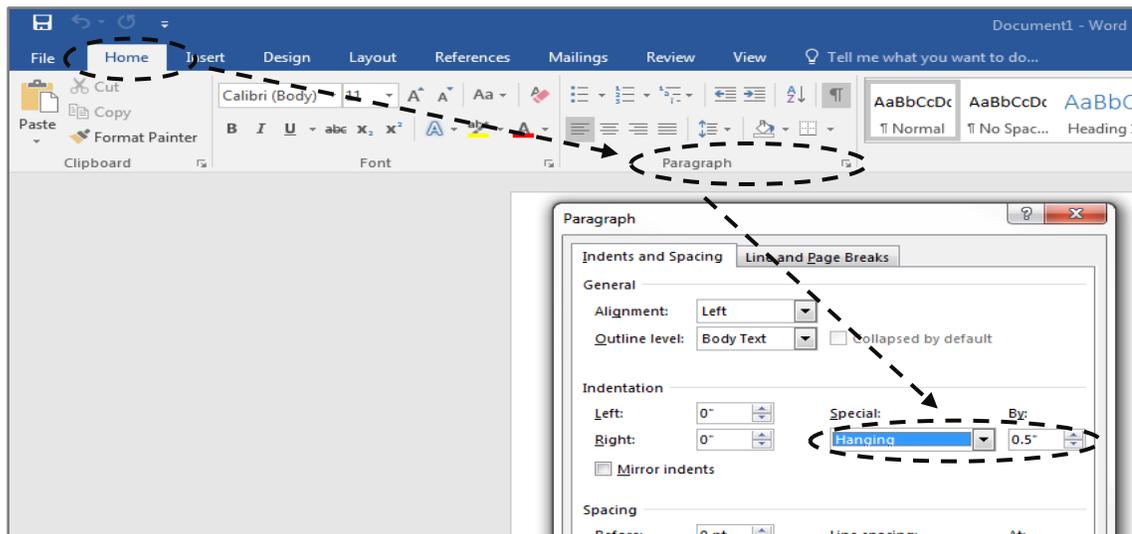# Bracken Business Communications Clinic

Hints for Document Formatting

Formatting a paper can be challenging, but there are some helpful hints that will make your work easier and more consistent. Microsoft Word is the University-supported word processor, and the examples that follow use that application's options.

Hanging First Lines. For formatting following American Psychological Association (APA) guidelines, entries in the References section need to be double spaced, justified to left margin and have hanging first lines; e.g.,

Angeli, E., Wagner, J., Lawrick, E., Anderson, M., & Brizee, A. (2010, May 5). *General format.*

Retrieved from http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/

1. Select text for formatting.
2. Select Home tab.
3. Click Paragraph drop-down symbol and the Paragraph dialog box will open.
4. Under Special, select Hanging (from drop-down list) and chose "by".5".

5. Click OK to complete.

**MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY** | **JAKE JABS** College of **BUSINESS & ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

Hanging First Lines (Cont'd.)

Like many capabilities in Word, there are multiple ways to do this formatting; for example, if the ruler is displayed at the top of the document, after selecting the text to be formatted (gray background in example below), the first line indent, hanging indent, and left indent icons can be dragged across the ruler to create the same effect.
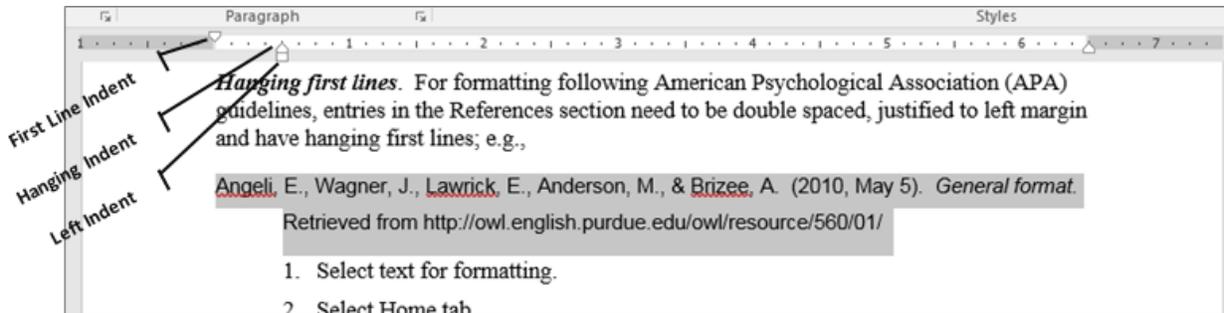
Inserting page break. For formatting following APA guidelines, the References section must start at the top of a new page. There are also other situations in which formatting requires the forced start at the top of a new page; e.g., not having a dangling section header at the bottom of the preceding page.

1. Position cursor in front of the word or character that is to start the new page.

2. Select Insert tab.

3. Click Page Break.
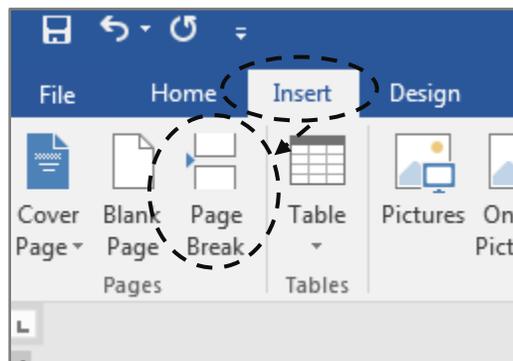
Paragraph formatting. Paper submissions will have different formatting requirements based on teachers' requirements; for example, formal letters are typically single spaced with a double space (blank line) between paragraphs. Understanding how to use a word processor's paragraph formatting tools can make that task easier.

1. Position cursor in text (paragraph) selected for formatting.

2. Select Home tab.

3. Click Paragraph drop-down symbol and the Paragraph dialog box will open.

4. Within the Spacing subsection, line spacing can be selected from the drop-down options (Single, Double, Exactly and other).

5. Spacing before and after paragraphs can selected by choosing Before (the number of points to be automatically added before a paragraph with 6 pts. adding a half-height blank line, and 12 pts. a full blank line) or After (the number of points to be automatically added after a paragraph).

    Adding a blank line between single-spaced paragraphs can also be accomplished by designating 0 pts. before and after, and then using the enter key to add a line before the following paragraph.
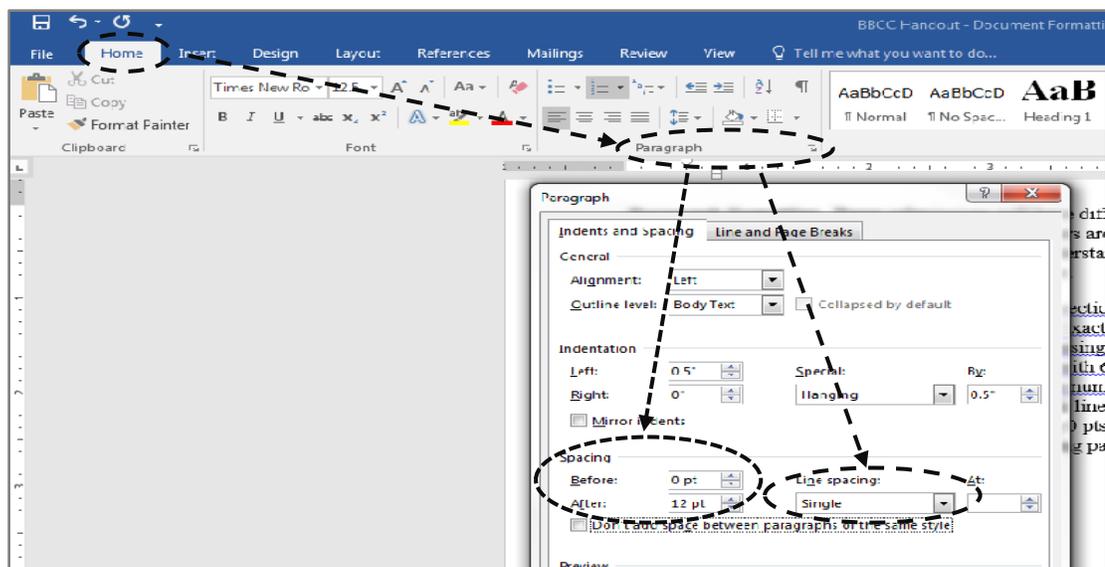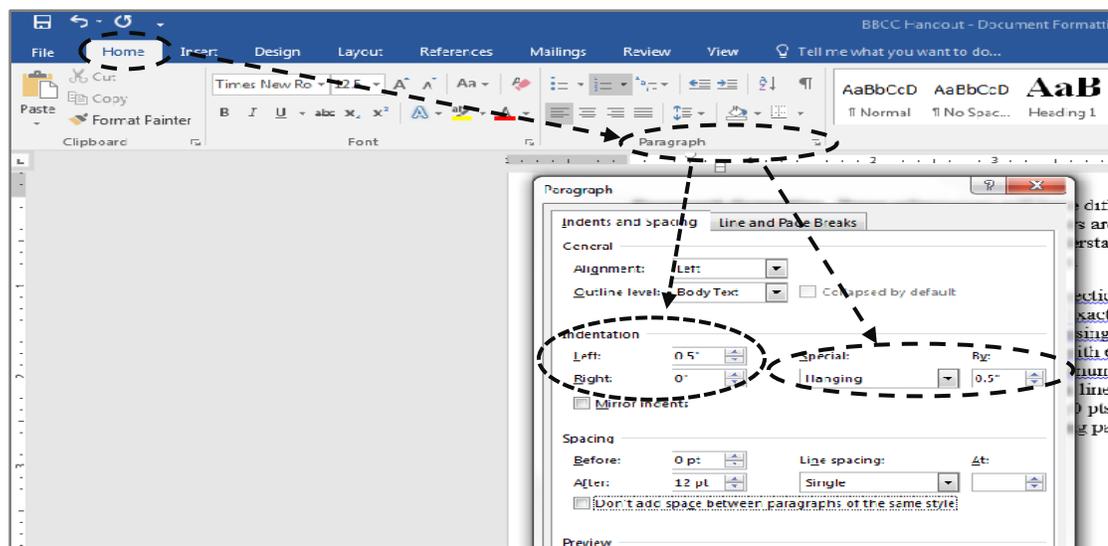

6. Click OK to complete.

Formatting bulleted or numbered lists. Using bulleted or numbered lists can be a useful approach for presenting lists or sequential steps, but formatting them can be a challenge. Understanding how to use a word processor's indentation formatting tools can make that task easier.

1. Select bulleted or numbered text for formatting.

2. Select Home tab.

3. Click Paragraph drop-down symbol and the Paragraph dialog box will open.

4. Within the Indentation subsection, offset (indent) of bullets or numbers from the left margin is controlled by the Left value.

   The spacing *following* the bullet or number to the start of text is controlled by the value in the Special subsection drop-down Hanging value. This might typically be "by" .25.

5. Click OK to complete.

   If a ruler is displayed at the top of the document, after selecting the bullets or numbers to be formatted, the first line indent, hanging indent, and left ident icons can be dragged across the ruler to create the desired indents.