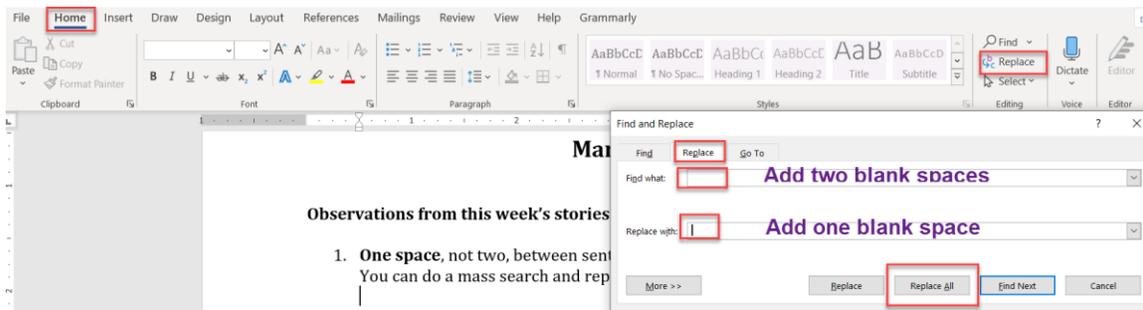


Story Notes:

1. **One space**, not two, between sentences, always and forever, since well before the 1990s. You can do a mass search and replace using the MS Word *replace* feature. The same rule applies to the one and only space after a colon.



2. **Comma splice.** A comma is not strong enough to hold two independent clauses/sentences together. When a comma is used in this way, it's grammatically incorrect and called a comma splice. Only a conjunction or semicolon can separate two independent clauses in one sentence. You can also split the clauses into two separate sentences.

We went to the movies, we ate a wonderful meal. (comma splice)

We went to the movies, and we ate a wonderful meal.

We went to the movies; we ate a wonderful meal.

We went to the movies. We ate a wonderful meal.

3. **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.

4. **Family member's titles as names.** When writing about a family member *without* attributing a possessive pronoun (*my, your, hers, his, our, their*) or other designation, capitalize Mom, Dad, Grandpa, Aunt Rose, etc.

Grandma Donna is my dad's mom, Uncle Jim's stepmom, and my cousins' and my favorite grandmother.

5. **New speaker, new paragraph.** Each time there is a change of speakers in dialogue, you *must* start a new paragraph. Always, a new speaker requires a new paragraph.

“Are you going to the dance?” Joe asked.

“I plan to,” said Alice.

“Will you save a slow dance for me?”

“Of course, I will.”

6. **Abbreviations.** Using abbreviations for states, types of roads, etc., is correct, but we are writers, and words are our currency. I strongly encourage you to choose words over abbreviations whenever possible.

I turned onto Sixtieth Street and made it to Jasmine Avenue before I ran out of gas.

7. **Would** – Many, many times you can replace *would* in a sentence with the simple past tense, and it makes the sentence much stronger.

I would go to the movies every Saturday afternoon.

I went to the movies every Saturday afternoon.

8. **That.** *That* is an often overused and unnecessary word. We use it a lot out of habit rather than need. Read your sentence without *that*. If the meaning is still clear, delete the extraneous *that*.

I bought the car that I wanted all my life.

I bought the car I wanted all my life.

9. **Quantify.** Wherever possible, quantify your descriptions in terms of size, amount, number, etc. If you don't know the exact number, qualify it in some way, but still provide a specific point of reference.

We've been best friends for a long time.

We've been best friends for more than thirty years.