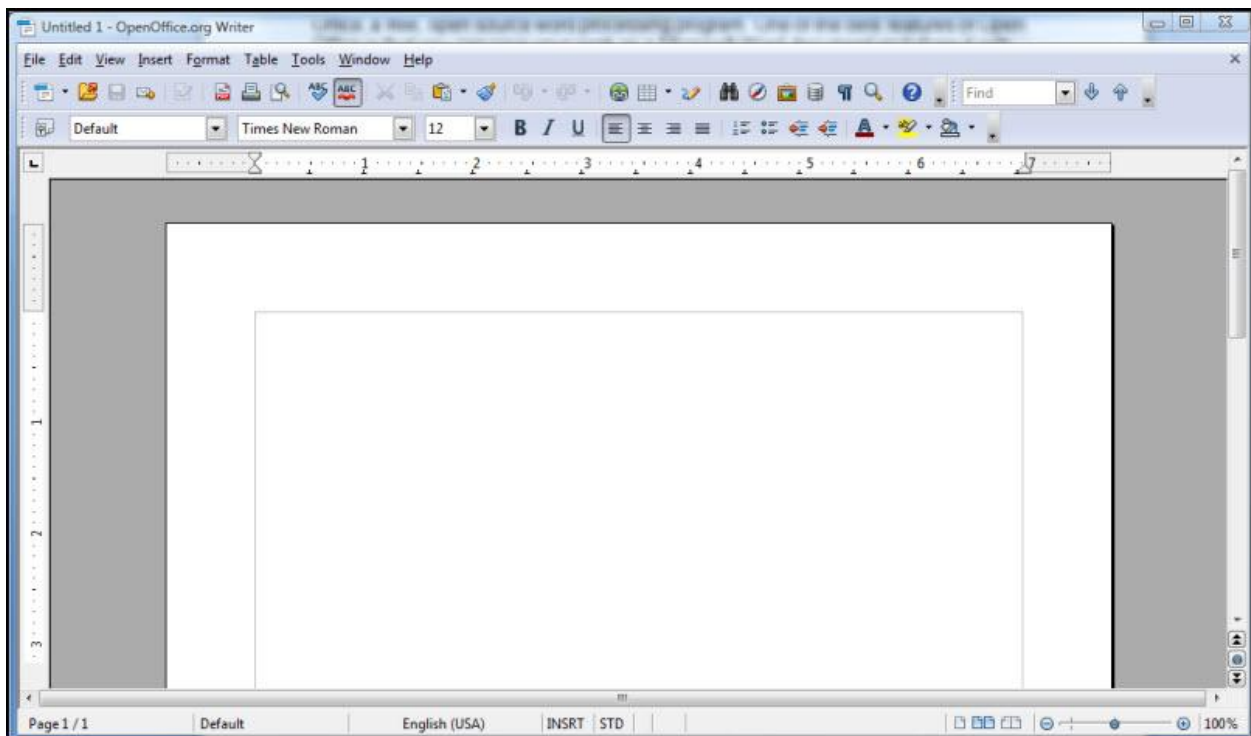
Set your Margins.

If you prefer to change the margin settings prior to writing, click on the Format link at the top of the page and then Page.
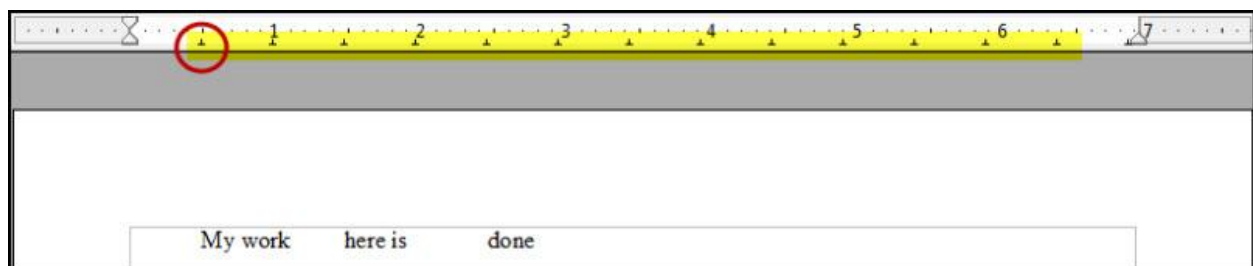
Format -> Page

Select the Page tab and you'll see the margin settings in the lower left part of the box. Place your cursor in each box and change the numbers to the appropriate settings.
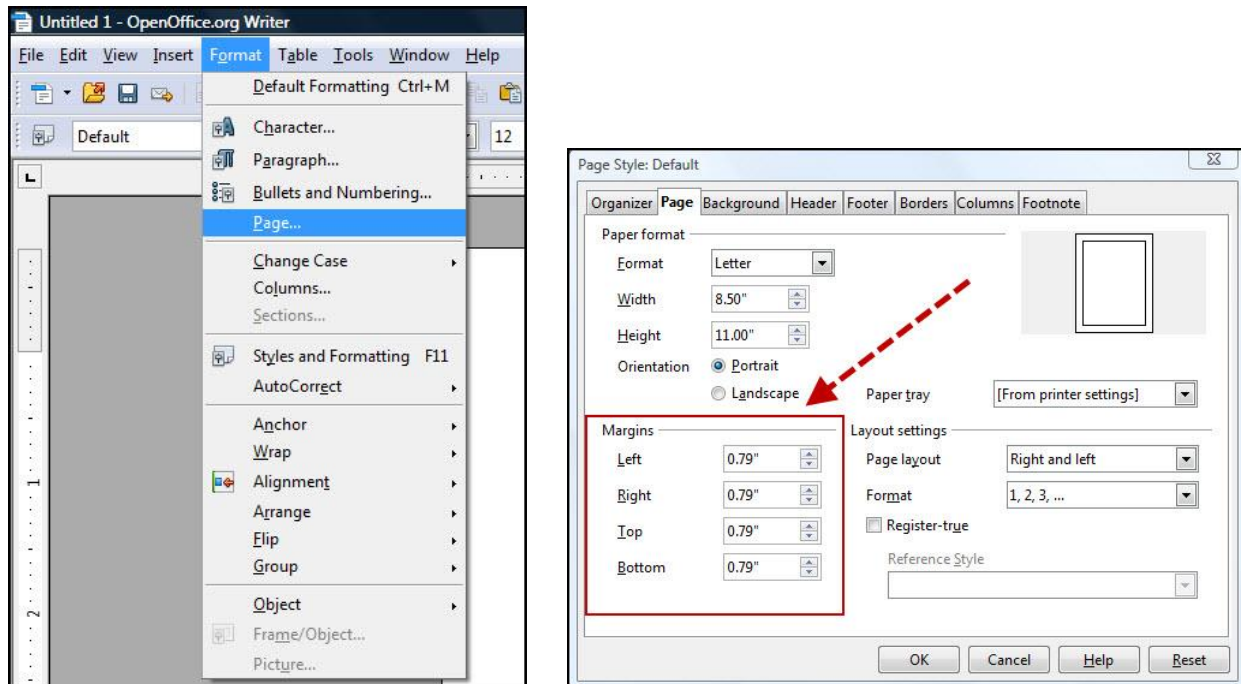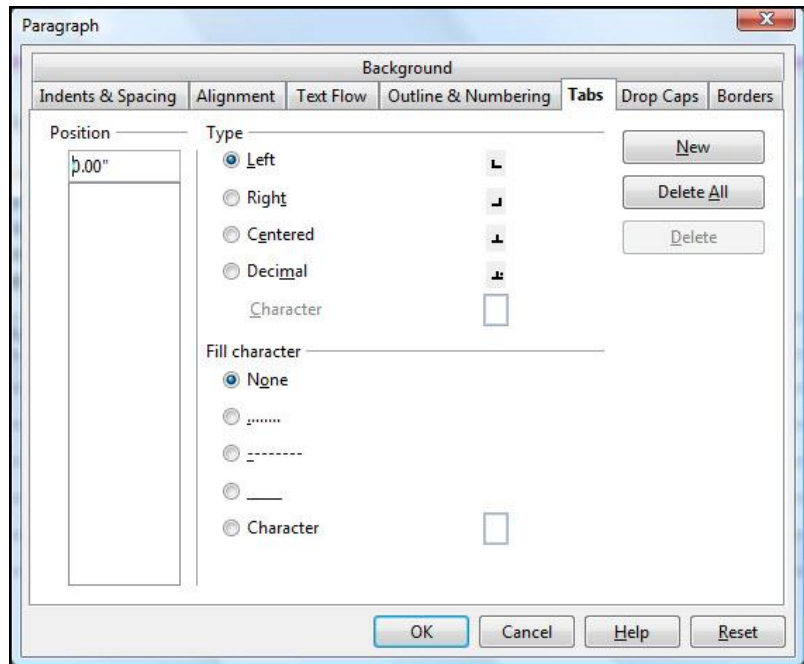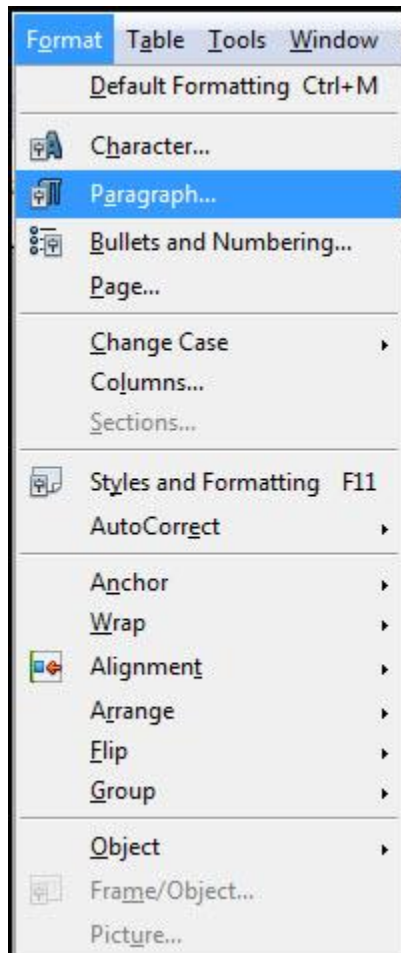

Set Tab Stops.

The tab stops are preset at approximately every half inch but they are easy to change if you have a different preference. The first way is to simply click and slide the L-shaped symbol in the upper rule to the correct position with your mouse.

The second way to change the tab stops is to click the Format tab at the top of your blank page, then click Paragraph.

Format -> Paragraph

Click on Tabs and you can change the location of each individual tab by clicking on the appropriate radio button and inputting the desired tab location in the left hand box.

Tip: Use the ruler above the blank page as your guide for setting tab stops.

Once you click OK, any text that you have typed will automatically move according to the new tab stop settings.

If you're unhappy with the new tab stops, simply open up the Tab box again or use the Undo function. You can go to Edit then choose Undo or you can simply click the Undo symbol located in the upper toolbar.
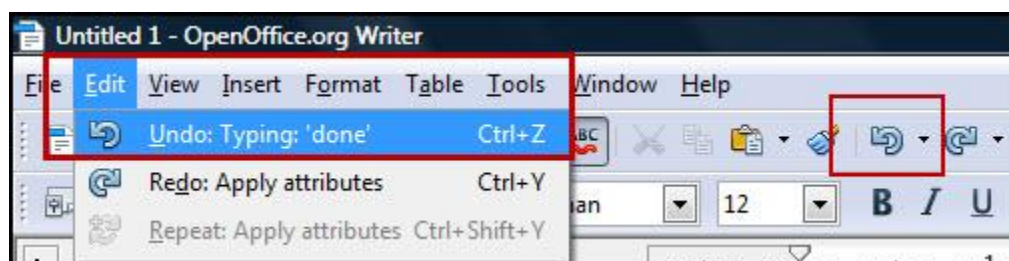
One more step before writing…set your font and font size.

Set your Font and Font Size.

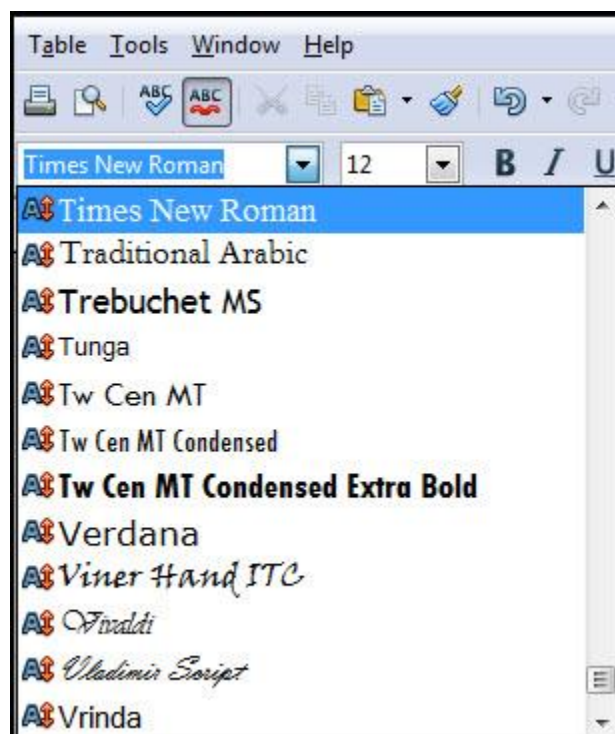First, a note about fonts: choose a font wisely based on the purpose of your ebook and with your reader in mind. Even though there are dozens of fonts to choose from in Open Office, some will be difficult for your readers to look while reading and some fonts may not be available on everyone's computer, thus making your ebook impossible to access.

For instance, reading a whole page of Vivaldi type will be difficult at best. Save your fancy fonts for your title and/or chapter headings. The most standard fonts for information ebooks seem to be Arial or Times New Roman.

The same goes for choosing font size. Hardcover books can get away with printing at a size 10 font but computers cause stress on the eyes, thus making a larger font easier to read for almost everyone. The common ebook font sizes seem to be either a 12 or 14, depending on what font you choose. Arial size 12 looks different from Times New Roman size 12.
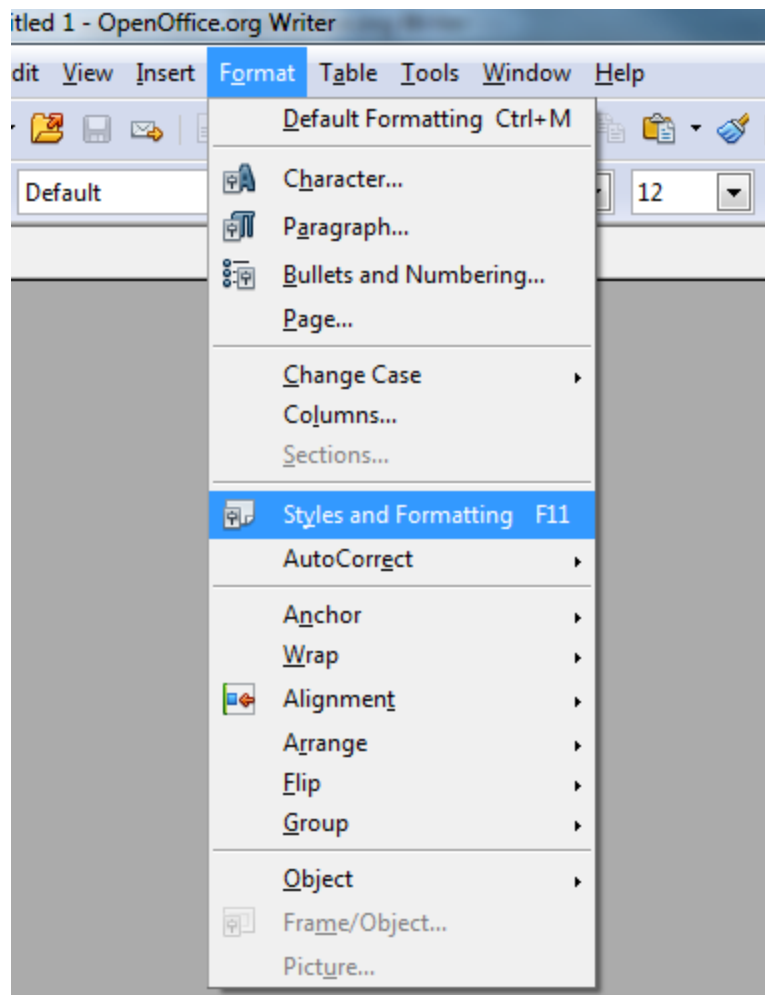
There are two ways to set up your fonts.

Option 1: Use the Style Settings

The preferred method of setting your fonts is through the Style settings. The reason for this is simple. It's easy to customize different parts of your ebook in one place.

If you decide you'd like to see all of the headers bold, you update it in one place, rather than having to scroll through and update your entire document.
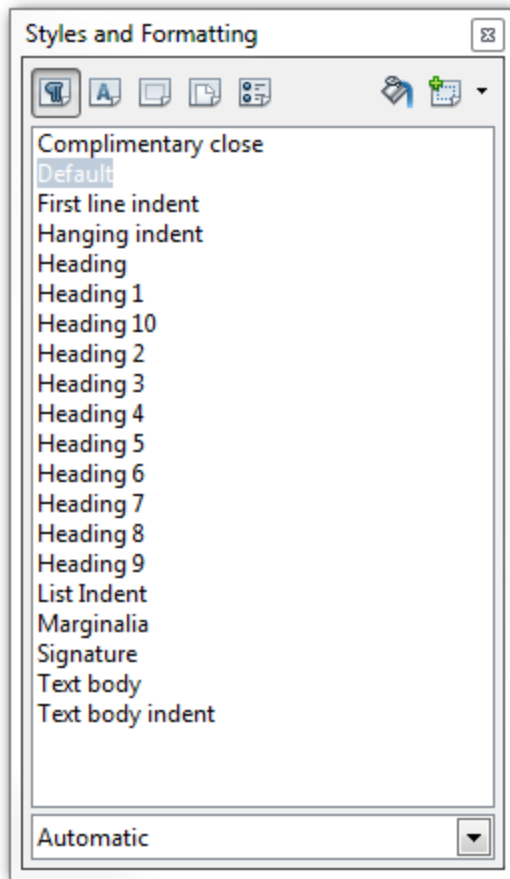
If you decide that you'd like your links to be a brighter blue, you can update that in one place as well, rather than searching through your document to find them all and do it manually.

While this overwhelms a lot of people, it's actually quite simple.

Go to "Format" and then "Styles and Formatting".

You'll see this box.

Styles and Formatting

Complimentary close
Default
First line indent
Hanging indent
Heading
Heading 1
Heading 10
Heading 2
Heading 3
Heading 4
Heading 5
Heading 6
Heading 7
Heading 8
Heading 9
List Indent
Marginalia
Signature
Text body
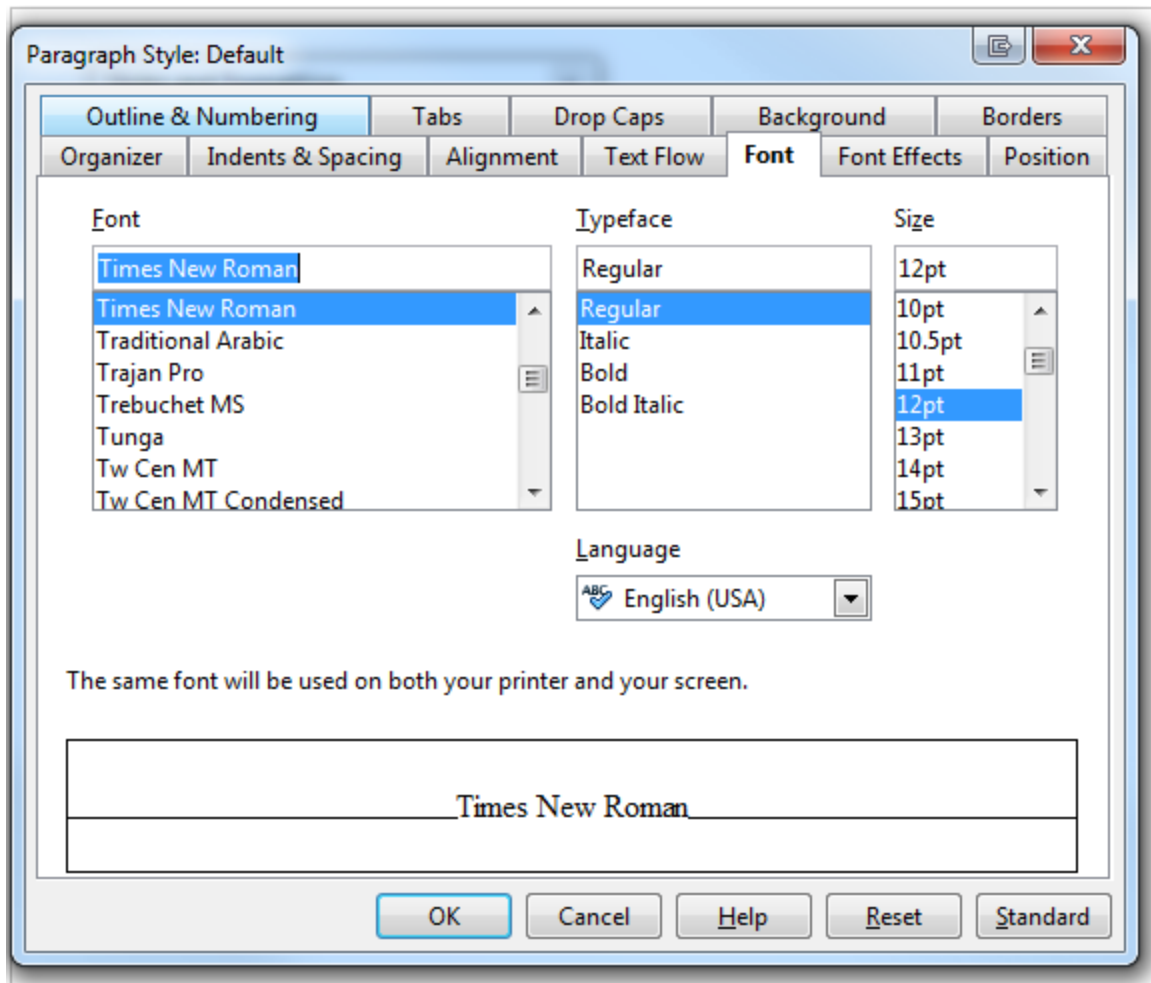Text body indent

Automatic

The first setting you'll want to change is the default.

Right click on the "Default" and choose "Modify".
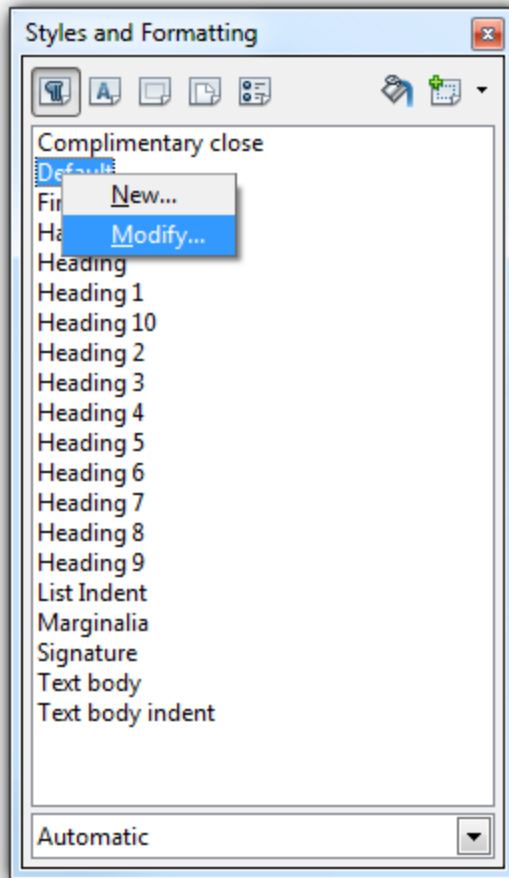
Select the "Font" tab and you can then assign and manage the default font for your entire document in one place.

<u>Option 2: Set Font Type and Size before Starting</u>

Most people manage fonts with this method, which works, but is more work down the road.

You'll see the font and sizes in their own dropdown boxes in the upper toolbar. To change the font, select the text on the page that you'd like to update and simply click on each box separately to make your choice.
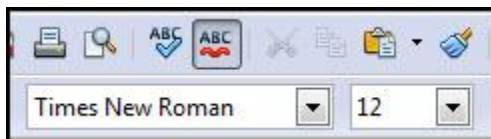
Turn on Spell Check.

One last thing is to click on the Auto Spell Checker. That's the small button above the font box that has ABC with a red squiggle line. Click that icon with your mouse and the computer will automatically correct any misspelled words as you continue typing.

Now you can get started on writing your ebook! The important thing is to get started. Don't worry about the rest of the formatting until you get your words onto the paper. In the end, the words are most important and your information is what your customers are purchasing.

Make Your eBook Professional-Looking with Graphics.

At this point you might be questioning why you should spend even more time on formatting your ebook. After all, you just spent weeks writing it and you want to start making money with it, right?

Again, keep your readers in mind. Will they want to purchase a plain document that doesn't have a cover graphic and looks more like a college term paper or will they want to purchase an ebook that has an interesting cover along with graphs and charts that illustrate your key points?

Which example above sounds like the author truly cares about their work? If you were in a real life bookstore, which book would look more professional to you on the bookshelf?

Adding graphics to your ebook is important because:

- They help illustrate important points
- They help your reader remember important information
- They make reading your content more interesting
- They add value to your ebook

When using photographs, it's incredibly important to purchase stock photos from your favorite stock photo website. You purchase the photos along with a license to use them as you wish, without having to pay any further royalties or fees.

If you take the cheap way out and try to copy and paste photos from Google Images or other places on the web, not only are you stealing those photos but you run the risk of incurring the wrath of Google or some other website owner who discovers the unauthorized use of these photos. Since you're using this ebook to build your professional reputation and credibility, play it safe and purchase stock photos.

A few of the most popular stock photo sites to check out are:
- http://www.istockphoto.com
- http://www.shutterstock.com

- http://www.bigstockphoto.com
- http://www.gettyimages.com

Note: carefully consider the size of the stock photos you purchase and where they will be used. If you purchase a small photo and try to enlarge it to fill the whole cover page, you might lose some of the clarity of the image and it will appear blurry.

Stock photo sites will list the physical size of the photos next to the price so you'll know before purchase if the photo will fit the whole space. Of course, you don't have to make your photos the full size of the page; that's completely up to you and how you want the finished product to appear. Small photos will most likely be fine on the inner pages of your ebook but cover art should be larger.

Your Cover Page

Your cover art will certainly help sell your ebook so choose the image wisely. If you can afford to outsource this task to a graphic designer, that's even better, but if you're a do-it-yourselfer, simply choose an image (or two) that best describes your ebook.

Once those images are purchased and saved on your computer, you can manipulate them any way you like or you can simply use them as is.

First, place the cursor on the very first page of text at the left margin. This is where you want to add a Page Break so you can create a new cover page. Once the cursor is in place, press Ctrl + Enter at the same time. Now your text starts on page 2 of the document and the first page is blank.
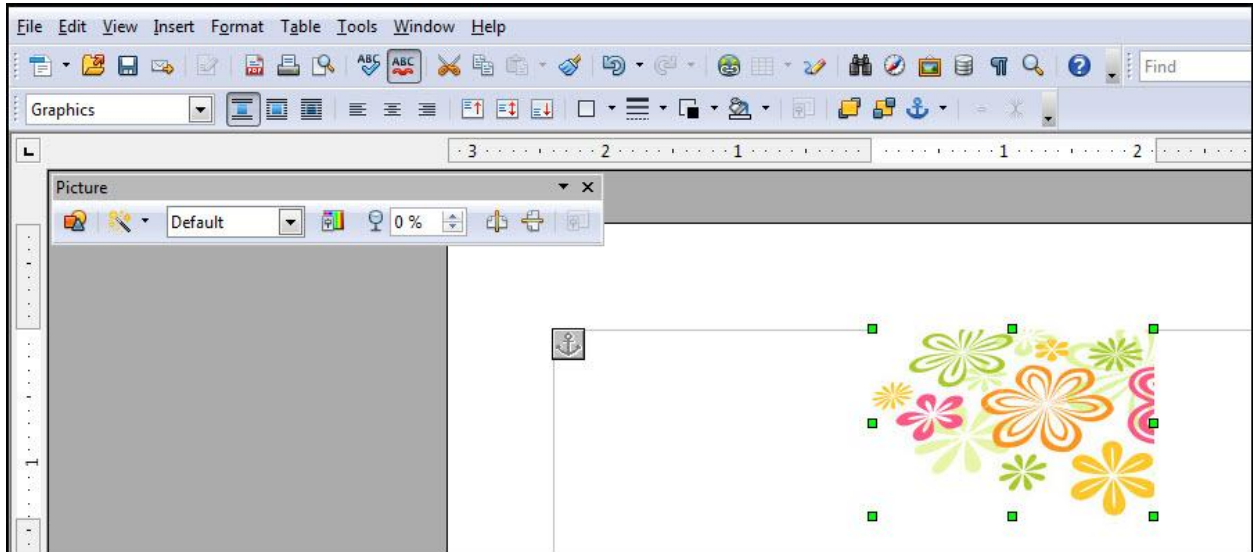
To insert a photo, click Insert > Picture > From File.
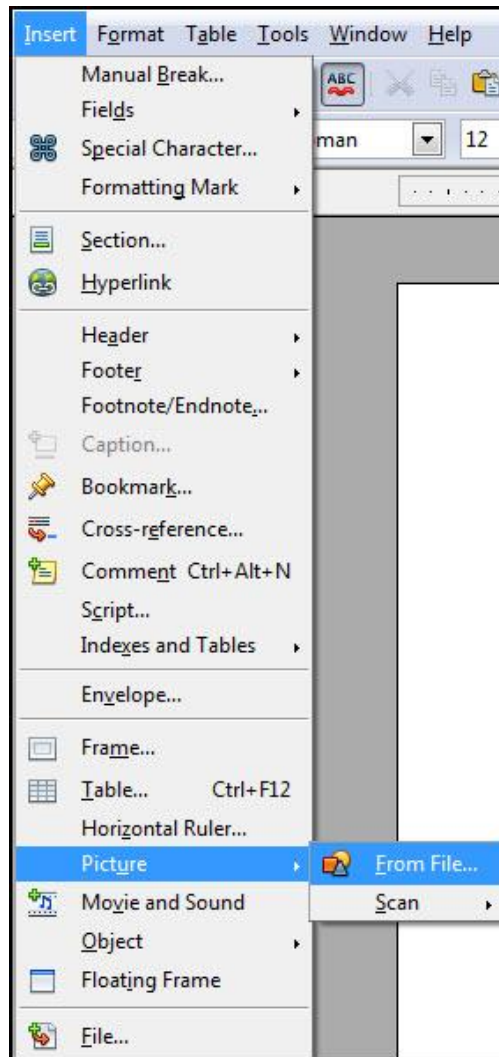
Choose the file name from the box that appears.
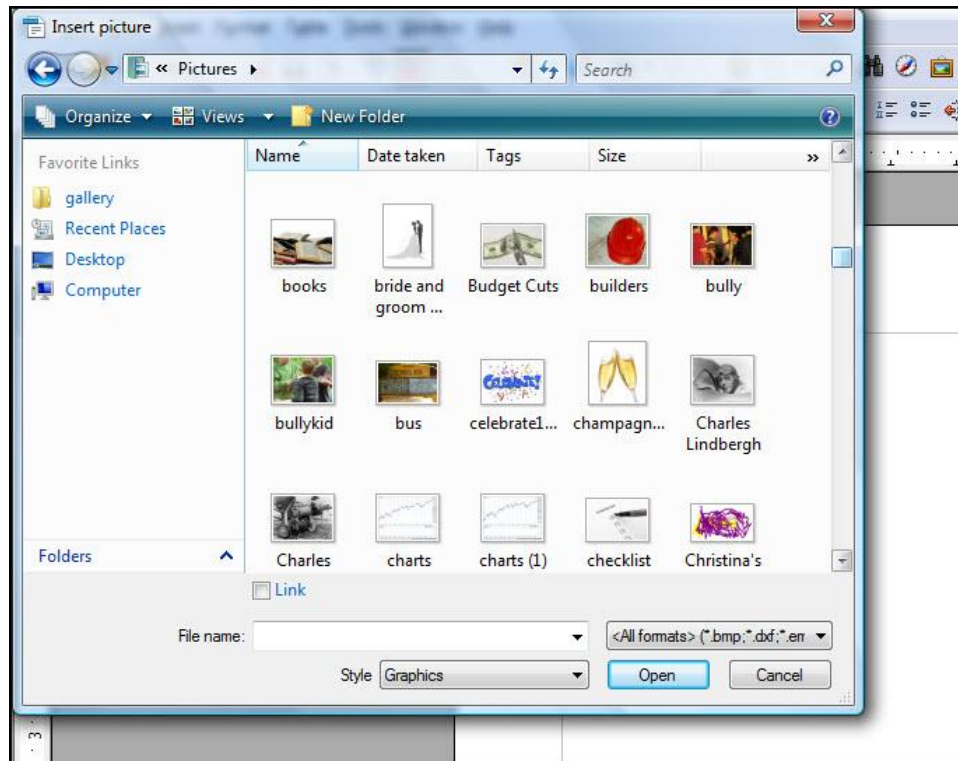
The photo is inserted to the center of the blank page.

The green squares around the perimeter of the photo indicate that you can change the size and placement of the photo. Hover your mouse over one of the squares and you'll see an arrow appear, which means you can click and drag the photo to make it larger or smaller.

Hover over the center of the photo and you'll see two arrows crossed. When you click and drag now, that move the photo into a different position on the page.

For the cover graphic, it may be enough to just click and drag the image to a larger size which fits the size of the page. On the inner pages of your ebook the photos will likely be smaller. No matter what page you're working on, the following instructions for editing your photographs will be the same.

In the left corner of the page where you inserted the photo, there is an anchor icon. Anchoring is a way to position an object, graphic, or frame in a document. An anchored item remains in place, or moves when you modify the document.

In the upper left corner you'll also notice a long box labeled Picture. Click on the left icon and that opens up another Picture box. These are all more ways to change the properties of the photo you just inserted.
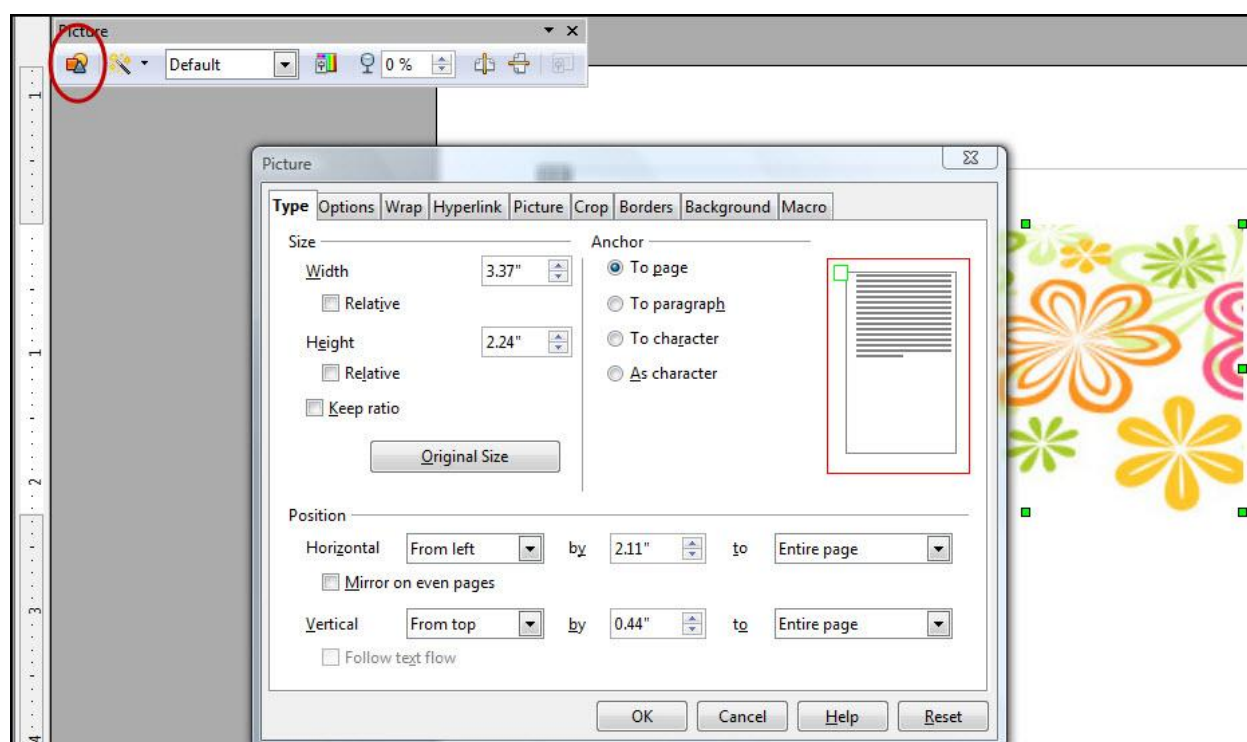
Here's a quick explanation of each Picture tab:

Type allows you to change the width and height dimensions as well as the page placement. You can also change the anchor options under this tab.

Wrap allows you to choose how the text should be positioned around the photo.

Hyperlink allows you to link a webpage to a specific image. **IMPORTANT NOTE:** where it says Frame, always choose _blank. This means when your reader clicks on the photo, the web page will open up in a new window instead of in the ebook window. You don't ever want to take people away from your own content!

*Picture* allows you to flip the photo vertically or horizontally.

Crop allows you to cut out unwanted parts of the image by making the image size smaller.

Borders places a border around the graphic. You have the option of choosing the thickness, the color, and if you want any 3-D or shadow effects.

Background offers a rainbow of colors to change the image background.

Graphic Filters

If you click on the magic wand icon in the Picture box, a dropdown menu appears with more icons. These are "special effects" to change the look of your photo. The best way to learn what these filters do is to just fool around with each one to see if it's the effect you want. You can always use the Undo button to go back to the original photo.
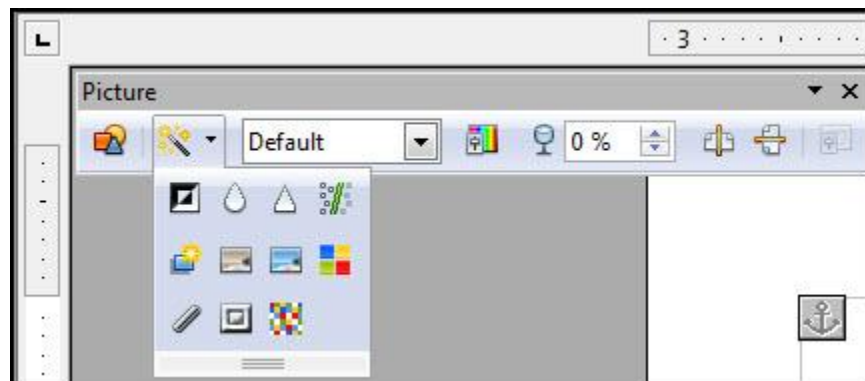
Invert is like an xray effect. It changes the photo colors to opposite colors. If the background is black, invert will change the background to black. If the main color is yellow, invert will change it to blue.

Aging gives your photo a black and white look.

Charcoal Sketch makes the photo look as if it was hand drawn using various degrees of charcoal colors.

Mosaic turns your photo into pixels and you control the size.

If you click on the box that says Default, a smaller dropdown box appears, allowing you to change your photo to Grayscale, Watermark, or Black and White.

The rainbow icon allows you to adjust the colors of your photo as well as the contrast and brightness.

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You also have the option of adjusting the Transparency of the image. The higher the number the more faded the image will look. This is useful if you intend on having text appear on top of the image.

The last two icons on the Picture bar allow you to flip the image both vertically and horizontally.

Insert Headers and Footers.

Headers and footers are areas within the margins, at the top and bottom of the page respectively, where you can add information, such as the ebook name, copyright information, or your website URL. The text placed in the header and footer boxes remains the same on all the following pages.

To insert a header, click the Insert link and scroll down to Header. Clicking the Default button adds the header box at the top of each page.
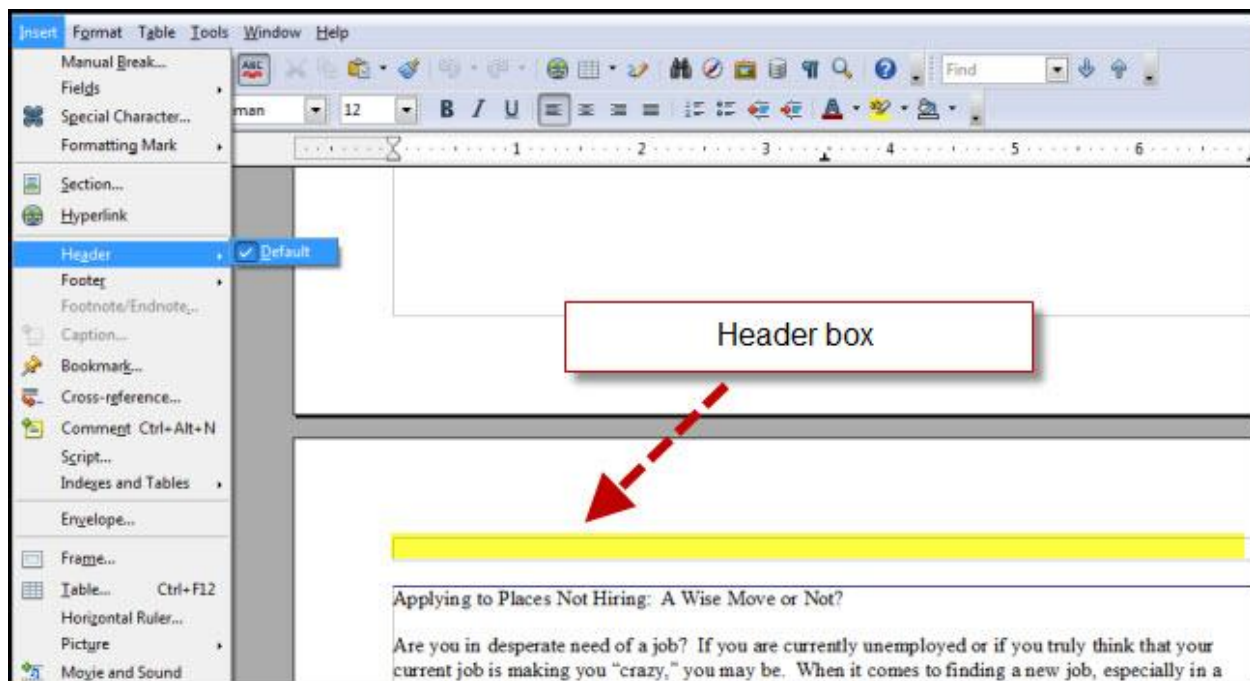
This step, however, also adds a header to the cover page, which generally isn't necessary. To eliminate the header from the cover page, click the Format > Page link. This opens up a box where you can uncheck the box next to "same content left/right" under the Header tab.
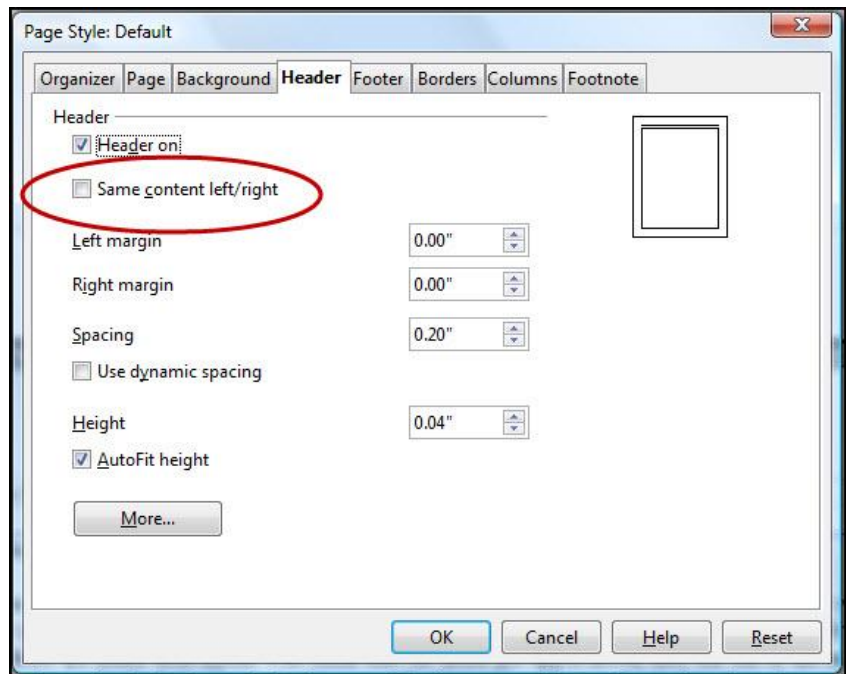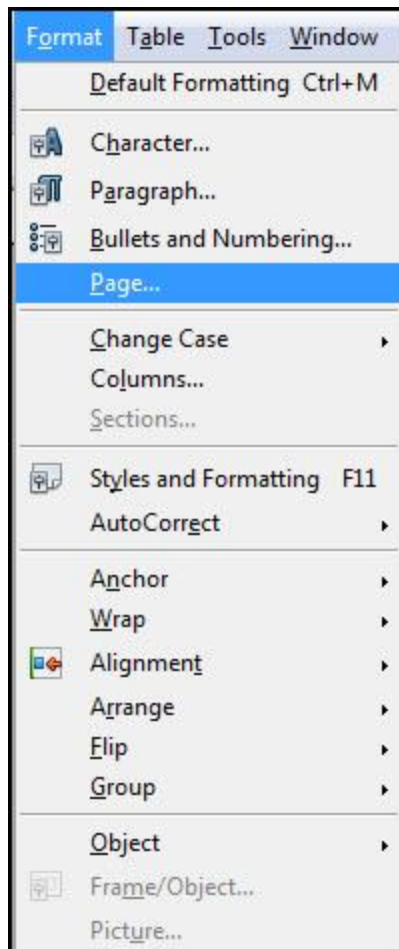
After closing that box, go to page 2 of your document and add your header text. Now you will see the header text only on the even pages.

Follow these same directions to add your footer only now you will use the Insert > Footer default choice or go to the Format > Page link and choose the Footer tab.

Add Borders

Borders are a simple design element that can make your pages "pop" with some color. They are also a great way to work your company colors onto the inner pages of your ebook, which can help your brand recognition.

To add a border to your ebook pages, click on the Format > Page link again and choose the Borders tab.
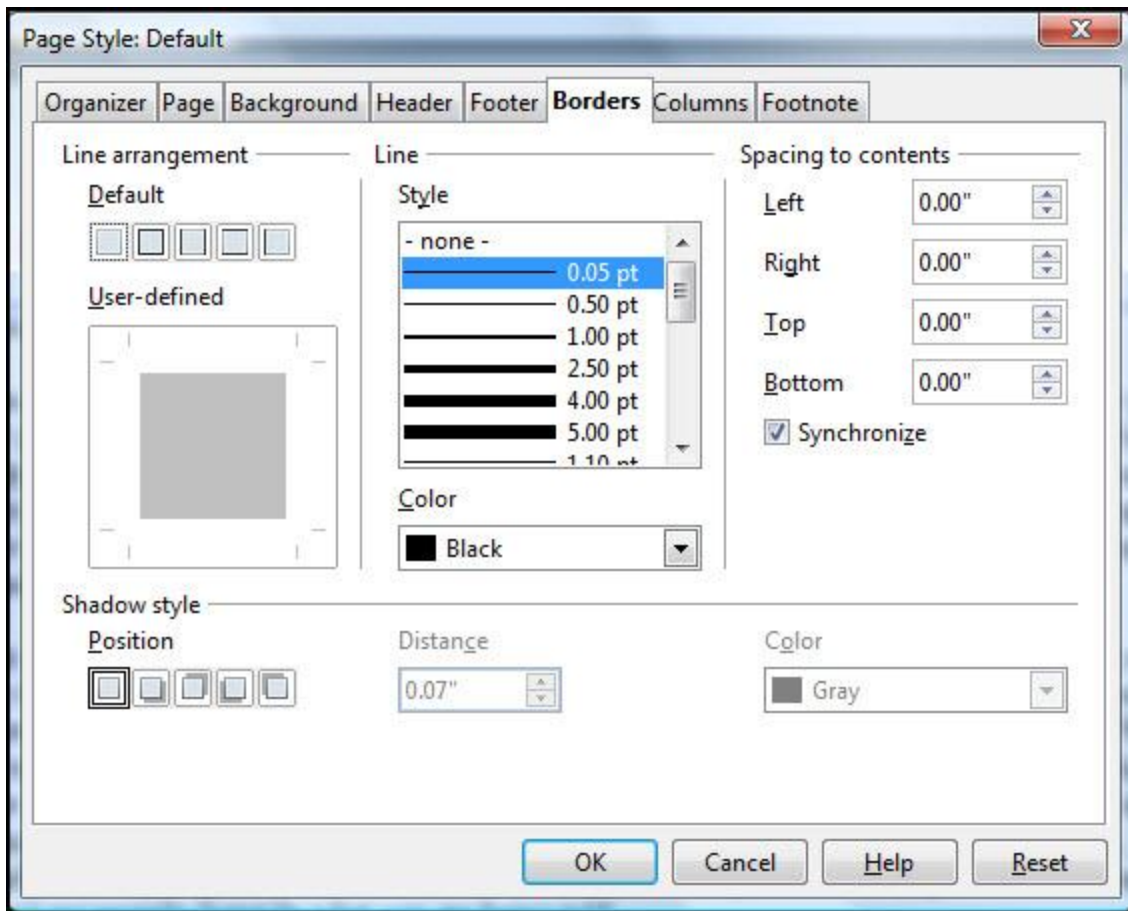
Here is where you can customize the width, color, and position of your page borders. You also have the choice of having the border around the entire page or just certain sides.

Note: Pay special attention to the Spacing to Contents numbers. The default settings place the borders very close to the text, which will make it distracting and difficult to read. To add some white space in between the border and the text, simply press the Up Arrow next to the default numbers. Also, checking the Synchronize box will move all the borders evenly.
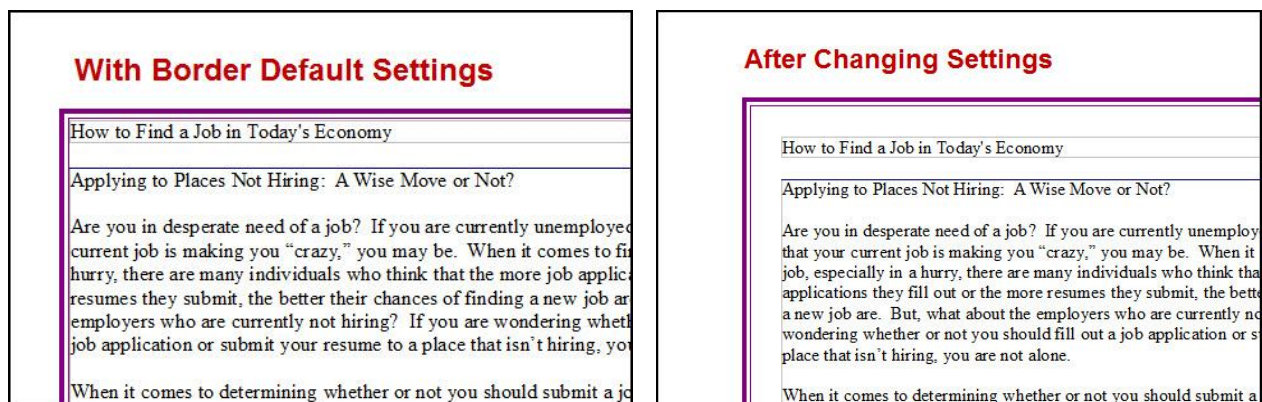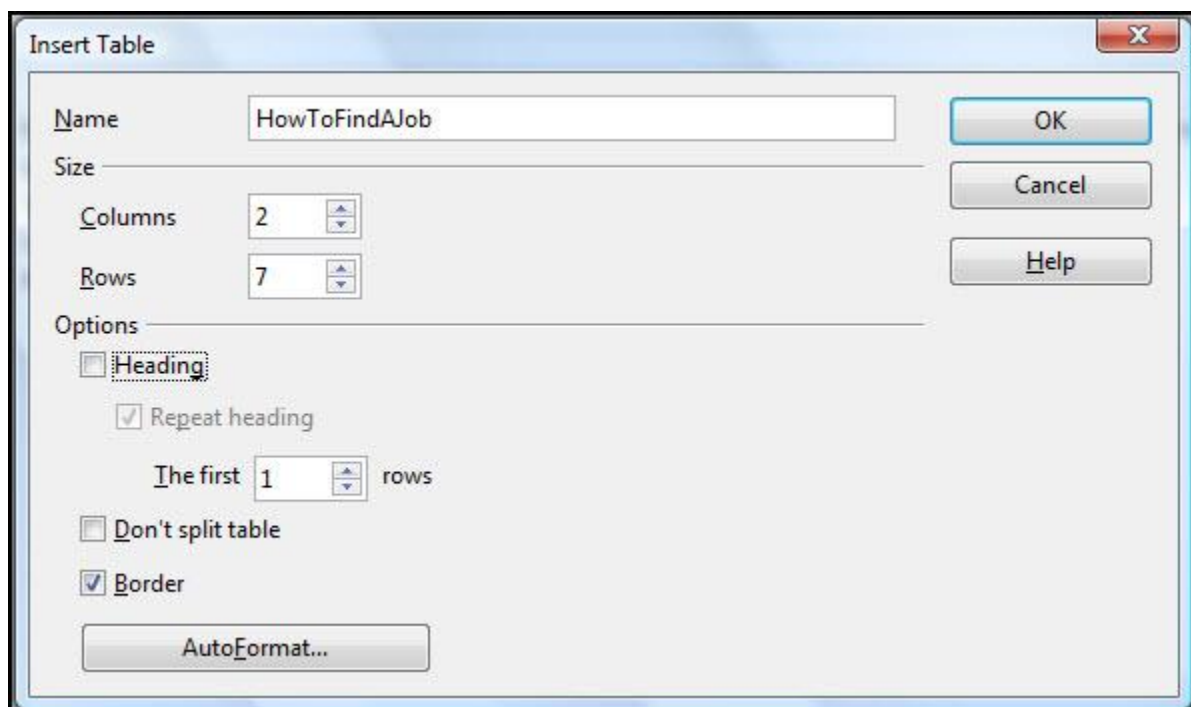
Add Tables
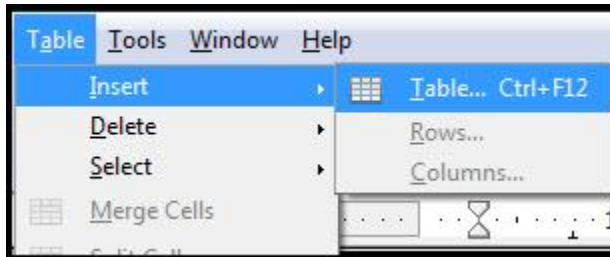
Tables are a great way to present data in a clean and uncluttered manner, especially if you're trying to compare two sets of data. To create a table, choose the Table > Insert > Table links at the top of the page.

Now choose the table name, number of columns and number of rows. Click OK and your table will appear in your document.


To add your information in the chart, simply place your cursor in any of the fields and start typing. You can move from each field by using the Tab button.

You'll also notice a Table formatting box in the upper left corner. This is an easy way to add or delete table rows or columns, change the color of the table border, and position the text within the table fields.
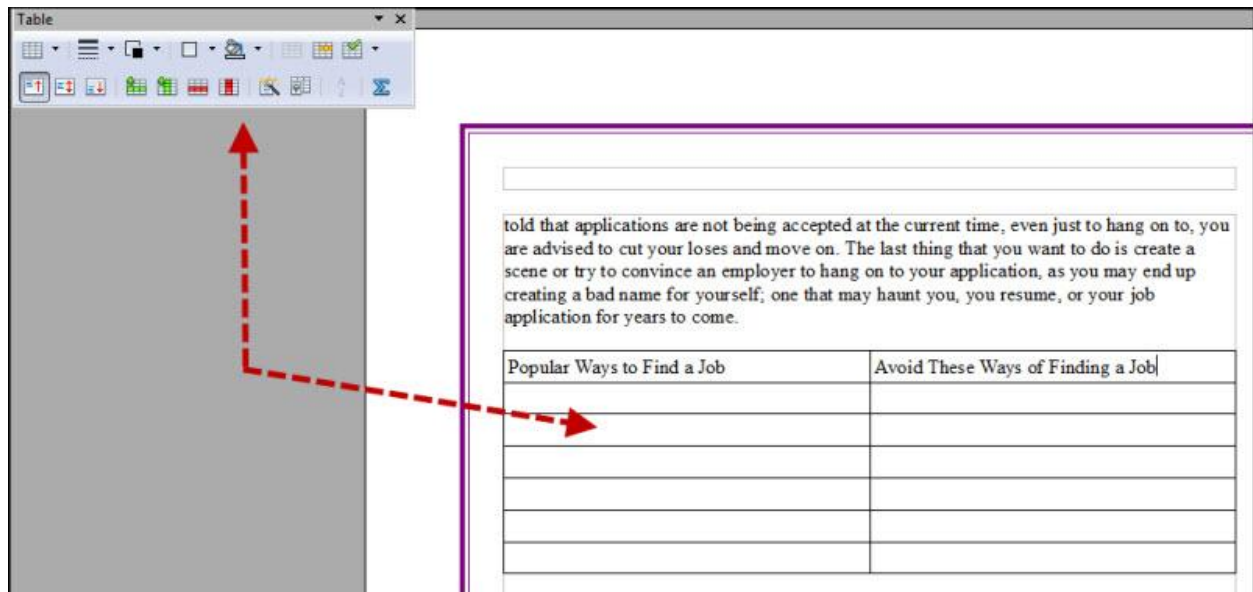
Fancy Chapter Headings

It's very important to format or label your chapter titles as Headings so you can automatically create a Table of Contents for your ebook. Simply scroll to each chapter title, highlight it with your mouse, and click on the Formatting box to the left of the Font box.
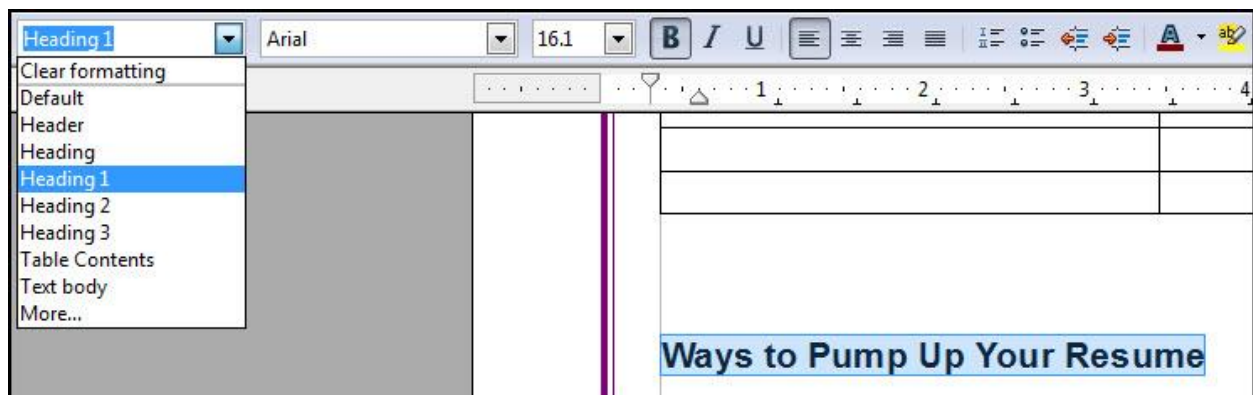
Choosing either Heading 1, 2 or 3 will change the size of the title. If you want to change the font to add a little more flair, simply click on the font choices and click the new font name… or, if you recall in the earlier section on Formatting Styles, you can update the headers all at once using the "Format" – then "Styles and Formatting" tool.

Generally the Heading 1 format is for chapter titles while the Heading 2 or 3 would be for subsections of each chapter. It's important to use the same title format throughout your ebook or you'll have difficulties creating the Table of Contents.

Create a Table of Contents

One way to create your table of contents is to scroll through each page of your ebook and take notes of each chapter title and what page it appears on. Not only is this time consuming but it then becomes difficult to make any changes to the ebook. Adding even just one paragraph can shift the text enough to make all the page numbers incorrect, thus making it necessary to go through the whole process again.

It's much easier to follow these steps so your Table of Contents will be generated automatically, based on how you formatted your chapter titles.

Select the Insert > Indexes and Tables > Indexes and Tables choice from the tool bar.
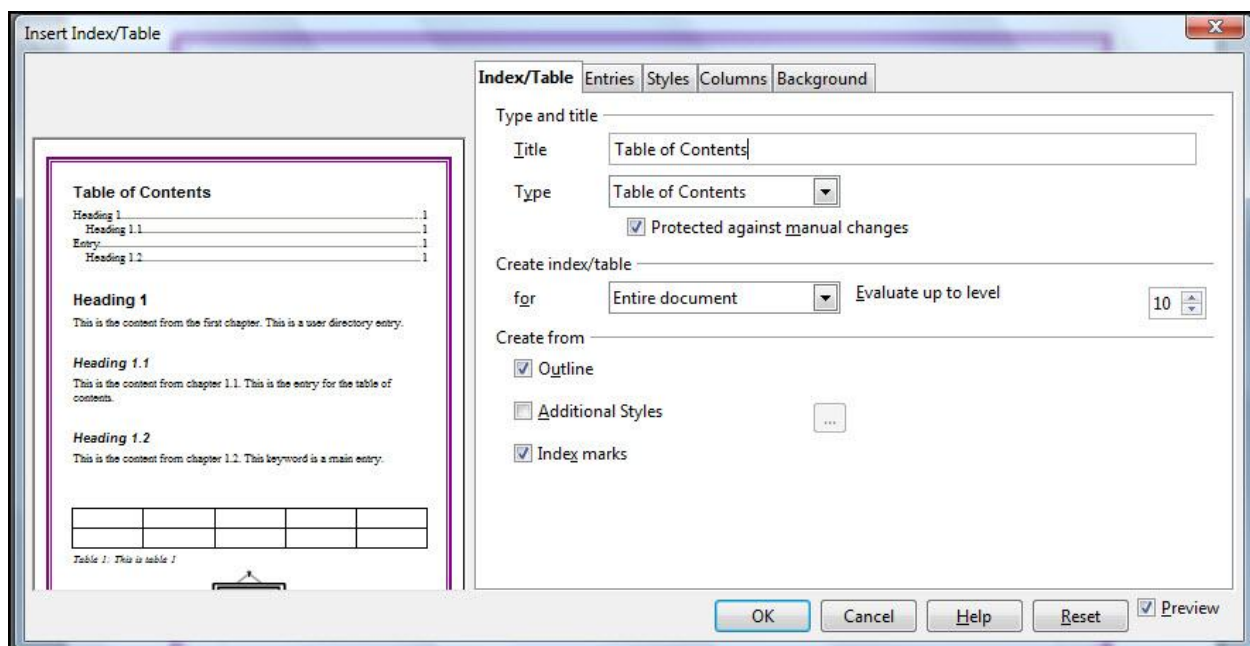
Under the Index/Table tab, you have the option of renaming your Table of Contents or creating a different index all together. Make sure the Preview box is checked in the lower right corner so you can see a preview of what the Table of Contents will look like.

The Columns tab allows you to change the number of columns of your index and the Background tab allows you to add background color to the text of your index page.

Note: adding color this way will give you a striped effect since the color only appears on the text, so you see white in between your lines of text.

Once you make your selections, click OK to see your newly-made Table of Contents.

How to Find a Job in Today's Economy

Table of Contents

Note: If you need to manually delete something from your Table of Contents, Uncheck the box that says "protected against manual changes".

Adding a Hyperlink.

Need to add a hyperlink to some text? Highlight the text and click on the Hyperlink globe icon in the toolbar.
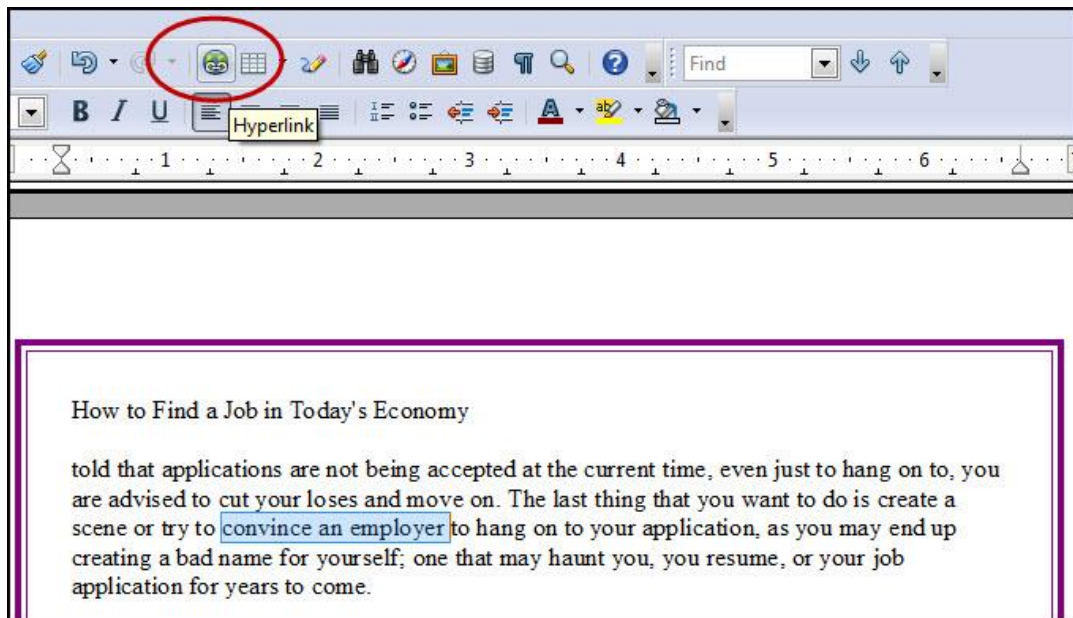

A Few More Tips for Working with Open Office

When you open up a new document in Open Office, you will see gray lines around the text area. You'll see a new gray line around the headers and footers as well. If this annoys you, it's simple to delete those gray lines.

Go to View and uncheck the Text Boundaries option. The boundaries around your Table of Contents and any other indexes will remain but the boundary around the main text and the headers / footers will disappear.
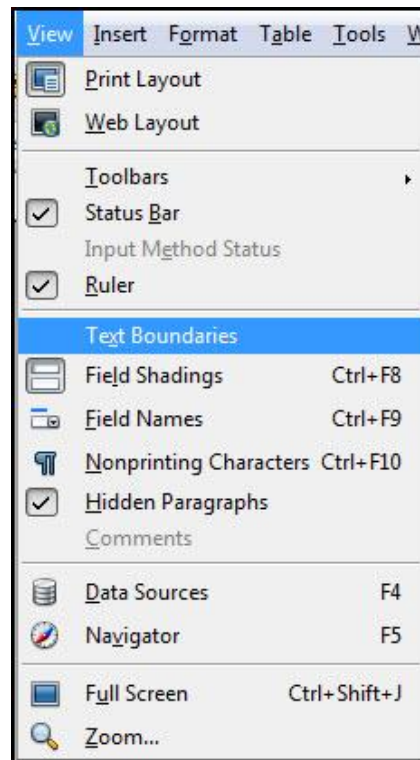
Using Find/Replace.

Do you need to change the spelling of a name or product that you've mentioned throughout your ebook? No problem! Select Edit > Find/Replace then enter the words to look for and what should replace them.
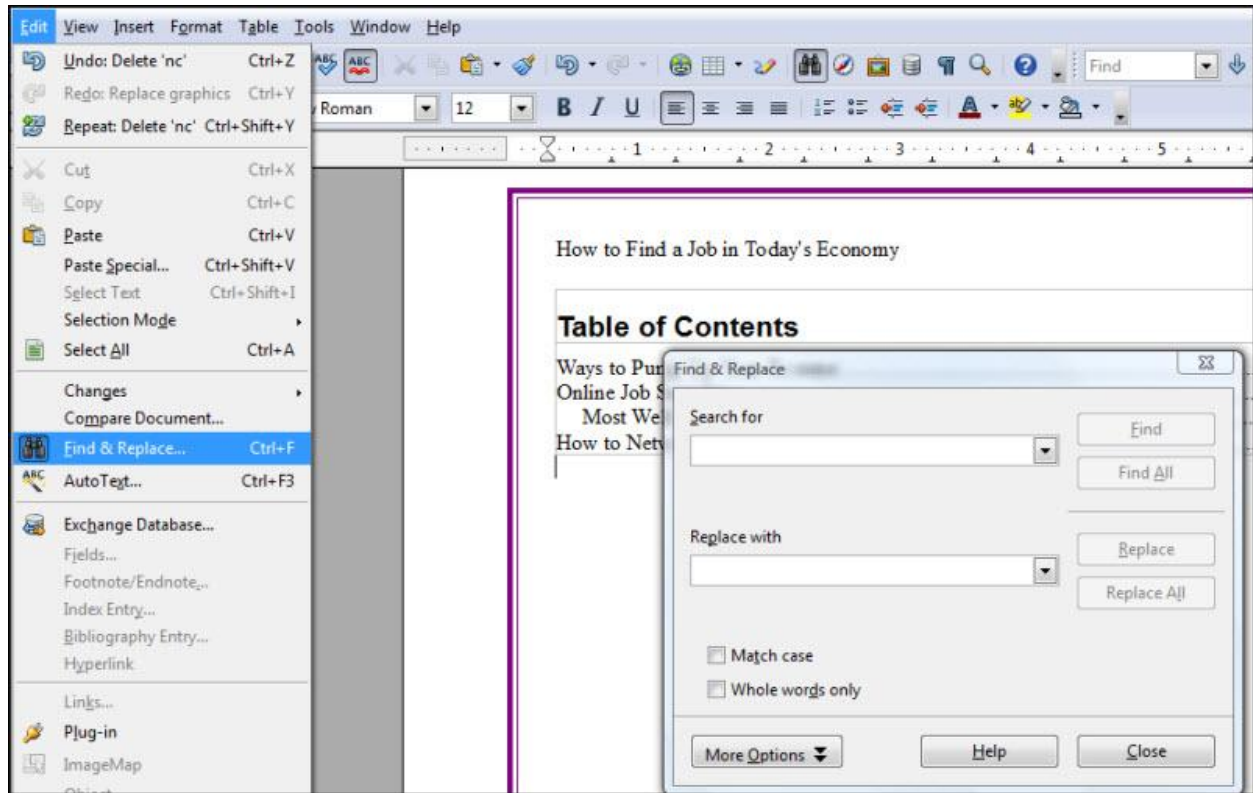
Using Spell Check.

Using proper spelling and grammar is imperative to convey your professionalism. Even though we turned on the automatic spell checker earlier in the process, now it's time to let the auto spelling and grammar checker do its work.

Simply click on the ABC with blue checkmark icon in the toolbar and any errors will appear in a dialog box, allowing you to change the grammar.

Turn your Document into a PDF.

Once you're done with formatting, it's time to save as a PDF. This format protects your content from being edited and redistributed without your knowledge. Simply click on the Export as PDF icon in the toolbar.
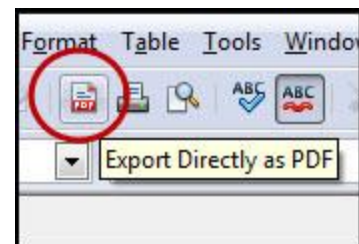
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- Write a press release.
- Email your lists.
- Buy a solo ad in someone else's ezine.
- Do interviews with other bloggers and/or podcasters.
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- Create an affiliate program.
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