How to Force Microsoft Word to Cooperate

MICROSOFT WORD IS THE MOST USED WORD PROCESSOR, BUT IT'S FULL OF FRUSTRATIONS FOR USERS. HERE'S HOW TO FIX SOME OF THEM.

Microsoft has made the Office suite a bargain for families ($100 per year for up to six people) and for enterprises (starting at $96/year/user). Microsoft 365 runs on Windows and MacOS computers as well as Apple and Android phones and tablets.

Open-source applications such as Libre Office and Open Office can be used without cost, but they aren't always complete solutions as replacements for Microsoft's applications.

Anyone who needs to create documents consisting of text probably uses Microsoft Word, but many users complain about the way Word works.

The shortcomings aren't entirely Microsoft's fault. Users request features that shouldn't be added to a word processor application and Microsoft's developers have added features even when it was clear that people were asking for a word processor that would perform tasks no word processor should be asked to do.

Today's word processors bloated. This applies to Wordperfect, too, and to the open-source applications. They all try to perform tasks that they shouldn't. We can ignore unwanted features, turn off specific functions, and usually find a way to force Word to get the basics right.

Whether a function is wanted, though, depends on the user. Despite valid claims by editors that Word's spelling and grammar checker is
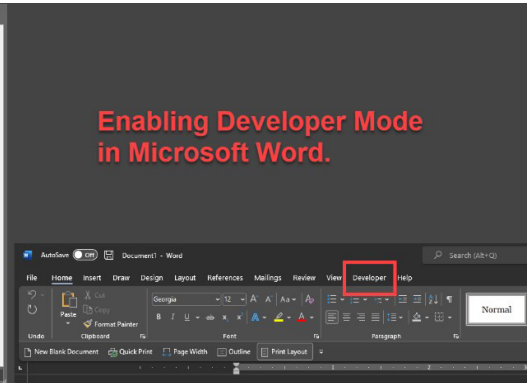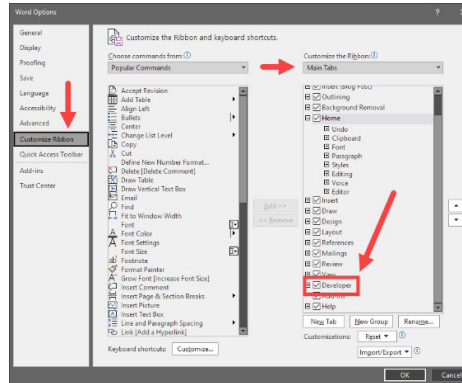
Enabling Developer Mode in Microsoft Word.

absurd, I continue to use it. Most of Word's *editor* recommendations are questionable, but sometimes it catches an error I've missed. Ideally, unwanted features could simply be disabled in a menu. Some can, but many cannot.

Fix the Default View

ONE OF WORD'S ANNOYANCES IS ITS PROPENSITY TO CREATE NEW DOCUMENTS IN WEB LAYOUT VIEW.

Web Layout is inappropriate for writing letters, instructional materials, and other printed documents. Print Layout is the correct choice for those kinds of materials and should be the default.

What makes the situation bizarre is that Word is not a website design tool and it creates horrid HTML code. The feature shouldn't even exist. It does exist and users should be permitted to set the default view in a configuration menu. Instead, the change requires creating a macro that runs automatically when a document opens. Here's how to create that macro:

If you haven't enabled Developer mode, click *File* in the menu and then select *Options* at the bottom of the Home screen. Then choose *Customize Ribbon* in the panel that opens, scroll down the Main Tabs list on the right side of the panel, and place a check mark next to *Developer*.
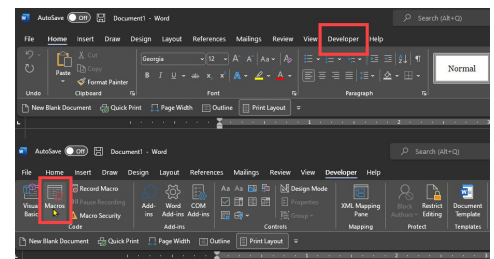
To create the macro, select *Developer* from Word's menu and then click *Macros* to open a dialog box.

Type **AutoOpen** in the Macro Name box and click the *Create* button.

Some text will already be present in the macro, and the last line will be End Sub. Insert a blank new line above End Sub and type: **ActiveWindow.View. Type = wdPrintView** on one line.
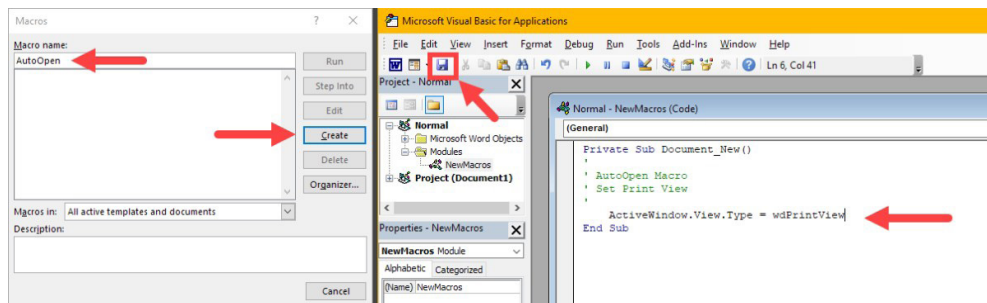
Click the disk icon to save the macro and close the Visual Basic for Applications window. New documents will always open in Print View. That's more difficult than it should have been, but it's still a relatively easy fix that quickly eliminates the annoyance.

Template Changes

WORD USES TEMPLATES TO STORE STARTING INFORMATION FOR DOCUMENTS.

Normal.dotm contains information about typefaces, styles, margins, and other settings.

If you routinely change settings when starting a new document, modifying the default template will save time. First you have to find it.

Choose *File, Open* from the menu and then type %appdata% in the Location field. This opens the *Roaming* directory. Then choose Microsoft and Templates. You'll see Normal.dotm in the list of files.

CHOOSING THE ADVANCED TAB PROVIDES ACCESS TO LIGATURES, NUMBER FORMS, AND OTHER SPECIALIZED TYPOGRAPHIC SETTINGS.
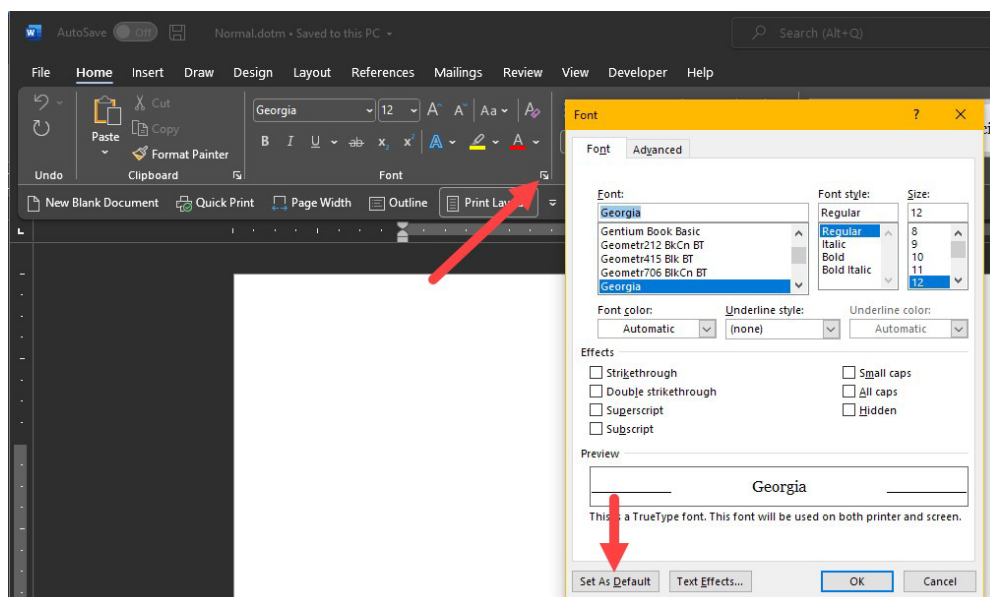
Because most of the styles in Word are based on the Normal style. Changing the default font also changes the Normal style, which affects all other styles based on it. To change the default typeface, click the Font expansion icon to open the Font dialog. After selecting the options you want, click the *Set As Default* button and choose the "all documents" option.

Any changes that you make to Normal.dotm will be applied to all documents that you create, but does not affect existing documents. Other settings that can be changed here include character spacing, layout, text formatting, paragraph formatting, document formatting, styles, text, pictures, AutoText entries, and keyboard shortcuts.

If you make a mistake, it's easy to reset Normal.dotm to its default setting: Just delete the file and Word will create a new one the next time you launch it.

Specialized Templates

YOU CAN ALSO CREATE A SPECIALIZED TEMPLATE SUCH AS ONE FOR A LETTERHEAD.

Start with a new document, add any graphics, headers, footers, or styles that you want to include in documents based on this new template. Modify any settings and then use Save As to specify a Word Macro-Enabled Template. Word will save this in the Custom Templates directory, C:\Users*username*\Documents\Custom Office Templates\ where *username* is your user ID on the computer.
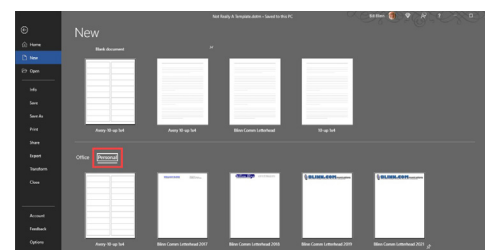
To use the template, choose File, New. Then scroll down and select Personal to show any templates you've created. Templates that you use frequently can be *pinned,* which adds them to the top section of the templates list.

Crafts people sometimes say that no time spent becoming familiar with their tools is wasted. That applies to computer applications, too, and to Microsoft applications in particular.

Microsoft's objective is to create applications that work the way users want them to. The problem with this approach is that some software design decisions are based entirely on input from users. The most common requests, even when they are illogical, receive the most attention from developers.

The result can be an application that has been designed by a committee, a gigantic committee. It's up to us users to adjust the software to meet our needs! Ω