



Headings and Subheadings Manual

Overview and Accessibility

Heading styles create consistency across your document in terms of formatting. More importantly, using the built-in heading styles in Word allows for indexing of individual headings and subheadings, which creates a navigable and accessible document. Accessibility is now required for all Electronic Theses and Dissertations (ETDs) housed at [OAsis: UNLV's Repository for Scholarship, Research, and Creative Activity](#). Documents must adhere to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 Level AA standards. Please see the [Office of Accessibility Resources](#) for more information, and see the guidelines on the [Office of Accessibility Resources' Tips and Tricks page](#).

Using heading styles also allows Word to create a Table of Contents (see our Table of Contents manual on our [Thesis & Dissertation Guidelines page](#)), rather than you manually creating one. This will ultimately save you time and ensure that your headings and subheadings are consistent in your Table of Contents, and easily updated if necessary.

Please note that while this manual gives instructions for formatting headings and subheadings in Microsoft Word, all documents must adhere to the same rules, regardless of software used. Please work with your advisor for formatting accessible headings in LaTeX or other software.

Types of Headings

1. **Major headings:** These include all chapter headings, as well as any other major section in your document. Required major sections are the Abstract, Table of Contents, References, and Curriculum Vitae. Optional major sections include Acknowledgements, List of Tables, Appendix, and others.
2. **Subheadings:** These include different subsections within your chapter. You can have primary or first-level subheadings, secondary or second-level subheadings, tertiary or third-level subheadings, etc., and these will follow a logical outline order.

Formatting and Accessibility Requirements for Headings

- Heading sizes and styles must be consistent throughout the document. This means that all major section headings must be formatted in the same style (for instance, bold, centered, 14-pt font). Similarly, each level of subheading must also be consistent throughout the document (for instance, bold, aligned left, 12-pt font). Using Word's built-in styles will ensure consistency and compliance with accessibility requirements (see the next section for step-by-step instructions)
- Major section headings can be a larger font size as in the example above, as long as it is in accordance with a student's approved style guide and advisory committee
- All major section headings must appear in the Table of Contents
 - You can choose whether to include subheadings in the Table of Contents, but they must be included consistently. For example, if you include first-level subheadings for Chapter 1 in the Table of Contents, then all first-level subheadings in the document must be included in the Table of Contents
- Each major section must start on a new page
- Page numbers must be consecutive throughout the document
- All headings must be in black, no exceptions. The default styles in Word are often in other colors, which will need to be modified for each level of heading as outlined below

Formatting Major Headings

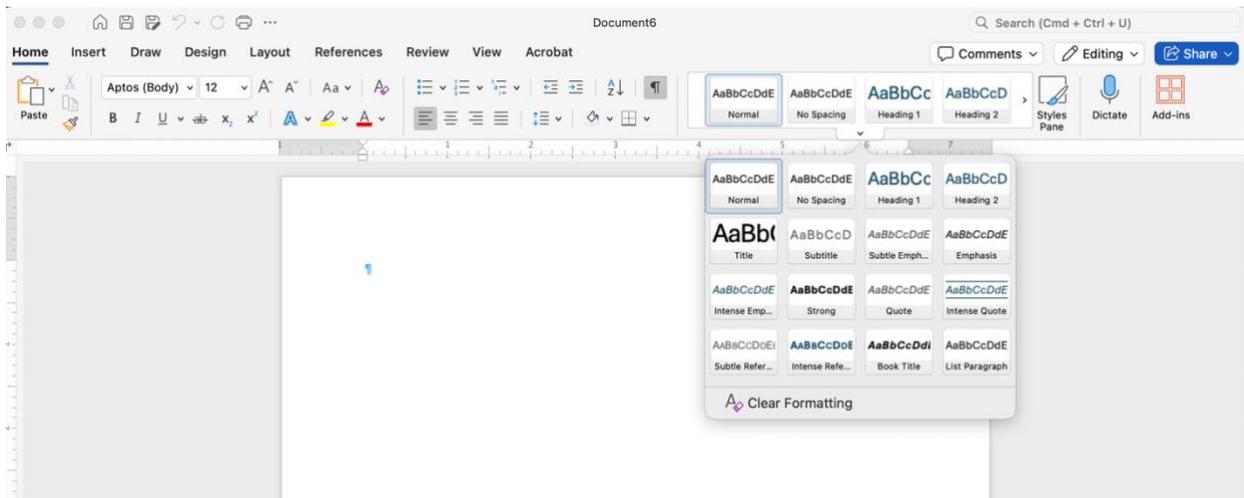
Similar to Word automatically applying the Normal style to the body of a document, Word also automatically creates Heading styles. These can be found in the Styles menu on the Home ribbon and include labels such as "Heading 1," "Heading 2," "Heading 3," etc.

You can modify major section headings to the font, style, and font size that you like in accordance with your chosen style guide, and apply this style to all major section headings in the document. Note: Depending on your version of Microsoft Word, Step 2 below may not work. Instead, you can right click on the style you wish to change in the Styles Pane and select "Modify." This will bring up the Modify Style box.

Important: Do not use Heading 1 in the body of your document! Heading 1 must be applied to the title on the Cover Page only. All major section headings as described under

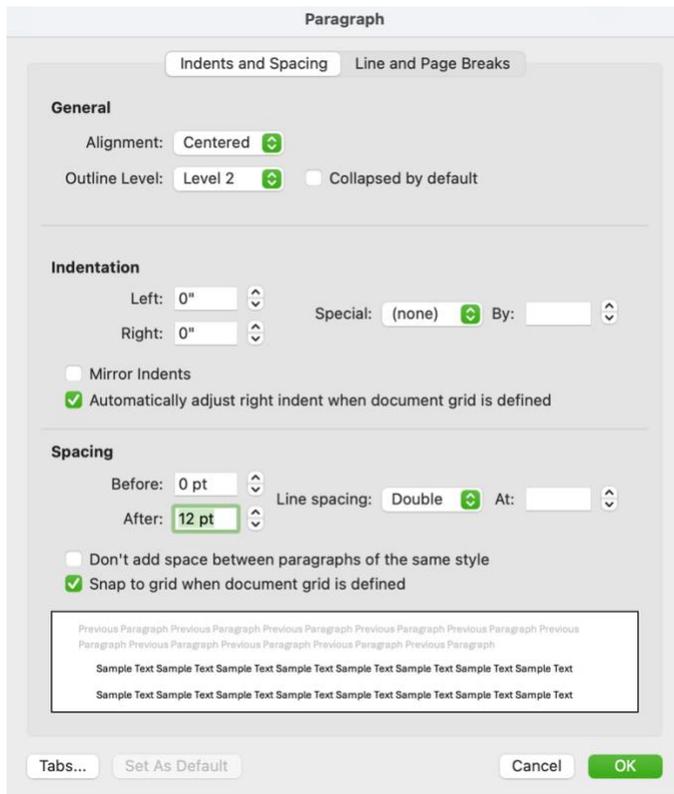
“Types of Headings” above will use Heading 2. As the title on the Cover Page has specific formatting requirements, please ensure that the format is correct (see the Cover Page manual on the [Thesis and Dissertation Guidelines page](#) for further help). Then follow Steps 1 and 2 below to open the Styles, but rather than click on Modify in Step 2, click on “Update Heading to Match Selection” to ensure that Heading 1 is applied and formatted correctly.

1. On the Home ribbon, find the Styles section. Locate the Style called Heading 2, but do not click on it. Instead, click on the downward-facing arrow that appears as you hover your mouse over the Styles, which brings up the Styles menu



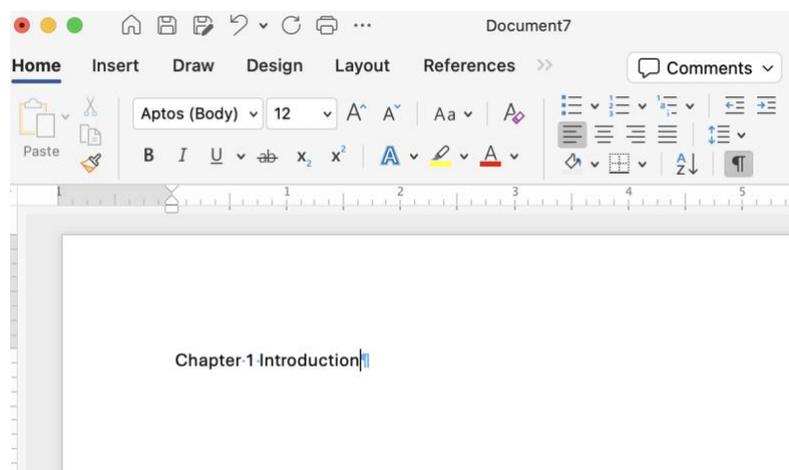
2. Move your mouse to Heading 2, and right-click. A drop-down menu will appear. Click on “Modify.” The Modify Style box will pop up

- d. Click OK to save changes for all windows

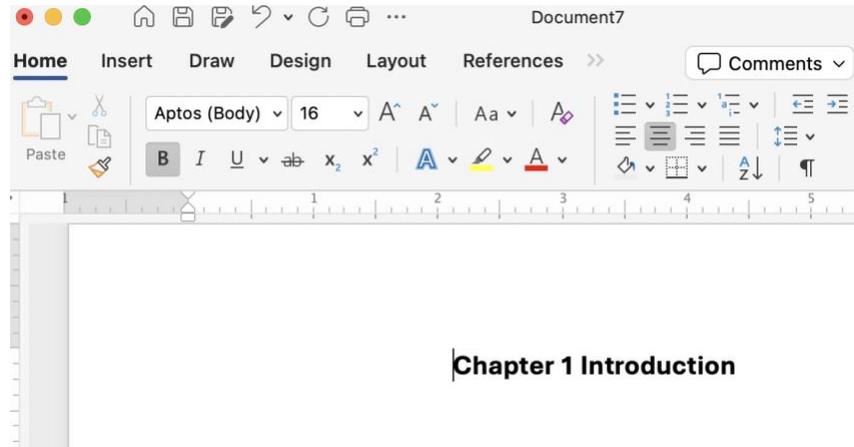


5. The Heading 2 style can now be applied to all major section headings in the document:

- a. Place the cursor at the beginning of the heading or highlight it



- b. Click on Heading 2 in the Styles box or Styles Pane. The heading will automatically change to the settings you just created



- c. Repeat this process so that all major section headings are labeled as Heading 2

Note: If you want to make any further changes to the Heading style (for instance, if you want to make them a larger font size), do not use the Home ribbon. Rather, make any changes through the Modify Style box, and all headings at the same level will be updated. If you modify a style through the Home ribbon, extra styles will be created, and other headings at the same level will not be consistent.

Formatting Subheadings

Each level of subheading will be formatted with a different Heading style in the Styles section. You will already have used Heading 1 for the title on the Cover Page, and Heading 2 for all major section headings. Your next level of subheading (first-level subheading or primary subheading) will therefore use Heading 3, second-level subheadings will use Heading 4, and so on for further levels of subheading. Your chosen style guide for your discipline will determine your subheading styles. If your department or discipline does not have a designated style guide, it will be reached by consensus between you and your advisory committee.

To modify Heading 3:

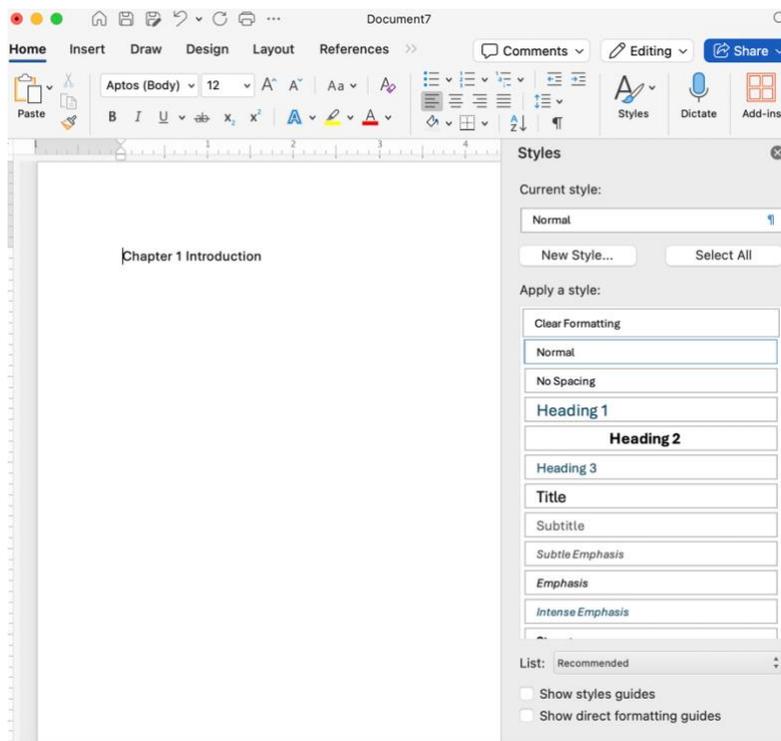
1. Click on the downward-facing arrow at the bottom of the Styles box on the Home ribbon of Word
2. Locate Heading 3, and right-click to bring up the menu. Choose “Modify”

3. Make changes to the font size, alignment, and style following the instructions for Heading 2 above
4. Once you have completed all of the necessary changes, click OK out of all windows
5. You can now apply Heading 3 to all first-level subheadings in the document
6. Repeat the process for all subsequent levels of subheading using Heading 4, Heading 5, and so on

Clearing Mistakenly Applied Styles

You might accidentally attribute a style to a particular section in your document. For example, a heading style might accidentally be applied to the body text which should be in Normal style. If this happens, you can clear the formatting to remove the style you incorrectly applied.

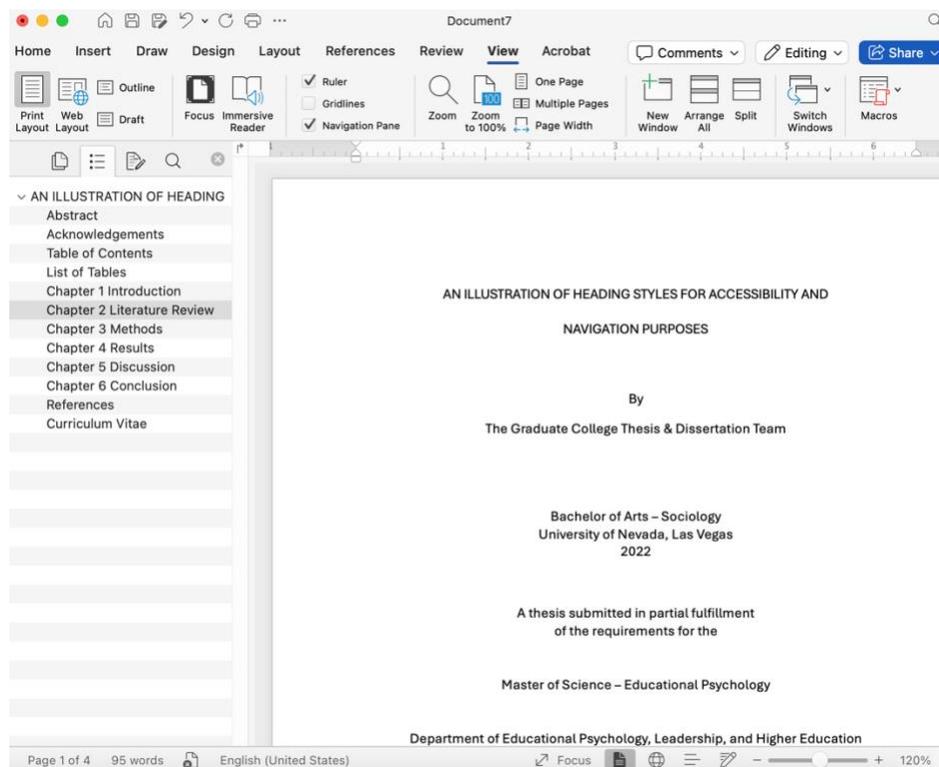
1. Highlight the portion of your document that needs to be cleared
2. Click on the Styles Pane. At the top of the Styles pane, there should be an option to “Clear Formatting.” This will remove all formatting and convert the selected text to “Normal”



Checking Your Headings for Accessibility

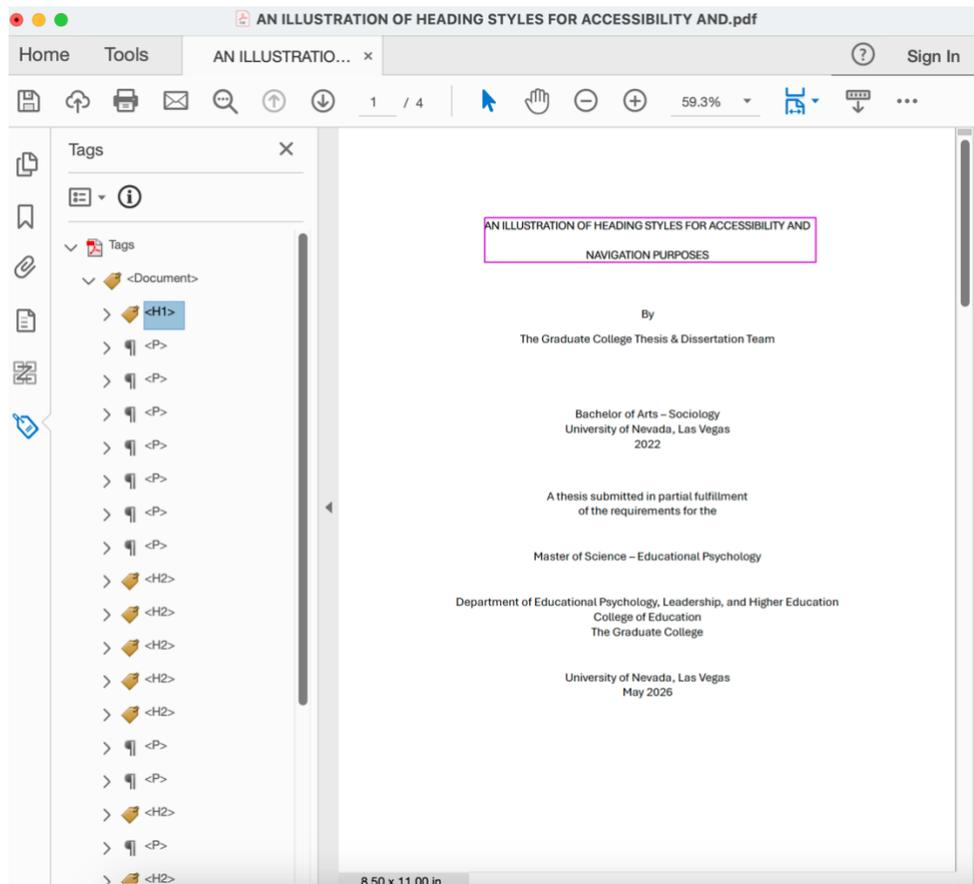
As noted above, federal guidelines require that all documents meet accessibility standards. Going through the process outlined above will automatically make them accessible, but it is important that you double-check this.

1. In your document, go to the View Ribbon, and ensure that Navigation Pane is checked
2. Click on the bullet list icon that appears in the pane on the left
3. You should see all of your major section headings listed here. If you have subheadings, then these will be listed here as well
4. If you notice that one or more of your headings or subheadings does not appear in the list on the left, please follow the steps to apply the correct style to that heading or subheading
5. Then return to the Navigation Pane and ensure that it appears in the navigation pane



When you save your document to PDF (using the Save As button or File command), all heading styles will be automatically saved in the PDF document. To check that these were saved correctly in your PDF:

1. Open your PDF in Adobe Acrobat Pro, using one of the computers on campus if you do not have this paid product
2. Open the Tags pane by clicking on the icon of the shopping tag. Your version may look different than the screenshot below and may have this in the right-hand-side panel



3. Ensure that the “H1” tag is applied to your title by clicking on it. If you don’t see the purple box around the title, then right-click the tag and ensure that “Highlight Content” is selected in the menu that appears
4. Check to ensure that “H2” is applied correctly to each of your major section headings, and “H3” to first-level subheadings, if applicable
5. If you need to make changes, go back to your Word document. Once everything has been updated, click “Save As” to convert your document to PDF, and check the tags again
6. Congratulations! You’ve created accessible headings and subheadings!