

By Katherine Murray

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Depending on what you like to do in Word, you may have cosmetic preferences or functional preferences. Maybe you want the program to work as fast as possible. (Okay, that's an easy one... who doesn't?) Or maybe you like to arrange your tools and document details so that you can get to them quickly. Whatever your preferences may be, Word 2010 enables you to tweak some basic settings so it works the way you want it to.

1: Change up the Quick Access Toolbar

The Quick Access Toolbar is that small set of tools in the upper-left corner of your Word 2010 screen. By default, the program offers Save, Undo, and Repeat (pretty safe bets), but you can click the Customize Quick Access Toolbar arrow at the end of the row to display additional choices. To add a tool to the toolbar, click it in the list. For a little more detailed customizing, click More Commands to display the Quick Access Toolbar category in the Word Options box. Here, you can find and add the tools you want, specify whether they will appear in all documents or just the one you're working on, and even import or export a Quick Access Toolbar customization for use on other computers.

2: Add your own tabs and groups to the Ribbon

This was the customization lots of us were waiting on -- a chance to tweak the Big Kahuna, the Word Ribbon. In Word 2010, you can easily add your own tabs to the Ribbon, complete with tab groups in whatever configuration you choose. To add a new tab group, click the File tab and click Options; then click Customize Ribbon. Word adds the new tab immediately following the tab you had selected in the list (**Figure A**). Click New Tab in the right side of the dialog box, rename the tab, and add and name the groups you want. Now you can drag and drop the appropriate tools to the new group. Click OK to save your changes.

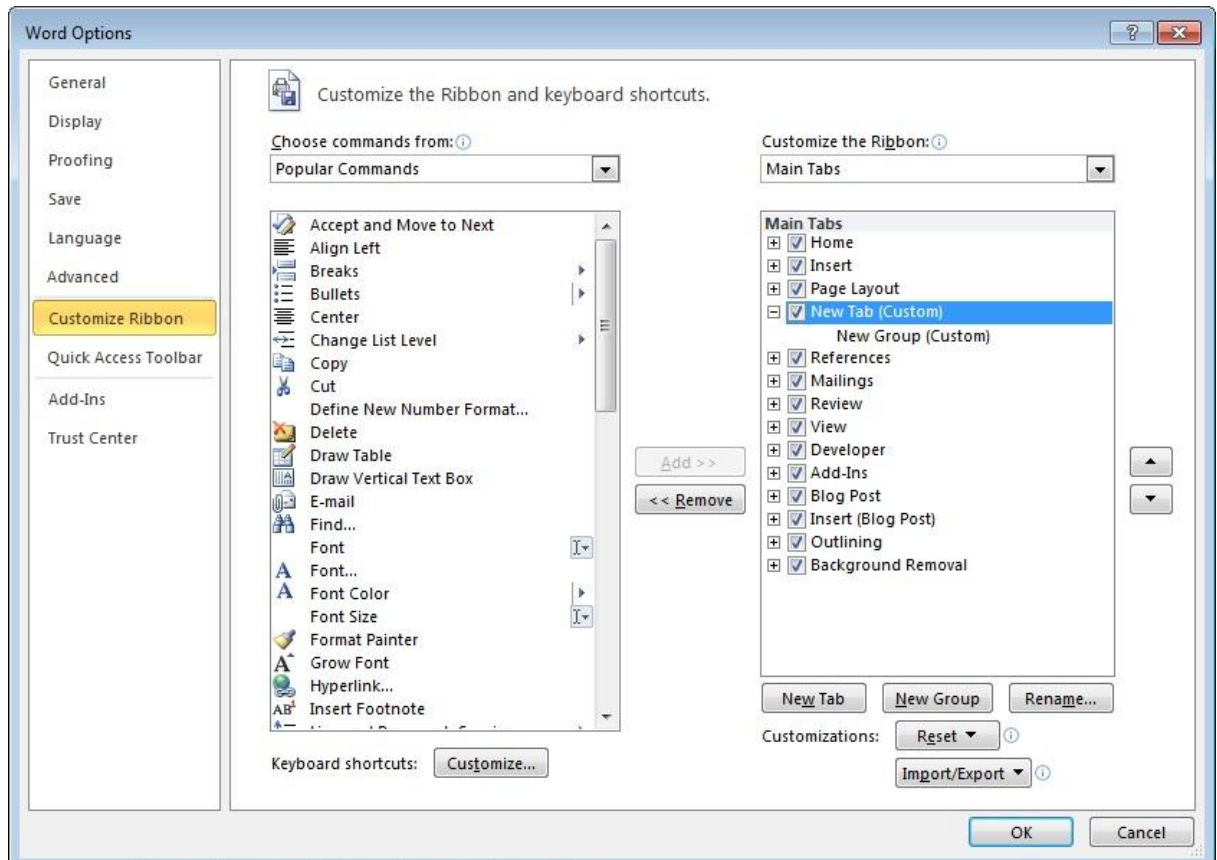


Figure A

3: Change the Word color scheme

There's not a huge range of skins to choose from, but if you are tired of the steely gray default of the Word 2010 interface, you can change the look to -- hold on to your seat -- a steely blue or a sleek black. The color scheme is visible mostly in the Ribbon, the title bar, and the surrounding desktop area of your screen. By default, the program uses the Gray color scheme, which enables you to see the subtle changes in the Word 2010 screen design. A little more white space on the Ribbon, the glows and outlines on selected tools and options, softened gradients, and enhanced use of color help you find your way around the screen. The developers suggest choosing the Black color scheme if your vision is such that having high contrast helps you read; otherwise, the color schemes are purely personal preference. Note that any changes you make to the Word color scheme flow through to your other Office 2010 apps as well, so don't be surprised when your Outlook window looks different after you make the change.

4: Add to your document properties

The new Backstage view in Word 2010 makes it easy to view and work with all sorts of information related to your file. You can view which of your teammates has access to the document, for example, or add tags so that the document shows up easily in a search. You can see the document properties Word displays by default by clicking the File tab and choosing Info. The document properties appear in the rightmost panel. If you want to add all Word's document properties to the list so that you can click and update them, click Properties and click Show All Properties. You can also add the properties in a Document Panel at the top of your file by clicking Properties and choosing Document Panel.

5: Create your own Quick Parts

So how many times a year do you type your company's mission statement on reports you write or documents you send? You can create your own Quick Parts to store that mission statement -- complete with the font and format settings you used -- so that you can insert it easily in any document you create. To create your own custom Quick Part, first add the text or image you want to include and then select it. Click the Insert tab and click Quick Parts. At the bottom of the list, click Save Selection To Quick Part Gallery. Finally, in the Create New Building Block dialog box (**Figure B**), enter a name for the Quick Part, choose the gallery where you want it to appear, and fill in the other choices as needed. Click OK to save the item.

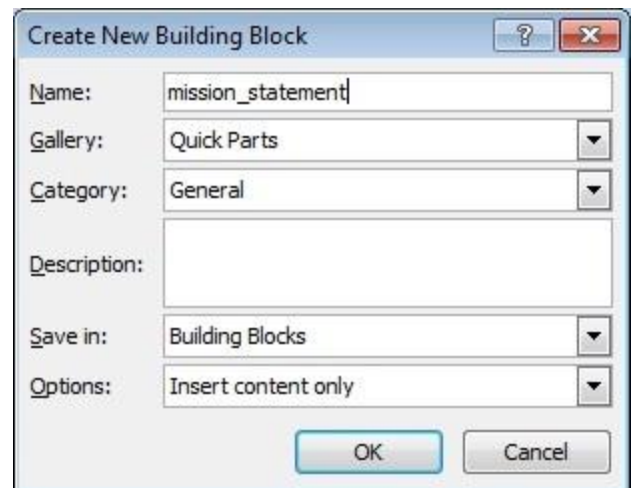


Figure B

6: Set your default folders

Maybe you get tired of navigating through the maze of folders each time you save a new file. You can easily configure Word 2010 to put the files where you want so you have one fewer thing to think about. In Word 2010, saving to a SharePoint site or Windows Live Skydrive account is a seamless part of the program, so you can also choose the shared folders where you want to store your work. To change the defaults, click the File tab and click Options. In the Word Options dialog box, click Save (**Figure C**). Click in the Default File Location field and type the path to the folder you want to use or click Browse and click your way there. Similarly, if you are working collaboratively on SharePoint and want to change where Word keeps the new documents you check out and modify, click in the Server Drafts Location field and enter a new path or click Browse to find the spot where you want to save the files. Click OK to save your changes.

You can also choose the online server space (or Windows Live SkyDrive account and folder) you want to use when you click the File tab, click Save & Send, and click either Save To SharePoint or Save To Web.

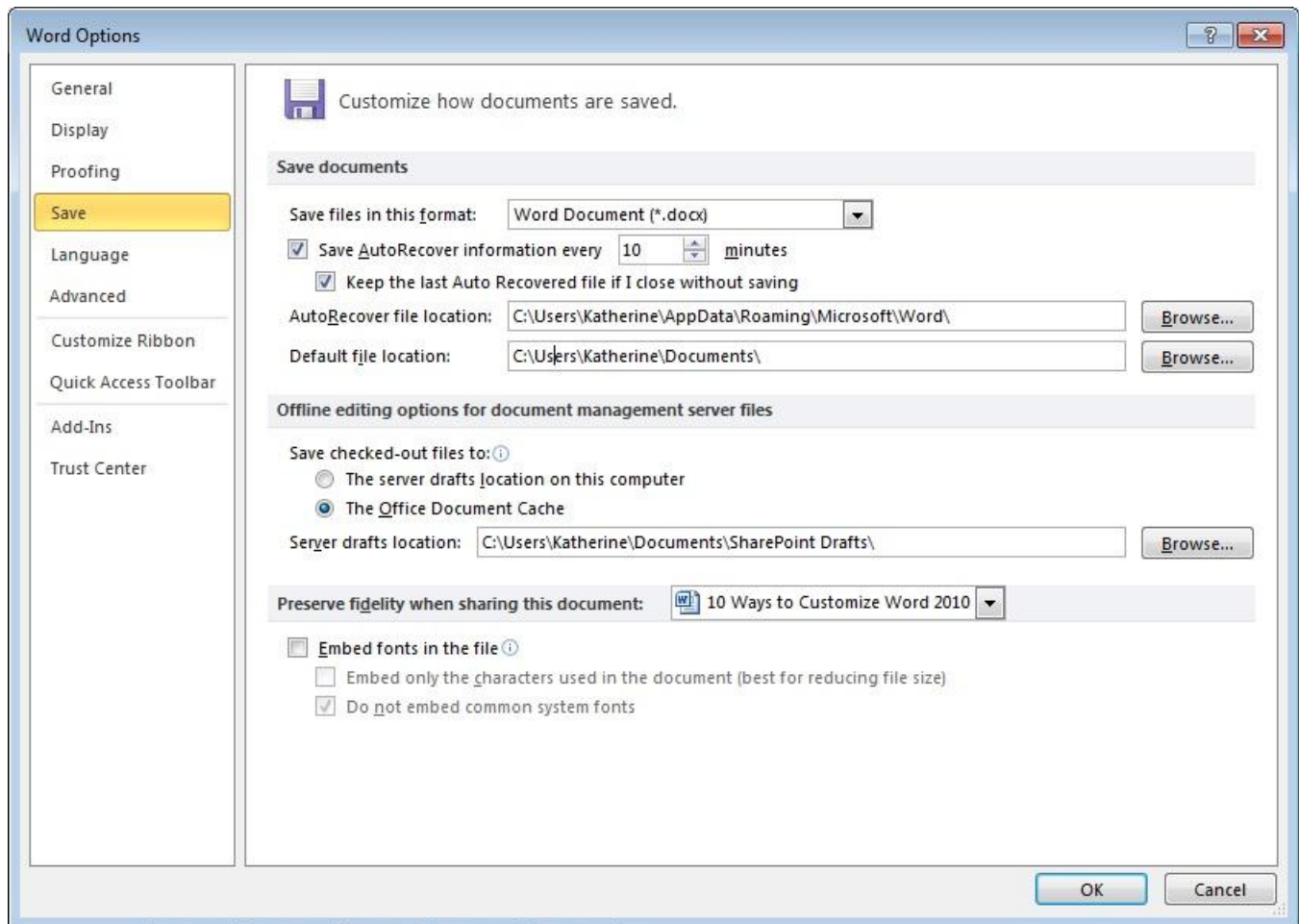


Figure C

7: Customize your page preferences

Businesses often go for a certain look and feel with the printed and online documents they produce. Your margin settings may be unusual, perhaps allowing readers to take notes or simply to create additional space for design reasons. Maybe the header and footer spacing are the same, the orientation is always portrait, and the gutter allows for spiral binding. Display the Page Setup dialog box and set up the page the way you want it, then click Set As Default. A prompt will ask you whether you want to continue, because the changes will be added to the Normal.dot template. Click Yes if you want to make the change. By default, your new documents will be created using the page settings you entered.

8: Display the style area

If you like to see what's going on behind the scenes in your document -- for example, which styles are used for headings, which are used for body text, and so on -- you might want to display the Style area for your document in Draft and Outline views. The Style area is a vertical column displayed along the left edge of your page, showing you all the styles that are used (and where) in your current file. Turn on the Style area by clicking the File tab, clicking Options, and clicking Advanced. In the Display group, specify the amount of space you want to devote to the area in the Style Area Pane Width In Draft And Outline Views. Click OK after you make the change and display your document in Draft or Outline view to see the change.

9: Organize your styles

Do you love creating and working with your own styles? It's not a difficult thing to do in Word 2010. Simply format the text with the font, size, style, color, and effect you want. Right-click your creation, point to Styles, and click Save Selection As A New Quick Style. If your styles begin to overpopulate your Styles gallery, you can organize them and make your favorites your defaults. First, click the dialog launcher in the Style group (in the Home tab) and click the Manage Styles button at the bottom of the Styles pane. In the Recommend tab, click the style you want to change and click Set Whether This Style Shows When Viewing Recommended Styles. Scroll through the list and click the styles you want to hide or show. It's an easy way to weed an over-full Style gallery, and you can always change the settings back if you find you're missing a style you really need.

10: Set your favorite fonts

We each have our preferences when it comes to the fonts we use to write and read. I prefer light, open fonts like Calibri, Footlight, and Palatino. Others can't take text seriously unless it appears in Times New Roman, Bookman, or New Century Schoolbook. No matter what your font preferences are, you can set up Word to use them in the Manage Styles dialog box. Click the Set Defaults tab and choose your favorite settings for the Font, Size, Color, Position, Line Spacing, and Paragraph Spacing. Click OK to save your settings.

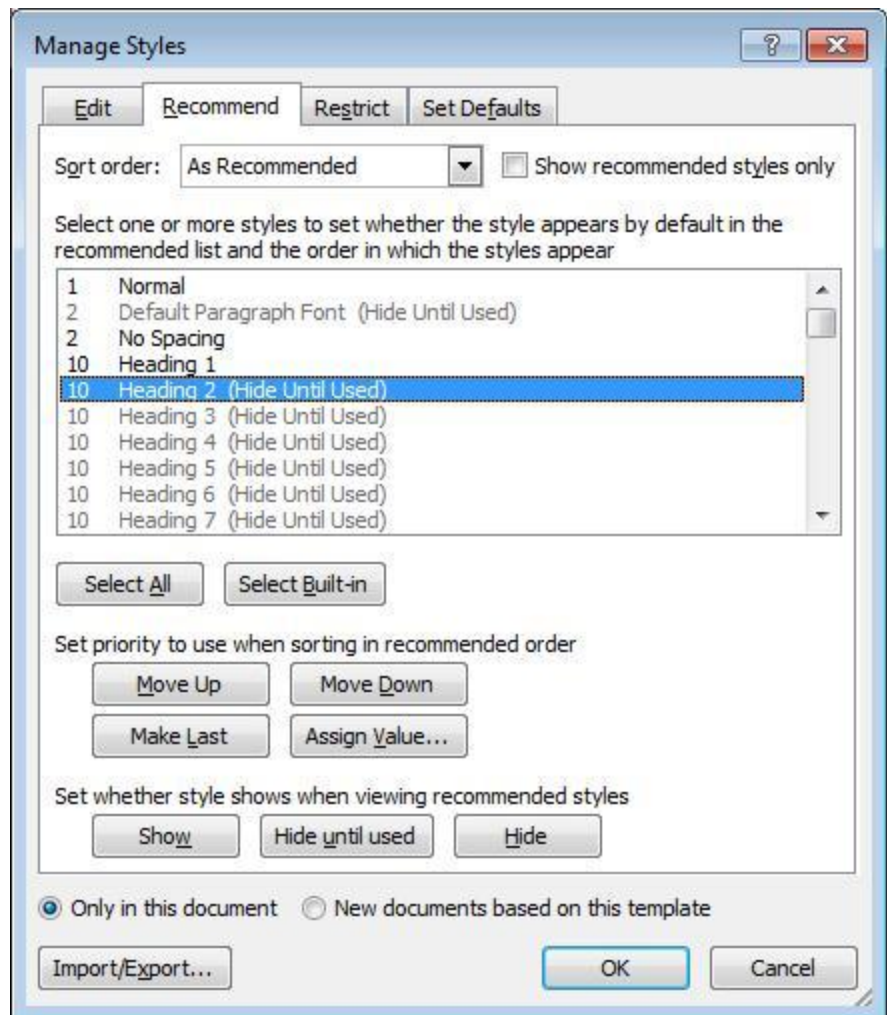


Figure D

Katherine Murray is the author of *Microsoft Office 2010 Plain & Simple* (Microsoft Press, 2010), *Microsoft Word 2010 Plain & Simple* (Microsoft Press, 2010), and *Microsoft Word 2010 Inside Out* (Microsoft Press, 2010). You can reach Katherine through her blog, BlogOffice or by emailing kmurray230@sbcglobal.net.