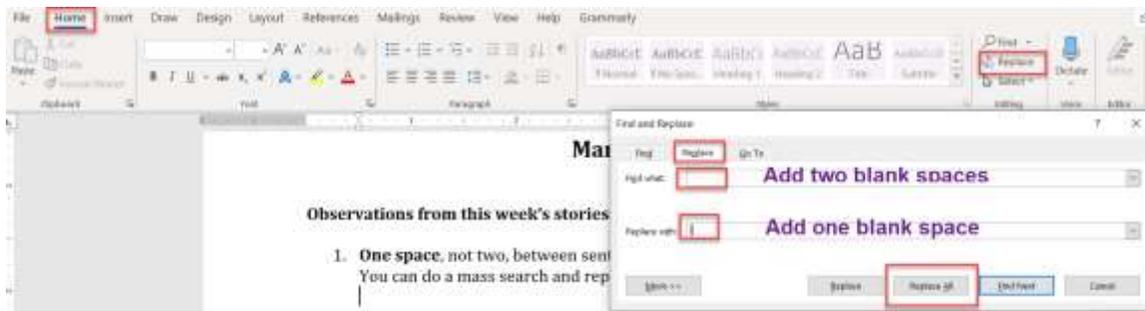


1. **Page numbers.** Insert page numbers. It makes your story easier to discuss. (Use your word processor's toolbar to access the *insert* feature for placing page numbers in the document header or footer.)
2. **One space only.** Never use two spaces between sentences (or anywhere) the way we used to when typing on an old-school typewriter. Word processing software accounts for proper spacing automatically since well before the 1990s. You can do a mass search and replace the extra spaces using the MS Word *replace* feature. The same rule applies to the one and only space after a colon.



3. **Semicolon.** I've heard a semicolon called the *love child of a colon and comma*. It can be used to *replace* a conjunction in a compound sentence.

*I enjoyed the movie, but I loved the dinner afterward.*

Semicolon replaces *but* in this version:

*I enjoyed the movie; I loved the dinner afterward.*

A comma is not strong enough to connect to complete sentences. To do that is a *comma slice* and is not grammatically correct.

4. **Bold, all caps.** You do not typically see bold type within the text other than titles, and you rarely see all capital letters. It's better to use italics for emphasis.

*I said I wanted *bacon*, not sausage.*

5. **Exclamation marks.** Use sparingly. It's better to write exciting sentences than to use exclamation marks.

6. **Very.** *Very* is a qualifier that adds virtually nothing to the sentence, and it is a word I typically delete while editing for someone. I adhere to Mark Twain's philosophy about *very*:

*Substitute "damn" every time you're inclined to write "very"; your editor will delete it and the writing will be just as it should be.*

7. **Numbers.** Use words to spell out all numbers below 101, including ages, and use numerals for (almost) everything 101 and above.

*I bought six new books. I'll add those to my collection of 600.  
My class has thirty-two students.  
My hometown has only 400 people.*

8. **Comma to set off introductory phrase.** A comma is usually needed to set off an introductory phrase. If the sentence is perfectly clear without it, you may omit the comma, but I add it in rather than determining if it's needed or not.

*Before eating, the members held the business portion of the meeting.*

9. **Em dashes.** Em dashes (—), indicate an abrupt change or interruption. They can be used for emphasis or introductory explanation—similar to a colon.

10. **Compound words.** Check compound words to see if they are two separate words, hyphenated, or one word—*backyard, front yard, in-depth*. You can type the word(s) in question into an online search engine followed by the words Merriam and Webster to see the current status of such words or phrases.

11. **Comma and independent sentences.** Put a comma in between two independent sentences connected by *and, or, or some other conjunction*. The boy ran to school, and he sneaked in without the teacher noticing he was late.

12. **Military.** Branches of the service are usually lowercased unless they are in a complete title such as the *United States Air Force* or *US Air Force*. Many servicemen disagree with this convention, but style-wise, lowercasing *army, navy, air force, etc.*, is the standard unless part of a complete title.