

How to Create a Table of Contents

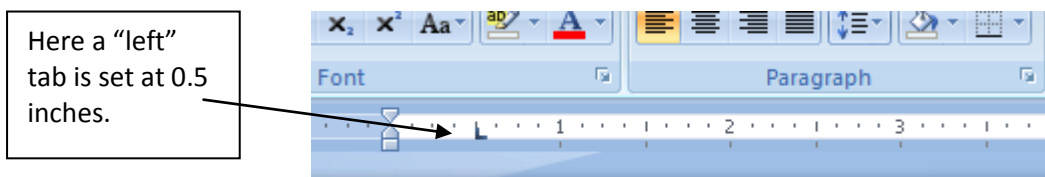
Making a nice table of contents (TOC) in *Microsoft Word* is often a pain, so this document attempts to show you how to make one. Note that the suggestions given below will also work for a List of Tables or a List of Figures. Also note that the following technique is not the only method that works, so if you have a different method by all means use it. Finally, templates of these documents are provided on the Biology Department's web page, so you can just download them and replace the existing information with your own. However, if you read this document, you will have a better understanding of how the templates were created, which will help you modify them for your own use.

NOTE: the following instructions are based on *Microsoft Word 2007*. However, other versions of this software work in a similar manner, so if you look around you should be able to find the same menus/settings as are described below.

Step 1 – Understand tabs

The key to getting the page numbers to line up in the TOC is to use “tab stops”. You are probably familiar with tabs, they simply are spots that the cursor stops each time you hit the “Tab” button on the keyboard. By default, tabs are set every ½ inch. You will need to set a special tab on the right side of the page to help the page numbers line up.

The tabs can be set up simply by clicking on the ruler at the top of the page – wherever you click on the ruler, a tab is set.



If a tab is on the ruler that you want to remove, just click on the tab mark and drag it up or down to take it off the ruler.

To truly understand tabs, you must realize that there are several different types of tabs. The traditional tab is a “left” or “left aligned” tab. If you tab over to a “left” tab and start typing, the text is aligned on the left side:

This text is “left aligned” on a 0.5 inch tab.

Each tab type has its own symbol on the ruler; the “left” tab symbol looks like this:



The far left side of the ruler contains the tab type button – click on it to cycle through all the different tab types to get the one you want, and then click on the ruler to set that type of tab in a certain position.

You can probably figure out the different tab types: “right” lines up the right side of the text, “center” lines up the centers, “decimal” lines up the decimal points of numbers, etc.

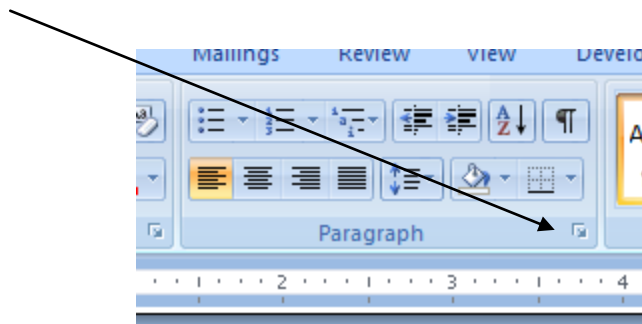
This text is center aligned on a 3 inch tab.

This text is right aligned on the same 3 inch tab.

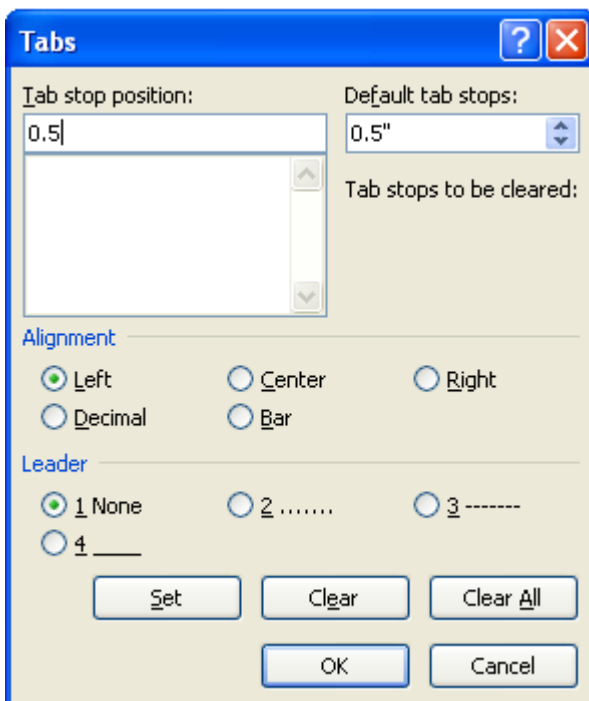
Step 2 – Set tabs

Now, all you have to do is set a couple of tabs and building the TOC is a piece of cake. First, set a “left” tab at 0.5 inches (this tab will be used to align the caption text).

NOTE: although clicking on the ruler is convenient, it might not be accurate enough for our purposes. To set our tabs exactly, we need the tab dialog box. To find this box, click on the “Home” tab and then click on the little arrow at the bottom of the “Paragraph” group:



In the window that pops up, hit the “Tabs” button in the lower left to get the tab dialog box.

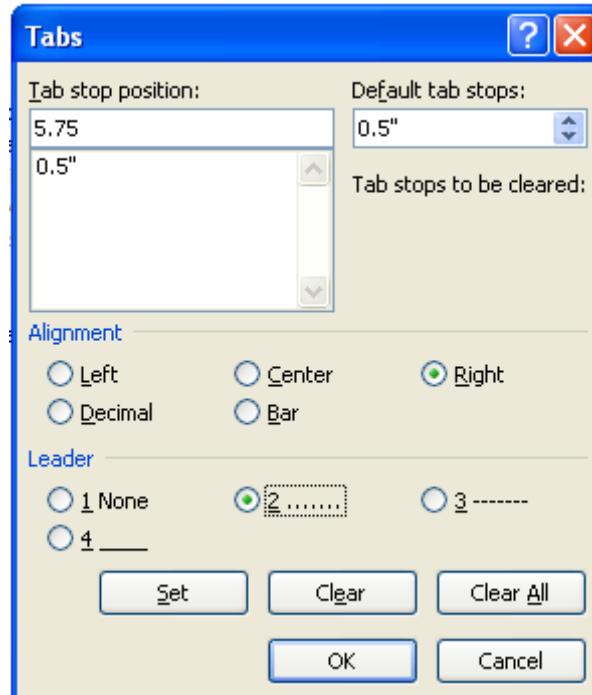


In the upper left of this box, you can set your tabs exactly. Although the default for tabs is every 0.5 inches, we are going to go ahead and set a tab manually at 0.5 inches (note all measurements are from the left margin). In the middle section, we choose “left” for our alignment. Finally, we want no leader, so choose “None” in the bottom section.

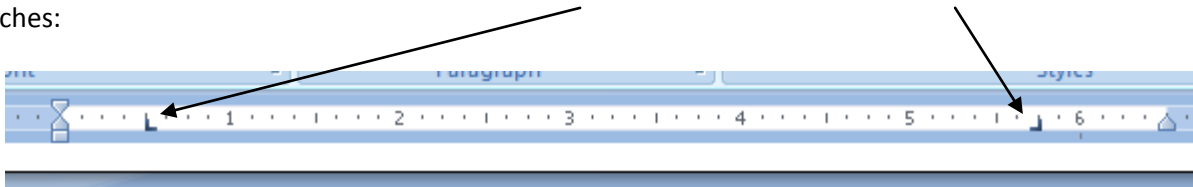
When you hit “OK”, *Word* will create a “left” tab at 0.5 inches.

Now that we have the tab set to align the caption text on the left, we just need another tab to align the page numbers on the right. We want the page number tab at 5.75 inches (the paper is 8.5 inches wide, minus the 1.5 inch margin in the left equals 7 inches, minus the 1 inch margin on the right equals 6 inches, so if we set the page number tab at 5.75 inches the page numbers will be exactly 0.25 inches inside the right margin).

In the tab dialog box, set a second tab, this time at 5.75 inches. This tab needs to be a “right” tab, and it needs to have a series of dots (choice #2) as its leader:



If you look at the ruler up top you can confirm a “left” tab is at 0.5 inches and a “right” tab is at 5.75 inches:



Step 3 – Build the TOC

Now you can build your TOC using the tabs you just set. In the first line, tab over to the second tab and type “Page”:

.....Page

Ooops! What just happened here? You made a nice “right” aligned word at the second tab, but since you set the 2nd tab to have a “dotted” leader it put the dots in! Although we want the dotted leader later, we don’t want it now. So, with you cursor on this line, open the tab dialog box and set the leader to “none”.

Page

OK, now that we fixed that, the word “Page” is properly aligned. Now we just need to fill in the section names. We want the section names left aligned, so just hit return to get to the next line and start typing. When you are finished, tab over to the right and enter the page number (you will have to reset the tab to the “dotted” leader):

	Page
INTRODUCTION.....	1
METHODS.....	5
Site description	5
Statistical analysis	8
RESULTS	9
DISCUSSION.....	15
LITERATURE CITED	19

Note how we used the first tab (at 0.5 inches) to align the subheaders in the TOC.

Step 4 – Build a list of tables

The list of tables and list of figures are just as easy. The only differences are 1) we need to give the table/figure number on the left; and 2) the captions often take up more than 1 line.

Begin by setting the tabs just as before. This time, the first line contains the word “Table” or “Figure” along with the word “Page”:

Table Page

Next, hit return to jump to the following line, and start typing. Put the table number on the far left, and then tab over to the first tab stop to start the caption text (captions should match the captions in the body of the thesis exactly, so you might want to copy and paste).

Table Page
1. Summary of all water quality parameters measured at Lake Ruth during the winter of

Here is our problem: the caption is so long it runs into the spot where the page number is supposed to go. No problem, we'll just hit return to jump to a new line, tab over to the first tab, and continue...

Table Page
1. Summary of all water quality parameters measured at Lake Ruth during
the winter of 2008-200916
2. List of fish species captured in Lake Ruth during nighttime trap netting.....18

Note how the caption text is left aligned at the 0.5 inch tab, and also note how the page numbers are right aligned with a nice dotted leader. Sweet!

A final thought: Word has a built in method for creating TOC's which uses styles to automatically create the TOC with the proper page numbers, and then as the document changes the page numbers can automatically update. Although this is nice when it works, I've had more trouble than success with the automatic TOC's, so I provide this document as an alternative. By all means, if you are creating a large document, use the automatic Word TOC!