“How do I create a table of contents in Word?”

A table of contents helps readers to navigate long documents, but is very time-consuming to create and update manually, particularly if you have added or removed content.

The good news is that you can use Word to add an automatic table of contents to your document in just a few clicks of the mouse. Use this guide to find out how.

Preparing to create a table of contents

Before you can create a table of contents, you must first apply Heading styles (e.g. Heading 1, Heading 2, Heading 3) to the chapter headings within your document. This tells Word what to include in the table of contents. You can use our guide “What are Heading styles and how do I use them in Word?” if you need help with Heading styles.

Creating a table of contents

1. To create a table of contents, first apply Heading styles to your document.
2. Click where you want to insert the table of contents.
3. Click the References tab, then click Table of Contents.
4. At the bottom of the list, click Custom Table of Contents…
5. Set up your table of contents:
   - Tab leader: The dots, dashes or line that leads to the page number.
   - Format: The font and layout of the table of contents (you can change this later).
   - Show levels: The number of heading styles to include in the table of contents.
   - Untick Use hyperlinks instead of page numbers (so that you can edit your table later) and click OK.
Removing your table of contents
Click the References tab, Table of Contents, and then Remove Table of Contents.

Updating your table of contents
Every time you make changes to your document, remember to update your table of contents to reflect the changes.

1. Right-click your table of contents and click Update Field.
   – Or click your table of contents and press the F9 key.
2. Select Update entire table and click OK.

Changing the look of your table of contents
The format of your table of contents is controlled by styles called TOC 1 to TOC 9 – which relate to Heading 1 to Heading 9 respectively.

1. Click the Home tab, then click the launcher arrow at the bottom right of the Styles group.
2. Scroll to find TOC 1 in the Styles pane.
3. Right-click TOC 1, then click Modify.
4. Make your changes in the Modify Styles dialog, and click OK.
5. Repeat this for other heading levels you need (TOC 2 = Heading 2, TOC 3 = Heading 3 etc).

Further information and help
If you want to learn about any Microsoft product in more detail you can use Microsoft’s Office Support for tutorials, videos and helpful hints.
– For essay formatting requirements, e.g. margins and line spacing, please check with your School.
– Within Word, click the question mark (top right) at any time for help. Search for keywords, e.g. headings.
– You can also use MyIT to log calls with the University’s IT Service Desk: https://myit.abdn.ac.uk