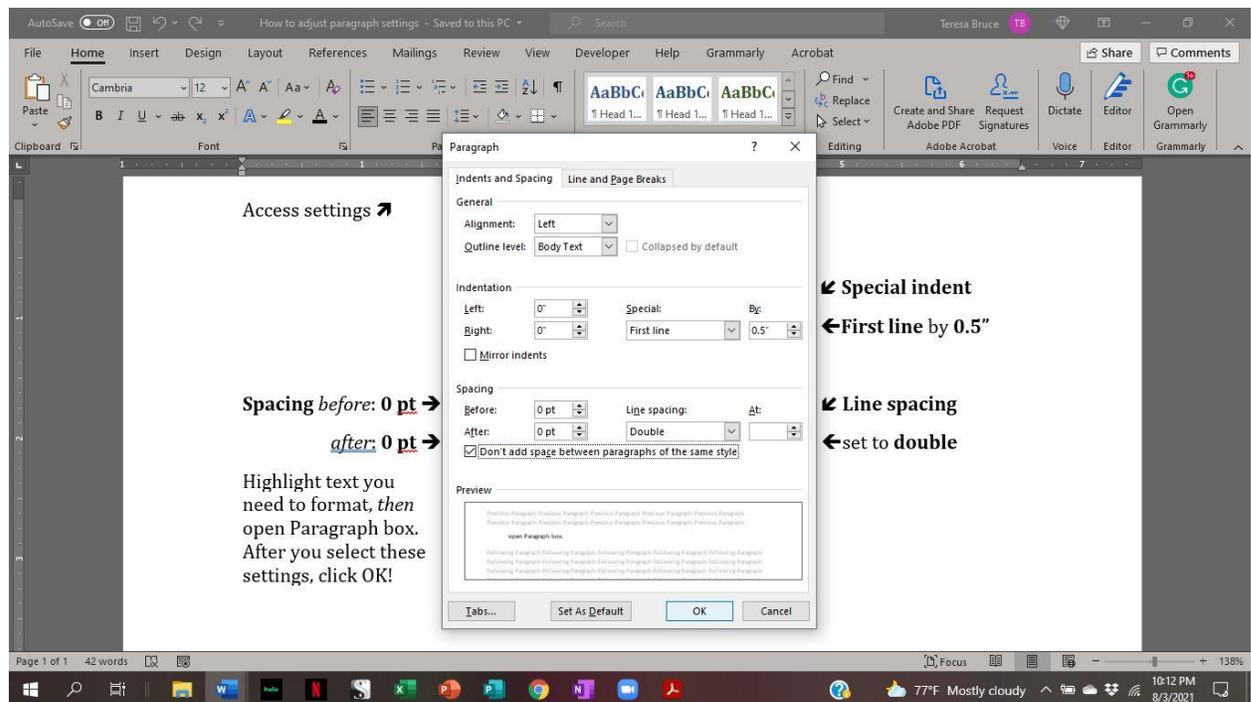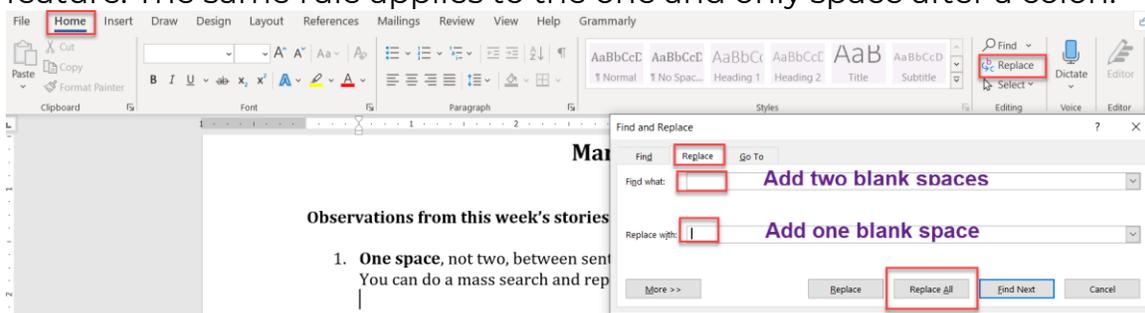## Story Notes:

1. **Create a personal editing checklist.** Use these story notes as a basis to build a personal editing checklist. Add other items you often overlook and use these sheets to check your future stories *before* submitting them for review.

2. **Story format.** It is best to get in the habit of indenting your paragraphs and not using the block style with an extra line between paragraphs. I don't know of any publishers or magazines that use this format as a standard for submissions.

   By selecting the paragraph drop-down menu and adjusting the options, you can create double-spaced, indented paragraphs without extra line spaces.



Also, make sure to use a black or dark gray font color. *Experts* say a lighter gray is easier on the eyes online, but for people like us with older eyes, the more contrast the better.

3.  **Comma and independent clauses (sentences).** An independent clause is another name for a sentence. It has a subject and a verb and needs nothing else to be a sentence. Put a comma in between two independent clauses/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.*

4.  **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.



5.  **Use a comma after an introductory phrase or clause.** If you write a sentence that includes an introductory phrase or clause, it must be followed by a comma.

    > *If you decide to attend, you'll need to submit your payment by March 2, 2025.*
    > *After a long work week, Joe treated himself to a movie and popcorn.*

    It is grammatically correct to omit the comma *if* the introductory phrase is short. But what is short—two, three, four words? It's a good idea to get used to adding it. Then, you won't have to determine if the phrase is short enough to omit the comma.

6.  **Plant, animal, and other names.** Most common names for plants and animals are lowercase, except when the name is a brand name or includes a word that would normally be capitalized.

    > *The blue jays ate all the figs on my tree.*
    > *Sam just bought a German shepherd puppy.*
    > *We saw fields of California poppies on our trip.*
    > *I love Red Delicious apples.*

7. ***Then* isn't a conjunction.** *Then* most often serves as an adverb but can also be used as an adjective or noun. But it is *not* a conjunction like *and, but, or* and should not be used that way. You may see it sometimes in text, but it is not grammatically correct.

   *We came home from the concert then went to sleep* (incorrect)
   *We came home from the concert and then went to sleep* (correct).