

Tables, Tabs, Columns – Which to Use?

When creating a document in any word processing program there are often times when you'd like to have some text on the left and some on the right. Some examples might be a list that's too long for one page, a table of contents, a list of definitions, jobs and responsibilities, etc. There are four possibilities (plus combinations of them) for accomplishing this and each fulfills a separate need.

1. You can space from one side of the page to the other. This is always the **WRONG** thing to do. It's hard to adjust later on and its appearance partly depends on the computer, the program, the font and the printer being used. If you want to use different fonts it will almost never look right. The following lines will serve as an example of the problem. Every line says "no spaces", followed by five spaces followed by "see?".
No spaces see?
No spaces **see?**
No spaces see?
No spaces see?
2. A second option is to use tabs. This option does have some very specific uses but is usually not the best option. The big drawback is the same as in #1 – its appearance is dependent on the computer, the program, the font and the printer. However, using specifically designed tabs (experiment with right tabs with or without "leaders", decimal tabs, center tabs, etc.) might very well be the best answer. Check the "help" section of your word processing program to see what options there are.
3. If you have a list that is relatively narrow (less than half a page width) and it's simply a list, COLUMNS is the way to go. You can format a section of your document to handle multiple columns – and you can dictate where each will end. In Word, just click on "Format", then "Columns". You'll be offered several options (shown below).

Col #:	Width:	Spacing:
1:	2.75"	0.5"
2:	2.75"	

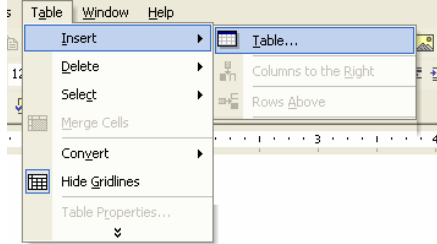
1. You can choose preset columns or choose the number of columns, the width of each and the spacing between them.

2. You can apply the columns to the whole document or just the text which will follow. (from this point forward).

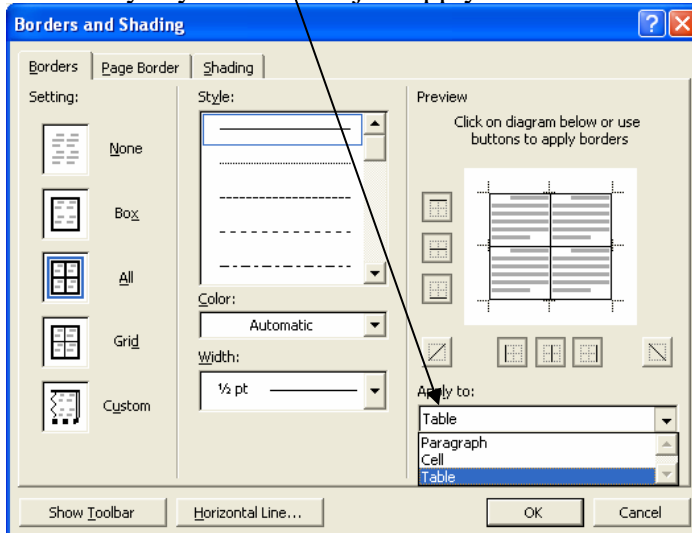
3. You can also have a vertical line between the columns.

Note – if you are doing a brochure with multiple folds, remember to take the overall page margins into consideration for spacing.

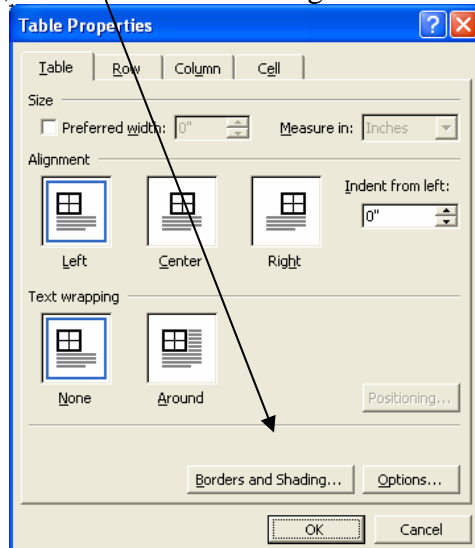
4. MANY times tables are the right way to go. You can line up information both vertically AND horizontally. And it's easy to move things around as things change. In Word, simply click on "Table", "Insert", "Table".



- Choose the number of rows and columns you want to start with. To go from one cell to the next, simply press the "tab" key on the keyboard.
- If you want a real tab within a cell, press the "ctrl" key along with the "tab" key.
- You can choose to show the borders or not – click inside the table somewhere and then click on "Format", "Borders and Shading". Different cells can be handled differently if you choose – just apply the lines to each cell separately.



- You can control the formatting of the table via the "Table" menu option. As you can see, the borders and shading can be set here as well.



5. Try putting together a quick list and try each option!